

## Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: A Research Study

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### Abstract

Before the 12<sup>th</sup> century the status of women in India was equal and full freedom, they played a decisive role in all the external and internal work of the society, But after the military conquest the external invaders tortured them in all kinds of atrocities, in defense of this, social arrangements were made to avoid the openness of child marriage girls under the protective concept. Even the practice of Sati is the result of this defense mechanism, in Indian villages today, the son is given preference over the daughter. Today for 75 years, we have been in self-government, yet the attitude towards women in a large section of Indian society has not changed as fast as expected. This research paper considers the current status of women empowerment and gender equality. In this research, various new laws, rules taken by the government to make women self-reliant and give them equality have been mentioned and the role of micro, small and medium industries in the economic condition of women has been described. Women account for 24% of the MSME sector. The participation of women in this field is high but the study revealed that their participation at the leadership level is only 10%. According to the World Bank in January 2020, India ranks 117 out of 190 countries in terms of women empowerment worldwide. According to the National Contact Survey, the female survey participation rate in 2011 was 25.5% and the contribution of women to India's GDP is 17%. In the annual Gender Gap Report, 2023, India has moved up eight places from last year and is now ranked 127th out of 146 countries in terms of gender equality. But this better figure, the reduction of the total gender gap to about 64.3 per cent, is hardly a source of joy.

**Key Words:** Gender Equality, Women Empowerment, Impact of Government Schemes, Objectives, Education, Health Services.

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## ***INTRODUCTION***

Women empowerment is a process in which women's self-esteem, self-reliance, rights, independence, equality are increased in many areas so that the multifaceted development of women is possible. That is, in general terms we can say that women empowerment is to "strengthen" women in all fields. Over the years, women have suffered from the injustice and conservative traditions of the society. But with the changing times today, they have made a different identity for themselves, women and daughters have broken gender stereotypes and stand firmly to achieve their dreams and goals. In a country like India, there is a deep disparity between the social status of men and women and there is a long way to go to bridge the pit of this inequality. The matter can be thought of. For the empowerment of the weaker sections of our society i.e. women, the society will have to seriously make many efforts at the level of education, at the level of thought and behavior, economic, political, social and psychological level, only then this age-old deep gap can be bridged. No country can progress unless the society of that country is advanced, and no society can progress until half the population of that society i.e. women are strong, well-educated and empowered. The idea of development is incomplete without gender equality. Gender equality simply means providing equal opportunities to men and women. Whether it is social family rights, education or employment.

Thanks to the grassroots efforts made after the 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution, India has done well in terms of political empowerment with more than 40 percent female representation in education and local governance. But, as this report points out, only 15.1% of MPs are women, we all know very well that for some time now India has initiated many efforts to give women their real social dignity and improve their miserable condition. The Government of India has started many schemes for this so that the status of women in the society can be improved. The following is a brief list of women empowerment schemes launched by the Central and various state governments in India to educate, empower and bring women to equal social status.

The following schemes are being run by the Ministry of Women and Child Development and the Government of India for the empowerment of Indian women.

### ***Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao Scheme***

Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao Yojana - Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao Scheme was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on January 22, 2015 in Panipat, Haryana. The main objective of this scheme was to make people aware

by seeing the continuously declining sex ratio of girls. Before the launch of this scheme, the child sex ratio of Panipat was 808 in 2001 and 837 in 2011. After the launch of this scheme, the child sex ratio is improving day by day.

### **Ujjwala Yojana**

This scheme was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on May 1, 2016. Under the project, capital of Rs. 8000 crore was approved for providing LPG connections to women. This scheme has distributed gas cylinders to women living below the poverty line.

### **Swadhar Ghar Yojana**

This scheme was started in 2001-02. The scheme is run through the Ministry of Women and Child Development. Its main objective is to arrange for the rehabilitation of destitute women, widows, trafficked women, released prisoners women, women free from prostitution, women suffering from natural disasters, mentally disabled etc. Through this scheme, women are provided physical and mental strength so that they can stand on their feet and start their life again.

### **One Stop Centre Scheme**

The scheme was implemented on April 1, 2015 with the 'Nirbhaya' fund. This scheme is to help women who become victims of any kind of violence. Under this, the work of providing police desk, legal help, medical and counseling services is done. A toll-free helpline number 181 has been set up for the use of this scheme. Women in need can get help by calling the helpline number 181.

### **Women's Power Centre**

Mahila Shakti Kendra Yojana (MSK) aims to empower rural women by providing skill development and employment opportunities. The scheme was approved for a period of three years i.e. 2017-18 to 2019-20. It is a sub-scheme under the umbrella scheme of The Women's Safety and Empowerment Mission for women receiving on-the-job training unless the total training period is more than one year. This is only when a vacancy is available after accommodating working women. The number of women receiving on-the-job training should not exceed 30% of the total capacity.

Girls up to 18 years of age and boys up to 5 years of age coming with working mothers will be kept with their mothers. Working mothers can also

avail the day care centre services provided under the scheme. Plans for Adolescent Girls

Earlier known as Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (SABLA), Scheme for Adolescent Girls (SAG) was formulated in the year 2010. The scheme covers adolescent girls in the age group of 11 to 18 years and aims to impart life skills to them. Education, nutrition and health education, and awareness of socio-legal issues, among other things. The scheme replaced the Kishori Shakti Yojana (KSY) scheme and the Nutrition Programme for Adolescent Girls (NPAG).

The objectives of SAG are as follows:

- Enabling adolescent girls for self-development and empowerment.
- Improving nutrition and health of adolescent girls.
- To promote awareness regarding health, hygiene, nutrition etc.
- Upgrading the home-based skills, life skills and vocational skills of adolescent girls.
- To assist out-of-school girls to return to formal schooling.
- To provide information about available public services such as Primary Health Centre (PHC), Post Office etc.

### **Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK)**

Established in March 1993, Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK) is an autonomous body, a national level organization under the aegis of the Ministry of Women and Child Development aimed at socio-economic empowerment of women. Currently, RMK functions as a facilitation agency in that it provides loans to NGOs, intermediary micro-financing organisations (IMOs) and voluntary organisations that give loans to women's self-help groups (SHGs).

### **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana**

Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana aims to benefit pregnant women and lactating mothers. The scheme came into effect from January 1, 2017. The scheme provides a benefit of Rs 5000 in three installments to pregnant women and lactating mothers (PW&LM) for the first living child in the family.

### **Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Urban Livelihood Mission (DAY-NULM)**

DAY-NULM under the aegis of Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India aims to provide shelter equipped with essential services to

the urban homeless in a phased manner. The mission aims to reduce poverty and vulnerability of urban poor households by providing them gainful self-employment opportunities. The mission covers families from disadvantaged groups including urban poor and women. It encourages the formation of women SHGs, imparts skills to street vendors, and facilitates access to institutional credit and social security etc. to vulnerable groups. Under the Deendayal Matru Vandana Yojana, the government gives money in three installments of ₹ 5000 on the first child. And even if the second child is a daughter, an amount of ₹ 6000 is given by the government. So far, 68640 women have benefited under this scheme.

### **Tips for Women Empowerment**

- Half of India's population is women, if women contribute to the labor force, then India's growth will become more developed.
- Women's education should be encouraged.
- Crimes must stop
- Child marriage should be stopped.
- Women should develop scientific thinking.
- Women should be encouraged to take self decisions .

### **Conclusion**

Gender equality and women empowerment are critical to India's progress. While laudable steps have been taken by the government, work still needs to be done to completely eliminate gender-based inequality. In recent years, India has taken significant steps in closing the gender gap and ensuring women's rights. Legal reforms and policy measures have played an important role in empowering women and ensuring their rights. The main objective of initiatives like 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' campaign and 'Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana' is to improve the condition of women in the society. Economic empowerment is also important, and schemes like the 'National Rural Livelihood Mission' are helping to promote women's entrepreneurship and financial inclusion. In addition, women's participation in politics and decision-making processes has increased, resulting in reservation of seats for women in local bodies providing them a platform to express their views. But all the efforts and plans are still far from their goal, more efforts are still necessary.

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