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# Woman's Empowerment and Gender Equality in India: A Brief Discussion

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### ABSTRACT:

Since the beginning of civilization, there has been a power struggle in society. Women are largely neglected in society. Women have been fighting to establish their rights in the society. From where the issue of women's empowerment has emerged. Women empowerment refers to the independent participation of women in all political, social, economic and cultural fields. Women are grossly neglected and exploited in the underdeveloped countries of the world. They are deprived of social recognition in various fields. But to be saved from this deprivation, first of all, gender equality is needed. If there is gender discrimination, there will never be equality in the society.

In countries like India, there is extreme gender discrimination. One of the reasons for this gender inequality is illiteracy. People in many parts of India are still guided by old ideas. However, in the present time, the Government of India has taken various programs to increase the awareness of women and to increase this empowerment. If we look at the international arena, in 2001, the United Nations approved the Millennium Development Goals in New York. In which a total of eight goals are mentioned for global development. One of them is Gender Equality and Empowering Women. That is, the issue of women's empowerment is given importance globally. This goal is said to be achieved by 2015. Also the concept of feminism developed for the rights of women. Women can establish equality in society only by enjoying certain benefits.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Gender Inequality, Rights, Socio-economic Status, Education

### Introduction:

The birth of civilization has come from the powerful man exerting force on the powerless. This force is exercised sometimes by physical power, sometimes by acquired power. Humans are the most advanced animals on earth. Although men and women live together in society. History has witnessed women being heavily dominated by men. Humans are social beings. To live in society, people have to mix with different parts of society. And different parts of the society are dominated by men. From this hegemony, women are being ruled and exploited by men. But the extent of this exploitation varies in different societies. Western countries are developed socio-economically and culturally. As a result, the rate of exploitation of women in developed countries is relatively low. In developed countries, women are not confined to the confines of the household and earn money through various activities. As a result they are economically self-reliant. Because of this self-reliance, the other person cannot force them to do something. The books developed the concept of feminism are: Book of the City of Ladies (Christine de Pisan), A vindication of the right of women (Marry Woolstone Craft), The Feminine Mystique (Betty Friedman), Sexual Politics (Kate Millet), The Female Eunuch (German Greer) etc.

While the rate of exploitation of women in western countries is relatively low, the rate of exploitation of women in third world countries is very high. In India, Africa, South Asia, Latin America, etc., women are extremely neglected. Because in all these countries, men have established their dominance in all areas of society. In all these third world countries, women spend their lives confined within the four walls of the house. They spend their lives doing various household chores. There is little opportunity to integrate with the outside environment. In third world countries women are economically dependent on men. They are highly dependent on men to buy their various commodities. Women are obliged to obey men when it comes to doing any small to big work. And this is where the exploitation of women begins.

### Objective of the Study:

1. To identify the hindrances in the path of women empowerment
2. To know the need of Women Empowerment.
3. To ascertain why women's participation in politics is low.

4. To explore how women can become economically self-reliant.
5. To review the position of women in Indian society.
6. To study the government schemes for women empowerment.

#### ***Women Empowerment:***

India is a developing country. India has unity in diversity. People of many castes and religions live together here. But the people of different regions of India are still far behind. Human thinking is not yet fully developed. Especially the men of the family have established a monopoly over the women. In western countries the issue of women empowerment gained awareness much earlier but in developing countries like India the issue of women empowerment gained prominence much later.

In 1992, Marry Wollstone Craft first wrote a book for the advancement of women on a larger scale, "Vindication of the Right of Women". In this book she developed the concept of liberal feminism. Later, various phases of feminism continued to proliferate. In British India, Raja Ram Mohan Roy promoted women's development and social reform by abolishing the practice of sati-dating and pioneering women's education. Jyotiba Phule established a girls' school in Pune in 1848 for the advancement of women's education and social reform. He also founded the Satya Sadhok Samaj in 1873 for Dalits and women's interests. Also Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar made a lot of efforts for women education.

#### ***Economics and Empower,:***

In the 21st century, women's empowerment has increased a lot. In the past, women were denied the right to vote, the right to education and the right to be elected. But nowadays women have improved a lot. But humans are social creatures. This society is made up of men and women. While men dominate the entire society, women lag far behind. There are various reasons behind this disparity, such as women are still completely economically dependent on men. Also women are physically less efficient than men, they are exploited and abused by men in various ways. Following are the issues that I think should be emphasized for women empowerment and gender equality in a country like India.

#### ***Freedom:***

Women's empowerment and reduction of gender inequality first requires adequate freedom for women. Because if there is no freedom, no person can develop his own talent or wholeness. So first of all women should participate in all parts of the society without keeping them confined within the four walls of the house. There are many areas in India where women are confined to domestic work. As a result, they are not getting opportunities for their own development. Just as women can move freely in the developed countries of the world, in India too women will be empowered and gender inequality will be reduced if they enjoy the opportunities.

#### ***Women Education:***

The right to education is essential for the overall development of the society, regardless of gender. Women are still deprived of equal opportunities in education In India, women in urban areas have more access to education than in rural areas. In rural areas, girls have the opportunity to get education till a

certain age, but sometimes they are pressured by the family. As a result, women cannot fully develop their dreams. As a result, women are naturally neglected and deprived in the society. However, it must be admitted that the Government of India has taken various programs for the empowerment of women. Schools, colleges, universities for women have been established in various states and districts. For women empowerment, the government has provided various activities so that women can become self-reliant and less dependent on men.

#### ***Women and Religion:***

Some religious rules hold back women. According to religious rules, women will live within the four walls of the house. How far a religion stands for justice and fairplay and how far it has succeeded in

exploding prejudices and shibboleths of a primitive age can be seen from the position it assigns to women in its ritual and theology. Religious bigotry is one of the reasons behind the backwardness of women.

#### ***Prohibition of child marriage:***

Child marriage is a major obstacle in the path of women empowerment in India. Generally according to Indian law if a girl gets married below 18 years and a boy gets married below 21 years then it is called child marriage.. In India, girls are still married off at a young age in rural areas. As a result, women become mothers at an immature stage. Women do not get a chance to stand on their own feet and lead a life. Rammohan Roy of subjugated India took considerable steps to prevent child marriage. The Prevention of Child Marriage Act was created in 2006 and came into effect in 2007. So women should

be provided with adequate education to become self-reliant. With proper education they can become self-reliant and not dependent on men. In other words, prevention of child marriage is absolutely necessary for the development of India as a whole.

**Abolishing gender discrimination:** Gender inequality is one of the reasons behind the backwardness of women in India. Women in India have been subjected to various forms of discrimination since the beginning. Sometimes in the field of work and sometimes in the field of education. In India, women are still paid less than men in various jobs. For example, if a man's daily salary in a factory in India is 500 rupees, a woman is paid 350 rupees or 400 rupees. Also Indian society is very backward in terms of education of women. There are many families where education of boys is thought of without provision of education for girls. Even though Article 14 of the Indian Constitution talks about reducing discrimination between men and women, it has not been fully implemented. So, stronger steps should be taken so that women are not discriminated again.

#### ***Decision Making:***

How powerful women are in a country is largely determined by how active women in that country are in decision-making. Because in a society like India, most family decisions are made by men, while women are neglected. Even when it comes to giving birth, women cannot make their own decisions. That is, it can be said that men have a kind of dominance over women. But there are many families where women have the last say. Where men's will and reluctance have no value. However, steps must be taken so that women can take decisions at all levels.

#### ***Stop Feticide:***

Feticide is one of the major obstacles to women's empowerment in India. The preference for giving birth to a boy child can be observed in the family. In Indian society, the girl's family has to pay a hefty dowry at the time of marriage. There are many families who are not interested in having a girl child because of the future. Men are able to take responsibility for the family. Also there is doubt as to who will be the sharer of the paternal property, so that if a son is born there is no such doubt. So there is discrimination in the transfer of property. So many families kill the fetus.

#### ***Education and Job:***

Education makes people ideal, conscious and wise. Education is the backbone of society. So for the progress of the society, all men and women should be provided with education. Indian society thinks that education is only for getting job or earning money. Without getting a job after studying, education is considered to be of no importance. As a result, the spread of education at all levels of society has not yet developed properly.

On the other hand, it is believed that women should get married at 18, so education will not help much. That is, women are naturally exploited and neglected by the society. So education in society should not be seen only for the purpose of getting a job. Education helps people in overall development. Education should be given to all irrespective of caste, color, religion, women, men. If women become educated in modern education, overall development of the society will be possible and along with this, women empowerment will be successful.

#### ***Women in Politics:***

The extent to which women are participating in the politics of a country reveals the empowerment of women in that country. Indian society is a male dominated society. Here women cannot take any decision overriding men. There are very few families in India where women can live as they please. Politics in a country like India is an important issue. After independence, men enjoyed exclusive political power in India, but now women are also participating in various parts of politics. Also, the Constitution of India has given importance to women's participation in politics legally. Women's participation in various parts of rural politics such as Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad has increased

Variations in women's participation in Indian politics have been observed since independence. In the first Lok Sabha in 1952, out of a total of 489 seats, only 24 seats were for women. That is, only five percent of the total seats were for women.

The trend of women's participation in Lok Sabha elections since independence can be shown with the help of the following table:

Year	Women Participation(%)
1952	4%
1957	4.5%
1962	6.8%
1967	5.58%
1971	5.41%
1977	3.51%
1980	5.29%

1984	7.95%
1989	5.48%
1991	7.30%
1996	7.37%
1998	7.92%
1999	9.02%
2004	8.29%
2009	10.87%
2014	12.15%
2019	14.40%
2024	13.60%

### ***Women rights in India:***

Advancement of women is essential for all-round development of India. Keeping in mind the empowerment of women, various types of privileges have been mentioned in the Indian Constitution. Some of the women's rights mentioned in the constitution are discussed below –

- Equality before law ( Article 14 )
- No discrimination by State on grounds only of religion,rule,caste,sex,place of birth or any of them (Article 15)
- Special provision by state in favour of women and children ( Article 15(3) )
- Securing adequate means of childhood for a man and woman equally (Article 39(a) )
- Equality of opportunity in matters relating to employment( Article 16)
- Equal pay for equal work ( Article 39(d) )
- Promoting justice on basis of equal opportunity and to provide free legal aid ( Article 15(a,c) )
- One-Third reservation for women in Panchayets (Article 243(d) ) and in Municipalities (Article 243(d) )
- Right to property to women ( Article 300(a) )

### ***Government Scheme for women:***

Although women are oppressed in Indian society, various schemes have been developed by the government at different times. So that women can become empowered. After independence, various provisions of the Indian Constitution have made several special provisions for women . Some of the schemes are discussed below-

#### **1)National Commission for women (NCW):**

A scheme by the government to empower women is the National Commission for Women, which is also known as Rashtriya Mahila Ayug. It was created in 1992. The scheme was designed to deal with issues such as dowry, abuse of women, women's education etc. It is currently headquartered in New Delhi.

#### **2)Rastriya Mahila Kosh(RMK):**

This scheme was launched in 1993 by the Government of India. India is a developing country. In urban as well as rural areas of India, girls are confined to housework. As a result, various loans were being given to women by the government so that girls could also earn. In other words, socio-economic development of women has been tried with the help of this scheme.

#### **3) Mother and Child Tracking System(MCTS):**

During childbirth, women get various benefits with the help of this scheme. The scheme, formulated in 2009, says that girls will get the necessary facilities during maternity or after childbirth.

#### **4) Pradhan Mantri Vandana Yojana(PMVY):**

This scheme was created in 2016. The purpose of this scheme is to enable poor mothers to get necessary treatment. As a result of this scheme of the Government of India, poor mothers are saved from malnutrition. Also, one of the other objectives of this scheme is to ensure that no girl below 19 years of age gets married. Especially in rural areas, many girls are married before the age of 18. If the girls are not of age, they face various physical problems after marriage. So this scheme aims to ensure that the marriage takes place at the right time.

5) Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Employment of Adolescent Girls(RGSEAG):

This scheme was created on 1st April 2011. The main objective of this project is to make girls self-reliant in particular. This scheme is designed to help women earn money and be less dependent on men. It was created by the Ministry of Women and Child Development in 2011. The project is later known as SABLA since 2012.

6) Priyadarshini Scheme:

The scheme was launched in 2011 to make women self-reliant. Especially this project was group based.

The scheme was first implemented in seven districts of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

7) National Action Plan for Children:

This project was launched on January 24, 2017. This project is developed by the Ministry of Women and Child Development. This project is designed to ensure that children get proper nutrition and access to education as needed.

8)Beti Bachao Beti Pado:

This project was created on 22 January 2015. In countries like India, women are far behind. One of the objectives of this project is to ensure that every child or mother gets adequate educational opportunities. The project also focused on improving the child sex ratio. That is, gender equality and women's empowerment were the main objectives.

9)Sakhi Prakalpa:

This project was launched in 2015. This scheme is designed to protect women who are oppressed in various ways. In Indian society, women are dependent on men. Men restrict women's lives a lot. As a result, women cannot live their own lives. This project is designed to deal with any kind of crime against women.

10)Nirbhaya Tahabil

The central government created this scheme in 2013. There are many women who are exploited and abused, they are deprived of justice due to lack of sufficient funds. Through this project, women have been made safe and secure. That is, the main objective of this project is women empowerment.

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## Conclusion:

Women empowerment is the participation of women in all spheres of society. Empowerment of women is to increase the power of women without any kind of discrimination in political, social, educational, gender fields. So that women can move freely without any discrimination in all areas. Before independence, women could not work independently in India. However, after 1992, women's participation in politics increased and 33% seats were reserved. In the past, the participation rate of women in schools, colleges and universities was low, but now the participation rate is much higher.

Currently, India ranks fourth in the military in the entire world, behind this is the participation of women in the military. From the late 20th century to the present, a large number of women have participated in the Army, Navy, and Air Force. As a result women are not lagging behind. Not only in India but all over the world women today have improved themselves a lot. All the tribes that exist in India work together and run the family without distinguishing between men and women. Tribal women are never economically dependent on men. In the north-eastern region of India, particularly in the states of Nagaland, Assam, Manipur, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya etc., women enjoy relatively more power. All these regions are inhabited by tribal people like Garo, Khasi etc. So finally it can be said that women empowerment is very necessary for the progress of the entire society.

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