A Critical Analysis of Policy Initiatives for Empowering the Other Gender

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Date of reception:15 Feb 2023

Date of revision: 20 Mar 2023

Date of acceptance: 12 Apr 2023

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ABSTRACT

Women account for almost 50 % of the populace of any nation; therefore, their contribution to growth cannot be overlooked. Females are unquestionably the foundation of every civilization, performing numerous tasks every day. They have, nevertheless, been a marginalized section of the community in many areas of the globe. Female's roles in India have always been much larger than their social definitions, which reflect the overall gender prejudice. A country cannot achieve its long-term goals without trained women since women are the moms who write a generation's destiny. Chetan Sanghi, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Women and Child Development, once said: "We would like to change the paradigm to women-led development". In India, female rights have improved dramatically in the past several years. In India, a significant number of females are leaving their homes to pursue education. To restore their rightful and dignified status, governments, NGO's, various agencies have initiated empowerment programmes that deliver a powerful basis to raising the internal solid point in addition to self-worth for the rural females. The Indian government has proclaimed 2001 to be the year of female liberation. The Rajya Sabha approved the Female's Quota Bill on March 9, 2010, one day after International Women's Day, guaranteeing 33 % seats for women in parliament and state parliaments. Now is the moment to recognize the importance of women's empowerment via knowledge and leadership advancement in a fast-growing nation like India. This article aims to examine problems connected to female liberation and to provide solutions in the form of different government policies to achieve this goal.

Keywords: Other Gender, Initiatives and measures, Empowerment, Growth & Development of Women, Laws & Act of Women Empowerment, Govt. Policies& Schemes

INTRODUCTION

Women have been the most distressed and oppressed element of society throughout history, and they have suffered for decades. Because of societal taboos, violence, molestation, and other obstacles that they have faced as a result of any religion, culture, or other factors, they have been deemed a lesser gender in comparison to the patriarchally strong gender, male. For a long time, they have been denied basic necessities and human rights. Women in India's multi-cultural, multi-racial, and inter-religious subcontinent experience a plethora of issues and share comparable emotional responses. Female empowerment is a buzzword in India these days. India is dedicated to women's emancipation as a country. Women, according to Panigrahy & Bhuyan (2006), are builders and performers at all times and serve as a resource for nation-building. Domestication, household tailoring, handicrafts, weaving, and working in the informal sector have all been options for them. They have been sharing the burden throughout, whether through domestic labour or financial help to her family through external exposure.

In rural India, females are progressively having a greater influence than males. Female empowerment has gone a long way, despite the fact that it still has a long road ahead to go. Women in rural areas work in the fields, farming, harvesting, and threshing grain. The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that women do two-thirds of the world's work. We do not completely abandon gender inequality challenges, but in reality, we do not provide sufficient choices and opportunities to both urban and rural women in India. Regardless of the fact that women's rights seem to be a distant objective, the political winds are swirling in rural India, gently but steadily. More than one million females participate in local government and advancement in India's 600,000 villages owing to meaningful legislation like the 73rd Constitution Amendment (1950). Females in rural areas are beginning to express themselves, questioning long-held patriarchal traditions and negotiating new positions and possibilities for themselves. Marginalized groups of rural females acquire voice presence at home and in their societies due to their overall performance. They are growing more conscious of their responsibilities and

seek necessities and a portion of family and communal assets. Since freedom, the government has worked hard to eliminate different prejudices. NGO's and foreign organizations operating in rural areas must make an effort to address problems linked to female empowerment.

Gender Specific Initiatives for Sustainable Growth of Rural India

When the term empowerment is used, a succession of changes has occurred, with terminology emerging as highly subjective in response to the appropriate objective of individual's perceptions throughout the last five decades. The purpose of this essay is to make clear the importance of women's empowerment as a result of eliminating gender inequities. In fact, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) prior to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 were more broad-based, focusing on closing the gender gap in education, raising earnings for women in agricultural industries, and increasing the number of women seats in national legislatures. Personal growth is at the heart of the empowering cycle, including personal, financial, social, and political aspects. Sen and Batliwala (2000) claim that it results in increased intrinsic capability, improved self-confidence, and an inner shift of awareness that empowers one to surpass impediments. This viewpoint focuses primarily on two key points. To begin with, it is a power to attain intended goals rather than a power over the others. Second, the concept of empowerment is more appropriate to those who are underprivileged, whether they are men or women, groups of people, tribes, or castes (Nayak & Mahanta, 2012). Though the notion is not exclusive to women, it does cut across all classes and races, as well as inside communities and institutions. Gender equality and female empowerment are civil liberties essential to progress and the Millennium Prosperity Objectives' fulfillment. Despite advances, six out of ten of the globe's impoverished individuals are still women and girls, less than 16 % of the globe's members of the legislature are female, two-thirds of all kids are locked outside the school entrance. Girls and women are still systematically exposed to torture in international armed conflicts and behind confined gates at residence. Many people use the word "empowerment" without fully comprehending what it implies. Empowering, as per the Cambridge English Dictionary, is "to allow." In the perspective of individuals, they must be granted permission to exercise authority over their life. However, the nature of empowerment is influenced by the concept of equity. The concept of equity refers to a woman's liberty in terms of her physical, psychological, moral, and financial well-being. Women's empowerment is an issue in all urban-rural communities because the nature and circumstances are the same for the gender (Makwana & Patel, 2016).

Empowerment, according to Kabeer (2010), is paradoxical and depends on various pillars that must be met. It is dependent on their actual life decisions alternative which defines empowerment, these aspects are listed below:

- Poverty and disempowerment have plagued them for so long that they no longer have any options. Women have lost their ability to pursue or bring change in many aspects of life.
- The given option of power-rule entails considering both patriarchal and matriarchal perspectives. The demand for female decision-making approval is decreasing. This gender difference places female individuals in a position where they can't even consider approving or making good decisions since they are completely denied those opportunities.

Strengthening the Other Gender: Shift of Focus

Women's position in India has changed dramatically during the last several millennia. Females and males had equality throughout the early Vedic era. Gargi and Maitrey are two female sages and seers mentioned in the Rig Ved and Upanishads. Nevertheless, beginning about 500 B.C., the position of females, started to decline, and the condition was exacerbated by Mughal invasions and, subsequently, European conquerors. Several rehabilitative initiatives include "Guru Nanak's Jainism, Rajaram Mohan Rai's Ishwar Chandra Vidya Sagar, Pandita Rama Bai's. It's not that British female's rights were ignored. Prohibition of Sati Practice Act 1856, Widow Remarriage Act 1856, and other legislation was passed. After freedom, there was a genuine shift. Females are guaranteed equality under the Indian Constitution. Additional provisions protect female's rights, such as no state harassment, equal opportunity, and so forth. During the late 1970s, the feminist movement gained traction in India. As a result, particular emphasis must be given to the female's education system in India.

Table-1: Trends in Women Education (Literacy Rate %)

Year	Persons	Males	Females	Literacy Gap
2011	74.04	82.14	65.46	16.68
2001	64.88	75.26	53.67	21.59
1991	52.21	64.13	39.29	24.84
1981	43.56	56.38	29.76	26.62
1971	34.45	45.96	21.98	23.98
1961	28.30	40.40	15.75	25.05
1951	18.33	27.16	8.86	18.30

Source: Census of India, 2011

Dropout rates among girls considered to be relatively high, particularly in rural, tribal, and slum communities. The main reason for this was the trainees' low academic performance, which found it tough for them to adapt with the courses and to concentrate on the practical skills (Singh, 2016). Girl children in Indian families, especially in rural communities, perform the duties of second mother by shouldering domestic tasks such as looking after kids, fetching water from the well, gathering wood, sweeping, and cooking, among others, discouraging girls from attending school. The second most challenging evil is the bonded labour system, which is a dismal phenomena that operates as an obstacle to girls' education for underprivileged washerman, informal sector workers and agricultural labour families (Shetty & Hans, 2015, Ahmad, Alam & Subhi, 2022).

The constitutional mandate to provide basic and compulsory education to all children under the age of 14 years has yet to be fully realized in action. This failure, according to educational experts, is primarily due to the poor advancement of teaching and knowledge-building among not just among girls but the society itself. Although this woman education rate in India is steadily increasing, it is still less than that of the male literacy rate. In India's northeastern cities, the gender disparity in literacy is much more significant. Despite the fact that enrolments for females are greater in certain areas, numerous girls drop out after just a few years of schooling.

Table 2: State-Wise Women Literacy rate in %age

Sl. No.	State	Females' Literacy
1.	Delhi	81%
2.	Gujarat	71%
3.	Goa	82%
4.	Bihar	53%
5.	Chattisgarh	60%
6.	Andhra Pradesh	60%
7.	Assam	67%
8.	Arunachal Pradesh	60%
9.	Himachal Pradesh	77%
10.	Haryana	67%
11.	Jharkhand	56%
12.	Jammu and Kashmir	58%
13.	Kerala	92%
14.	Karnataka	68%
15.	Maharashtra	76%
16.	Madhya Pradesh	60%
17.	Meghalaya	74%
18.	Manipur	73%
19.	Nagaland	77%
20.	Mizoram	90%
21.	Punjab	71%
22.	Orissa	64%
23.	Sikkim	76%
24.	Rajasthan	52%
25.	Tripura	83%
26.	Tamil Nadu	74%
27.	Uttarakhand	71%
28.	West Bengal	71%
29.	Uttar Pradesh	60%
UTs		
1.	Chandigarh	81%
2.	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	82%
3.	Daman & Diu	80%
4.	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	66%
5.	Pondicherry	81%
6.	Lakshadweep	88%
All Over India		**65%**

Source: Indian Census, 2011

Female's rights have made significant progress. As a consequence of women's increased involvement in literacy initiatives, the gender disparity in reading levels is narrowing. Much more important is the reality that in neo-literate families, the difference in enrollment of girls and boys is much smaller than in non-literate families.

Representation of Women Development
Our framework evaluates the effects of globalisation vectors on women's labour force participation, political and professional representation (Alves &Steiner, 2016). Trade liberalization, finance institutions, and investments around the world, particularly among emerging economies, has opened up new territories for both economic and political actors in recent decades, aided by the discovery of modern Information Communication Technology (ICTs). Many experts argued on the most fundamental processes and political ramifications of globalisation, despite agreeing on its central message- collection of changes in the international system leading to a sole world market for producing goods and services for the people (Berger 2000;Alam et al., 2022). Furthermore, female labour market participation has an influence on community amenities that enhance women's bargaining power or autonomy in the home, such as childcare, healthcare, sanitation, and access to safe water. Though there is still a considerable distance to go in India regarding female liberation, it has gone a long way. There's been a shift in the position of females in higher learning throughout the world. To encourage females, more understanding is being raised about integrating gender views into governance and using gender-inclusive methods to execute development-related objectives.

Table -3: Top Profession of Women

Sl. No.	Occupational Sector	Male (%)	Female (%)
1.	Nursing Professionals	23	77
2.	Social Workers Professionals	26	74
3.	Flight Attendant/ Travel Stewards	59	41
4.	Teaching	64	36
5.	Philosophers, Historians, Pol.Sc.	78	22
6.	Computer Programme	82	18
7.	Health Professionals	83	17
8.	Administrative officials	91	9
9.	Lawyers	93	7
10.	Protective Service Workers	97	3

Source: Indian Census, 2011

Furthermore, while there are disagreements about the degree to which socioeconomic improvements might promote women's empowerment, particularly in terms of individual income, there is an overwhelming agreement that the economic realm plays a large role (Chung et al. 2013; Alam & Ahmad,2020;2022). After all, improving women's earnings or occupational remuneration has a positive effect on their liberty and power (Slusser 2009). Females' independence in India's higher education system is contingent on an equal allocation of funds in the present and future. It should be a central tenet of all policies and activities to promote equal chance and cooperation among and between generation in a community founded on independence, democracy, and regard for basic rights.

Status Quo of Females
Rai (2011) believes that quotas in political systems benefit women. How successfully are women's representation and interests addressed when liberalisation and globalisation are considered? Following the enactment of the 1992 amending Act, which mandated a one-third female representation in both rural and urban bodies. The gendered status quo inside the party system or the elitism among majoritarian politics were the reasons why 33 percent of the leadership at the legislative level opposed representation. Gender justice has been totally embraced by the women's movement, which has resulted in national legislation. However, the issue remains crucial, as the link between representation with opposition, as well as universal empowerment, is fragile. In democratic India, the re-distribution of power and justice have been separated for women section. India has committed a range of foreign agreements and international human rights treaties that pledge to ensuring women's equal rights. The signing of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1993 is one of them. The Indian government has also passed a number of women-specific laws to protect females from gender injustice, abuse, including atrocities, and to combat societal ills such as early marriage, dowry, assault, and the practice of Sati. These may be roughly divided into two classifications: I the offences defined by the "Indian Penal Code (IPC), and ii) the offences defined by Special Laws (SLL)."

Table 4: Legislative Provisions of Women in India

Sl.No.	Crimes	IPC
1.	Killing for dowry or efforts	Sec.302/304-B IPC
2.	Harassment	Sec. 354 IPC
3.	Abduction for diverse resolves	Sec. 363-373
4.	Rape	Sec. 376 IPC
5.	Mental and physical torture	Sec. 498-A IPC
6.	Sexual assault and importation of girls up to 21 years of age.	Sec. 509 IPC

Source: Constitution of India, 1950

Table 5: Special Laws for Women in India

Sl.No.	Special Laws (SLL)
1.	The Plantation Labor Act (1951)
2.	The Employees State Insurance Act (1948)
3.	The Special Marriage Act (1954)
4.	The Family Courts Act (1954)
5.	The Hindu Succession Act (1956)
6.	The Hindu Marriage Act (1955)
7.	The Maternity Benefit Act (1961(Amended in 1995))
8.	Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act (1956)
9.	The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act (1971)
10.	Dowry Prohibition Act (1961)
11.	The Equal Remuneration Act (1976)
12.	The Contract Labor (Regulation and Abolition) Act (1976)
13.	The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act (1983)
14.	The Child Marriage Restraint (Amendment) Act (1979)
15.	Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act (1986)
16.	The Factories (Amendment) Act (1986)
17.	The Marriage (Amendment) Act (2001)
18.	Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act (1987)

Source: Constitution of India, 1950

India's legislative and statutory provisions guarantee females' equality and security and enable the government to take affirmative prejudiced actions to their advantage. Around the 1980s, there was a massive surge of conflict between 'academics' and activists. Today, however,'students,' 'journalists,' 'teachers,' and ordinary female youth have been seen fighting violence against women, identity-based discrimination, women rights and politics (Alam et al, 2021).

Government Efforts for Empowering Females
Furthermore, the constitution allows governments to implement positive discrimination policies forthe benefit of females. The Indian government has also made special efforts to help Indian females gain courage and self. The programme guaranteed female's equitable accessibility to health, excellent education, and involvement and decision-making in the country's social, political, and economic life. The national strategy also seeks to improve the legal system to eliminate gender inequality. It also envisions a stronger collaboration with civil society, especially women's groups. The Indian government has also made a number of steps to promote women. The following are a few of them:

Table-6: Govt. Initiatives for Women Empowerment in India

Sl.No.	Year	Name	Purpose
1.	1992	**NCW**	To research and analyze all issues relating to legal and constitutional protections for females, evaluate current laws and propose changes where required, and so on.
2.	1992	**The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act**	Assure that females hold one-third of all chosen positions in local governments, regardless in rural or metropolitan regions.

3.	1991-2000	**NPAGC**	To guarantee the female child's existence, safety, and growth, with the eventual goal of creating a brighter prospect for the girl child.
4.	2001	**NPEW**	Females' progress, growth and independence in all areas of life will be facilitated by establishing a more reactive legal and judicial framework sympathetic to femalesand the popularisation of a gender perspective into the advancement approach. Another promise was to enhance and establish appropriate institutional structures and execute global commitments, including cooperation at the global, local, and sub-regional levels.
5.	2005	**PWDVA**	It ensures adequate protection of the constitutionally protected women's rights: survivors of domestic abuse of any type and issues related to or incidental to such aggression. It offers quick and urgent assistance to females who are victims of domestic abuse of any sort.
6.	2006	**MWCD**	India is working to improve females and child rights.

Source: Ministry of Women and Child Development, GOI

All these policies are aimed at ensuring women empowerment through higher education for the full development of women.

Initiatives of Government to Empower Females

The Indian government is trying to train illiterate urban and rural females for self-employment, which is critical for the emancipation of female empowerment. From the grassroots to the national and international levels, a significant number of programmes have received increasing attention in the field. Such as "Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme, One Stop Centre Scheme, Women Helpline Scheme, UJJAWALA Yojana, Working Women Hostel, SWADHAR Greh (A Scheme for Women in Difficult Circumstances), Nari Shakti Puraskar, Awardees of Stree Shakti Puruskar, 2014 & Awardees of Nari Shakti Puruskar, Awardees of Rajya Mahila Sam The Commission on the Status of Women, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, the Division for the Advancement of Women, the United Nations Development Fund for Women, and, most recently, the United Nations Women Association," which controls the actions of all erstwhile United Nations agencies, are all working to females' empowerment (Menon et al, 2020). The Dowry Prohibition Act was approved by the Indian government in 1961, and the Dowry Prohibition (Maintenance of Lists of Presents to the Bride and Bridegroom) rules were drafted in 1985. In India, any diagnostic procedures that can be used to determine a child's gender have been outlawed. In some locations, female infanticide still exists. The government has implemented several strategies and programs for women's welfare, such as the National Credit Fund for Women (1993), Food and Nutrition Board (FNB), Information and Mass Education (IMF), and so on. The year 2001 was proclaimed the Year of Women's Empowerment (Swashakti) by the Indian government, and the National Policy for Women's Empowerment was passed (Shireesha, 2021). The Hindu law of inheritance was modified in 2005, giving women the same status as men in terms of having a stake in ancestral property. The most promising development in recent years has been the growing participation of women in PRI (Hazarika, 2011). These worldwide organizations strive to guarantee that females have a genuine say in all aspects of government, from the court to the public service, the business sector and civilized society. In short, all these programs are contributed towards the realization of women empowerment and sustainable community development.

CONCLUSION

Although India is a rapidly growing country, Indian Women continue to face discrimination. It is to remind us that female equality in rural India is now one of the most pressing issues of the twenty-first century, not only on a national but also worldwide level. On the one side, there is still a significant disparity between the objectives enshrined in the constitution, laws, policies, plans, programmes, and associated processes and the actual truth of females' position in India. Women's household choice autonomy, personal security, freedom of mobility, women's tolerance of unequal gender roles, press attention, access to higher education, women's experience of sexual assault, and other indicators are given special attention. Indicators such as the percentage of female voters and female MPs are used to examine women's political participation. After examining the data, it was discovered that women's home decision-making efficiency and freedom of movement differ significantly depending on their age, education, and employment status. Government initiatives, and those of non-governmental organizations, will not be enough to accomplish this objective. The community must adopt the

commitment to establish an environment free of gender discrimination. Females have full access to higher education and may participate equally in the country's social, political, and economic life. As a result, in rural regions, particular emphasis must be given to female rights. To create a healthy future generation in India, greater access to higher education for females must be guaranteed in the educational system.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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