

An Analysis of Different Approaches to Women Empowerment: A Case Study of India

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Abstract

Women empowerment in India is the most effective tool for development these days; women across the world are actively working as a leader and surpassing others in all the spheres of life. As the entire world is clapping its breath and praying every single day for an incredible escape from the COVID-19 Pandemic, it is the women governors and nations steered by these amazing figures who are taking over the responsibility and marching ahead in the battle alone wherever required. Women empowerment in India is dependent up to a great extent on numerous different variables that encompass geographical setting (urban/rural), social status (caste and class), educational status, and age factor. Actions on women empowerment exist at the state, local (panchayat), and national levels. However, women encounter differentiation in most sectors like education, economic opportunities, health and medical assistance, and political participation, which demonstrates that there are substantial gaps between strategy advancements and real exercise at the community level. This paper is descriptive in nature and analyzes the different approaches to women empowerment in India using various indicators based on data from secondary sources.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Empowerment in India, UN principle, Constitutional rights, legal framework for women

Introduction

Women's empowerment can be defined as promoting women's sense of self-worth, their ability to determine their own choices, and their right to influence social change for themselves and others.

In Western countries, female empowerment is often associated with specific phases of the women's rights movement in history. This movement tends to be split into three waves, the first beginning in the 19th and early 20th century where suffrage was a key feature. The second wave of the 1960s included the sexual revolution and the role of women in society. Third wave feminism is often seen as beginning in the 1990s. Women's empowerment and promoting women's rights have emerged as a part of a major global movement and are continuing to break new ground in recent years. Days like International Women's Empowerment Day are also gaining momentum. Women in India are emerging in all sectors, including politics, business, medicine, sports and agriculture. The Department of Women and Child Development, Government of India, came into existence as a separate Ministry with effect from 30th January, 2006, earlier since 1985 it was a Department under the Ministry of Human Resources Development. The Ministry was constituted with the prime intention of addressing gaps in State action for women and

children for promoting inter-Ministerial and inter-sectoral convergence to create gender equitable and child-centred legislation, policies and programmes.¹

Indian government launched various schemes for women empowerment²:-

1. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme
2. Archive - One Stop Centre Scheme
3. Archive - Women Helpline Scheme
4. UJJAWALA : A Comprehensive Scheme for Prevention of trafficking and Rescue, Rehabilitation and Re-integration of Victims of Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation
5. Working Women Hostel
6. Ministry approves new projects under Ujjawala Scheme and continues existing projects
7. SWADHAR Greh (A Scheme for Women in Difficult Circumstances)
8. NARI SHAKTI PURASKAR
9. Awardees of Stree Shakti Puruskar, 2014 & Awardees of Nari Shakti Puruskar
10. Women Helpline Scheme
11. Mahila Shakti Kendras (MSK)
12. NIRBHAYA
13. Mahila police Volunteers

Review of Literature

Nayak Purusottam and Mahanta Bidisha(2009)³ explore that women of India are relatively disempowered and they enjoy somewhat lower status than that of men. In spite of so many efforts undertaken by the government and NGOs the picture at present is not satisfactory. Mere access to Education and employment can only help in the process of empowerment. These are the tools or the enabling factors through which the process gets speeded up. However, achievement towards this goal depends more on attitude. Unless the attitude towards the acceptance of unequal gender roles by the society and even the women themselves changed, women can not grab the opportunity provided to them through constitutional provision, law etc. Till then we can not say that women are empowered in India in its real sense.

Chaudhary, Amatul R. and Chani, Muhammad Irfan and Pervaiz, Zahid(2012)⁴ point out that the goal of women's empowerment can be achieved by making them conscious about their rights through the provision of education, by making them economically empowered through labour force participation and by focusing on integrated development through enhancing women's overall development. Many complex issues i.e. family, class, caste, religion, political, cultural and ethical have to be resolved for a holistic strategy of empowerment. However we can focus on more vivid paths to empowerment by bridging the gender gaps in educational and employment opportunities in Pakistan.

Singh Prachi and Gupta Shilpi(2013)⁵ Conclude that India has enacted many constitutional and legislative provisions for empowerment of women. Many development schemes especially for women have also been launched for improving their fortune. Such measures have started giving positive outcomes relating to women's problems. But the position of women in our country still leaves much to be desired. Top priority should be given in our developmental plans for improving female literacy and creating skills

and capability among women for enabling them to stand on their own feet. Unless the process of development is properly engendered, it shall remain endangered. One concurrent example of gender discrimination is the glass-ceiling effect. The term “glass ceiling” is used to describe an invisible barrier where women are deprived of opportunities at all levels of employment and are discriminated against only because they are women. No doubt women have the potential to achieve an equal footing with men. But, it is the social practices and male attitudes that are making an effective and invisible barrier preventing women from rising above a certain point. Empowerment of women could only be achieved if their economic and social status is improved. This could be possible only by adopting definite social and economic policies with a view of total development of women and to make them realize that they have the potential to be strong human beings. The first and foremost priority should be given to the education of women, which is the grass root problem.

Research Methodology

The main aim of this study is to analyse the different approaches of women empowerment in India. And compare the Indian status of women empowerment with global. This study is descriptive in nature and uses only secondary data.

Secondary Sources- The secondary is data which many scholars use in their research. In simple terms, it has already been collected and documented by some investigators for its persistence and not for the current research challenge. It is accessible from various sources such as government publications, books, journal articles, websites and reports. These are concentrating on exploring the existing articles.

History of Women Empowerment in the World

1691 Mexico Sor Juana Inés de la cruz - following criticism for studying secular texts, celebrated writer and nun Sor Juana Ines de la cruz of Mexico memorably defended women's rights to education in 1691 by proclaiming " one can perfectly well philosophize while cooking supper." A national icon, today she appears on Mexican currency.

1860 Russia Anna Filosofova - Ahead of her time, prominent women's rights activist and Russian philanthropist Anna Filosofova believed it was better to educate and train the poor rather than provide cash benefits. In 1860, she Co-founded a society to provide support to the poor, including not only affordable housing but also decent work for women.

1893 New Zealand Kate Sheppard - New Zealand's most celebrated suffragist, Kate Sheppard along with fellow campaigners presented a " monster " petition to parliament demanding women's suffrage with nearly 32,000 signatures - an instrumental move that led to New Zealand becoming the first self-governing country to grant national voting rights to women in 1893.

Women's representation is still lagging in politics. In 2015, only 22% of all national parliamentarians were female, a slow increase from 11.3% in 1995.

1911 Japan Raicho Hiratsuka - A pioneering Japanese editor, writer and political activist Raicho Hiratsuka co-founded her country's first all women run literary journal Seito in 1911 through which she challenged women's traditional roles at home. In the magazine's inaugural issue, she emboldens women to "reveal the genius hidden within us!"

1951 Egypt Doria Shafik - Doria Shafik catalyzed a women's rights movement in Egypt when in 1951 she, alongside 1500 women, stormed parliament demanding full political rights, pay equality and reforms to personal status laws. These efforts, along with countless others to come, helped pave the way to women's right to vote in 1956.

1960 Guatemala Rigoberta Menchu - The first indigenous person to win the Nobel Peace Prize, Rigoberta Menchu campaigned for social justice, ethno-cultural reconciliation and indigenous people's rights during and after Guatemala's civil war (1960-1966). In 2006, she Cofounded the Nobel women's initiatives to magnify women's work on peace, justice and equality. **1973 USA Billie Jean King** - A pioneering American tennis champion and social change activist, Billie Jean King famously threatened to boycott the U.S open in 1973 unless women were given equal prize money— a demand that was met, making the U.S open the first major tournament of its kind to offer pay equality. Even with her efforts, the gender wage gap still exists for women in all walks of life. Globally, women earn 24% less than men.

1990 India Vandana Shiva - A staunch environmentalist, Vandana Shiva formed Navdanya in India during the early 1990s to conserve unique strains of seed crops and to educate farmers on eco diversity. Under Navdanya, she also created a programme on biodiversity, food and water, which empowers women in protecting the livelihoods of their communities.

1992 Botswana Unity Dow - As a plaintiff, Unity Dow won a historic case in 1992 enabling women married to non citizens the right to confer nationality to their children. Later, as Botswana's first female High Court Judge, she gained international acclaim on a case that allowed Botswana's San people to return to their ancestral homelands.

2016 Zimbabwe Loveness Mudzuru & Ruvimbo Tsopodzi - Taking their government to court on child marriage, former child brides Loveness Mudzuru & Ruvimbo Tsopodzi made history in 2016 when Zimbabwe's constitutional court ruled in their favour stating that nobody in the country may enter into marriage, including customary law union, before the age of 18.⁶ **2016 Hillary Clinton:** becomes the first woman to receive a presidential nomination from a major political party.

2017 Saudi Arabia: In 2017, the Saudi Arabian government lifted the ban on female drivers; it took effect in June 2018.

2017 India rules sex with minors illegal: Another sign of the modernization of India was a Supreme Court ruling in October 2017 that deemed rape of a female under the age of 18 (even if the minor is a child bride) illegal. Further, being charged with this crime can result in a ten-year prison sentence. This ruling helps discourage the tradition of child brides and speaks to the country's attempt to create more equal marriages (age-wise, at the very least).

2018 Iceland: Requires fair pay for women Some countries talk a good game about equal pay for women, but Iceland made it the law of the land. In 2018, Iceland became the first country in the world to make it illegal—resulting in a fine—to pay men and women in the same job differently. One major difference between this law, and the Equal Pay Act in the United States is that the burden is no longer on

the employee to make this claim—the onus is on the companies to prove that they are paying men and women equally as a matter of general review. Thus, women are not required to become detectives themselves (and risk their reputations and work relationships) to find out if they are being paid the same as their male colleagues.⁷

2021 Bangladesh Gender Gap Report released by the World Economic Forum March 30, 2021. The report focuses on measuring gaps between men and women in accessing resources and opportunities. Bangladesh secured the 65th position in the overall tally of the report. All other south Asian countries have ranks beyond 100. Bangladesh's success in reducing its gender gap. **2021: Kamala Harris** is sworn in as the first woman and first woman of color vice president of the United States. The daughter of Jamaican and Indian immigrants, Harris served as California's first Black female attorney general and won election to the U.S. Senate in 2016.

2023 U.S: Indian-origin Manpreet Monica Singh becomes the first female Sikh judge in the U.S, She was sworn in as a judge of the Harris County Civil Court at Law No. 4 in Texas.

TIMELINE OF WOMEN'S ACHIEVEMENTS IN INDIA

1848: Savitribai Phule, along with her husband Jyotirao Phule, opened a school for girls in Pune, India. Savitribai Phule became the first woman teacher in India.

1879: John Elliot Drinkwater Bethune established the Bethune School in 1849, which developed into the Bethune College in 1879, thus becoming the first women's college in India.

1883: Chandramukhi Basu and Kadambini Ganguly became the first female graduates of India and the British Empire.

1886: Kadambini Ganguly and Anandi Gopal Joshi became the first women from India to be trained in Western medicine.

1891 Rukhmabai, the second practising female physician in India, the publicity around whose child marriage and subsequent dissolution led to the Age of Consent Act, 1891.

1898: Sister Nivedita Girls' School was inaugurated.

1905: Suzanne RD Tata becomes the first Indian woman to drive a car.

1916: The first women's university, SNDT Women's University, was founded on 2 June 1916 by the social reformer Dhondo Keshav Karve with just five students.

1917: Annie Besant became the first female president of the Indian National Congress.

1919: For her distinguished social service, Pandita Ramabai became the first Indian woman to be awarded the Kaisar-i-Hind Medal by the British Raj.

1925: Sarojini Naidu became the first Indian born female president of the Indian National Congress.

1927: The All India Women's Conference was founded.

1936: Sarla Thakral became the first Indian woman to fly an aircraft.

1944: Asima Chatterjee became the first Indian woman to be conferred the Doctorate of Science by an Indian university.

1947: On 15 August 1947, following independence, Sarojini Naidu became the governor of the United Provinces, and in the process became India's first woman governor. On the same day, Amrit Kaur assumed office as the first female Cabinet minister of India in the country's first cabinet.

Post independence: Rukmini Devi Arundale was the first ever woman in Indian History to be nominated a Rajya Sabha member. She is considered the most important revivalist in the Indian classical dance form of Bharatanatyam from its original 'sadhir' style, prevalent amongst the temple dancers, Devadasis. She also worked for the re-establishment of traditional Indian arts and crafts. **1951:** Prem Mathur of Deccan Airways becomes the first Indian woman commercial pilot.

1953: Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit became the first woman (and first Indian) president of the United Nations General Assembly

1959: Anna Chandy becomes the first Indian woman judge of a High Court (Kerala High Court) **1963:** Sucheta Kriplani became the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, the first woman to hold that position in any Indian state.

1966: Captain Durga Banerjee becomes the first Indian woman pilot of the state airline, Indian Airlines.

1966: Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay wins Ramon Magsaysay award for community leadership.

1966: Indira Gandhi becomes the first woman Prime Minister of India.

1970: Kamaljit Sandhu becomes the first Indian woman to win a Gold in the Asian Games.

1972: Kiran Bedi becomes the first female recruit to join the Indian Police Service.

1978: Sheila Sri Prakash becomes the first female entrepreneur to independently start an architecture firm

1979: Mother Teresa wins the Nobel Peace Prize, becoming the first Indian female citizen to do so.

1984: On 23 May, Bachendri Pal became the first Indian woman to climb Mount Everest.

1986: Surekha Yadav became the first Asian woman loco-pilot or railway driver.

1989: Justice M. Fathima Beevi becomes the first woman judge of the Supreme Court of India.

1991: Mumtaz M. Kazi became the first Asian woman to drive a diesel locomotive in September. **1992:** Asha Sinha becomes the First Woman Commandant in the Paramilitary forces of India when she was appointed Commandant, Central Industrial Security Force in Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited.

1992: Priya Jhingan becomes the first lady cadet to join the Indian Army (later commissioned on 6 March 1993)

1999: On 31 October, Sonia Gandhi became the first female Leader of the Opposition (India).

2007: On 25 July, Pratibha Patil became the first female President of India.

2009: On 4 June, Meira Kumar became the first female Speaker of Lok Sabha.

2011: On 20 October, Priyanka N. drove the inaugural train of the Namma Metro becoming the first female Indian metro pilot.

2011: Mitali Madhumita made history by becoming the first woman officer to win a Sena Medal for gallantry.

2014: A record 7 female ministers are appointed in the Modi ministry, of whom 6 hold Cabinet rank, the highest number of female Cabinet ministers in any Indian government in history.

Ministries such as Defence and External Affairs are being held by Women Ministers.

2015: Sumita Bose the first author and first woman to write an autism book in India.

2016: J. Jayalalithaa, became the first woman chief minister in India to rule the state consecutively 2 times by winning legislative assembly election.

2017: On 25 March, Tanushree Pareek became the first female combat officer commissioned by the Border Security Force.

2018: Archana Ramasundaram of 1980 Batch became the first Woman to become the Director General of Police of a Paramilitary Force as DG, Sashastra Seema Bal.

2018: In February, 24 year old Flying Officer Avani Chaturvedi of the Indian Air Force became the first Indian female fighter pilot to fly solo. She flew a MiG-21 Bison, a jet aircraft with the highest recorded landing and take-off speed in the world.

2019: On 2 December 2019, sub-lieutenant Shivangi became the first woman pilot in the Indian Navy.

2020: Karuna Nundy, a supreme court lawyer, was appointed to a UK panel of experts to build frameworks that protect media freedom across the world.

2021: A twenty-seven-year-old girl from Manipur scripted history by winning the silver medal in the Women's 49 kg Weightlifting event at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021. Mirabai Chanu lifted a total of 202 kilograms.⁸

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA

In ancient Indian culture, women were treated as equal to men, and there was no discrimination on the bases of gender, instead of that women were honored by society, and society at the time considered women as Janani which means mother, even in Hindu scripts women are considered as Devi. They used to enjoy their full basic rights where they were free to receive education. They were trained in the art of warfare by choice. The Rig Veda finds mention of a warrior queen Vishpala, who is trained in the art of warfare. She loses a leg in battle ; an iron leg revives her spirit and she resumes her battlefield exploits. A true example of women empowerment. The character of Vishpala is further explored by Saiswaroopa Iyer in her book Avishi, which was recently released in 2021. Women Empowerment in the field of education during the 7th to 8th century is corroborated by Yajnavalkya's welcoming of the participation of women in Vedic studies. In the medieval and letter period, Rani Rudrama Devi of Warangal, defied the male counterparts of her times. Chennamma, the queen of Keladi, fought like Goddess Shakti in the battlefield; she ruled for 25 years. Velu Nachiyar, the queen of Sivagangai, presently part of Tamil Nadu, happens to be the first queen in the history of India to wage a successful war against the

British. Velu Nachiyar was trained in martial arts, use of war weapons, archery and horse riding. She was an expert in silambam (fighting using sticks). Laxmibai, the queen of Jhansi, added a regiment of women. An excellent horse rider, she herself drilled and trained them. When she became a queen, the kingdom had an army of around 5,000 men. They are archetypes of women empowerment. The status of women saw a gradual decline with Islamic invasion and later the British. Such was the effect of their rule that women's rights and freedom were curtailed. They started getting exploited. Practices like child marriage and Jauhar (this was a Rajput custom, where the Rajput women sacrificed their lives for their husbands when they were about to lose a battle) saw a raise only to protect their honor from Invaders.⁹ The history of women's empowerment in the ancient age is quite confusing because on one side it encouraged women to choose their life partner on their own and on the other side, they were forced to perform Sati as per social norms. Women in India are emerging in all sectors, including politics, business, medicine, sports and agriculture.

History was made when two female scientists from the Indian Space Research Organisation led the country's second lunar mission Chandrayaan-2 from its inception to completion in 2019. Female leadership for a huge space mission challenged the meta narrative that rocket science is a profession reserved for men. The Supreme Court suspended the government's position on women serving as army commanders in 2020. Women were first inducted into the armed forces in 1992 and have served in a multitude of positions, including fighter pilots, doctors, nurses, engineers, signallers, etc.

Major Businesses Run by Women in India:

In India, 45% of the start-ups are run by women, of which over 50,000 are recognised by the government. The country witnessed the most women-led start-ups turning into unicorns in 2021.¹⁰ Major start-ups run by women are listed below:

Brand	Founder / Co-founder	Date of Establishment	Total Funds Raised	Market Valuation
	Divya Gokulnath	2011	US\$ 8.5 billion	US\$ 18 billion
	Falguni Nayar	2012	US\$ 148.5 million	US\$ 12.5 billion
	Upsana Taku	2009	US\$ 380 million	US\$ 750 million
	Isha Choudhry	2015	US\$ 90 million	US\$ 100 million
	Chitra Gurnani Daga	2009	US\$ 1.24 million	US\$ 4.48 million

United Nations Principles on Women Empowerment

Established in 2010, the United Nations Women’s Principles, help people understand how to empower women in every sphere of life. The principles are as follows: ❖ Incorporate a high-level leadership to help maintain gender equality, ❖ To treat all women and men equally, and not discriminate.

- ✓ To maintain equality in giving employment to both men and women, promote education, provide professional training for the development of women.
- ✓ To ensure the health and well-being of women.
- ✓ To promote equality by implementing various initiatives.
- ✓ To prepare a report on the progress of achieving gender equality

Women Empowerment Through the Constitution of India

The Constitution of India gives equal rights to women like the right to vote, right to equality, etc. The six articles of the Constitution of India guarantees equality of genders. In fact, this clearly reflects that the constitution grants special favours to women:

Article 14 says that the government shall not deny to any person equality before law or equal protection of the law.

Article 15 declares that the government shall not discriminate against any citizen on the ground of sex.

Article 15 (3) that empowers the state for making special provisions in favour of women and children.

Article 42 directs the state to make provision for ensuring just and human conditions of work and maternity relief.

Article 51A(e) states that it is the duty of every citizen to renounce practices that are derogatory to the dignity of women.

Article 343 (d) and 343 (T) Reservation of not less than one third of total seats for women in direct election to local bodies, viz; Panchayats and Municipalities.

Legal Framework for the Protection of Women in India

In India, the laws related to women are classified into two categories, which are:

1. The Indian Penal Code:

Under the Indian Penal Code 1860, the following crimes against women are identified:

- Rape (Section 376);
- Sexual harassment (Section 509);
- Torture (Section 498A);
- Dowry, dowry deaths (Section 302, Section 304B);
- Molestation (Section 354).

2. Special laws

Various legal provisions in India, ensure the protection and safety of women and their rights.

Some of them are:

- **The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976** This Act was established to ensure that men and women both get equal pay and wages for the work done and that there is no discrimination on grounds of sex, in the matters of employment.
- **The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961** The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 was established, to stop the practice of paying or accepting dowry as a consideration for marriage.
- **The Special Marriage Act, 1954** The Special Marriage Act came into force in 1954. This Act was established to provide a special form of marriage, irrespective of the faith or religion they believe in.
- **The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971** This Act was enacted to prohibit the practice of illegal abortions. This Act mentions the provisions by which a pregnancy can be terminated or aborted.
- **The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013** This Act was enacted to ensure that women are protected in their place of work. In the case of Vishaka v State of Rajasthan (1997), the Court laid down certain principles known as ‘The Vishaka Guidelines’. These principles were later converted into The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013.

Conclusion

To conclude, Like the world, women in India have also developed in all fields. There has been a steady transformation in the status of women in comparison to earlier periods. Women of today take part completely in areas such as politics, status, military sectors, economic, service, sports, entertainment, and technology sectors. It might be observed that India has enacted many constitutional and legislative provisions for empowerment of women. Many development schemes especially for women have also been launched for improving their fortune. Such measures have started giving positive outcomes relating to women's problems. But the position of women in our country still leaves much to be desired. No doubt women have the potential to achieve an equal footing with men. But it is the social practices and male attitudes that are making an effective and invisible barrier preventing women from rising above a certain point. Empowerment of women could only be achieved if their economic and social status has improved. This could be possible only by adopting definite social and economic policies with a view of total

development of women and to make them realize that they have the potential to be strong human beings. The first and foremost priority should be given to the education of women, which is the grass root problem.

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