



# Women empowerment in India

Puja Devi<sup>1</sup> (**Corresponding author**)

Research Scholar

Haryana School of Business

Guru Jambheshwar University of Science and Technology, Hisar

Address- Department of Economics, GJUS&T, Hisar, Haryana, India-125001

E-mail: [jangrapooja65@gmail.com](mailto:jangrapooja65@gmail.com)

Mobile- 97291-52467

## Abstract

The current study tries to investigate the condition of women in India via several indicators from the secondary information from UNDP. In the whole world, the study of women empowerment has been an attractive issue including in India for a few decades. The term empowerment does not mean giving authority or power to people; they already have enough power in terms of the wealth of their skills, knowledge to do their job brilliantly rather it means improving their status, way of living and, a comprehensive viewpoint of life. India's women are relatively less empowered compared to counterpart males despite numerous initiatives undertaken by government bodies. There is still exist variation among gender, especially in terms of literacy and occupation patterns. However, women's empowerment is the necessity of the process of socio-economic and political upliftment of the community. The level of mobility and decision-making autonomy by women varies with age, level of education and occupation status. It is found that some ancient norms and rituals still prevail in the communities which have to be followed by the women. The majority of the women accept as true that domestic violence such as wife-beating to justified for one reason or the others. However, a very less proportion of women argued that they have autonomy about how to spend their household income and this power grows with age, education and occupation. Moreover, women's coverage of social media is also less than men's in the rural sector. Rural women are more suffer from domestic violence compared to urban areas. The research reveals that education and employment are the main two factors responsible for the enhancement of empowerment and, improved socio-economic status (SES) of women.

**Keywords** - Employment, Decision-making power, women empowerment, Socioeconomic status (SES), Domestic violence.

## Introduction

From historical perspectives, India's researchers believed that women have equal status with men in every field of life. Research by various ancient Indian scholars found that females were educated in the Vedic period. Rigvedic proposed that the females got married at the age of maturity and were possibly free to choose their life- partner. In economic development, women play a significant role directly or indirectly. Although natural history has provided hereditary reproduction power to women the SES of women is so much poor and the rate of poverty is also more in women compared to men. The requirement for women's empowerment arose due to gender discrimination, exploitation and, male-dominant society for so many decades. They have been attacked for various types of violence and exploitation activities by the male people of their families and society in India as well as other countries. Thus empowerment of women is the answer for all related issues. Through empowerment, their hidden capabilities can be used for economic development.

Empowerment is the procedure of obtaining essential opportunities for marginalized people, either directly by people, or through the help of non-marginalized others who share their access to these opportunities. It also includes motivating and enhancing the skills for self-sufficiency. This is not an easy task to begin and effectively implement. Inequalities between men and women and exploitation in opposition to women have also been age-old issues all over the world. Thus, women's quest for equality with men is a universal phenomenon. People who lack self-sufficiency become, at a minimum, dependent on charity, or welfare. They lose their self-confidence because they cannot be fully

self-supporting. This in turn can lead to psychological, social and, even mental health problems. In the past, women were treated as mere house-makers. **Review of Literatures**

Begum (2018) examine that even though India feminism contributes half of the total population, their social, monetary and, political status is much poorer than that of men. They are subjected to domination and violence for a substantial length of time and even today. Rathore (2017) worked on that Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru gave a statement: "that you educate a man you educate an individual but if you educate a woman you educate the complete family. So at this point when India's feminism contributes to half of the population, it will strengthen the whole national economy. The author found that the training is the most important factor to improve the status of women in how to face difficulties, how to go up against their conventional part and, change their lives. During the same time, Krishna et al. investigate the conditions of women in India. The author found that in the earliest era, women were bound to take part in any social activities and she was not considered any part of basic leadership in their home. The condition of women was very terrible in provinces and other remote areas. But gradually women are started with wage-generating activities. Parnami et al. (2015) investigate the changes in the life of women over the time a last number of years. At present women are participating in business activities because of globalization. Now they are moving and propelling business people and opposed to doing family domestic work. So there are so many enormous changes in India. Banerjee (2013) worked on the conditions of women during independence. The adversity of females compared to men is identifying with training and basic leadership because of male dominant society and lack of money in India also the main factor to put the women backstage. The study found that the conditions of women are adverse because of an assortment of policies and projects that gives them equal status to men. In the northern part of India is still the conditions for women are not so much improved. Nandal et al. (2013) investigate the improvement in women in respect of education, health, family life, gender discrimination and marriage, etc. in Indian society status of women. He found that earliest period in India the conditions of women are very fewer degrees attractive. But later on, some gradual changes took place in feminism because of globalization and some other economic reforms. Subrahmanyam (2011) examined the variation of women's education in India in present and past eras. The result shows that there has improvement in the enrolment ratio of girls in the schools. Meanwhile, Rao examines the health status of women. The study highlighted that the health condition of SHG women has taken a turn better and their family members are also well aware of several governmental provisions especially meant for them. Rekha Singh found various factors that affect the status of women. The main factor is that women are denied uniformity as men due to the old culture in India. Raja Ram Mohan Roy started an improvement against this imbalance and addiction. Mahatma Gandhi also took initiated the freedom movement. Now they are taking part in various governmental issues and departments. The author found that in the absence of education, dowry, and other monetary servitude, the women conditions are not improved. Mishra et al. (1955) worked on women's empowerment in India. The author found that there are some lawful rights for feminism in India laws that help to empower women. But some economic empowerment is also required in under-developing and other developing countries. Dhyana dipta Panda investigate that feminism is treated as a goddess in Indian culture. But in practice even today in each stage of life she has been offended in the general public. Now a day's some enactment has been made for women since the freedom movement but even after it they are battling for their rights. Suguna examined the women education in India and found that education is a tool through which women can be trained on how to face their life difficulties like domestic violence, how to raise voice for their rights and, how can change their own life. So we can't ignore the importance of education to empower women in India. But unfortunately, education is moderate in the rural zone of India.

### **Objectives of the study**

1. To study the scenario of the status of women and efforts made in the past and present.
2. To study the necessity of empowerment of women.
3. To study the government schemes and their eligibility criteria for women empowerment.
4. To identify the major obstacles in the path of women empowerment.

### **Research Methodology**

The current research is generally descriptive and analytical in nature based on secondary data sources from various books, journals, the internet and, magazines in India.

### **Women in India**

The older period for Indian women has been exciting. But now a day the condition of women is improving day by day. In the ancient period women can be enjoyed with similar status to men. Many ancient researchers like Patanjali and Katyayana found that in early Vedic era, women were educated. They get married at their mature age and they were also free to choose their husband. There are many holistic books such as Rig Veda and Upanishads, pointed that there are various women like Gari and Maitreyi, reflects the importance of feminism. But after approx. 500 B.C the conditions of women started exploited with the Manusmiti and with the Mughal attack of Babur and the Mughal Empire and later Christianity scratch the freedom and rights of women. After sixth century, child marriage got started.

In the era of medieval period, the condition of Indian women further deteriorated. In some part of India, child marriage, sati traditions and stop to widow remarriage became a part of their social life. The Purdah practice was brought by Muslim society. The Jauhar was applied in Rajputs of Rajasthan. The temple for women was Devadasi and they were sexually exploited in some part of India. In Hindu, Kshatriya ruler was in traditions. In Muslim families, women were prohibited to move in Zenana areas. Even after British rule, the status of women was not in good conditions. Women herself doesn't feel identical and many times she ill-treat herself.

After independence of India, the legitimate committee and others nation leaders powerfully demand for similar rights among women and men. Now we can see that women are getting a reputable position in every field of life. Yet, they have not completely freed some unfairness and harassment of the society. Only a few numbers of women are able to set up their potentialities. If we are talking about their social status, they are not treated equal to men in all the places including western countries. Gender discriminations are found in India even today. The contradictory condition is that sometimes women treated as Goddess but at another times merely as slave. The Women contribute nearly 50% of populate, so it became responsibility for each and every to encourage and improve the women condition. Now Indian feminism has the benefit of equal status with men as per constitution and legal provision. But it is a long history to achieve this current position. First, the time of Mahabharata when Draupadi was put as a commodity by her husband. Secondly, even last few year back Indian feminism was always dependent on male people of her family. Thirdly they were not having permission to speak loudly in front of elder members in her family. There are various other social evils like bride burning by their in-laws family whose dowry was not sufficient.

In the twenty century, Mahatma Gandhi arise a national movement to remove all these inequalities with women. At the same time various other social reformers gave attention on women education, ban on premature marriage, evil of sati etc. and make legally provision for it. After independence of India, the constitution committee and other leaders of nations passed various act such as Hindu marriage act, 1955 that determine the age for marriage, the Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act, 1956, for widow/ divorce women for remarriage and similarly imprisonment for six months or fine up to Rs 5000 under Dowry prevention act 1961. Hence the condition of women in India is changing day by day.

### **Women Empowerment in India**

The term empowerment help women to achieve equality with men or it will help to decline the gender gap. As we all know that women have a very important role in country economic development as she is main originator of family, supplier of workforce and also play very significant role in other fields like agriculture, industry and service sector. The nature has given reproduction power to especially to women. So she can create social, economically society wonderful. But after all their socio- economic condition is so much poor. Generally the women are offended in various cases such as rape, dowry tortured, sexual harassment, domestic exploitation, kidnapping and many more. The results of such cases mostly go against women due to absence of any witness, problem of proving the incidents etc. So she should be strengthened and her condition must be improved; she must be physically, socially, politically empowered so that they can use their hidden capabilities to face the real life problems. In India to upliftment the status of women various initiatives was taken before and after British rule. At the time of British rule, many social reformers such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Jyotirao Phule etc. struggled to improve the conditions of women. Therefore, in Calcutta the first free school opened for women (Kalikrishna Girls' High School) in 1847 by Peary Charan Sarkar (a member of young Bangal). In south India Martha mault and her daughter Eliza Mault started education and training for women. Raja Rammohan Roy successful to abolished the traditions of "Sati" under Governor – General William Bentick in 1829. Ishwar Vidyasagar improved the conditions of widow women under the remarriage act 1856. Pandita Rambai a women reformer uplifts the conditions of women in India. Mohhomad Ali Jinna passed a act for prevention of child marriage act 1929.

### **Women empowerment after independence**

After Independence, India take various initiatives to empower women. The Constitution of India also provide gender equality, equal work opportunity, equal pay for equal work and also make special provision in favor of women and children. To prevention of child labour, Government of India passed, the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act in 1956. Dowry prohibition act was passed in 1961. In India the medical test that earlier was used to check the sex of baby have been totally prohibit. During late 1970s the feminist activism got momentum and the protest due to the issue of rape of young girl Mathura in police station by a policeman compelled the government to amend the Evidence Act, the Criminal Procedure Code and the Indian Penal Code and introduce the category of custodial rape. In 1986, Govt. of India passed act for the protection of Muslim divorce women. In 1990, various women oriented NGO and SHGs were also set up with the aid of donation received from foreign donors to protecting the women rights. After it in 1997, India Supreme Court took a strong step against sexual harassment of women at their workplace.

Government of India declared the year 2001 as the year of women Empowerment. In 2006, the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 has come into force. Rajyasabha passed Women's Reservation Bill, ensuring 33 percent reservation to women in Parliament and State Legislative bodies on 9th March, 2010. According to the 73rd

and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts, all local elected bodies reserve one-third of their seats for women. Even though the percentages of women in various levels of political activity have risen considerably, women are still under-represented in governance and decision making positions.

### Need of the study

- Jawaharlal Nehru had said “You can tell the condition of the NATION by looking at the status of WOMEN.”
- Mahatma Gandhi says, “You educate a man, you educate an individual. You educate a woman, you educate an entire family.

So women play a significant role in every fields of development. If she is socially economically strongly then she will create wonderful society. In economic development women play a significant role directly or indirectly. Although the natural history has provide the hereditary reproduction power to the women, the socio- economic conditions of women is so much poor and the rate of poverty is also more in women only. Hence it is the fundamental requirement to study the past and present conditions of the women and suggest for their betterment. The need for women empowerment was felt in India long back. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the religious, social, and educational reformer and the maker of Modern India demanded inheritance property rights for Women, gave tremendous effort to abolish the defunct custom .Sati,, the Hindu funeral practice. Key figure of Bengali Renaissance, Iswarchandra Vidyasagar , championed the uplift of the status of women in India. Jyotirao Phule, Pearicharan Sarkar etc also fought for uplift of women. Later, Mahatma Gandhi had announced at the Second round table conference that his aim was to establish a political society in India, in which women would enjoy the same rights as men and the teeming millions of India would be ensures dignity and justice-social, economic and political.

### Reasons for the empowerment of women

In Indian Constitution there are various articles related to women that provides equality, no discrimination, and equality in equal pay for equal work. In addition today we can observe tht government of India also made various provisions in favour of women and children. But after all provisions, Indian women are exploited and marginalized at every level of society. Women found very poor in terms of economically, social contribution, political participation, health and access of education. Only few percentages of females are engaged in services and other economic activities. Thus to become independent as men, economically power is also required. It also observed that only few females are literate comparatively to men in India (Men literacy rate was 82.14% and women literacy rate was only 64% as per census 2011). Hence education plays very significant role in women empowerment. In addition to education, Indian women take less food but work more. Hence health point of view they found too weak to work. Another issue is that harassment at their workplace. There are various cases like rape, kidnapping, dowry harassment and so on. So for these issues, women empowerment is essential for protection of their own lives and dignity.

### Government schemes for women empowerment

As mentioned above that Central Govt. as well as state Govt. trying to empower the women through lot of schemes. Some of the schemes are Day care centre for children and mothers, Swayamsidh, Swa- shakti, Support to training and employment programme for women, Ladli yojana, Mahila vikas yojana, Self Help- groups and so on. Some of the schemes, their eligibility and procedure for apply are as follow-

Central Scheme	Launching year	Objective	Eligibility
<b>Empowerment schemes:</b> .Rastriya mahila Kosh	1993	To provide lower income women with access to loan to begin small business.	All women
Swadhar Greh	2002	To provide to the essential need of shelter, food, clothing, medical treatment and care of women in trouble and who are deficient monetary support	All women
Priyadarshini	2011	It offers benefits women through SHG`s	Women
One stop centre	2015	To provide integrated support and assistance under one roof to women affected by violence, both in private and public spaces	Women
Central social welfare Board	1953	To promote social welfare activities and implementation welfare programmes for women and girls children through	Women

		voluntary organization	
Development of women and children in rural areas (DWCRA)	1982	To improve the socio economic status of the poor women in rural areas through creation of groups of women for income generating activities.	Women
Gender Budgeting scheme	2005	For economic empowerment of women	Women
Rajiv Gandhi National Creche scheme	2006	It offers benefits to encourage the women to join gainful employment. It focus for children of working women those seeks to provide day care facilities whose age 0-6 years.	1.working women in public or private sector 2. Household monthly income less than Rs 12000
Swayamsiddha	2001	The objective of the this scheme is empowerment of poor and needy, women from weaker sections of the society, such as scheduled castes and scheduled tribes etc. by improving access of women to micro-credit, economic resources, etc	Women
NARI web-portal (National Repository of information for women )	2018	Its main objective to provide all information related to new launched government schemes for women	All women
<b>Nutrition schemes</b> The Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana	2010	It provide money to help ensure the good health and nutrition of the recipients.	Pregnant and lactating women age 19 and over for their first two live birth
Anganwadi service	1975	The main purpose of this scheme is development of children, Pregnant and lactating women.	All children under age of 6 years and all pregnant and lactating women.
Rajiv Gandhi scheme for empowerment of adolescent girls- Sabla	2012	It offers a variety of services to help young women become self –reliant, including nutritional supplementation and education, health education and life skills etc.	Adolescent girls (11-14 years old girls)
<b>Training &amp; Employment</b> Support to Training and employment programme for women	2009	It aim is upgrading skills of women for self and wage employment.	All women
Mahila E- Haat	2016	This scheme helps to improve the socio-economic status of women by providing a web based marketing platform for direct selling products.	All entrepreneur women
<b>Haryana schemes</b>			
<b>Empowerment of women</b> 1. Swa Shakti	1999	The objective of the program was to bring out socio-economic development and empowerment of women through the promotion of women SHGs, microcredit and income-generating	Only resident women above 18 years old

		activities.	
2. Swawlamban	1982	The objective of scheme is to provide training and skills to women to facilitate them employment or self-employment on a sustained basis.	All SC ,ST Women
6. . Implementation of protection from domestic violence act and other acts of the ministry	2006	It facilitates to prevent sexual harassment at the workplace.	All women
7. Mahila Samridhhi Yojana (MSY)	1993	Under it, every rural woman aged 18 and above can open an MSY account of money she can save.	All women
8. Indira Mahila Yojana (IMY):	1995	The main objective of this programme is to give a forward thrust to the women education, awareness income-generation capacities and the empowerment of women.	All adult women aged 18 or above are eligible for this scheme
9. Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK)	1993	The main objective of the scheme is to provide loan through SHG.	1.All women 2. Family monthly income does not exceed Rs. 11000
10. Ladli Yojana	2005	under it, a sum of Rs. 5000/- is invested in Kisan Vikas Patras (KVPs) per year, for five years, on the birth of the second daughter born on or after 20-8-2005, which will be provided to the tune of Rs 96,000/- (approx) on maturity after 18 years.	Girl child must be born after 20-8-2005
11.Short stay home	1969	The schemes designed to provide temporary shelter to women and girls who are in social and moral danger due to family problems, mental strain, violence at home, social ostracism, exploitation and other causes.	All women and in addition to it all girls between 15-35 years old from SC/ ST given to preference.
12. Widow pension scheme	1995, New rule are effect from 1 Nov. 2018	Under this scheme all the deserted/ destitute/ vidhwa women with more than 18 years of age will get Rs. 2000 as monthly pension as additional financial assistance.	1.All widow above 18 years old. 2. The total annual income of vidhwa/destitute women from all sources does not exceed Rs 2 lakh.
13. Adult pension scheme	1995 and new rule effect from Nov. 2018	Under this schemes additional financial assistance Rs. 2000 to all people with more than 60 years old.	1. All people including women must be above 60 years old. 2. Family income does not exceed annually Rs.2 lakh.
14.. Women helpline scheme	2018	It aim giving immediately police assistance to all needy women at any time	All women
16. Shadi Saghun Yojana	2018	It aim provide financial assistance to girls at the time of marriage	Girl must be graduate and above 18 years old.
17. Inter caste marriage Saghun scheme	2021	This scheme promote communal harmony and promote inter caste	1. Both the spouse must be citizen of India and one of the spouses must belong to

		marriage by giving Rs2.5 lakh. In the form if FD in the name of couple after marriage registration.	Schedule caste. 2. Couple must have not availed benefit under any other similar scheme. 3. All the applicants will be given this grant amount only for one time at the time of first marriage. Couple can apply for the incentive within 1 year from the date of marriage.
18. Deendayal Antyodya Yojana	2018	Under this scheme women get the Loan through SHG whose interest totally bears by state Govt. at the time of repayment.	Income of each member does not exceed Rs 1 lakh
19. Durgashakti Vahini scheme	2018	The main objective of this scheme is to ensure that the girls feel secure at public places and while travelling from their home to institution.	All girls
21. Ujjawala Yojana	2016	The man objective of this scheme is a women empowerment and protecting their health by giving Free LPG connection.	1. Applicant must be BPL women above 18 years old with citizen of Haryana. 2. The household of the applicant should not already own an LPG connection anyone name in the household. 3. The applicant should not have availed similar benefits in any other Government scheme.
<b>Nutrition:</b> 1. Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls-Sabla	2010	It aims of holistic development of adolescent girls. . Here Nutrition provision (@ 5/- per day for 300 days in a year) and 6Kg free food grain provided. 2. Iron and Folic Acid supplementation (52 tablets annually)	Girls ages must be 11-19year old and less than 35 kg weight
2.Kishori Shakti Yojana	2015	.It aims to improve the nutritional and health status of girls in the age group of 11-18 years	Girls age between 11-18 years old
3.Indira Gandhi Matritva sahyog Yojana	2010	It provides money to help ensure the good health and nutrition of the recipients.	All pregnant and lactating women above 19 years old on their first two live birth.
4. Haryana sanitary Napkins distribution scheme for girl students.	2018	Under this scheme all girls of Govt. School below the age of 18 years will get sanitary pads in schools and all women above age 18 years will get it through PDS shops every month.	All women
5. Scheme for Adolescent girls.	2012	Under this scheme all adolescent girls get nutritional food of 600 calories, 18-20 gram	All pregnant, lactating and adolescent (11-14 years) girls.

		protein and micro nutrition's of minimum 300 days	
<b>Education</b> 1. Sakshar Mahila Samooh Members	2005	It offers award to women who have done exemplary work in the field of literacy, self-help group formation and strengthening, awareness generation, preventing female foeticide and child marriage etc.	All eligible women
2. Balika smridhhi Yojana		It aims give benefits to girls child for education and marriage.	All girls child and marriage not before 18 years old
3. Beti Bachao, Beti Padoo Yojana	2015	It aim protection of girls child and giving them better education	All girls child
4. Single girl child scholarship	2015		
6. Free coaching for JEE/ NEET to Govt. school students.	2018	1. Under it, total number of 225 Govt. School students securing more than 85% marks in class 10 <sup>th</sup> will get free coaching for JEE/ NEET along with boarding facility. This training course for medical and engineering competitive entrance exams for admission.	All Govt. school students securing marks 85% in Metric.
<b>Training &amp; Employment</b>			
1. Sakshsm You've Yojana	2017	The main objective of this scheme is to provide more job opportunities for the unemployed youth in Haryana, private sector will also involved in the scheme.	All graduate students including girls.
2. Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY)	1989	It aims providing employment to landless man and women	1. Resident of India 2. All landless men and women

(Secondary source)

### Major obstacles in women empowerment in India

The following are the major obstacles faced by women in the historical periods and at present up to some limit-

1. Gender discrimination
2. Less enrolment of women in schools
3. Dowry system
4. Less mobility
5. Lack of awareness about governmental schemes.
6. Less participation in workforce
7. Lack of economic and social development

### Conclusion

“There is no chance of the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on one wing.”-**Swami Vivekananda**.

The term empowerment related to flow of power. Women empowerment means to made women independent economically, self- reliant, and have possession power to face any difficult situation in life. The empowered women should be able to participate in the decision making. There are many women in India that possess the highest position in President offices, Prime Minister, Lok Sabha Speaker etc. such as Chandra Kochar occupying highest position in the corporate sector. But still the condition of women is not satisfactory. The literacy rate among women is also lower than male. It can be noticed that ground reality is discrimination, degradation especially in rural areas and in the deprived sectors of the society. In 21<sup>st</sup> century women are being brutalized, commoditized, materialized and subjected to the empowerment of women has become one of the most important concern of 21<sup>st</sup> century not only at

national level but also at the international level. However Government has taken various initiatives for empower the women but only government initiatives alone would not be sufficient to achieve this goal. Society must take various initiatives to create a environment in which there is no gender discrimination, exploitation etc.

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