

Indian Women's Empowerment In The Twenty-First Century: Some Troubles And Barriers

Mr. Ashok Kumar¹, Ms. Meera²

¹Assistant Professor, Chandigarh School of Business, CGC, Jhanjeri

²Assistant Professor, Chandigarh School of Business, Jhanjeri Email id: ashok.j2077@cgc.ac.in

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Abstract

The term "women empowerment" has gained widespread recognition in the twenty-first century. Women's empowerment encompasses a variety of factors, including economic possibilities, societal justice, & personal rights. Female's emancipation on its own explains how various privileges, including social and political rights and economic and legal equality, should also apply equally to women. We owe women all of these privileges.

But nearly all around in the world, women and girls remain to be deprived of these basic rights, frequently for no other reason than their gender. Since ancient times, men have held women in inferior and subordinate positions. Women's empowerment is among the most pressing issues today and a necessity, yet the reality is that things are not satisfactory enough. Gender mainstreaming accelerates the process of achieving strengthening women and advancing gendered equality, which is the ultimate objective. The Indian government has developed programs and policies at various stages to address various areas and tactics of gender advancement in this approach. Women's upliftment and empowerment is still necessary. In this essay, an endeavour has been undertaken to shed some light on the various problems and difficulties experienced by Indian women. A few recommendations are also made for women's empowerment in the conclusion.

Key words: Education, civil rights, gender disparity, and policy considerations for women's advancement

Introduction

Today, the most crucial issues of in the 21st century is the empowerment of women. Women's advancement is fundamentally the process of improving the social, economical, and political position of women, historically the less fortunate members of society. Women's empowerment is the process of enhancing the political, social, educational, gender, and economic power of individual women and groups of women. Women's empowerment also entails creating a society, or sort of political environment, free from oppression, exploitation, anxiety, discrimination, and the general sense of persecution that comes from being a woman in a stereotypical masculine organisation.

Nearly half of the world's population is made up of women, however India has a disproportionately low female population compared to its male population. They are not always placed on an equal footing with males in terms of social prestige. Despite this, women in western nations enjoy the same status and rights as males in all spheres of life. However, discrimination and limitations based on gender continue to exist in India. She was paradoxically viewed as both a Deity at sometimes and just a slave at others.

The process of women's empowerment in India is greatly influenced by a number of factors, including geographic location, educational attainment (urban vs. rural), social standing (caste and class), and age. Although there are several national, state, and local (Panchayat) policies and procedures on women's empowerment in many fields, including healthcare, schooling, economic opportunities, gender-based violence in politics, rights to work, right to property, etc. However, a considerable gap has been observed between policy developments and real community practise.

Review of Literature:

We gain some understanding of the steps, aspects, and gaps in women's empowerment through the review of the literature. The results of many research on women's empowerment shed some insight into the issues and obstacles that they face as well as the effects of policies and practices on the various facets of women's empowerment. In their 2005 study, Venkata Ravi and Venkatraman concentrated on how Self Help Groups (Self help group) affected women's participation and ability to exercise control over decisions about both family concerns and group exercises. This shows that female's involvement in socioeconomic pursuits boosted their ability to participate in the decision-making process. Sethuraman K. focused on the impact of domestic violence and women's empowerment on malnutrition and child growth in a rural and ethnic community in southern India (2008). The study was conducted in rural Karnataka and is long-term and empirical in nature, including tribal and rural areas. This study looks at the growth and nutritional status of children between the ages of 6 and 24 month in a rural and tribal community, in addition to the link between domestic abuse and women 's autonomy. It also demonstrates a beneficial link among women's rights and healthy diets for both mothers and their children. According to M. Bhvani Sankara Rao (2011), the women 's wellbeing who participate in Self Help Group (SHGs) has unquestionably improved. It is evident that women used to talk among themselves about the health issues that affected them, their progeny, as well as other connections enlightening them about the many gov't benefits available to both children and adults. Does Female Empowerment Promote Economic Development? Doepke M. Tertilt M. (2011 For this research, a variety models of uncooperative family negotiating were created in order to better understand the kind of frictions that could lead to the discovered observed relation. According to the empirical evidence that underpins this study, children gain when their mothers are financially secure.

It also shows how allowing women to work in respectable positions and earn a consistent income not only contributes to the reduction of poverty but also promotes better nutrition, wellness, and educational outcomes for women as well as the individuals who rely on them.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To recognise the necessity of women's emancipation
2. To assess the variables affecting women's advancement
3. To determine the roadblocks to women's emancipation

Research Methodology:

The research approach was chosen with the nature of the investigation in mind. Essentially, this essay is analytical and descriptive in nature. Analyzing women's empowerment in the context of India has been attempted. The information used in this study comes exclusively from textbooks, journals, periodicals, scientific papers, websites, government records, and other secondary research.

Need for Women Advancement

Females and young girls must be regarded as equals to men in all respects because they are not commodities.

Nearly nearly 1/2 of all people on Earth, 1/2 of its persons ability, nearly two thirds of its labour force, 1/10th of its revenue, and less than 1/100th of its real estate are owned by women. In the 900 million illiterate individuals worldwide, women outnumber males two to one, and women make up 70% of the poor. There are increasingly more women working and attending education worldwide. However, girls are still far more likely to miss school than boys. Around 15 million girls and Ten million boys who should be in primary school aren't, according to estimates. In terms of property rights, 38% of women worldwide who are employed labour in the agrarian, forestry, and fishing industries, while just 13% of landowners are women. Even though the proportion of women in elected positions has increased, as of February 2019, they still make up 24% of all National Parliamentarians. According to research on domestic violence, 35% of women as well as girls between the ages of 15 and 49 had been subjected to physical or sexual abuse by a romantic partner in the previous year. In 30 countries, 1 in 3 girls (200 million girls) between the ages of 15 and 19 underwent the damaging practise of female genital mutilation (FGM) in 2017. Worldwide, child marriage is a common occurrence. In the globe today, 650 million women & girls get married prior to the age of 18. Globally, approximately 30 million women died in 2017 from medical complications to pregnancies and delivery issues, according to the issue of great health and well-being (U.N,2019)

In Indian culture, which is reflected in the sacred texts, women are revered as goddesses of prosperity (Laxmi Maa), wisdom (Sarswati Maa), and power (Durga Maa). In India, the problem of empowering women needs to be seriously addressed, particularly in distant regions. Approximately 66% of people which are women living in rural areas is underutilised, primarily as a result of ingrained social conventions and traditions. 90% of the workers are women in agricultural and animal care (Shettar,2015). Studies now in existence demonstrate that, despite being in the same class, women are generally less healthy than men.

In India, the labor participation rate for women is 25.51 percent, compared to 53.26 percent for men, according to the 2011 Census. Compared to the urban sector's 53.03 percent of men, the rural sector's 30.02 percent female workforce participation rate is higher (Women & Men,2018).

It is still a long way off for Indian women to be treated equally to their male counterparts; in addition to being being overlooked as public figures, the typical India-born woman also appears being neglected at home. Only 8 of the 74 cabinet posts in the union minister's council were held by women in 2012. Only three of the Supreme Court's 31 judges were female, and only 73 out of 689 judges in other top courts were female .According to the 2017 edition of the election statistics book, there were almost 11% of women nominated for the Rajya Sabha in 2016. In the 16 General Election in 2014, 5.54 percent of women voted, which is roughly equal to the 67.0 percent of men who cast ballots (Women & Men,2018).

All south Asian nations, with the exception of Afghanistan, were ranked higher for women than India in the 2013 UNDP study on Human Development Indicators. According to the prediction, an Indian girl kid between the ages of 1 and 5 will die 75% more frequently than a boy child. One woman is raped every 20 minutes, although only 10% of offences are reported. Therefore, attaining gender equality and empowering women is crucial for society to guarantee the growth and advancement of nation. In India, women's advancement is still a catchphrase, although it is necessary for the reasons listed below.

Access to Higher education: Even after 74 years of independence, the majority of women in India are denied their fundamental human rights, despite the fact that schooling is a fundamental right. Boy children and girl children have different levels of access to education. Traditional society holds the view that educating girls more will lead to problems down the road. So, in order to improve the status of women in society, women must be empowered.

Employment Access : According to recent data, just 13% of women hold administrative positions, 11% hold judicial positions, 7% hold police positions, 2% hold positions in the defence industry, and 22% hold teaching positions (Kishor and Gupta,). It provides a general index of women's employability. Due to a male-dominated culture, it is

impossible for a woman to be exposed in the media. A woman is unable to express her opinions and intentions in the media, and if she does, society will not tolerate it (Baruah,2013).

Decision-making ability: Due to India's male-dominated society, women are denied the ability to make any decisions. In general, it is believed that women do not make smart decisions when making decisions. Because of the culture of male dominance, women cannot make any independent decisions in the household, the village, or the local community. It is ideal for women to have the freedom to make their own decisions in all aspects of life.

Libertarian Movement: There are several factors that prevent women from moving publicly; a woman unsafe to do also during the day, although especially at night. From a security standpoint, it seems as challenging for females to operate a latenight duty or in other form of challenging functioning environment. Therefore, it is asserted in India that empowering women is necessary to give them the same mobility as males, including at night.

Domestic Abuse: In most households today, domestic violence is a common occurrence due to the advancement of social living standards. Family abuse has detrimental effects on one's health both immediately and over time and on wellbeing of women and children. Experts believe that the persistent danger of domestic violence contributes to women's disempowerment (Nagaraja, 2013). Domestic abuse incidences continue to happen every day even if the Domestic Violence Act of 2005 is in effect. If women are given more power, when society stops using violence, and when people are treated equally regardless of gender, this condition can be changed. In addition to the above mentioned facts, crime against women is one of the most worrying circumstances for women. Women should be given the freedom to live a respectable and dignified life in order to protect themselves from crime.

Violence against Women

Women's rights violations are a direct threat to India's efforts to empower women. Alarming data are revealed in a National Crime Records Bureau report on crimes against women. Table 1 lists the reported offences' crime heads in chronological order from 2010 to 2014:

Table 1: India's Women's Crime, from 2010 to 2014

No.	Crimes	Year 2010	Year 2011	Year 2012	Year 2013	Year 2014
1	Rape	21,395	22,170	24,205	24,900	33,700
2	Death due to Dowry	8,370	8950	8,630	8,290	7,930
3	Brutality by In-Laws	89,500	94,100	99,130	10,6525	1,18,860
4	Assault on Women	38,710	40,610	42,960	45,350	60,760
5	Immoral Traffic	2,464	2480	2,420	2,550	2,570

Source: Crimes in India, Year 2014.

According to Table 1's data, crimes against women are getting worse every year in every way. From 25,740 cases in 2010 to 51,880 incidents involving women in 2014, the data on kidnapping incidents almost doubled and showed a considerable increase. In-law abuse cases grew steadily from 89,500 in 2010 till 1,18,860 in 2014. Attacks against women climbed from 38,710 in 2010 to 60,760 in 2014. However, throughout these years there was also an upsurge in rape, dowry deaths, and immoral trafficking charges.

The rising crime rate is a reflection of the deplorable mentality of the populace, which is impeding social and national advancement. Even if our nation has severe laws protecting women's rights, the problem only becomes worse every year because of the twisted attitude of the male-dominated culture.

Data on the total amount of crime against women reported under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) shows that it is likewise a disturbing issue in India. Crime against women makes up a sizeable portion of all other crimes, which demonstrates how unsafe and insecure women's lives are in India. Despite the fact that there are laws protecting women's rights, women nevertheless face many hardships in our society on a daily basis. Table 2 below lists the crimes against women that were reported under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) from 2010 to 2014.

Table-2 Indian Penal Code records crimes against women (IPC)

Sr No.	Year	Crimes in Total	Assaults on women	Percentage Of Total Crime
1	2010	21,21,330	2,03,994	9.62
2	2011	22,24,820	2,13,570	9.61
3	2012	23,25,560	2,28,635	9.84
4	2013	23,87,170	2,44,260	10.24
5	2014	26,47,710	3,09,53	11.71

Source: Crimes in India, Year 2014.

In comparison to 2012, when there were 2,28,645 incidents reported of offense against women under the IPC, 2013 saw a sum of 2,44,270 such incidents. The number of these offences has been rising steadily, reaching 3,09,540 in 2014. In the last five years, the percentage of IPC offences perpetrated against women as a percentage of all IPC crimes grew from 9.61% in 2010 to 11.70% in 2014.

According to the data analysis above, crime against women is climbing year over year under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) among all other types of crime in India, despite the country's strict legislation enacted to combat it. Because of this, women's empowerment in our nation is very necessary in order to significantly lower both the overall crime rate as well as crime against women.

The total criminal activity towards women in India in 2016 shows that the bulk of the instances under this category were recorded as cruelty by a husband or by his family (32.6%), assault on a woman to violate her modesty (25%), kidnapping and abduction of women (19.0%), and rape (11.5%). (Crime in India, 2016).

The statistics for all crimes against women from 2014 to 2016 are shown in table 3 below. According to table 3 below, the overall crime rate against women decreased to - From 3.0% in 2014–2015 to 2.9% in 2015–2016, the percentage increased.

Table 3: Total Women's Crime in India from 2014 to 2016

Crime Head	Crime Incidence			Rate of Crime			Percentage Variability	
	2014	2015	2016	2014	2015	2016	2014-2015	2015-2016
Total Crime against Women	3,39,447	3,39,233	3,38,944	56.5	54.1	55.1	-3.0%	2.8%

Crimes in India, Year 2016

In terms of total crimes committed against women in 2016, cruelty committed by a husband or a member of his family had the highest number (1,10,378), followed by assaults on women intended to offend their modesty (84,746), kidnapping and abduction instances (64,519), and rape incidents (38,947).

In 2016, among the nation's major states, West Bengal had the highest number of cases of cruelty committed by a husband or his family (19,302), preceded by Rajasthan (13,811) and Uttar Pradesh (13,811). (11,156). Attacks on women with the purpose to offend their modesty were more common in Maharashtra (11,396), preceded by Uttar Pradesh (11,335), and Madhya Pradesh (8,717). The most kidnapping and abduction instances were reported in Uttar Pradesh (12,994), Maharashtra (6,170), and Bihar (5,496). In 2016 there were more rape cases in Maharashtra (4,189), Uttar Pradesh (4,816), and Madhya Pradesh (4,882) (also see table -4).

Table -4: 2016 statistics on crimes against women in India:

S.No.	Crimes	Cases in Total	Main States/UT during 2016		
1.	Violence by husband or his Blood relations.	1,10,368	West Bengal (19,292)	Rajasthan (13,801)	Uttar Pradesh (11,146)
2.	Violence on women intended to offend their modesty	84,736	Maharashtra (11,386)	Uttar Pradesh (11,325)	Madhya Pradesh (8,707)
3.	Kidnapping & Abduction	64,509	Uttar Pradesh (12,984)	Maharashtra (6,160)	Bihar (5,486)
4.	Rape	38,937	Madhya Pradesh (4,872)	Uttar Pradesh (4,806)	Maharashtra (4,179)

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Crimes in India, Year 2016

Elements Affecting the Advancement of Women:

The elements given below are some of the key variables that affect women's empowerment in our nation. It can be claimed that women's empowerment in our nation is possible if these variables pan out favourably.

Duty to one's family: Every family member must be taken care of by the female members, and the more family members there are, the greater the burden falls on women. As a result, women in joint families never have free time—not even to discuss their opinions with other relatives. In the case of working women, women hold down two full-time jobs. Their household duties have not lessened as they have moved to a new job. Their home duties, including as cooking and caring for the family's children, elderly, sick, and disabled members, go unpaid and are not even held accountable. Every day, women devote three times as much time to caregiving and household duties as do men. Household duties interfere with their performance and prevent them from succeeding.

Discrimination against women: It represents one of the key elements that significantly affects women's empowerment in our nation. Women in India are regarded as second-class citizens in a culture where men predominate. However, the ratio of male to female has significantly decreased as a result of the sex-discrimination abortion of female foetuses. Male children are traditionally thought of as the family's heirs, an asset, and female children as liabilities. Women's access to new work prospects has been constrained by gender discrimination in schooling. For the same work/jobs, women receive lower pay than men do. There is a false belief that because women lack emotional strength, they cannot take risks like males do in our society.

Societal standing- Indian society is separated into many groups based on factors such as caste, religion, economic standing, culture, and family history. Women suffer greatly as a result of these qualifications, experience social prejudice, and as a result, are disadvantaged in many ways. In order to improve women's standing in society. Empowerment is required in our nation.

Ambition for Success: There is a widespread belief that women are often less ambitious than men. They become dependent on both society and their male family members as a result of this character. There is a prevalent perception that women lack a clear life goal and desire, regardless of their environment—rural or urban, wealthy or impoverished, educated or illiterate.

Violence Against Women: Women in our culture endure great suffering as a result of various atrocities, including rape, molestation, eviction, subjugation, humiliating, enslavement, use of force, and dowry demands. Urban areas experience proportionally more atrocities than rural ones.

Challenges and Obstacles to Women's Empowerment

The development of female empowerment in our nation has been hampered by a variety of barriers, which presents numerous difficulties and restricts it in a variety of ways. Because of ingrained social-cultural norms, women in developing nations like India are given a lower position. Even in the twenty-first century, Indian society is still firmly convinced that a boy child carries the family next generation while a female kid is destined for the family of in-laws. Every now and then women internalise the conventional view of their position in the household and community, which causes them to suffer injustice. The following are some of the main obstacles to women's empowerment:-

Literacy- A significant obstacle to women's empowerment in our nation is their lower level of education. Even though we have made great strides in schooling since independence, women still make up the majority. For men, education lags far behind. According to the 2011 census, there is a considerable gender bias in the higher education system, with the male literacy rate being 82.14% and the female literacy rate being only 64.4%. (Suguna, 2011). In addition, women in India are significantly underrepresented in professional and specialised education and training, which has a significant impact on their employment and leadership potential. The only means by which women can be empowered, get better employment, and work side by side with men is therefore believed to be through education.

Measures for health and safety- Another danger and significant obstacle to women's empowerment is the issue of safety and health. A woman's health is crucial for the welfare of her family, her nation, and society at large. Malnutrition, maternity healthcare, and medical hazards are among the main health problems that women face nowadays in India that prevent them from attaining their life goals. In public or private settings, women are not given any protection., including workplaces, streets, markets, transportation hubs, hotels, and even private residences. The main goal of safety measures should be to empower women.

Business Competencies:- Professional skills are lacking among women in both the public and commercial sectors of the workforce. Women's access to new career prospects is restricted as a result of these disparities in skills and education development between the sexes. Being equal to males in India is extremely difficult due to this disparity, which also severely limits women's empowerment.

Economic Growth: Women's involvement in the economic development process paves the path for the elimination of poverty, non - discrimination, and shared prosperity. Whether they work in business, the agricultural sector, as entrepreneurs, workers, or provide unpaid care at home, Women contribute considerably to the economy. However, they continue to be disproportionately impacted by exploitation, prejudice, and poverty. Women are a minority of individuals in high positions and frequently wind up in unstable, low-paying occupations as a result of gender discrimination. It restricts their ability to access financial resources like loans, real estate, and land, as well as her ability to influence economic and social policy. Although eradicating poverty is a national priority, a greater proportion of women are only exploited because of poverty.

Family Overload For women's empowerment in India, gender discrimination in domestic relationships is a major challenge. In this society, it is common to believe that women alone should be responsible for taking care of the home. Women are responsible for housework, child care, menial tasks, and caring for the elderly and disabled individuals in the family. Household duties hampered their effectiveness and stymied their success. This load sometimes prevents women from becoming as empowered as males in society.

Unfairness and Moral code:- Because of gender bias in nutrition and health, women have an extremely high death rate, substantially lowering their population, particularly in Asia, Africa, China, & India. The Maternal Mortality Rate In India has decreased to 130 in the years 2014–2016 from 301 in the years 2001–2003 (Women & Men, 2018). Only until women as a whole step forward and assist in their own self-empowerment with such work restrictions & obstacles be eliminated or diminished that stands in the path of women's empowerment.

Conclusion:

The emancipation of women is among the most important topics of the 21st era, both locally and globally. However, the situation of women's empowerment appears to be somewhat unsatisfactory considering the success in the fields of earnings, jobs, and academic achievement. Every nation on the planet experiences gender inequality, & women account about 50% of the population. Advancement of women and gender equality are so crucial to our society's development and progress as a whole. The National Crime Records Bureau's report on crimes against women presents worrisome data from the years 2010 to 2014, showing that the number of kidnapping events nearly doubled and increased significantly, going from 25,740 women in 2010 to 51,880 in 2014. From 89,500 in 2010 to 1,18,860 in

2014, the number of cases of abuse by in-laws climbed steadily. Rape, dowry killings, immoral trafficking, etc. have all increased significantly over the past few years as well. The rising crime rate against women illustrates the position of women in current society and the attitudes that people have about them.

Over the last five years (2010-2014), the percentage of offences under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) that are perpetrated against women has grown, growing to 11.70 percent in 2014 from 9.61 percent in 2010. It demonstrates that, Even though there are stringent regulations in place to safeguard sufferers of offenses towards women, IPC-related crimes against women are on the rise every year in India. As a result, women's empowerment in our nation is crucial for a progressive society as well as for reducing crime against women and creating a safe and healthy environment.

Cruelty committed by a husband or a member of his family accounted for the majority of crimes against women in 2016 (1,10,378), following that assaults on females intended to insult their modesty (84,746), kidnapping and abduction instances (64,519), and rape incidents (38,947). In 2016, the highest number of cases of cruelty committed by a husband or his relatives occurred in West Bengal (19,302), followed by assaults on women with the intent to offend their modesty through Maharashtra (11,396), most kidnapping and molestations ever cases in Uttar Pradesh (12,994), and the highest number of rape cases in Madhya Pradesh (4,882). For a nation like India, where women are revered as goddesses, the state-by-state analysis of crime shows that crime among women is on the rise in all major states.

The most pressing requirement of the moment is for attitudes toward women to alter. It is important to note that their way of thinking and their set of values all contribute to the growth of a great family, a good society, and eventually a good country. Governmental measures by itself wouldn't be adequate to accomplish this. In order to eliminate gender discrimination and provide women full autonomy over their lives and equal opportunity to participate in society's social, political, and economic affairs, society must take the initiative. The most realistic way to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment continues to be gender mainstreaming. By incorporating a perspective on gender into all institutional regulations, plans, operations, and architecture, it brings gender equality and women's empowerment from the margins to the centre of decision-making.

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