

Research Paper

Beyond Barriers: An In-depth Analysis of Women's Empowerment in a Viksit Bharat

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ABSTRACT

"Woman is the builder and moulder of a nation's destiny". (Rabindranath Tagore)

As India, nearing its hundredth anniversary of being independent in 2047, the concept of "Viksit Bharat" is becoming a more prominent part of national discussion. This research paper examines the essential importance of empowering women in realizing this vision, significantly advancement have been made, however, entrenched gender disparities continue to exist, particularly in such areas like healthcare, education and employment participation. Viksit Bharat road map is leading the journey of India towards economic, social, and the technological improvement. The government bodies target to strengthen disadvantaged groups and enhance their accessibility to vital services. A holistic approach aimed at empowering rural India align with national development objectives and international sustainability pledges, highlighting its importance in realizing the vision of "Viksit Bharat". Women empowerment includes aspects related to social, economic and political spheres. Empowerment of women is not only essential but also imperative for all round development of a country.

Keywords: *Beyond Barriers, Women's Empowerment, Viksit Bharat*

Women empowerment is active multidimensional process which helps the women to rectify their full identify & power in whole life, empowerment helps the women to slows their strength handle the whole responsibilities, and help to overcome the problem that confront them. Selective indicators help to measures for the empowerment, such as community, the workplace active endowment in the household.

The term empowerment refers to the process by which women achieve control over the variable that influences their lives and wellbeing. Gender inequality, particularly discrimination between men and women, is deeply entrenched in Indian society. Women empowerment appears to be a journey of modification, characterized by initiatives targeted on focusing on gender inconsistency as well as encouraging a society in which there are equal advantages for women.

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Anciently, Indian society has been marked by deep-rooted gender disparities, but over the years, there has been extensive enhance the capabilities of women in multiple fields in the diverse topography in India, that sustain gender inequalities and ensure the allocation of sufficient resources.

Education-

Education is one of the primary ways to attain gender equality and female literacy has significantly improved in the country over the last few decades. Education provides the fundamental pillar for the empowerment of women and their economy self-reliance. In India various initiatives have been implemented to promote equitable access to education including the “right, to free and compulsory education. Act 2009”. Women empowerment includes aspects related to social, economic and political spheres. Empowering women is not only essential but also imperative for all round development of a country. Accordingly, 42.57% of total, STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) enrolments are women it shows, these days more and more women are taking part and removing the barrier.”

Women, in Viksit Bharat–

As world moves fast, women in India are playing an important part in forming its development & future trajectory. Viksit Bharat aspires to foster an inclusive economy by promoting investment, growth and innovation through initiatives such as make in India, digital India and startup India.

India's commitment to significant international agreements, such as the Beijing's “Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)”, the “convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW,1979)”, and the “agenda 2030 for sustainable development, forms the foundation of the country's policy framework on women's empowerment and equality. With, India announcing its own theme of “Nari Shakti se Viksit Bharat” the goal is to shift from women's development to women -led development.

Challenges and issues in, Women Empowerment in India

1. Biasness in education:

There has always been a gender biased society in India. Even after so much of modernization patriarchy still exists. The rural Indian households have a thought pattern that girl will get married and will leave the house so there is no point in getting her educated, instead they like to spend money on the education of boys as they will give a huge return in future. Women always had a low ratio in education as compared to men in India. The average female literacy rate in India is 71.5% and for male it is 84.4% as per the 2021 data. This is because women are not given equal opportunity to study and educate themselves in comparison to men; specially in rural areas.

2. Exploitation at workplace

In the organization sectors or in any job place women are given less opportunity on the higher posts as people have a belief that women are not capable of handling the workload of the higher job positions. This effect is known as Glass Ceiling effect and from this phenomenon a large female population is being affected. Moreover, women are given less salary as compared to men and also less chance to work and show their skills and abilities.

3. Inequality in household chores:

As Indian society has always been male dominant society, doing household work is seen to be the work of females only. There has been a huge bias in the household work like food preparation, looking after family, and child. Women often sacrifice their job and lifestyle in order to fulfil the needs and demands of their family. Whereas men are focusing on their career, job, health and lifestyle and either contribute less or do not contribute at all in the household chores.

4. Health facilities:

An important aspect for a woman is their health, typically their sexual and reproductive health and hygiene. Many times, women are seen being neglected of their basic health care needs due to the vast family responsibilities they carry, specially at the time of their pregnancy they require most health care. There is a need for women to have easy access to high quality healthcare and remove gender related prejudice.

5. Social norms and cultural norms:

Living in an Indian society comes with a responsibility of following social and culture norms. There are some norms that are affecting women in order to get empowered. Some states in India still have practices like honor killings, child marriage etc. These practices are harmful and are a major barrier for women specifically of rural areas. Most women adhere to these norms only to save and protect the reputation and name of their family.

Empowering women through Government policies and schemes

Government has introduced and implemented various schemes for empowering women of India. As Viksit Bharat is focusing on the women as one of its themes, here are some of the schemes or programs for women by the Ministry, of Women and Child Development (MWCD).

1. Swadhar Grah:

This is a place where women who faced difficulties due to any natural disasters or are homeless, prisoners released from jail, victims of domestic violence or women rescued from trafficking, who are in distress and have no support from family and society gets facilities and support such as food, shelter, medical etc. Women are provided with a temporary accommodation or shelter with the primary needs such as food, medical facilities, in addition to the emotional support, counselling, behavioural trainings, legal aid and guidance. They also get skill training for their financial independence.

2. One Stop Centers:

One Stop Centers are facilities made for women who faces issues in their life like violence, abuse whether it's physical or sexual or verbal or emotional, sexual harassment, human trafficking, attacks, and honor killings. Irrespective of the women's caste, culture, religion or economic status, One Stop Centers are always available to help them with their problems.

The services provided by One Stop Centers are medical services, counseling, assisting women in filing FIR, legal aid & counseling and a place to stay in for a maximum period of 5 days. The major benefit of One Stop Centers is that all these services given to women are easily available under one roof.

These services are also available for the girls below 18 years of age but in this situation the One Stop Center should be registered under "Juvenile, Justice Act, 2000" and the "Protection, of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012."

3. "Beti BachaoBeti Padhao scheme"

This scheme focuses on improving the sex, ratio between girl child and boy child in India with the help of making changes in society. Many awareness campaigns have been organized to raise the issue of huge difference in the sex ratio and also the difference in educational ratio i.e. literacy rate among boys and girls.

The Hon'ble Prime minister of India inaugurated the Beti, Bachao Beti Padhao campaign on 22nd January, 2015.

The main goals of this scheme were:

- Avert discriminatory practices of sex-selective based on gender.
- Making sure that no girl child is being killed before or after birth and protecting them
- Ensuring that every girl child receives education and feel empowered.

4. 181 Helpline number for women:

A toll-free number i.e. 181 has been established for women in need of emergency services when faced by any kind of violence or attack. The number also provides information related to all the government schemes that are made for women throughout the country. Women just need to dial the three-digit number and immediate assistance is provided to them by the staff and the service is available 24/7. The staff of women helpline do not disconnect the call until and unless the issue is resolved and then take the feedback later. This helpline is connected with Police, hospitals, protection officer, district level service authority (DLSA) and one stop centers. This scheme benefits women who are the victims of violence whether in public or private space through one call. It also provides details about the government programs or services that are available to women.

5. Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojna (PMMVY):

The scheme was implemented on January 1st, 2017 by the Indian government. The scheme "Pradhan Mantri Matru,Vandana Yojana" promotes healthy behavior of Pregnant women and lactating mothers, by providing financial support to them so that it could compensate with the loss of wage or salary during pregnancy and lactating period. Women are provided with adequate cash incentive so that they would only focus on taking rest, have nutritional food and take care of their child.

The amount of Rs. 5000 is provided in two different installments for the first child.

There are several criteria for women to be eligible for the benefits, some of which criteria are:

- The scheme is only for the first child but to promote the positive behavioral change towards girl child, women will get benefit on second child with extra cash incentive if she has girl child as the second child. In this case the amount of Rs. 6000 is provided in one installment.
- Pregnant women should not be an employ of any central/state government organizations or of any Public sector undertakings (PSUs) or with any other similar benefits from law. If so the benefits of the scheme won't be provided under such conditions.

Limitations:

As we observe Indian government has started various policies to help women and promote their empowerment. But when we check the actual status of these schemes, it is not

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providing as many benefits as it seems to be. The limitations or barriers behind the effecting working of these policies can be:

- that, there is a huge flaw in the implementation of these policies as in many cases the benefits do not make it to the target population, reasons could be corruption or lack of monitoring the mechanisms.
- that, some policies are made to target only a specific state or region and due to which some states may benefit more and others may not because of the lack of facilities such as infrastructure, economic development etc.
- The awareness about the policies plays a major role in the successful implementation of those schemes. Women, sometimes are not aware about the benefits they could avail or have half information about it. As a result, they are unable to get advantage of these effective policies.
- One major drawback is that there is a lack of an integrated and comprehensive policy that focuses on the overall issues of women. There should be more practical and realistic approach in making these policies so that it could cater a lot of issues that women encounter, collectively as social, economic and cultural issues.
- Cultural factors and social norms are so deeply rooted in our lives that they still continue to affect the women and their empowerment, such as stereotypes, patriarchal thinking, gender roles are pulling women down and obstructing the effective execution of policies designed to confront these issues

Impact:

Empowering women has been observed as a pillar of progress for societal, political and economic areas. Women have the potential to transform the development of the country and this could happen only if they are provided with education, opportunities, medical facilities and social support. Women are making their significant contribution toward the field of education, economic development, social initiatives, actively working in the MNCs and securing leadership roles. They are contributing in not only expanding the workforce but also improving their performance and efficiency.

Women are actively contributing towards economic growth in country's GDP, poverty rates have come down and families & communities have built up economic resilience. As women are also becoming an earning member in the family, hence reducing poverty. These women then use their money to uplift their families by providing good education to their children, providing healthcare facilities, and nutritional food to the family, which then improves the overall well-being of the family and entire community, breaking the poverty cycle.

In terms of education, educated women majorly prioritize the education of their children as well, resulting in increased literacy rate.

Working and educated women are more likely to get involved in politics and social domains, which as a result, leads to improved and comprehensive policy making, addressing actual issues of women and also of all citizens of the country. When we empower women, we are reducing the gender inequality in every field, questioning the stereotypes and discrimination women experienced from a long time back, creating a society where both men and women receive equal rights and chances to grow.

Women are also contributing in STEM fields and start-ups where they offer different frameworks and viewpoints leading to innovation, creativity, advances in technology and industrial development.

Women are also playing a crucial role in the sustainable use of the environment and its natural resources. They also bring a peaceful and balanced environment in the society. By empowering women, the traditional set gender roles are also challenged, nurturing a more integrated and healthier environment in society as well as at the workplace.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the empowerment of women in India seems a complex and evolving journey characterized by advancement, challenges and ongoing continuous efforts aimed at attaining gender equality. Government policies and initiatives are crucial in talking historical inequalities and promoting a favourable environment. In which women can exercise their rights. Contribute to socio economic progress and engage effectively indecision-making process.

To strengthen the effectiveness of women empowerment policies, it is essential to focus on the cultural and societal norms that sustain gender inequalities. To enhance the effectiveness of women empowerment policies, it is essential to prioritizes their proper implementing address the cultural and societal norms that sustain gender inequalities and ensure the allocation of sufficient resources. Women empowerment transcends mere policy: it represents a societal shift that necessitates a united effort, awareness and dedication to breaking down Obstacles that impede the higher progress towards equitable society and more inclusive. The lack of education serves as an obstacle to attaining empowerment. Reflecting on all the points discussed, it becomes evident that transformation is crucial, which recognizing that the pace of this change might be slower than desired.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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