



## Is Women Empowered in India?

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### Abstract

*Through this paper an effort has been made to study the position of women and to find out whether the women in India is empowered by utilizing some measures based on the information from secondary sources. The analysis shows that despite of a number of initiatives undertaken by the government the position of women are comparatively lower as compared to men in India. Gender bias still exists as it has been clearly been seen in case of education as well as employment. Decision making of women in their own house is varied and it depends upon the age, employment and education. It has been found that in equal treatment in matter of gender is still carried on in the society. Beating of women is justified for many in the society even on the perspective of some women in our society itself, even women in many cases they have little say on how to spend the money even for household chores, even gender biasness is noticed in the profession of media where the number of women engagement is seen less as comparative to men. Political Participation too faces similar fate of gender discrimination. By a thorough observation a conclusion has been drawn that only the field of education and employment can lift the women and empowered them to a greater height and this also should be backed by the attitude of the people regarding gender equality.*

**Keywords:** Women Empowerment, Education, Employment, Domestic Violence, Media.

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## **Introduction**

From the past five decades it has been noticed that the procedure of female uplifting process has passes through radical alteration starting from welfare publicize loom to fair play loom. Empowerment predominantly comprises power over wherewithal and beliefs and it implicit the route through which the feeble get superior power over the state of affairs of their existence. Women Empowerment is a budding concept as it shows the way to the women folk for enhancing their self confidence, self love and transforming from the core to fight back in the practical life and hurdles prevalent in our society. The matter of female upliftment is a huge concept and on the similar ground it is imitable as it includes the emotions, growth, and overall development of female folk of all class, caste and community at large. Development of female mass is based upon the women empowerment to a greater extent as development of a female's life in a overall perspective depends upon the development of female both externally such as wellbeing, movement, edification and wakefulness, standing in the kin, taking active part in any decision for the family and in addition at the intensity of refuge and internally as in the area of awaking oneself and enhancing confidence in self. Female upliftment is also defined as Human Development Index was for the very first time brought to light through United Nation Development Programme 1990 which with the passage of time takes the shape of standard development in the case of gender equality from simply a measure for socio- economic evolution in a particular nation. Opposing to the wide-ranging credence that growth is sexual category is unbiased; but data demonstrate a different view where it has been noticed that female folk are way to backward in almost all aspects of life even in today's world not only in India but also in the world as a whole. Because of this biasness we have noticed that globally steps has been taken for uplifting women folk and pressure has been given in human development as a whole and women development became one of the key point since 1995 in United Nation Development Programme. On the whole, development of a country is not possible without empowering the female mass and helping them to grow and make them way towards development. For uplifting women and measuring their development two indices

has been introduced one is Gender related Development Index (GDI) and the other is Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM). In theory, it has been evident that there is almost equality prevails in the matter of both the gender and females are in the process of empowerment to a great extent. Moreover females are achieving more in comparison to males but unfortunately in reality the view of women empowerment in India is quite opposite.

### **Indian Perspective on Women Empowerment**

In India empowerment of female folk enhances with the rise of India. Though gender equality was not noticed prior to Independence but in order to stand for women against gender biasness a number of principles had been drafted and brought into force which has been evident in The Constitution of India and the preface of it that is in the Preamble, in Fundamental Rights, Directive Principles and in Fundamental Duties. The Constitution not only contribute towards providing equal status to female folk however it again authorize provinces to implement procedures of affirmative prejudice supporting female folk.

If we move to the past then it has been evident that the position of female folk in the past was of greater height, in the Vedic era the status of female was prosperous as they were highly honoured culturally, socially and in almost every aspect of life. They had indeed right to educate themselves such as in the field of astrology, astronomy, geography, veterinary sciences, right to learn various art form be it horse riding, martial art, they use to participate actively in wars and fights and moreover they were free to learn various form of fighting skill, they were also skilled in performing art form dancing, singing, cooking, choosing the partner they wish. Even they had the right to stay single and give over their entire verve to acquaintance and to God for inner consciousness. The position of female folk of that time used to execute almost all tasks and forfeit uniformly with their life partner. They equipped themselves in a number of subjects of sciences as well as philosophies and also skilled themselves in military practice. In short they were extremely valued inner and outer sphere of society.

The magnificent position of female turned down with the passage of time during the middle age with the societal change.

During the later part of British rule in India the process of female development where the demand for equal right sprung with the effort of renowned persons who brought reform in our society and countrywide influential persons of India like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Sarojini Naidu, Annie Besant, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and the like who made a tremendous effort for equipping self confidence among the female folk and making them aware about their rights. They become quite successful in eradicating the social evils which cropped up from the middle age such as sati pratha in which force had been applied to step in the funeral pyre of their husband alive, marriage of girls at an early age and in some cases booking baby girl for marriage after their birth etc. Social reformers furthermore buoyant remarriage of widow and female edification. The ground for women growth has been successfully set up by the social reformers and they advocate for their equal position in our society. With the effort of the social reformers female folk of India gradually able to move from a traditional mindset to modern mindset and become more aware and tolerant in various aspects of their life. Now it has been noticed that female of today's generation are able to break free themselves from the traditional blockade forced by the social order of our society and they are not only competing with the male folk in every area of work and life but also raising their voice to make change in the patriarchal system prevalent in our society.

From the time of Independence till date numerous effort has been made by the Government of India to uplift the women folk and empowering them and made a noteworthy budge from wellbeing familiarize approach to growth approach. They set up The Commission for women had been set up nationally in 1990 to give protection to female folk and help them to make aware about their rights. Female learnt to participate actively in political affairs through the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Amendments to the Constitution of India. The year of millennium that is 2001 was acknowledged as the era of female's upliftment for improving their significance and to accomplish that target the administration has pioneered various plans, strategies, programmes and recognized several establishments and made a number of legal provisions o uplift the female mass of India. Though a range of initiatives and process been taken, however women in India still lag behind the

men in case of literacy, work field etc. The picture of women has been inferior in the countryside. Though women are educating themselves and enrolled them in higher education but are facing estranged in various authority. The status of women is no case equivalent to male as the number of crime rate is uprising day by day despite a number of efforts from the end of the government like kidnapping, molestation, killing of girl child before and sometimes after taking birth, demanding money or articles of materialistic pleasure before and after marriage, burning bride, sexual harassment etc. are very recurrent.

In addition to low woman edification, there are a number of factors that directly impact sexual biasness. Even child f born as a girl is not as much of pleasing for many and many families consider boy child as a means for happiness and prosperity, this mindset cannot be completely removed from the mind of the people in our society as it is engraved in any form in the mind of the people of our society despite of caste, creed, community and religion. Since the birth of female, she is maltreated in every aspect including education, employment, nutrition and social status. United Nation Development Programme since 1990, in a number of reports relating to development of human mass stated that the status of women is in a decline rate be it in literacy , gross enrolment, , holding the seats in the Parliament and even in the proficient arena they hold. We can say that sexual discrepancy in totality is falling in a downward direction with the passage of time. A range of pointers are prevalent in our society which uplift the female folk such as women control in taking decision, Freedom of movement, societal approval of unequal gender role, admittance to service etc. Information on some of these of pointers of female upliftment is scrutinized and conclusions are brought into light in the subsequent fragments:

### **Women Control in Taking Decision**

Taking decision by women themselves is one of the factors to articulate the position of female in the way of female upliftment. Though the ratio of decision taking not only differ depending upon the place of residence , whether they are residing in rural areas or urban areas but also equally depends upon their age, edification, education of their life-partner and their economic

position in the society. Women inhabit in municipal vicinity are comparatively more uplifted than the female residing in the country side. Empowerment among women enhances with the age and qualification, greater the qualification greater empowered the women become. Life partner's decision making will boost the height of taking decision among female as life partner's support here plays a vital role.

Less than 40% women who are married can take part in the decision for the family either alone or jointly with their life-partner whether it be for family health care, purchasing of property, groceries or visiting relatives house as well as attending invitations. And again this decision making ability is also backed by the economic status of women, hence service plays a very crucial role in empowering women mass. On the other hand we can say that women in service in most of the cases have the authority to take decision all alone. So we can say that women in the urban areas especially family which is not of joint nature have greater independence in taking family decision.

### **Societal approval of Unequal Gender Role**

Now if we speak regarding women's view point towards women in our society than the response that come to front will be of in a controversial nature. As a large number of women in our society approve in a personal level that women beating and gender inequality is justified in a number of matters and this again is a good indicator for women empowerment in India. The protest of women against the unequal gender roles particularly regarding preferences for sons and the acceptance of domestic violence serve as a significant indicator of female upliftment in our society. The data indicates that approximately 54% of women in India consider wife beating to be justified under certain circumstances. Additionally, almost 35% of women believe it is acceptable if a wife neglects her household or children. Notably, the acceptance of wife beating shows little variation across different age groups and household structures, but it decreases markedly with higher levels of education. It is important to highlight that even among the most educated women, at least one in three endorses one or more justifications for wife beating. Furthermore, women in rural areas tend to be more accepting of wife beating compared to their

urban counterparts. The level of agreement is also lower among never-married women in contrast to those who are married.

### **Admittance to Edification**

Literacy is a weapon for almost everyone be it a male or female but when we speak about women empowerment, in that case education works as a weapon for uplifting the female folk in our society can be calculated well through gender difference in enrolment of girl student in different stages of schooling and their dropout ratio in different stages of school edification. Comparing the literacy rates between male and female it has been noticed that the ratio of female is low till date and female partaking is not pleasing as in every level of education it has been below 50%, but it is also true that partaking of females at every phase of edification has been progressively rising with the passage of time.

### **Admittance to service**

As per the information of National Family Health Survey available to the general public through Government of India the number of married women who are in service between the age group of 15 to 49 years is less than 50% in comparison to male folk of the same age group. Hence gender biasness is clearly visible in the sphere of service sector. Approximately 20 to 25 percent female folk are not being paid for their work at all in comparison to them less than 5 % male folk exists. Moreover, earning money for the family is not considered as an adequate stipulation for empowering women monetarily. The area where we are residing also puts impact in the empowerment of women and also control over the money earned by the female folk. By and large female in urban vicinity be more in charge over their income than that in countryside areas. Also women's control over their income significantly impinges on the level of education they poses. Further, family circle and the environment created by the family members also engage in recreation of women empowerment in India from monetary perspective. Nuclear family has less influence of relatives or other members hence women are liberal in spending their income and have greater control over their earnings as compared to non nuclear family where each money spend is noticed and in many cases the decision of the women who is earning in that family is highly influenced by others.

## **Limitations to Women Empowerment**

A number of constrictions are there to facilitate the test in the procedure of empowering female folk in India. Societal standard and kin arrangement in budding nations akin to India, visible and disseminate the subsidiary position of women folk. It's not just a regular saying but the reality of almost every Indian family of expecting a son over a daughter and if any family blessed with a girl child then they keep on putting mental pressure to the girl child's mother of having a boy child afterwards. This preferential treatment of son over daughter has reinforced instead of undermined and it's generally a clear indication of the declining gender difference. Our societies and communities prefer boy child in almost every aspect be it in admiration of education, nourishment and other prospective. The core reason of this kind of outlook is depend upon the credence that male child accede to the race in India and women folk were bought up with this mindset that they are inferior to men in many areas and all these indifference is natural and valid, hence women themselves are the real culprit for the injustice occurred against them.

Paucity can be another reason for the large category of women in India who in reality have a little knowledge relating to women empowerment and in many cases they are pretty unaware of their rights. There are two sides of a women based upon their financial independency those who live in poverty and living in an environment where they are financially dependent are actually the real victim of injustice where they are undernourished, deprived of better education and erstwhile facilities, they become easy target for many crime like be the victim of child abuse, force labour, involved in sex racquet, easy target for trafficking etc. On the other hand those who are bought up in a family where the parents can afford all facilities for child nourishment be it in the area of health, education of other facilities are less prone to injustice. Moreover having greater hand over finance gives strength to women to raise their voice not only for them but also for those who are less privileged. They hold a good position in home as well as in the society but it will be a false notion if one will say that those who are financially independent are totally free from all kind of injustice, that's not true as there are evidence of a



number of cases in India where financial independent women are also harassed, tortured both mentally and physically.

Though the law of the land provides various legal and constitutional provisions for protecting the women but these provisions fail when a large number of women are not aware about their lawful rights and in many cases those who are aware of their rights do not take legal steps, sometimes they lack courage to raise their voice and sometimes indirect pressure from the society, family, relatives etc. prevents them to take any legal step. Mostly it is seen that law takes place in matters relating to marriage and inheritance but again in case of inheritance women step back to raise their voice for their rights in the ancestral paternal property if their brother or brothers are alive as they most of the time think that their brother and father spends a lot of money during their marriage so it will not be humane to raise their voice for the property after marriage, and it has been seen that the brothers too take this for granted that sisters have no right over the property after marriage. Again this mindset is also framed by the women in our society and the past practices of same kind work as cheery upon cake. A number of constitutional provisions has been drafted to protect women of our land apart from various provisions made in the Indian Penal Code and Criminal Procedure Code as well as other supplementary Acts that have been enacted to safeguard women such as Child Marriage Resistance Act, 1930, The Suppression of Immoral Trafficking of Women Act, 1987, The Indecent Exposure to Women Act etc. In practice Child marriage has been controlled to an extent but if we talk about immoral trafficking and indecent exposure to women then there are a number of evidences where women are still exposed in an indecent manner through media and there are hardly any prosecution as well as proper legal action taken against such cases. Hence, despite of the effort made from the point of legislations to safeguard the women in all form of injustice women are still lagging behind and so as women empowerment indecent exposure to women. There are numerous incidence of indecent exposure of women in all forms of media with hardly any prosecution. Although the legal rights are in place to create an enabling atmosphere these have not been very successful in realizing women's empowerment.

## **Summary and Findings**

Ranges of indicator of women empowerment are perused via the records from a range of sources whilst converse women's significance in India now a days. The foremost importance is given to the indicator akin to choice of the women in family related decisions, fiscal independence, lack of restrictions regarding movement, approval of women relating to disproportionate gender responsibility, coverage to media, role of women in pursuing education, domestic violence and harassment faced by the women etc. Participation of women in politics is also taken into consideration. After going through the various information collected from a number of sources it can be deduced that the decision making power of the women in household matter and reluctance of women regarding movement depends largely upon the age, education and job profile. It has been noticed that in equal gender custom is still prevalent in today's society and the surprising fact is that it has been backed by the women themselves. Taunt in the case of movement of widow, divorcee women and even unmarried women become a daily habit of the women folk of our society. The belief system of almost half of the women in our society showcase that it is totally okay to beat wife for a number of reasons which most of the case they called a pity issue like thrashing and harassing for not cooking properly or in the standard they used to have from past days, not handling the household chores in the way they think the wife should do in case of cleaning or be taking care of the children, also refusing to indulge in the activity of sex with husband when he wants the same and showing disrespect to in-laws no matter how rude and misbehave they used to do with the wife etc. Moreover all these activities has nothing to do with the age or qualification not even the place of residence, the attitude matters and the working professionals are in no case left apart, as in some way or other they also face some form of mental harassment nowadays. At the same time as swat up women's admittance to edification and service it is bring into being that gender difference exists equally in both the situations. Be it is in the case of literacy where the participation of girls at all juncture is less than 50%. Similarly almost similar percentage has been noticed in the case of service sector and a significant portion of them are not paid for their work

and women folk who are house makers falls under this category. Even working professionals if it is women than they even don't have full control over their own earnings and a few women folk have a final say on how to utilize the money earned by them or having limitation in spending their hard earned money. Though women in urban areas can be in the charge of cash earned by them and it enhances with age and the area they are living and it will be equivalent in the case of education too, but it shows a discrepancy notably with family circle.

Female foreword to media is furthermore fewer comparative to male folk. Experiencing physical harassment is in no way different by Women's experience of domestic violence shows that violence is not lessened by age. Whereas the women folk living in the countryside are comparatively much more prone to physical and mental harassment than women are more prone to domestic violence than metropolitan women. As regards female's involvement in political matters it has been noticed that a large gender gap that large gender gap subsist in the matter of voting and less than ten per cent of total associate in Lok Sabha are female folk. The reason is a greater number of women folk be short of requisite echelon of fiscal This is because most of the women be short of desired echelon of fiscal independency, education, autonomy, literacy, physically powerful, judgment taking capacity of self, own decision making capacity, kin backup etc. Hence we can perceive that these reciprocally mutually dependent matters emphasize one another and set female folk in a detrimental situation comparative to male folk. An assortment of restriction in attaining the required echelon of empowerment is also acknowledged. A considerable portion amid them is paucity, societal rules and kin formation, be deficient in wakefulness concerning lawful and constitutional provision etc.

If we utter casually, it has been noticed that the female folk of India are comparatively less empowered and in some way or other hold lower position than that of male folk. Though numerous efforts have been made on the side of the government and NGOs, the scenario in reality is not up to the mark. Education and employment can only assist in the way to empowerment and can simply be equipment in the course of speed up the process of achieving empowerment. Conversely, attaining the real target depends on

the attitude achievement towards this goal depends more on the mind set. Until or unless the mind set en route for the reception of disproportionate gender function by the general public and even the female folk themselves misshapen women cannot grasp the prospect endow with them throughout constitutional provision, law etc. Thus we cannot strongly conclude that in reality women in India are empowered and it still remains an unanswered issue searching for its destination in reality

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