

CONSTITUTIONAL MEASURES AND GOVERNMENT POLICIES FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Women empowerment and gender equality are two sides of the same coin. Each has a number of parameters that together produce a wide range of indicators. It implies a parity-based exchange system. In India, which is ranked as the fourth-most hazardous country in the world for women, gender discrimination is one of the least concerning issues. It causes problems with things like illiteracy, poverty, inefficiency, ignorance, a lack of social control abilities, timorousness, etc. Women's status is closely related to their country's economic condition, which depends on their access to opportunities for economic activity involvement. Currently, it is considered that a society's economic standing is a good measure of its level of progress. By examining the social, economic, political, and religious privileges that women enjoyed, one may determine their true standing. This study examines the numerous programmes put out by the Indian government to empower women there. Numerous programmes are being carried out by the Indian government to increase access to jobs, education, healthcare, infrastructure development, etc. Some of these are flagship initiatives like the National Rural Health Mission, the Integrated Child Development Scheme, the SarvaSiksha Abhiyan, and the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. The social standing of women in India is rising as a result.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Gender Equality, Constitution Measures, Laws.

Introduction

In the Puranic period the status of women was lowered. In the social field, pro-puberty marriages came to be practiced, widow remarriage was prohibited, the purdah system came in to vogue and sati became increasingly prevalent. In the economic field, women were totally denied a share in their husband's property. In the religious field, women were forbidden to offer sacrifices and prayers. In the Buddhist period, the status of women improved a little, though there was no tremendous change. In this period, the political and economic status of women remained unchanged. A little improvement in social and religious fields visualized in this period. In the medieval period, saints like Chaitanya, Nanak, Meera, Kabir, Ramdas, Tulsi and Tukaram stood for the rights of women to religious worship. During British rule, a number of changes were made in the economic and social structure of our society. In this period, substantial progress was achieved in eliminating inequalities between men and women in education, employment, social rights and so forth. The idea of imparting education to women emerged

in the British period. The Hunter Commission emphasized on the need for female education in 1882. Since then, there has been a marked increase in the number of female students at every level from 1941 onwards. After two rounds of raucous rejection, first in 1996 and then in 1998, the union law minister in December 1999 managed to introduce the historic 85th constitutional amendment bill seeking to reserve 33 percent seats for women in legislative bodies. It is a great achievement for women society. From the socio-economic points of view in the 21st century, the term "gender equality" gets a new shape as the National Population Policy 2000 has empowered women in health and nutrition. In the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) of United Nations (2000), it also sets gender equality and women empowerment as one of the goals.

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Objectives

- Limelight the government's policies and constitutional measures to raise awareness among groups.
- To educate women about their human and women's rights through media, educational institutions and mass communication.

Methodology of the Study

The analysis is mainly based on secondary data collected from various government sources, websites, magazines and newspapers.

Gender Equality and Women Empowerment

The gender equality principle as a concept come to be enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles. Equality is guaranteed there without regards to cast, creed, sex, or religion. In the 5th Five Year Plan (1974-78), only approached towards women issues shows a shift from welfare approach to developmental approach.

Government of India Statutory Body and Commission: The Government of India has a number of Statutory bodies and commissions related to gender equality and women empowerment. They can be specified as follows:

- **Ministry of Women and Children**

In 2006, the Department for Women and Children was constructed as an independent Ministry, splitting from the Ministry of Human Resource Development, to execute and evaluate the programs and policies, amend legislation, guide and coordinate efforts of Government and non-government organisation working in the field of women and children.

- **National Policy for the Empowerment of Women (NPEW)**

Through positive economic and social policies for holistic development of women with equal care, advancement, development and empowerment, the national policies for empowerment of women were initiated in March 20th,2001. It includes mainstreaming gender perspective in development process and strengthening legal system. For a conducive social change, it was implemented to promote all round development of women by concerned ministries and departments.

- **National Commission for Women (NCW)**

The National Commission for Women was set up as a statutory body in January 1992 under the National Commission for Women Act 1990 to review the constitutional and legal safeguards to women and recommend remedial legislative measures. The Commission has 7 fulltime members- a chairperson, 5 Members and a Member Secretary and has been working successfully for two and a half decades.

- **National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW)-2010**

For all round development of women and to strengthen all sectors coverage facilitate the process of coordinating all women welfare and socio-economic welfare programs across different ministries and departments, the National Mission for Empowerment of Women was launched on March 8, 2010. The Mission has Executive Director and experts in different fields like health and nutrition, law, central budgeting poverty alleviation, information and communication technology. At the state level, State Mission Co-Ordinator with the chairmanship of Chief Minister and Minister of concerned departments and state resource centre for Women work with the support of National Mission for Empowerment of Women. At the village level a 'Poorna Shakti Kendra' through which service to women would be facilitated with the strategy of strengthening institutional framework for greater efficiency in support of women established. It also concerned with crime against women, declining sex ratio, child marriage, saving and educating girl child. The Mission also conducts research in leading areas of women empowerment, organizes seminars, conferences, discussions, competitions and award programs.

Educational support by Government for Women Empowerment

- **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao**

The scheme was launched by the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi on January 22, 2015 in Haryana's Panipat District, which had one of the lowest sex ratios in the country. The scheme focuses on the issues of survival, protection and education for the girl' s child. Initially the scheme was focused on 100 districts with a low child sex ratio. Now it has been expanded to 61 more districts. The educational side of the scheme is implemented through Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and Rastriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) by facilitating girls in various ways for better, attainable education.

- **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan**

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan was implemented to achieve the goals for universal access and retention, bring the gender and social gaps in enrolment levels and enhances learning levels of all children.

- **Mahila Samakhya**

Under the National Policy of Education 1986, to transform the status of women Mahila Samakhya was implemented as a pilot project in six states of India with the financial support of Netherlands Government. It was supposed to be improve the participation of women in decision making and make them conscious of their rights and opportunities.

Initiative in Health Sector and Women Empowerment

- **National Rural Health Mission (NRHM)**

National Health Mission was launched in 2005, and NRHM is a sub-mission of the NHM that was initiated in 2013, which provides medical and health care to rural population. It has a number of maternity schemes for better health of mothers and Children and awareness program to improve sex ratio.

- **Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahayog Yojana**

It is a welfare program for better health and nutrition for pregnant and lactating mothers. It was introduced in 2010 using the ICDS platform. The scheme was launched in 53 districts in pilot basis. Around 12.5 lakh pregnant and nursing women are expected to benefit from the scheme through direct cash transfer to their saving bank accounts or post offices only. The first two live births are eligible to include in the scheme.

- **Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY)**

Janani Suraksha Yojana was launched in 2005 for safe motherhood intervention under the National Rural Health Mission with the objective of reducing maternal and neo-natal mortality by promoting institutional delivery among the pregnant women. It is mentioned that through this scheme, the institutional delivery rate touches 80%.

Women Rescue, Safety, Rehabilitation and Empowerment

- **UJJAWALA Scheme**

It is a comprehensive scheme for the prevention of trafficking, rescue and rehabilitation of women and children's victims of trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation in India. The scheme was launched in 2007 by Ministry of Women and Children Development. The scheme has five components i.e., prevention, rescue, rehabilitation, reintegration and repatriation.

- **Pradhan Mantri UJJAWALA Yojana**

To reduce physical labour with health hazard and for environmental balance, the scheme was launched on May1, 2016 by Prime Minister of India. The women were suffering the most,as traditionally they are the ones who cook for the whole family. It provides cooking gas at subsidized rate to BPL families.

- **Mobile App "HIMMAT"**

In January 2015, Delhi Police launched its own App for women's safety. The App is launched basically for women who travel alone at night. The App will work within 30 second and will send information to police, relatives, friends etc.

- **Panic Button in Mobile Phones**

Panic Button is superior and faster mode of alerting than mobile apps. Hence, the Department of Telecommunication notified the rules on the panic but on under the Indian Wireless Telegraph Act 1933 in April 2016. This facility will ensure women's security and make women feel secure like men without any restrictions. As per the rules, since January 2017,all mobile phones will have the facility of panic button and from January 1, 2018,all mobile phones will be required to have the facility of identifying their location through satellite-based GPS.

Schemes Related to Girl Child and Gender Equality

- **Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana (SSY)**

On January 22, 2015,Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched a scheme for small deposit as a part of "Beti Bachao, BetiPadhao " campaign. Sukanya Samriddhi Account can be opened at any time from the birth to 10 years of her age with a minimum deposit of Rs 250 and thereafter any amount in

multiple of Rs 100 can be deposit. For one time, a girl child who has attained the age of 10 years prior to one year from the date of introduction of the scheme. Initially the interest rate was set at 9.1% but later revised to 9.2% in late March, 2015.

- **Restructured Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS)**

ICDS was launched in 1975 to raise the health and nutritional status of poor children. These services are provided through Anganwadi centers, established mainly in rural areas. It also provides nutrition products to pregnant women.

- **Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescence Girls (RGSEAG-SABALA)**

To empower adult women the SABALA scheme was launched in 2010-2011, which covers the age group between 11-18 years. The scheme was launched in 205 selected districts.

The objective of the scheme is:

- To enable adult girls for self-development and empowerment. To improve their nutrition and health status.
- To promote awareness on health hygiene nutrition, reproductive and sexual health. As per the scheme each adolescence girl is provided with 600 calories, 18-20 gm protein and micronutrients per day for 300 days in a year.

Other Equalization Measures

- **Gender Budgeting**

Women comprise 48% of the total population of India. To improve the status of women purposeful and targeted budget allocation is necessary. The national budget impacts different gender differently. Focusing on women economic, social, political and educational fields special care should be taken in allocation of funds.

- **Constitutional Reservation for Women**

Reservation for Women Amendment Bill (108th Amendment) was passed on March 9, 2010 for ensuring equal participation and equal representation in different government departments and local government. The 73rd constitutional amendment act 1992 involves women in decision making and 1/3 seat reserve for women in Panchayat.

- **Laws, Acts Relating to Women**

To improve the status of women different laws and acts were adopted and enacted since the post independent period and these are mentioned below:

- **Maternity Benefit Act-1961:** The Act aims to regulate women employees in certain establishment for certain period before and after child birth and provides of maternity and certain other benefits.
- **Equal Remuneration Act- 1976:** The Act aims to provide for the payment of equal remuneration to men and women workers and for the prevention of discrimination on the ground of sex against women in the matter of employment and matter connected there with or incident thereto.
- **Protection of women from Domestic Violence Act-2005:** The law came in to force on October 26, 2006. It provides more protection to women within the constitutional ambit from any kind of violence against women or any types of occurring against women within the family.
- **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act 2006:** The Act came in to force in 2007. It was enacted to prohibit the marriage of persons who have to completed 21 years of age in case of male and 18 years in case of female. Any kind of Child Marriage will be considered as criminal offence as per the law.
- **Right to Education Act 2009:** This is the act to provide free and compulsory education to the age group of 6 to 14 years. It is included in Article 21-A of Indian Constitution. India becomes one of the 135 countries to make education a Fundamental Right. The Act came in to force on April 1, 2010 and it envisaged equality for women without any discrimination against men.
- **Sexual Harassment of women at workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Bill-2013:** For equal economic and professional rights of women, the Act was passed to provide protection against sexual harassment of women at workplace for the prevention and redressal of complaints of sexual harassment and for matters connected therewith or thereto.

- **Criminal Law (Amendment Act-2013):** It is an amendment act of Indian penal code. This new act has expressly organized certain acts as offences which were dealt under related laws. These new offences like acid at ack, sexual harassment, voyeurism, stalking have been incorporated into Indian penal code.

Women’s Participation in Government Skills Training Programmes

To bridge the gap in skilling, various provisions have been made for women in skilling programmes. There are also a few exclusive National Skill Training Institutes for Women, which offer training under two schemes: the Craftsmen Training Scheme (CTS) and the Craft Instructors’ Training Scheme (CITS). Eleven such institutes have been set up and eight more are in the pipeline.

- **The flagship programme of MDSE—the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal**
Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) which offers short-term skills training— pays close attention to the gender mainstreaming of skills.
- **The Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushal Yojana (DDU-GKY)**
A placement-linked skills development programme for rural youth implemented by the Ministry of Rural Development, provides for a 33-percent reservation for women. DDU-GKY has trained 1,128,301 candidates so far, and about half the beneficiaries of the programme have been placed in jobs after obtaining their certification. Meanwhile, the Skills Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion (SANKALP) scheme, implemented by MSDE in collaboration with the World Bank, has targets to increase the participation of women in short-term vocational training. It is a supporting programme to skill training schemes like PMKVY. For its part, the Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP), launched in 1986 and implemented by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, is the oldest skilling scheme in India. It trains women to become self-employed or entrepreneurs.
- **The National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS),** launched in 2016, follows the apprenticeship model for skilling and placement. It links courses under PMKVY and DDU-GKY with apprenticeship training to prepare candidates for the job market.
- **The Jan Shikshan Sansthan,** an old scheme under the Ministry of Human Resources Development, has since been revived under the MSDE. It focuses on skilling non-literate and school dropouts especially women.

Women’s Participation in Government Skills Training Programs

Scheme	No. of male candidates trained	No. of female candidates trained
Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (data from 2016 to November 2021)	6,437,213	4,830,646
Jan Shikshan Sansthan (data from 2018-19 to 2021-22)	154,359	800,269
National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (data from 2018-19 to 2021-22)	301,556	61,842
Craftsmanship Training Scheme (data from 2018-2021)	3,937,114	530,406
Craft Instructor Training Scheme (data from 2020-21)	3,394	6,111

Source: Information shared by Minister of State for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship on 6 December 2021 in Lok Sabha

Findings and Suggestions

Following points are very essential attribute for the empowerment of women:

- To improve economic and social status of women in the rural areas.
- To aware women about their human and women's rights through media, educational institutions and mass communication.
- To provide better working conditions for working women.
- Give preference to women participation in decision.
- To start new education programmes at the school and college level regarding women's rights.
- To take strong legal action on sexual harassment and female feticide.
- A favorable parental attitude is necessary for promoting women empowerment.
- There is also a need to integrate life skills, such as communication ability, decision-making capacity and self-confidence, into skilling programs.

Conclusion

Women are essential to any society's socioeconomic development. Therefore, they must equally participate in and benefit from development programmes. According to Swami Vivekananda, "As a bird cannot fly on one wing, no society can make progress unless women join men in all activities." The significance of women in our society has been made very plain in this statement. It is regrettable that there is still a gender gap in India despite a rapid rate of economic growth and several government initiatives to promote gender equality. Up to this day, there are still reports of rape, women's human rights violations, girl trafficking, and dowry deaths. As things stand, government parts and arrangements are not sufficient for sexual orientation uniformity and women's strengthening. In this respect, people's attitudes must be changed and conventional exercises must be expelled from our society. From this swearing off account, we come to the conclusion that women are without a doubt the establishment of the fundamental unit of society- the family. Indeed, in conventional parts, they illustrate incredible development, expertise, insights, hard work and commitment. On the off chance that we will saddle these properties with viability, India's development can be more comprehensive and impartial.

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