

An analysis of Women empowerment Journey: an insight

Gajraj Singh

Discipline of Statistics, School of Sciences, Indira Gandhi National Open University, Delhi-110068,
Email: gajrajsingh@ignou.ac.in

Received: 18.10.2022

Revised: 20.11.2022

Accepted: 24.12.2022

ABSTRACT

The present study deals with women empowerment in 21st century. The aims of this study are to find out women education in precolonial, colonial and modern India, the forms of empowerment of women, the violence against women, women rights, legal protection of women in Indian constitution, the role of NGOs in women empowerment, the Government schemes and program for women empowerment, how education has helped woman empowerment and how Indian society is changing by women empowerment in the 21st century. As a result it is observed that the historical background of women education in Indian society in Vedic era women education was good. This study also shows that women empowerment refers to increasing and improving the social, economic, political and legal strength of the women, to ensure equal-right to women and to make them confident enough to claim their rights. A country's all round development is only possible when its women become powerful. Besides that, this study shows the constitutional rights of women, the advantages provided by various NGOs, national agencies etc. women education is inevitable to rejuvenate woman empowerment. The women will be self-conscious socially, politically and economically by education. Overall this study shows that by women empowerment Indian society is developed and changing in the 21st century.

Keywords: Women Education, Women Empowerment, Women Rights, NGOs, Violence against Women

INTRODUCTION

Women play a considerable role in shaping the future of any nation. They are integral in deciding the path the development each country will follow. Therefore, every nation have to give due recognition to the strength and potential of women in their society. Therefore upliftment of women is integral of the progress of the nation. Empowerment of women means making them realize their potential as an individual, to motivate them to be politically active, independent and contribute economically to the society. National Policy for Women Draft in 2016, defines empowerment of women as a socio-political ideal that contributes significantly to achieving women's rights in any society. Empowerment of women is the right of women to take decisions both within as well as outside her home. The research paper studies the different dimensions of empowerment of women in India. The paper analyses the relationship between three important indicators of empowerment i.e., role of women in education, labour market and governance in Indian context.

Important Constituents of Empowerment of Women:

UNIFEM recognizes five aspects of women's empowerment.

- Under the cognitive aspect, women understands the conditions and reasons of their subordination at home and as a part of society in which they live
- The psychological aspect in which women hold the belief that she can improve her condition in society.
- The economic aspect of empowerment deals with women enjoying some degree of financial autonomy with control over resources.
- The political aspect enables women to become an active participant in social change in the country.
- And the physical aspect means the ability of the women to defend self in different situations.

Arguments for Women Empowerment:

UNIFEM (United Nations Development Fund for Women) states the following reasons for empowering women.

- Women constitute 50% of the population in any country. Empowering women is the base to create strong economies.

- It helps to create societies which are more stable and equitable.
- It enables the nation to become global partner for national building and protecting human rights.
- Forge partnership for improving quality of life for every individual in the country
- Create opportunities for self-employment and growth.

Objectives of Research

- 1) To examine the various indicators of empowerment of women like status of education, labour market and governance in the context of India.
- 2) To understand the reasons affecting the status of women in India.

Data Collection

The data required for analysis is collected from Government of India reports and international agencies like World Bank. Information regarding the topic is also sourced from journals and Government websites.

Women and Education in India

Education is an essential means of providing women with the necessary knowledge and skills to productively participate in the development of our country. Though enrolment of females has increased in education, yet there are certain inequalities that exist in India. According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2022, India's ranks are 135 out of a total of 146 countries in the Index.

Table 1: India's score in Global Gender Gap Report 2022

	2022		2021	
	Rank	Score	Rank	Score
Gender Gap Index of India	135	0.629	140	0.625
Economic Participation	143	0.350	151	0.326
Educational attainment level	107	0.961	114	0.962
Health standards	146	0.937	155	0.937
Political Empowerment	48	0.267	51	0.276

Source: World Economic Forum (2022)

The Global Gender Gap Report is calculated for countries based on three parameters i.e., economic participation of women in society, level of education achieved and political empowerment in the decision making process. While India's rank is 143 in economic participation, India is ranked 48 in Political attainment.

Table 2: Literacy rates in India and the Gap between male and female literacy

Year of Census	Literacy of Males (%)	Literacy of Females (%)	Gap in literacy (%)
1951	27.16	8.86	18.3
1961	40.4	15.35	25.05
1971	45.96	21.97	23.99
1981	56.38	29.76	26.62
1991	64.13	39.29	24.84
2001	75.85	54.16	21.69
2011	82.14	65.46	16.68
2017	84.70	70.30	14.40

Source: Women and Men in India 2022, www.mospi.gov.in

Table 2 shows the literacy rates in male and female and the gap between the two rates. The data shows that while the gap between the two has reduced over time, it will take some more efforts by all stakeholders to improve the female literacy in India and reduce the gender gap in education. In the year 2017, the literacy gap between men and women narrowed to 14.40 %.

Table 3: Number of females enrolled per 100 males enrolled based on different levels of education in India

Year	Primary level (Class I- Class V)	Upper Primary Level (Class VI- Class VIII)	Secondary Level (Class IX-Class X)	Senior Secondary Level (Class XI- Class XII)	Higher Education Level
2005-06	87	81	73	72	62
2015-16	93	95	91	90	86
2018-19	92	94	92	93	-

Source: Statistics at a glance 2018, Ministry of education

Table 3 reflects enrolment of females based on different stages of educations. The data shows improvement in female enrolment over time. However, there continues to be gap between male and female enrolment at stages of education. The gap is the highest in higher education.

Table 4: Number of Females per 100 Males in Major Disciplines

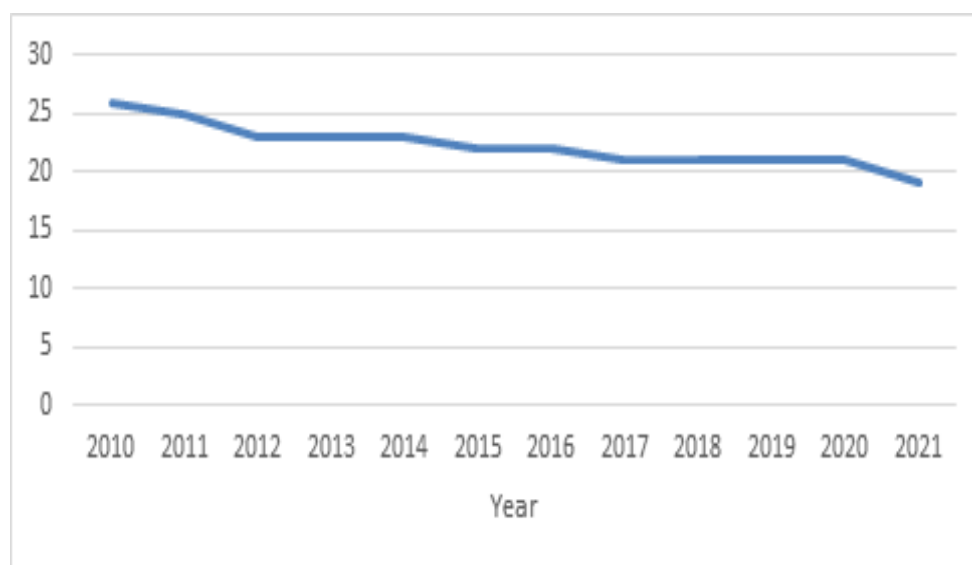
Year	2010-11	2018-19
Arts/ Humanities, Social Science	98.6	112.5
Engineering & Technology	40.9	40.6
Commerce	71.4	95.3
Science	86.9	104.1
IT and Computer	57.8	69.4
Medical Science	115.0	154.1
Management	48.1	60.4

Source: D/o Higher Education, Ministry of Education

The Table 4 shows the female enrolment per 100 male's major disciplines at University level. The results show that females enrolment in greater numbers than males in Arts, Social sciences, Science and Medical sciences. Their enrolment is low in Engineering, technology, IT and computer and management.

Women and Their Role in Labour Market in India

Another important feature of empowerment is the position of women in Indian labour market. Trends show a declining labour force Participation rates for women in Indian market. The contribution of women towards labour market has been limited with India having one of the lowest female labour participation rates at a global level.

**Figure 1:** Trends in participation of females in the Indian labour force

Source: World Bank, 2022

The participation of women in labour market in India has declined from 26 % in 2010 to 19 % in 2021. The data shows same trend in both urban and rural areas. This is despite the fact that females are enrolling and receiving education in larger number in the post-independence period.

Table 5: Trends in participation of females in the labour force in India

	2017-18			2020-21		
	Percentage of Males	Percentage of Females	Total	%age of Males	%age of Females	Total
Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR)	55.5	17.5	36.9	57.5	25.1	41.6
Worker Population Ratio (WPR)	52.1	16.5	34.7	54.9	24.2	39.8
Unemployment Rate (UR)	6.2	5.7	6.1	4.5	3.5	4.2

Source: Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) – Annual Report [July, 2020 – June, 2021]

Table 5 shows the participation of females in Indian labour market based on Periodic Labour Force Survey. The results show that the participation rates for females have increased from 17.5% in 2017-18 to 25.1% in 2020-21. The worker Population Ratio for females has increased from 16.5% in 2017-18 to 24.2% in 2020-21. The results shows that the female Participation rates in both the years are half of that of males reflecting the gender inequality that exists in India.

There are several causes for declining participation of women in labour market in India. Certain important causes are as follows.

- **Low Growth in Employment Opportunities for Women:** The NSSO data 2017 shows that the share of men employed in agriculture in rural economy fell from 80.6 % to 53.2%. However, the employment of women in agriculture decreased from 88.1 % to 71.7 %. The results highlights the fact that women continue to remain employed in agriculture and allied activities in relatively greater proportion due to several economic reasons.
- **Mechanization of Work:** Increased mechanization in agriculture and textile industries have led to increased displacement of women. A report by McKinsey Global Institute states that nearly 12 million women in India is in the danger of losing their jobs by 2030 owing to machines displacing labour.
- **Gender Gaps in Skill Development and Training:** World Bank data shows that female enrolment in service sector rose from 2 % in 1971 to mere 30 % in 2019. This is in spite of the fact that service sector today contributes around 55% of India's GDP. The NSSO data 2018-19, further shows that as of 2018-19, only 2% of women in working age has received any kind of formal vocational training, of which 47 % did not join the labour force.
- **Social Factors:** Unremunerated household work such as looking after children or the elderly still remains a women's task. The NSSO data 2019 shows that women spend on average 5 hours per day on household work, as compared to 30 minutes by men. Women face mobility issues due to safety and security concerns. They in many instances sacrifice their career growth, and drop out of education system to meet family responsibilities and safety considerations.

Role of Women in Governance in India

In India, in spite of strong constitutional consent that provides for equality of women in political representation at both national and state level, including electoral policies, discrimination continues even after 75 years of independence.

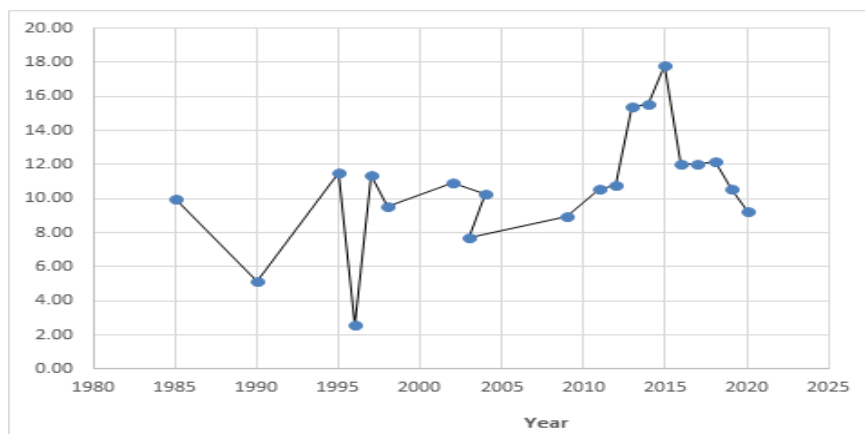


Figure 2: Representation of Women in Central Council of Ministers

Source: Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi. www.mospi.gov.in

Figure 2 illustrates the percentage of females in Central Council of Ministers. On an average, 10% of the Central Council of ministers is females. In 2015, the figure touched 17.78 %. Thereafter it declined to 10.53 % in 2019 and further to 9.26% in 2020. Further analysis of Constitution of Central governments' formation in India shows that few women have held cabinet berths, with almost all key positions occupied by men. In the current cabinet, Finance Minister is female.

Table 6: Trends of female representation in Lok Sabha

Lok Sabha (Tenure)	Year	Percentage of female representatives
First	1952	4.42%
Second	1957	4.47
Third	1962	6.85
Fourth	1967	5.97
Fifth	1971	5.06
Sixth	1977	3.77
Seventh	1980	5.65
Eighth	1984	7.94
Ninth	1989	5.24
Tenth	1991	7.57
Eleventh	1996	7.44
Twelfth	1998	8.06
Thirteenth	1999	9.15
Fourteenth	2004	8.87
Fifteenth	2009	11.43
Sixteenth	2014	11.87
Seventeenth	2019	14.39

Source: Men and Women of India, 2020, www.mospi.gov.in

During the first Lok Sabha, women consisted of 4.42% of the total seats in Lok Sabha. . This has increased to 14.39% in the seventeenth Lok Sabha in 2019. This is grossly inadequate keeping in mind that India is considered as one of the largest democracies in the World.

Table 7: Strength of Female Police Officers in India

Police Deptt/Organization	Percentage of Female Police Officers
Civil Police	13.10
District Armed Reserve Police	9.06
Special Armed Police Battalion	3.61
Indian Reserve Battalion	4.37
Total	7.88

Source: Women and Men in India 2020, www.mospi.gov.in

As far as strength of women representation in police force is concerned, only civil police has 13.10 % female Police officers. In District Armed Reserve Police, the share of women is 9.06% . In other police department, the percentage of female officers is less than 5 percent.

Table 8: Female representation in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI)

State/Union Territory	Total number of representatives (Elected)	Total number of women representatives (Elected)	Share of women elected representatives (%)
Andaman and Nicobar Islands	858	302	35.2
Andhra Pradesh	156050	78025	50.0
Assam	26820	13410	50.0
Bihar	127391	57887	45.44
Chandigarh	169	58	34.32
Chhattisgarh	170285	93287	54.78
Dadar Nagar Haveli	136	47	34.56
Daman & Diu	172	92	53.49
Goa	1564	516	32.99
Gujarat	144016	71988	49.99
Haryana	70035	29499	42.12
Himachal Pradesh	28723	14398	50.13
Jammu and Kashmir	33847	11169	33.00
Jharkhand	60782	30757	50.60
Karnataka	104967	50892	48.48
Kerala	18372	9630	52.42
Lakshadweep	110	41	37.27
Madhya Pradesh	392981	196490	50.00
Maharashtra	240122	121490	50.60
Manipur	1723	868	50.38
Odisha	3502	828	23.64
Punjab	97180	32393	33.33
Rajasthan	124854	70527	56.49
Tamil Nadu	117599	39975	33.99
Telangana	103468	51735	50.00
Tripura	6646	3006	45.23
Uttar Pradesh	826458	272733	33.00
Uttarakhand	64606	35957	55.66
West Bengal	59402	30157	50.77
Total	3100804	1375914	44.37

Source: Women and Men in India 2020, www.mospi.gov.in

Table 8 shows the female representation in PRI. The Constitution and its amendments (73rd and 74th) have given 33 % reservation to women in local bodies, which has provided opportunities for women to enter the political sphere in larger numbers. In the last few decades, there has been positive difference in women's representation in local governance. It is also a positive step forward that many states, like Bihar, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Jharkhand, Kerala and Rajasthan have raised the reservation level to 50%. This has allowed women in larger number to become elected representatives of the people, including women belonging to socially disadvantaged communities and even illiterate.

There are several causes for low representation of women in politics in India. Some of the important causes are as follows.

- 1) Socio-economic factors and society's outlook towards women participation in politics and governance.

- 2) Lack of reservation for women in Lok Sabha and State Legislatures.
- 3) Reluctance of Political parties to field more female candidates during elections
- 4) Lack of guidance from family and political parties for funds and other resources.
- 5) Lack of knowledge of the electoral process.
- 6) Class, caste and gender bias which deter women from contesting elections.

Measures Needed for Achieving Empowerment of Women

According to UNIFEM, following principles need to be adopted by countries for achieving Women's empowerment including education, labour market and governance.

- 1) **Establish leadership role for women:** This can be achieved by promoting gender equal environment at the workplace. We have to increase the level of education among women. Training and skill development sessions have to be conducted for women. Community initiatives on educating people from all backgrounds on the need for gender equality must be encouraged. There is also need for fostering entrepreneurial spirits among women. Steps need to be taken to ensure that practices followed by organizations are free from gender bias.
- 2) **Promote inclusive policies:** Laws need to be enacted for remuneration, including benefits which are inclusive in nature. There is need to recognize the work done by both men and women and strive to pay a fair wage to all. Inclusive policies should include access to child and elderly care so that women can become part of workforce. There is also need to recognize the work done by women which are not financially remunerated.
- 3) **Promote Health and Well-Being of Women:** Promotion of health and well-being of women is paramount to enable women to join public life in large numbers. There is a need to create a zero-tolerance policy towards any kind of abuse at work, including verbal, and prevent any instances of sexual harassment. There is also need to identify and address safety concerns pertaining to women. This also includes the measures taken by organizations for looking after the security of women travelling to and from work and during company-related business trips.
- 4) **Access to Affordable Education and Training:** Government as well as private sector need to create policies that encourage professional advancement of women and encourage women to enter non-traditional occupations like defence. Women also need to get access to affordable schooling and higher education, skill development, vocational and information technology training.
- 5) **Encouragement of Women Enterprises:** There is a need to create business opportunities for women-owned enterprises. This can be done by helping in marketing of products created by small businesses owned by women entrepreneurs. Also formal credit facilities have to give gender-sensitive solutions to credit and lending barriers faced by women.
- 6) **Community Leadership and Engagement:** All stakeholders including government representatives need to work together to eliminate gender discrimination and provide opportunities to women. There is need to recognize women's contribution towards development of their respective communities and ensure sufficient representation of women in local institutions.
- 7) **Transparency in Gender Based Planning:** Efforts have to be taken to create transparent policies by the Government and private sector for promoting gender equality. There is also need to establish benchmarks that enable policy makers to quantify inclusion of women at all levels.

CONCLUSION

Empowerment of women will make tremendous contribution towards the development of a nation. It must help women to become leaders with decision making capabilities to achieve the best for themselves and the society. The improved participation of women in education, employment and governance will help our nation to progress in future. Creation of good support system will enable women to achieve a work life balance which will further help in achieving women's empowerment. There is a need to increase infrastructure support along with adequate safety and security to boost the mobility of women. The increased engagement of women in local government suggests that there is urgent need to implement quota system at state and national level to increase political participation of women. When there is increased participation of women in nation building that we can say that women are occupying their rightful place in India.

REFERENCES

- [1] AISHE(All India Survey on Higher Education) -2018-19
- [2] Duflo, E. (2012). Women empowerment and economic development. Journal of Economic literature, 50(4), 1051-79.
- [3] Mehrotra, S., And Sinha,S.,(2020), Towards Higher Female Work Participation In India: What Can

- Be Done? Cse Working Paper 2019-02, Centre For Sustainable Employment
Cse.Azimpremjiuniversity.Edu.In
- [4] Men and Women Of India 2020, Social Statistics Division, Ministry Of Statistics And Programme Implementation, Government Of India, WWW.Mospi.Gov.In.
 - [5] Mokta, M. (2014). Empowerment of Women in India: A Critical Analysis. Indian Journal of Public Administration, 60(3), 473-488.
 - [6] Periodic Labour Force Survey(PLFS) -Annual Report(July2020-June2021)
 - [7] Ravindran, D. (2020). Enrolment of Women in Higher Education: A Comparative Study on Women's Equity in Governance and Employment Status in India. Journal of International Women's Studies, 21(5), 65-78.
 - [8] Rai, P. (2011). Electoral Participation of Women in India: Key Determinants and Barriers. Economic and Political Weekly, 47-55.
 - [9] World Bank Group, "Labour Force Participation Rate, Female (% of Female Population Ages 15+)" (Modelled ILO Estimate), India, 2021.