

A STUDY ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN POST-INDEPENDENCE

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ABSTRACT

Following India's independence, advancements were achieved in multiple sectors that resulted in welfare of women in the community. Numerous programs and plans were formulated that aimed primarily at fostering advancement among women. Motivating them to move towards the attainment of education and engagement in the workforce are the primary factors that encourage women's empowerment. Despite the implementation of measures and policies, certain areas still experience challenges.

In rural areas, women are viewed as inferior to men. A regrettable aspect is, Across the nation, females and young girls face violence and maltreatment. However, with the arrival Through globalization and industrialization, women are gaining access to development opportunities. The females, associated with urban communities are primarily improving their livelihoods by obtaining quality learning and obtaining job prospects. The primary sectors that have been considered this research paper addresses, the condition of women in post-independence India, women's empowerment, issues of gender in post-colonial India, women's political engagement and challenges faced by working females

Keywords: Women empowerment, political environment, Indian society, independence

INTRODUCTION

Women played a central role in the framework of Indian society. Undoubtedly, the women in Rig Vedic India held a prominent status in society and had favorable conditions. Women were also given the chance to reach elevated intellectual and spiritual levels. However, after experiencing respected and privileged roles in the Rig-Vedic society, women began facing discrimination in education and other rights and amenities during the Later-Vedic period (Saravanakumar, 2016). Indian society is skeptical that we are experiencing a significant transformation in the history of women. The voices of women are being heard more in Parliament, courts, and on the streets. Although women in the West have struggled for more than a hundred years to secure fundamental rights, such as the right to vote (Altekar, 1983), the Indian Constitution has granted women equal rights alongside men from the outset (Devandra, Kiran, 1985). The status of women in modern Indian society, concerning Equality, Education, Marriage and Family life, Race and Gender, Religion and Culture, reflects either a persistence or decline from ancient and medieval times.

In India, the undervaluation of women and the male dominance in society continue. Femininity has consistently been linked to a lower social status for women compared to that of men. Consequently, social and economic problems have arisen. Violation of women's rights and unequal access to education, employment, or the right to be born are just two instances of additional challenges. Research concentrating solely on women's history has been deficient in depth, scope, and understanding. Whether she was royalty, a queen, an official, an intelligent individual, or an ordinary

person, she was seldom the main focus of historical writings. In recent times, it has become evident that women are not only a vital part of society's social structure, but also its most important element. This is the result of numerous years of effort and commitment by individuals of distinction and intelligence.

The status of women in contemporary Indian society relating to Equality, Education, Marriage and Family life, Race and Gender, Religion and Culture has either been preserved or declined since ancient and medieval times. The women of the Rig Veda in India held a prominent position in society. The women were given a chance to achieve a high level of intellectual and spiritual excellence.

The status of women has been improved due to these alterations. They are playing a vital role in the progress of society in the fields of politics, culture, economics, and religion. Consequently, an increasing number of women are registering for college and obtaining higher education degrees. They are earning higher education degrees like bachelor's, master's, and doctorate, and securing employment. Women hold leadership roles across various areas, encompassing both the academic and nonprofit domains. They are employed in areas including healthcare, research, teaching, commerce, governance, legal matters, engineering, technology, and beyond. Shifting values have significantly influenced women's positions in society, frequently regarded as the most important social movement of recent decades.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Women's empowerment defined in several ways, including accepting women's viewpoints or making an effort to seek them, raising the status of women through education, awareness, literacy, and training. Empowerment is about change, choice and power. It is a process of change by which the individuals and groups with little or no power gain the power and ability to make choices that affect their lives. Women empowerment is a stage of acquiring power for women in order to understand her rights and to perform her responsibilities towards oneself and others in a most effective way.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIAN SOCIETY

Women's empowerment in Indian society focuses on achieving gender equality through education, economic independence, and safety, driven by historical reformers, government schemes, and NGOs. Key efforts include promoting literacy, skill development, microfinance, and legal protection against discrimination and violence to foster leadership and social mobility.

Key Aspects of Women Empowerment in India

- **Economic Empowerment:** Initiatives focus on financial independence through schemes like *Mahila Udyam Nidhi* (SIDBI loans up to INR 10 Lakhs) and *Udyogini* for small business, agriculture, and retail. *Mahila Samridhi Yojana* assists women entrepreneurs from backward classes.
- **Education and Skill Development:** Organizations like the HindRise Foundation work to bridge the gender gap in education and provide skill training to rural women.
- **Safety and Legal Support:** With high rates of crimes against women, organizations like Shaksham Foundation provide shelter, counseling, and legal aid.
- **Political and Leadership Roles:** UN Women India and programs like "Women on Board" by the Indian School of Development Management (ISDM) are increasing representation in decision-making and corporate leadership.

POST-INDEPENDENCE INDIAN WOMEN

There is a specific need to safeguard mothers and infancy, as stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Indian Constitution guarantees all people the right to life, as well as equality and freedom. All residents must abandon traditions that lower women's social standing. The Indian Constitution includes provisions and programmes with the express purpose of raising women's social standing. Since its first democratic constitution was adopted in 1950, women have had full legal, social, and political equality. Each nation must uphold the rule of law and ensure that women are treated fairly. Laws, treaties, and declarations haven't changed society's view of women very much, and they're still often seen as second-class citizens.

Building on the social reform movement of the 19th century, the women's movement had its beginnings in the 1920s. During this time of fervent nationalism and arduous war for freedom, the women's movement advanced. The most important of the movement's numerous victories was the passage of a constitution guaranteeing women's rights and adult suffrage in newly independent India. Although some progress was made, the position of women did not improve much due to these methods alone. In the 1970s, a new women's movement formed, one with political and social appeal. Some people in the modern world, especially those from more rural areas and with more traditional values and beliefs, still hope for a son and see daughters as a burden. Traditional male behavior is highly ingrained in Indian culture. They believe males are inherently superior to women and deserve greater opportunities to lead and make crucial choices.

The position of women has been elevated as a result of these changes. They are making significant contributions to the advancement of society in the areas of politics, culture, economics, and religion. As a result, more and more women are enrolling in college and earning advanced degrees. They are obtaining advanced degrees such as bachelor's, master's, and doctorate, and finding work. Women have positions of authority in a wide variety of fields, including the academic and nonprofit sectors. They work in fields such as medicine, science, education, business, politics, law, engineering, technology, and more. Changing ideals have had a major impact on women's roles in society, which is often recognized as the most noteworthy social trend of the last several decades.

WOMEN RIGHTS IN INDIA

The guideline of equivalence status of women is cherished in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles. The constitution provides equity to women, yet in addition enables the State to make provisions of positive discrimination in favour of women. Some of the significant articles are as per the following:

- Equality before law (Article 14).
- No Discrimination by state on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them (Article 15(i))
- Special provision by state in favour of Women and Children (Article 15(3))
- Equality of opportunity in matters relating to employment (Article 16)
- Securing adequate means of livelihood for men and women equally [Article 39(a)]
- Equal pay for equal work [Article 39(d)]
- Promoting justice on basis of equal opportunity and to provide free legal aid [Article 39(A)]
Renounce practices derogatory to women [Article 51(A)(e)]

- 1/3 reservation for women in Panchayats [Article 243(D)] and in municipalities [Article 243(T)]
- Right to Property to Women [Article 300(a)]

GOVERNMENT SCHEMES FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

The Government programmes for women development began as early as 1954 in India but the actual participation began only in 1974. The Government of India has over 34 schemes for women operated by different department and ministries. Some of these are as follows;

- Integrated Child Development Services 1975.
- Rastriya Mahila Kosh 1992-1993
- Mahila Samridhi Yojana 1993.
- Indira Mahila Yojana 1995.
- Women Entrepreneur Development programme given top priority in 1997-98.
- Dhanalakshmi 2008.
- Integrated Child Protection scheme 2009.
- Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescence Girls 2010.
- Creches care centre for the children of working and ailing mother.
- Short Stay Homes.
- Mahila Samakhya being implemented in about 9000 villages.
- Hostels for working women.
- Swayasjdha.
- Swadhar.
- National Mission for Empowerment of Women.
- Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women.
- The Rajiv Gandhi National Creche Scheme for Children of Working Mothers.

GENDER CONCERNS IN INDIA POST-INDEPENDENCE

Gender based differences and prevalence of violence has taken place not only in India, but in other countries of the world. Gender issues are regarded as a serious problem that has been experienced by women. In some cases, when women and men, both are employed in organizations, women are not given equal pay as men for the performance of same job duties, hence, they experience discrimination in terms of pay. Women are not employed in manual jobs, as it is believed that they do not possess the capabilities to perform manual jobs. Hence, men were assigned manual job duties. On the other hand, men consider themselves to be more capable as compared to women and abuse and mistreat them. Research has indicated that individuals, who are not educated, who are residing in the conditions of poverty and backwardness are the ones, who mistreat women. Whereas, educated individuals, who are engaged in reputed jobs, normally treat women on an equal basis.

In rural communities, individuals have recognized the significance of education. But they possess the viewpoint that education should be provided to the male children. The rural communities in some cases, are of the viewpoint that if they educate the male children, then they would acquire good employment opportunities and work towards enhancing the reputation of not only the family but also the community. Whereas, girl children are regarded as liabilities. It is believed that girls would only make demands and would yield no return on investment. The girls were trained in terms of implementation of household responsibilities, and take care of younger siblings and elderly members of the household, particularly when their parents go to work. Even if they have been enrolled in schools, they are compelled to drop out of schools, before their educational skills are honed. The parents usually do not believing in sending their girls to schools, because they primarily possessed the viewpoint that they have to eventually get married and would not be able to make use of educational skills in any manner. They primarily would need to manage the household responsibilities in their marital homes.

The individuals, who belong to deprived, marginalized and socio-economically backward sections of the society are the ones, who normally give more preference to the male children, as compared to female children. When they have both sons and daughters in the family, and have limited income, then they normally spend resources in taking care of the needs and requirements of their sons. The male children are treated with respect and care, better food is provided to them and parents ensure to take proper care of their health and well-being. They are encouraged to be informative and strong, so they can take care of their parents and other household requirements, when they become mature. Whereas, girls are provided with proper training in terms of taking care of the household functions, they were of reticent nature and usually were not allowed to give their ideas and suggestions. The girls are required to follow the instructions that have been imposed upon them by the male members of the household.

The overall development of women gets effected due to gender inequalities. The gender issues that have been created by the society degrade the position of women in all forms. The society has created issues by making demands for dowry. Dowry is referred to the price, which the bride's parents are required to pay to the groom's parents, at the time of marriage. The dowry is considered as the major issue, which enables the families as well as the communities to regard girls as burdens. The families belonging to deprived, marginalized and socio-economically backward sections of the society normally experience problems in paying dowry, hence, they do not feel contented upon the birth of the girl child. It is vital for the society to bring about changes within the attitudes and perspectives, particularly in terms of girls and women.

When the girl child is born within the family, she should be made aware in terms of values, cultures and principles. Girls should be encouraged towards acquisition of education. Upon completion of education, they should be encouraged towards engagement in employment opportunities. When the women have accumulated financial resources, then marriage should be arranged. Hence, it can be stated that making provision of opportunities for women, would not only enable them to augment the status and well-being of their families, but when they are well-educated, they would be able to sustain the livelihood opportunities in a well-organised manner.

CONCLUSION

In post-independence India, women—who comprise nearly half the population—have seen a significant evolution in their social status, driven by the belief that a civilized society is defined by the respect and courtesy shown to them. **Women's empowerment**, defined as the enhancement of their spiritual, political, social, and economic strength, has become a pivotal global and national concern in the 21st century.

Progress in India is currently fueled by a combination of legislative measures and increased access to **technology, education, and employment**, alongside efforts to prevent gender-based violence. However, the effectiveness of these policies often fluctuates based on variables such as **geographical location, caste, class, and age**.

While robust policies exist at the national, state, and Panchayat levels to address health, education, and political participation, government initiatives alone are insufficient. To achieve true equality, society must actively eliminate **gender discrimination**, fostering an environment where women possess full autonomy in decision-making and can participate equally in all spheres of life.

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