



## An Overview of Women Empowerment in India

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### Abstract:

*Women empowerment in India has emerged as a critical area of focus in the pursuit of gender equality and inclusive development. This overview examines the multifaceted nature of women empowerment, encompassing social, economic, political, and educational dimensions. Historically marginalized in various spheres, Indian women have witnessed significant progress through constitutional guarantees, government initiatives, legal reforms, and grassroots movements. Schemes such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Mahila E-Haat, and the Self Help Group (SHG) model have played pivotal roles in promoting financial independence, education, and participation in decision-making processes. Despite these advancements, challenges such as gender-based violence, unequal access to education and employment, and deep-rooted patriarchal norms persist. This paper highlights the progress made, identifies ongoing barriers, and emphasizes the need for sustained, intersectional efforts to achieve genuine empowerment and equality for women in India.*

**Keywords:** *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Mahila E-Haat, Self Help Group, Women Empowerment, Indian Women.*

### Introduction:

Empowerment is the interpersonal process of providing the proper tools, resources and environment to build development and increase the ability and effectiveness of others to set and reach individual goals. The term women empowerment is all about authority, or the power embarked on women sharing indistinguishable rights. It refers to the process of increasing the power, status, and autonomy of women in all aspects of life—social, economic, political, and personal. It involves giving women the tools, resources, and opportunities they need to make their own decisions, pursue education or careers, and live free from discrimination, violence, and inequality. Empowering women in India continues to be essential for achieving inclusive and sustainable development. It involves creating an environment where women can participate in society and the economy on an equal footing with men, and where their voices are heard and their rights are protected. Women's empowerment can take many forms, including education, economic, political, and social. While India has emerged as a global powerhouse in many industries and has seen a boom in global recognition,

there still exists a deep divide between men and women in various sections of society. Women are still discriminated against and face oppression in multiple spheres. The participation of women in economic tasks is still prohibited in many areas, and women often do not have access to education, especially rural women. It is crucial that this nation rally its resources and aim to solve the most prominent instance of group-based discrimination. The goal is to enable women to make informed decision, participate actively in society and contribute to the nation's development. Various government programs, such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (save the girl child, educate the girl child) and Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (microloans for women entrepreneurs) are aimed at improving women's education, healthcare and economic independence. Many NGO's and grassroots organization's work to empower women by providing resources, training and support to help them overcome challenges and achieve their goals. Their increased presence in education, entrepreneurship and the workforce has enhanced household incomes and national productivity.

## **Objectives**

Some of the objectives of women empowerment in India as follows: -

- The all-encompassing objective of women's empowerment in India is to provide them with self-sufficient agency. The development of women not only boosts their social standing but also provides all-around development in all spheres of Indian society.
- To create a society where women have equal rights, opportunities to resources, enabling them to participate fully in social, economic life.
- To develop the self-confidence of women in building their capacity.
- To build their thinking skills, a critical tools that helps in their decision-making processes.
- Providing women with economic empowerment births a new generation of women entrepreneurs who deliver creative outputs to roles previously occupied by men.
- Creating social awareness by challenging societal norms regarding how women are treated in all spheres of life.
- Healthcare is a critical tent in the objectives of woman empowerment in India.
- Providing financial assistance to deserving women from disadvantaged sections can help them achieve their educational and learn about preventative measures for women-related health issues.
- Allows women to make life-determining decisions through the different societal problems.

## **Various aspects of women empowerment**

### **➤ Social Empowerment**

This type of empowerment talks about the social differences women have gone through. It includes freedom of expression, mobility, and participation in community life. Breaking stereotypes, achieving gender equality, and freedom from discrimination. India has made a lot of progress after its independence. Still, in a

few places, women face injustices regarding health, family decisions, marriage decisions, childbirth, etc. Having an equal say in all of these matters can be a way to give women social empowerment and not limit them to a certain place.

➤ **Educational Empowerment**

Education has been one of the most important ways for women to acquire equal socio-economic status. It promotes informed decision-making, self-confidence, and economic participation. Education has been one of the most important ways for women to acquire equal socio-economic status. Women were denied the right to education in previous times. Women should be given free and compulsory education to understand their rights and duties in society. Girls that are allowed to attend school and keep learning can grow up to become upstanding citizens of India. Even today, female literacy rates across India tend to be lower than in other nations. As a result, it is the need of the hour to grant women access to education to help them study and become the breadwinners of the family.

➤ **Economic Empowerment**

Having equal access to work opportunities and participating in all kinds of markets can help women break down the barriers of inequality and defy traditional gender roles. Microfinance, skill development, and workplace equality play key roles. Financially independent women are seen as powerful people. Many organisations have realised the importance of economic empowerment and are actively working towards making women entrepreneurs and setting up microfinance facilities. Another important way to empower women financially is to enable them to make their own decisions in the way they run their homes. Creating more employment opportunities for women can also reduce poverty in the country.

➤ **Political Empowerment**

Representation in parliaments and local governance ensures inclusive policies. The participation of women in political activities is critical to creating a sustainable government body. Politics is one of the strongest and most compelling ways to make a difference in society. It gives women the confidence and skills required to be equal to men in society. Moreover, India has witnessed a lot of strong female politicians over the past few decades.

Indira Gandhi, Prathiba Patil, and Nirmala Sitharaman are a few examples of strong women in Indian politics.

➤ **Psychological Empowerment**

Psychological empowerment allows women to live a life where they are not controlled by fear. Even though a large population of women are strong and independent, they still cannot step out of their homes alone at night without worry. Women are vulnerable to various crimes such as harassment, exploitation, rape, and honour killing. Not only are these a threat to their survival, but they also have lasting psychological effects that can affect a woman's confidence. It entails creating a space where women are free to be themselves without fearing for their safety and well-being.

## ➤ **Health empowerment**

The health and well-being of women in India have improved, but there are still many issues to address. Access to quality healthcare, reproductive rights and mental health services. Maternal health has seen progress, but access to healthcare services is still limited in many regions. Efforts are going to improve the overall health and well-being of women across the country.

## **Women empowerment since independence**

Since gaining independence in 1947, India has made significant strides in the direction of women empowerment. The journey has been multifaceted, encompassing legal reforms, policy initiatives, economic development, educational access, and social transformation. In below here is a comprehensive analysis of development of women empowerment in India since independence with focus on government policies and legal frameworks:

### **1. Constitutional and legal framework**

#### **Equality rights**

Article 14: Guarantees equality before the law and equal protection of laws.

Article 15(1) and 15(3): Prohibits discrimination on grounds of sex; allows the state to make special provisions for women.

Article 16: Provides equal opportunity in public employment.

Article 39(d): Directs the State to ensure equal pay for equal work for both men and women.

Article 42: Directs the State to make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief.

#### **Key laws for empowerment**

Central Social Welfare Board (1953): Created to promote welfare activities and implement welfare programs for women and children through voluntary organizations.

Hindu Code Bills (1955–1956): Reformed Hindu personal laws, granting women rights in marriage, inheritance, and divorce.

Hindu succession Act (1956, amended 2005): granted daughters equal inheritance rights.

Dowry prohibition Act (1961): criminalized dowry demands (Strengthened laws against dowry practices).

National Perspective Plan for Women (1988–2000): First comprehensive plan for women's development.

National Policy for Empowerment of Women (2001): Aimed to bring gender justice and equality.

Protection of women from domestic violence Act (2005):

### **Provided civil remedies to protect women from domestic abuse.**

Right to Education (RTE) Act (2009): Ensured free and compulsory education for all children, including girls.

Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act (2013): Legalized protection against workplace harassment (following the Vishaka Guidelines). Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (2015): Launched to combat female foeticide and improve the status of the girl child.

Ujjwala Scheme (2016): Provided LPG connections to reduce health risks faced by women due to indoor pollution.

Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act (2017): Increased maternity leave to 26 weeks.

One Stop Centre Scheme: Provides integrated support to women affected by violence under one roof.

Mahila Shakti Kendra (2017): Community-level women empowerment centers.

Triple Talaq Judgment (2017): Supreme Court declared instant triple talaq unconstitutional.

Sabarimala Verdict (2018): Supreme Court allowed women of all ages to enter the Sabarimala temple, marking a step towards religious equality.

Here are some scheme launched for women empowerment in India and their objectives describe below:

#### **1. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme (2015) –**

- ❖ To prevent gender-biased sex selective elimination.
- ❖ To ensure survival & protection of the girl child.
- ❖ To ensure education and participation of the girl child.

#### **2. One-Stop Centre Scheme (2015) -**

- ❖ To provide support and assistance to women affected by violence, both in private and public spaces.
- ❖ To Facilitate/Assist in filing First Information Report (FIR/NCR).
- ❖ To provide psycho-social support and counselling to women/girl.

#### **3. Women Helpline Scheme (2016) –**

- ❖ To provide toll-free 24-hours telecom service to women affected by violence.
- ❖ To facilitate crisis and non-crisis intervention through referral to the appropriate agencies such as police/Hospitals/Ambulance services/District Legal Service Authority (DLSA)/Protection Officer (PO)/OSC. To provide information about the appropriate support services, government

schemes, and programs available to the woman affected by violence, in her particular situation within the local area in which she resides or is employed.

**4. UJJAWALA (2016) –**

- ❖ To prevent the trafficking of women and children for commercial sexual exploitation.
- ❖ To facilitate the rescue of victims from the place of their exploitation and place them in safe custody.
- ❖ To provide rehabilitation services with both immediate and long- term to the victims by providing basic amenities/needs such as shelter, food, clothing, medical treatment including counselling, legal aid and guidance, and vocational training.

**5. Working Women Hostel (1972-73) –**

- ❖ To promote the availability of safe and conveniently located accommodation for working women.
- ❖ To provide accommodation to children of working women, up to the age of 18 years for girls and up to the age of 5 years for boys.

**6. SWADHAR Greh (2018) –**

- ❖ To cater to the primary need for shelter, food, clothing, medical treatment, and care of women in distress.
- ❖ To provide women with legal aid and guidance.

**7. Nari Shakti Puraskar (2016) –**

- ❖ To strengthen the place of women in society.
- ❖ To facilitate institutions that work towards the progress and development of women in society.

**8. Mahila Shakti Kendras (MSK) (2017) –**

- ❖ To create an environment for women where they have access to healthcare, quality, education, guidance, employment, etc.
- ❖ To facilitate these opportunities at the block and district level in the country.

**9. NIRBHAYA (2012) –**

- ❖ To facilitate safety and security for women at various levels.
- ❖ To ensure strict privacy and confidentiality of women's identity and information. Provision for real-time intervention as far as possible

**10. Mahila Police Volunteers (2016) –**

- ❖ An MPV will serve as a public-police interface in order to fight crime against women.
- ❖ The broad mandate of MPVs is to report incidences of violence against women such as domestic violence, child marriage, dowry harassment and violence faced by women in public spaces.

**11. Mahila E-Haat (2016) –**

- ❖ To facilitate entrepreneurship opportunities online for women.
- ❖ To educate women on various aspects of online selling and helping them establish their venture.

**12. Sukanya Samriddhin Yojana (SSY) (2025) –**

- ❖ Launched as a part of the most popular “Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao” mission.
- ❖ The SSY accounts can be opened by the parents of a new-born girl child.
- ❖ The amount can be used for the girl child’s higher education, marriage etc.

**13. Mudra Yojana (2025) –**

- ❖ The PMMY (Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana) provides collateral-free loans to small business owners up to Rs.20 lacs ( limit increased in budget 24-25).
- ❖ It focuses on providing more loans to women-led enterprises.

**14. PMAY (Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana) –**

- ❖ It should overlook the PMAY Scheme while talking about women empowerment schemes in India.
- ❖ It is notable that the allotment of PMAY houses with the ownership of women is a major step in empowering them.

**Barriers of women empowerment in India**

Gender discrimination a preference for sons leads to unequal education, healthcare and opportunities. Boy child often receive better medical care and food. The traditional mind-set that prioritizes male education over female education needs to be dismantled.

**1. Economic barriers**

Women earn 20-30% less than men for similar work. Financial reliance on male family members reduces autonomy. Only 19% women are in the workforce, often in informal low-paying sectors. Only 14% of agricultural landowners are women, and banks often reject loans without male guarantors.

## **2. Lack of Education**

Many women, especially in rural areas, have limited access to quality education. Few women in tech due to societal bias. Early marriage reduced schooling for girls. deep-rooted cultural practices like child marriage and the dowry system continue to adversely impact the lives of young girls.

## **3. Violence and safety issues**

Fear of public harassment or violence limits mobility, dowry deaths is to be major obstacles to women's empowerment in India. 30% women face spousal abuse. The high prevalence of different forms of violence against women, including domestic violence, verbal abuse, physical and psychological harassments etc.

## **4. Traditional gender roles**

Traditional gender roles and expectation can limit women's opportunities and choices. Traditions and beliefs often discourage women's independence.

Religious and cultural practices may justify the oppressive treatment of women in certain communities.

## **5. Lack of legal and political participation**

In India women also face limited legal and political support for participate a political services including limited participation in government services. Low representation in politics and leadership roles. Political participation is also hindered at the Panchayat level and at the state and national levels, despite existing reservations for women.

## **6. Patriarchal attitudes**

These prioritized men over women are still deeply ingrained in many part of society. Deep-rooted gender norms restrict women's roles, inferior, limiting their aspirations and self-esteem and decision-making power. This can lead to Discrimination against women in areas such as education, employment and lack of infrastructure.

## **7. Workplace inequality**

Gender bias, wage gaps, and lack of maternity support hinder career growth. Women frequently encounter challenges such as unequal pay, limited career growth opportunities and workplace harassment and shift timing. Companies must embrace diversity and inclusion initiatives providing equal opportunities for women.

## **Conclusion:**

India has made commendable strides in creating frameworks for women's empowerment. Women empowerment is not a one dimensional goal; it is a collective and continuous process. Real women empowerment will come not from policy but from changing people's mind-sets. Empowered women are the backbone of s progressive and prosperous India. Women empowerment will be real and effective only when they have income and wealth so that they can stand on their own feet and build their identity in the society.



To ensure that women empowerment is not a privilege for a few, it is a right for all. The disparities in women's education across states emphasise the need for multifaceted approaches to improve literacy rates.

The institutional delivery patterns underscore regional disparities and the impact of socio-economic factors on maternal healthcare. Digital India has immense potential to be a game-changer for women's empowerment. However, for this to be realized, structural barriers must be addressed. Empowering women digitally is not just about connectivity—it's about access, agency, and voice. Women's empowerment has become one of the most important concerns of the 21st century, not only nationally but also internationally. Political representation of women, though showing improvement, requires continued efforts, including quotas, education initiatives, and financial support. Government initiatives alone are not enough to achieve these goals. Empowered women are not just beneficiaries—they are vital agents of social change and nation-building.

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**Citation:** Rej. D., (2025) “An Overview of Women Empowerment in India”, *Bharati International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Development (BIJMRD)*, Vol-3, Issue-07, July-2025.