



## Improving conditions of women in emerging India

Manish Kumar Singh

Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Rajat College Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, India

### Abstract

The provision of Human Rights has also been kept in the Indian Constitution like right to equality right to life right to speech et cetera. Gender equality in human rights refers to the fact that men and women have the same opportunities, rights, and obligations in areas such as decision-making, economic and social freedom, equal access to education, and the ability to practice and pursue careers of their own choosing. Female literacy rate in the country is only 64.46%, while the male literacy rate is 82.14%, according to 2011 census. Empowerment of women is a crucial element for all round development of society as well as country women empowerment related issues is now become a global phenomenon, because women and girls continue to face significant challenges all around the world. Any country can progress only when the women of that country are developed properly. The position of women deteriorated during the medieval period the systems of purdah and Jauhar were being introduced by the Rajput and Muslim communities. During the middle of the 19th century, the activist started raising their voice for the determination of the minimum age of marriage for the girls and boys. After India was established as an independent nation, there have been various forms of social norms all over the world which deny specific opportunities to women, such as the right to education, health, vote, economic opportunities, etc. progress on environmental stability, and human rights are hindered due to such gender inequality and are the primary cause of concern for poverty and hunger.

**Keywords:** Empowerment, status of women, constitutional provision

### Introduction

Human beings are born free and equality is the right of human and value of nations. On 10 December 1948 the United Nations declare the Human Rights under the universal declaration of human rights. The provision of Human Rights has also been kept in the Indian Constitution like right to equality right to life right to speech et cetera. In the term of women rights article 15 one and two prohibits the discrimination on the basis of religion race cast sex place of birth etc. also supports for gender equality and declared through UDHR in article (1) that "To achieve International cooperation in promoting and increasing respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion". With the support of United Nation and law of UDHR gender equality was made part of international human rights.

### Women Empowerment

Gender equality in human rights refers to the fact that men and women have the same opportunities, rights, and obligations in areas such as decision-making, economic and social freedom, equal access to education, and the ability to practice and pursue careers of their own choosing. Women empowerment means that ability of women, which gives them this ability in which they can take all the decisions related to their life. Women have a sense of self-worth, their rights and freedom to determine them, equal opportunities and access to all kinds of resources, the right to regulate and control their own lives inside and outside the home and to create social and economic order, these are the five components that, are essential for women's empowerment. The level of autonomy and self-determination that individuals and groups possess is known as empowerment. As a result, they are empowered to act independently and responsibly on behalf of their interests. It is the process of growing stronger and more self-assured, particularly when it

comes to taking charge of one's life and asserting one's rights. The term "empowerment as action" describes both the process of empowering oneself and receiving professional assistance, which helps individuals overcome feelings of helplessness and influence and identify and make use of their own resources. For the development of women, many types of work are also being done by all countries of the world, so that women power can be encouraged to be promoted in every field. Referring to the issue of women empowerment even in this century, it proves that still the development of women is not fully done. The condition of women in our country can be assume from the fact that there are still many such villages in India, where the life of women is confined to the four walls of the house.

### Country Towards Development and Women 1<sup>st</sup> Phase- Pre Independent India

From the time of pre-independence till the present, attempts have been made to improve the status of women. However, women's access to these initiatives and their knowledge of these programs are robbing them of some of their rights. Nonetheless, there has been significant progress made in the area of women's rights and empowerment if we compare the paths taken before and after independence. On the other hand, women's participation is an essential component of the nation's progress, which requires them to leave their homes, as seen by the decline in domestic violence, poverty, and other key occurrences. Position of women deteriorated during the medieval period the systems of purdah and Jauhar were being introduced by the Rajput and Muslim communities. The purdah system means that women were to remain within the curtain and keep themselves covered, they put a veil over their face, especially in the presence of the male members. Polygamy, Sati, Child Marriage, Widow Remarriage, Right to Property, etc. these are major practices that are unfavorable influences on women life in pre-

independence India. 'Polygamy' means, having multiple spouses, i.e. having more than one husband or wife at the same time. The Hindu Marriage Act of 1955, restricted the number of wives to one. Child marriage was seen as a severe issue that had a detrimental impact on people's general quality of life. The activists began advocating for the setting of a minimum age of marriage for both boys and girls in the middle of the 1800s. Thanks to the efforts of Keshab Chandra Sen and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, who expressed that early marriage has a detrimental effect on children's health in addition to preventing them from participating in a variety of childhood activities. These people worked to end child marriage, and in 1929 the Child Marriage Restriction Act was implemented, along with Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. 'Sati' is one of the serious challenges that are experienced by all the activists and reformers was the prevalence of the system of widow immolation or sati. The system of sati was abolished in Calcutta in 1798. It was a territory that was under the British. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was a great reformer, who rendered a significant contribution for improving the status of women. He struggled for the abolition of the system of sati, along with assistance from Lord William Bentinck. A ban was imposed upon this system in 1829 in the British territories of India. The conditions of widows was detrimental, The major challenges and problems that they experienced were, they were not allowed to participate in any social, religious, cultural or political activities; they were not allowed to express their ideas and viewpoints and did not have any say in the decision making matters; they did not have any right to property and were deprived of number of rights and opportunities; they were not allowed to take part in any functions and therefore opted for sati. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Mahadev Ranade, and Dayanand Sarasvati are the ones, who rendered a significant contribution in the reform movement of widow remarriage. As a result of their efforts, the Hindu Widow Remarriage Act XV of 1856 was passed. People's regard for the act was significantly lower. Regarding the right to own property, there was uncertainty, and laws emphasising women's rights were not put into effect. Prior to the implementation of the Hindu Women's Right to Property Act XVIII of 1937 and the Hindu Succession Act XXX of 1956, the Dayabhaga and Mitakshara laws emphasised the possibility that a widow could inherit her husband's property upon his death if she did not have a male child or a grandson.

### II<sup>nd</sup> Phase- Post Independent India

There have been various forms of social norms all over the world which deny specific opportunities to women, such as the right to education, health, vote, economic opportunities, etc. progress on environmental stability, and human rights are hindered due to such gender inequality and are the primary cause of concern for poverty and hunger. The status of women in the post-independence period underwent transformations. In the discussion of their status within the society, there are two main aspects that need to be taken into consideration, first to what extent women can control their own living conditions and the extent to which they possess the decision-making authority and perform their tasks and activities without minimum restrictions. Women constituted half of the population within Indian society. They have been making a major impact on the advancement of human resources. For this reason, it is imperative that we support

people in making decisions, gaining education, finding work, and improving their standard of living. One of the key tactics in the development process, the National Policy on the Empowerment of Women in India, 2001, brought about changes in the socioeconomic landscape. The standing of women changed as a result of these adjustments.

### Provision for Women in Indian Constitution

The following are a few significant laws with provisions designed specifically to protect women and their interests:

1. The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955
2. The Hindu minority and guardianship Act, 1956
3. The Hindu Succession Act, 1965
4. The Hindu minority and guardianship Act, 1956
5. The Hindu women rights to property Act, 1973
6. The dowry prohibition Act, 1961
7. The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961
8. The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006
9. Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005
10. Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987

The following clauses in the Indian Constitution aim to give women equal opportunities, safeguard their rights, and guarantee justice for them:

**Right to Equality**– Constitution ensures equality to all its citizens including women (Article 14). The Constitution ensures that no discrimination shall be made against any person on the basis of caste, class, creed, sex, race and place of birth [ Article 15(1)].

No discrimination shall be made on any grounds of discrimination including sex for providing employment opportunities. [Article 16].

The State shall take the responsibility of providing maternity benefits to women employees [Article 42].

**One-third reservation of women in the panchayats** – There must be separate seats reserved for women in the panchayats with separate seats for women SCs and STs [Article 243 D (3)].

**One-third reservation for women in the presidential posts of the Panchayats** – Reserving women seats for all posts at all the levels of panchayats (Gram Panchayat, Taluk Panchayat and Zilla Panchayat) [Article 243 D (4)].

**One-third reservation in Municipalities** – Separate seats for women in all the town municipalities [Article 243(T) 3]. It was indeed a bold step. The rural women will also be now able to exercise some political power and play a role in decision making for the town and village affairs.

Furthermore, they have been entitled to vote and are provided with other special benefits. The constitution protects women against exploitation and ensures that they are given equal rights and opportunities being in any field.

### Government schemes and Women Empowerment

1. **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme** launched on 22nd January 2015 by the Prime Minister of India in Haryana, this Scheme ensures survival, protection and education of girl children.
2. **Mahila Shakti Kendras (MSK)** another popular women empowerment scheme in India. It aims to provide one-stop convergent support services to women to develop skills, generate employment opportunities, and increase digital literacy. This scheme is operational at multiple

- levels, such as national level, state level, and district level.
3. Working Women Hostel introduced by Government of India to promote safe accommodation and environment for working women and provide daycare facilities for their children. Through this women empowerment scheme, the Government provides grant-in-aid for construction and new hostel buildings and extension of an existing building in rented premises.
  4. Women Helpline Scheme is one of the government schemes for women empowerment that intends to give 24x7 emergency responses to women affected by violence in private or public spaces.
  5. One Stop Centre Scheme next in the list of women empowerment schemes in India. It is a centrally sponsored scheme and is funded through the Nirbhaya fund. This scheme facilitates emergency (medical), legal aid and counselling, non-emergency services under one roof to combat all forms of violence against women.
  6. Mahila Police Volunteers launched by The Ministry of Women and Child Development, along with Home Affairs, in all States and Union Territories. This central government-sponsored scheme aims to create a link between police authorities and local communities to ensure police outreach on crime cases.
  7. STEP (Support to Training and Employment Program for Women) one of the most effective women empowerment schemes in India. It was introduced to provide training in skill development and to assure employment to women.
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### Conclusion

After considering the aforementioned discussion, it can be said that women in India were respected and acknowledged in society before to independence, but throughout time, their status declined. Women faced a variety of issues before to independence, including sati, polygamy, child marriage, widow remarriage, and property rights. Many social reformers, including Jyotiba Phule, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, and Ishwar Chandra, were aware that ladies should also pursue education in order to better their own prospects for employment. Women's empowerment is only getting started in this century. Particularly after independence, women's rights in India created a new, tough campaign against social ills and issues, which they fought.

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