



WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT

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purnimaranigaur@gmail.com**Abstract:**

Status of women in India is decided by social, political and economic hierarchy. It is socially and culturally constructed. Traditions and cultures play major role in it. Although sex ratio has declined due to many reasons, women provide force to development through various practices. Daughters are employed to work in the kitchen, they do work to serve food to earning members of the family. They are employed now in various schemes and projects of the govt. Women roles are keenly watched by the society. Their progress in education have made themselves sufficient. The constitution has provisions for their progress and betterment. Now they enjoy better life and livelihood. Govt. schemes have ensured their employment and income generation. They are more confident now. They have started revolting against undemocratic system of distribution of perks and power in the society. They are fighting against the evil practices in the society. The PINK SAREE GANG has influenced the film industry even. The KALI SAREE GANG is up against the wayward husbands and neighbours. The scientific developments have brought not good things for women. Now they fight against feticide, infanticide, dowry, honour killing and forced veiling too. But certainly they are better off now. They are socially, economically and politically strong now. They are in a demanding mode now.

To be pro-woman we don't have to be anti-man. What really matters is the change of mindset. Considering the role played by women that of a mother, a wife and a daughter, they deserve to be treated as partners and not viewed as competitors. The Constitution of India, under Article 14, 15, and 16, might have guaranteed women equality before law, protection and opportunity to work without discrimination on the grounds of religion, caste, creed and sex. This cannot happen if both men and women are reluctant to change their attitudes. Women have proved, time and again, that they are in no way inferior to men in all walks of life. The male dominated society is not yet ready to accept it. Women just need the necessary support and encouragement of the family and the society.

Women, like men, should try to do the impossible, and when they fail, their failure should be a challenge to others.

– Amerlia Earhart

Introduction

Women are leaders everywhere you look from CEO to the House wife that holds together a home our country was built by women who stand alone. A Review Any assessment of the status of women has to start from the social framework, social structures, cultural norms and value systems that influence social expectations regarding the behaviour of both men and women and determine women's roles and their position in society. A society is composed of many institutions and most important of them are the system of decent, family and kinship, marriage and religious traditions. They provide the ideology and moral basis for men and women about their rights and duties and their status and role.

Women development or empowerment need to improve the social, economic, political, educational, equal gender rights and spiritual strength of the women all over the world. The modern society needs to bring sociological empowerment among women to address the social and gender discrimination processes in the society. Women empowerment may solve lots of social issues as well as bring

growth and development of the nation on right track. We have listed below number of quotes and quotations about the women empowerment said by the famous and popular personalities of the world according to their own thoughts and need of women empowerment in the society. India is a very famous country known for its cultural heritage, traditions, civilisation, religion and geographical features from the ancient time. On the other hand, it is also popular as a male chauvinistic nation. Women are given first priority in India however on the other hand they were badly treated in the family and society. They were limited only for the household chores or understand the responsibility of home and family members. They were kept totally unaware of their rights and own development. People of India used to say this country as *Bharat-Mata* however never realised the true meaning of it. *Bharat-Mata* means a mother of every Indian whom we have to save and care always. Women constitute half power of the country so in order to make this country a fully powerful country, women empowerment is very necessary. It is empowering women to understand their rights

to be independent in every area for their proper growth and development. Women give birth to the baby means future of the nation so only they can better involve in making the bright future of the nation through the proper growth and development of the children. Women need to be empowered instead of treating as a helpless victim of male chauvinism.

With the slogan of women empowerment and development the question arise that - *are women become really strong?* and *is long term struggle has ended?*. Many programmes have been implemented and run by the government such as [International Women's day](#), [mother's day](#), etc in order to bring awareness in the society about the true rights and value of the women in the development of the nation. Women need to be progressed in the number of spheres. There is a high level of [gender inequality in India](#) where women are ill treated by their family members and outsiders. The percentage of illiterate population in India is mostly covered by the women.

The ratio of female to male population in India has been low. As per Census data, sex ratio of women to per thousand men is as given below:

Current Population of India in 2015	1,288,269,541 (1.28 billion) As of Oct 20, 2015
Total Male Population in India	665,262,390 (665 million)
Total Female Population in India	623,007,150 (623 million)
Sex Ratio	943 females per 1,000 males
Age structure	
0 to 25 years	50% of India's current population
Currently, there are about 51 births in India in a minute.	

Every year, India adds more people than any other nation in the world, and in fact the individual population of some of its states is equal to the total population of many countries. For example, Population of Uttar Pradesh (state in India) almost equals to the population of Brazil. It, as per 2001 Population Census of India, has 190 million people and the growth rate is 16.16%. The population of the second most populous state Maharashtra, which has a growth rate of 9.42%, is equal to that of Mexico's population. Bihar, with 8.07%, is the third most populous state in India and its population is more than Germany's. West Bengal with 7.79% growth rate, Andhra Pradesh (7.41%) and Tamil Nadu (6.07%) are at fourth, fifth and sixth

positions respectively. The sex ratio of India stands at 940. Kerala with 1058 females per 1000 males is the state with the highest female sex ratio. Pondicherry (1001) is second, while Chhatisgarh (990) and Tamil Nadu (986) are at third and fourth places respectively. Haryana with 861 has the lowest female sex ratio.

The real meaning of the women empowerment and development is to make them well educated and leave them free so that they can be capable to take their own decisions in any field. Women in India are always subjected to the honour killings and they never given their basic rights for the proper education and freedom. They are the victims who have face violence and abuse in the male dominated country. According to the National Mission for the Empowerment of women (NMEW) launched by the Indian Government, this step has sown some improvement in the 2011 census. The ratio of female sex and female literacy both has increased. According to the Global Gender Gap Index, India needs to take some advance steps to improve the women position in the society through the proper health, higher education and economic participation. Women empowerment needs to take full speed in right direction instead of being in nascent stage.

To call woman the weaker sex is a libel; it is man's injustice to woman. If by strength is meant brute strength, then, indeed, is woman less brute than man. If by strength is meant moral power, then woman is immeasurably man's superior. Has she not greater intuition, is she not more self-sacrificing, has she not greater powers of endurance, has she not greater courage? Without her, man could not be. If non-violence is the law of our being, the future is with woman. Who can make a more effective appeal to the heart than woman?

– Mahatma Gandhi

Women Empowerment and development in India

From ancient to modern period, women's condition-socially, politically and economically- has not remained same and it kept changing with times. In ancient India, women were having equal status with men; in early Vedic period they were very educated and there are references of women sages such as Maitrayi in our ancient texts. But with the coming of famous treatise of Manu i.e. Manusmriti, the status of women was relegated to a subordinate position to men.

- All kinds of discriminatory practices started to take form such as child marriage, devadashi pratha, nagar vadhu system, sati pratha etc. Women's socio-political rights were curtailed and they were made fully dependent upon the male members of family. Their right to education, right to work and right to decide for themselves were taken away. During medieval period the condition of women got worsened with the advent of Muslim rulers in India; as also during the British period. But the British rule also brought western ideas into the country's
- A few enlightened Indians such as Raja Ram Mohun Roy influenced by the modern concept of freedom, liberty, equality and justice started to question the prevailing discriminatory practices against women. Through his unrelenting efforts, the British were forced to abolish the ill-practice of Sati. Similarly several other social reformers such as Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Swami Vivekananda, Acharya Vinoba Bhave etc. worked for the upliftment of women in India. For instance, the Widow Remarriage Act of 1856 was the result of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's movement for improving the conditions of widows.
- Indian National Congress supported the first women's delegation which met the Secretary of State to demand women's political rights in 1917. The Child Marriage Restraint Act in 1929 was passed due to the efforts of Mahommad Ali Jinnah, Mahatma Gandhi called upon the young men to marry the child widows and urged people to boycott child marriages.
- During freedom movement, almost all the leaders of the struggle were of the view that women should be given equal status in the free India and all types of discriminatory practices must stop. And for that to happen, it was thought fit to include such provisions in the Constitution of India which would help eliminate age-old exploitative customs and traditions and also such provisions which would help in empowering women socially, economically and politically.

Why we need women empowerment and development

Need for empowerment arose due to centuries of domination and discrimination done by men over women; women are the suppressed lot. They are the target of varied types of violence and discriminatory practices done by men all over the world. India is no

different. India is a complex country. We have, through centuries, developed various types of customs, traditions and practices. These customs and traditions, good as well as bad, have become a part of our society's collective consciousness. We worship female goddesses; we also give great importance to our mothers, daughters, sisters, wives and other female relatives or friends. But at the same time, Indians are also famous for treating their women badly both inside and outside their homes.

Indian society consists of people belonging to almost all kinds of religious beliefs. In every religion women are given a special place and every religion teaches us to treat women with respect and dignity. But somehow the society has so developed that various types of ill practices, both physical and mental, against women have become a norm since ages. For instance, sati pratha, practice of dowry, parda pratha, female infanticide, wife burning, sexual violence, sexual harassment at work place, domestic violence and other varied kinds of discriminatory practices; all such acts consist of physical as well as mental element.

The reasons for such behaviour against women are many but the most important one are the male superiority complex and patriarchal system of society. Though to eliminate these ill practices and discrimination against women various constitutional and legal rights are there but in reality there are a lot to be done. Several self-help groups and NGOs are working in this direction; also women themselves are breaking the societal barriers and achieving great heights in all dimensions: political, social and economic. But society as a whole has still not accepted women as being equal to men and crimes or abuses against women are still on the rise. For that to change, the society's age-old deep-rooted mind set needs to be changed through social conditioning and sensitization programmes.

Therefore, the concept of women empowerment not only focuses on giving women strength and skills to rise above from their miserable situation but at the same time it also stresses on the need to educate men regarding women issues and inculcating a sense of respect and duty towards women as equals. In the present write-up we will try to describe and understand the concept of Women Empowerment in India in all its dimensions.

Issues and Problems faced by Women in India

Taking birth as a woman in the Indian society can be said as curse for the women.

Women in India face lots of social issues and problems all through the life which are big struggle for them right from their beginning of life. Female infanticide is the most common practice of killing girl child in mother's womb in the Indian society. Women in India are considered as burden for their parents and husbands as they think that women are here only to consume money whole life without earning a little bit.

Another common problem for women is sex discrimination which they face from their birth and continues till their death. Illiteracy, lack of proper education, responsible for household works, rape, sexual harassment at workplace, etc are some big issues for the women in India. However, a lot of positive changes has occurred in the women status as the number of educated people is increasing in the country.

Women in the Indian society have been considered as inferior than men for many years. Because of such type of inferiority they have to face various issues and problems in their life. They have to go extra miles than men to prove themselves equivalent to men. People in the middle age were considering women as key to destruction so they never allowed women to go outside and participate in the social activities like men. Still in the modern age, women have to face many more problems in their daily life and struggle a lot to establish their career. Still there are many parents who prefer to have only boy baby and allow education to boys only. Women for them are only medium to keep family happy and healthy.

A woman is seen in the society with more intense ridicule sight and become at higher risk of honour killing if she is involved in the love marriage or inter caste love marriage. Women face a lot of challenges because of the existence of patriarchal society, child bearing and family care roles, deep rooted cultural norms, etc in the Indian society. Women in India do not have equal access to autonomy, mobility to outside the home, social freedom, etc than men. Some of the problems faced by the women are because of their domestic responsibilities, cultural and social specified roles, etc. There are various issues and problems which women generally face in the society in India. Some of the problems are mentioned and described below:

➤ **Selective abortion and female infanticide:**

It is the most common practice for years in India in which abortion of female fetus is performed in the womb of mother after the

foetal sex determination and sex selective abortion by the medical professionals.

➤ **Sexual harassment:** It is the form of sexual exploitation of a girl child at home, streets, public places, transports, offices, etc by the family members, neighbors, friends or relatives.

➤ **Dowry and Bride burning:** It is another problem generally faced by women of low or middle class family during or after the marriage. Parents of boys demands a lot of money from the bride's family to be rich in one time. Groom's family perform bride burning in case of lack of fulfilled dowry demand. In 2005, around 6787 dowry death cases was registered in India according to the Indian National Crime Bureau reports.

➤ **Disparity in education:** The level of women education is less than men still in the modern age. Female illiteracy is higher in the rural areas. where over 63% or more women remain unlettered.

➤ **Domestic violence:** it is like endemic and widespread disease affects almost 70% of Indian women according to the women and child development official. It is performed by the husband, relative or other family member.

➤ **Child Marriages:** Early marriage of the girls by their parents in order to be escaped from dowry. It is highly practiced in the rural India.

➤ **Inadequate Nutrition:** Inadequate nutrition in the childhood affects women in their later life especially women belonging to the lower middle class and poor families.

➤ **Domestic violence and status in the family:** It is the abuse or violence against women.

➤ Women are considered as inferior to men so they are not allowed to join military services.

➤ **Status of widows:** Widows are considered as worthless in the Indian society. They are treated poorly and forced to wear white clothes.

Women empowerment and development in simple words can be understood as giving power to women to decide for their own lives or inculcating such abilities in them so that they could be able to find their rightful place in the society.

According to the **United Nations**, women's empowerment mainly has five components:

- ✓ Generating women's sense of self-worth;
- ✓ Women's right to have and to determine their choices;
- ✓ Women's right to have access to equal opportunities and all kinds of resources;

- ✓ Women's right to have the power to regulate and control their own lives, within and outside the home; and
- ✓ Women's ability to contribute in creating a more just social and economic order.

Thus, women development is nothing but recognition of women's basic human rights and creating an environment where they are treated as equals to men.

Specific Laws for Women Empowerment in India

Here is the list of some specific laws which were enacted by the Parliament in order to fulfil Constitutional obligation of women empowerment:

- The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976.
- The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961.
- The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956.
- The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961.
- The Medical termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971.
- The Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987.
- The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006.
- The Pre-Conception & Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act, 1994.
- The Sexual Harassment of Women at Work Place (Prevention, Protection and) Act, 2013.

Above mentioned and several other laws are there which not only provide specific legal rights to women but also gives them a sense of security and empowerment.

International Commitments of India as to Women Empowerment

India is a part to various International conventions and treaties which are committed to secure equal rights of women. One of the most important among them is the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), ratified by India in 1993. Other important International instruments for women empowerment are: The Mexico Plan of Action (1975), the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies (1985), the Beijing Declaration as well as the Platform for Action (1995) and the Outcome Document adopted by the UNGA Session on Gender Equality and Development & Peace for the 21st century, titled "Further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action". All these have been whole-heartedly endorsed by India for appropriate follow up. These various national and International commitments, laws and policies not with standing women's situation on the ground have still not improved satisfactorily. Varied problems related to women

are still subsisting; female infanticide is growing, dowry is still prevalent, domestic violence against women is practised; sexual harassment at workplace and other heinous sex crimes against women are on the rise.

Though, economic and social condition of women has improved in a significant way but the change is especially visible only in metro cities or in urban areas; the situation is not much improved in semi-urban areas and villages. This disparity is due to lack of education and job opportunities and negative mind set of the society which does not approve girls' education even in 21st century.

Government Policies and Schemes for Women Empowerment and development

According to the provisions of the Constitution of India, it is a legal point to grant equality to women in the society in all spheres just like male. The Department of Women and Child Development functions well in this field for the proper development of the women and child in India. Women are given a top place in India from the ancient time however they were not given empowerment to participate in all areas. They need to be strong, aware and alert every moment for their growth and development. Empowering women is the main motto of the development department because an empowered mother with child makes the bright future of any nation.

There are many formulating strategies and initiating processes started by the government of India in order to bring women into the mainstream of development. Women constitute half population of the whole country's population and need to be independent in every area for the holistic development of women and children. Whatever improvement and empowerment women have received is especially due to their own efforts and struggle, though governmental schemes are also there to help them in their endeavour.

In the year 2001, the Government of India launched a **National Policy for Empowerment of Women**. The specific objectives of the policy are as follows:

- Creation of an environment through positive economic and social policies for full development of women to enable them to realize their full potential.
- Creation of an environment for enjoyments of all human rights and fundamental freedom by women on equal basis with men in all political, economic, social, cultural and civil spheres.

- Providing equal access to participation and decision making of women in social political and economic life of the nation.
- Providing equal access to women to health care, quality education at all levels, career and vocational guidance, employment, equal remuneration, occupational health and safety, social security and public life etc.
- Strengthening legal systems aimed at elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.
- Changing societal attitudes and community practices by active participation and involvement of both men and women.
- Mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development process.
- Elimination of discrimination and all forms of violence against women and the girl child.
- Building and strengthening partnerships with civil society, particularly women's organizations.

The Ministry of Women and Child Development is the nodal agency for all matters pertaining to welfare, development and empowerment of women. It has evolved schemes and programmes for their benefit. These schemes are spread across a very wide spectrum such as women's need for shelter, security, safety, legal aid, justice, information, maternal health, food, nutrition etc., as well as their need for economic sustenance through skill development, education and access to credit and marketing. Various schemes of the Ministry are like Swashakti, Swayamsidha, STEP and Swawlamban enable economic empowerment. Working Women Hostels and Creches provide support services. Swadhar and Short Stay Homes provide protection and rehabilitation to women in difficult circumstances. The Ministry also supports autonomous bodies like National Commission, Central Social Welfare Board and Rashtriya Mahila Kosh which work for the welfare and development of women. Economic sustenance of women through skill development, education and access to credit and marketing is also one of the areas where the Ministry has special focus.

Conclusion

A strong woman understands that the gifts such as logic, decisiveness, and strength are just as feminine as intuition and emotional connection. She values and uses all of her gifts.

–Nancy Rathbur

It can be said that women in India, through their own unrelenting efforts and with the help of Constitutional and other legal provisions and also with the aid of Government's various welfare schemes, are trying to find their own place under the sun. And it is a heartening sign that their participation in employment-government as well as private, in socio-political activities of the nation and also their presence at the highest decision making bodies is improving day by day. However, we are still far behind in achieving the equality and justice which the Preamble of our Constitution talks about. The real problem lies in the patriarchal and male-dominated system of our society which considers women as subordinate to men and creates different types of methods to subjugate them.

The need of us is to educate and sensitize male members of the society regarding women issues and try to inculcate a feeling of togetherness and equality among them so that they would stop their discriminatory practices towards the fairer sex. For this to happen apart from Government, the efforts are needed from various NGOs and from enlightened citizens of the country. And first of all efforts should begin from our homes where we must empower female members of our family by providing them equal opportunities of education, health, nutrition and decision making without any discrimination. In order to really bring women empowerment in the Indian society, it needs to understand and eliminate the main cause of the ill practices against women which are patriarchal and male dominated system of the society. It needs to be open-minded and change the old mind set against women together with the constitutional and other legal provisions.

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