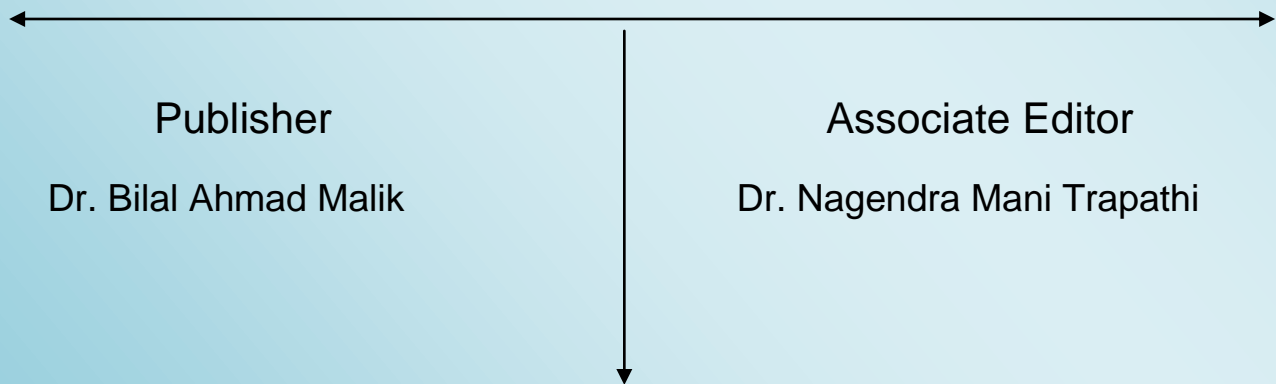


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## WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND FAMILY LIFE: A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

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### **ABSTRACT:**

*This paper attempts to analyze women today are trying to understand their position in the society and have become in Presently, most of the Indian women are uplifted and emancipated and granted equal status with men in different walks of life- political, social, domestic and educational as they are free to join any service or follow any profession. But practically women empowerment is still an illusion of reality. We observe in our day to day life how women become victimized by various social evils. Women Empowerment is the vital instrument to expand women's ability to have resources and to make strategic life choices. Empowerment of women is essentially of economic, social and political status of women, the traditionally underprivileged ones, in the society. It is the process of guarding them against all forms of violence. The study is based on purely from secondary sources. The study reveals that women of India are relatively dis empowered and they enjoy somewhat lower status than that of men in spite of many efforts undertaken by Government. It is found that acceptance of unequal gender norms by women are still prevailing in the society. The study concludes by an observation that access to Education, Employment and Change in Social Structure are only the enabling factors to Women Empowerment also gives special emphasis on various efforts initiated towards women empowerment and also pays due attention to make some recommendation for accelerating the women empowerment drive in India.*

**KEY WORDS:** Women Empowerment, Education, Health, Socio-Economic Status. Crimes against women.

### **INTRODUCTION:**

Women empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social, educational, gender or economic strength of individuals and communities of women. Women's empowerment in India is heavily dependent on many different variables that include geographical location (urban / rural) educational status social status (caste and class) and age. Policies on Women's empowerment exist at the national, state and local (Panchayat) levels in many sectors, including health, education, economic opportunities, and gender based violence and political participation. However there are significant gap between policy advancements and actual practice at the

community level. Empowerment of women is essentially the process of upliftment of economic, social and political status of women, the traditionally underprivileged ones, in the society. It is the process of guarding them against all forms of violence. Women empowerment involves the building up of a society, a political environment, wherein women can disproportionate sex ratio whereby female's population has been comparatively lower than males. As far as their social status is concerned, they are not treated as equal to men in all the places. In the Western societies, the women have got equal right and status with men in all walks of life. But gender disabilities and discriminations are found in India even today. The paradoxical situation has such that she was sometimes concerned as Goddess and at other times merely as slave. Mahila Samaj where they discuss various issues among themselves and try to find out reasonable solutions. Women social empowerment includes the socio-cultural development which is closely related with the political empowerment, a large number of participation, education, decision making roles, health, family, in short all sphere of life and genuine social empowerment are very much required in our society. It gets reflected in external qualities such as health, mobility, education and awareness, status in the family participation in decision making at level of material security.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

**H. Subrahmanyam (2011)** compares women education in India at present and Past. Author highlighted that there has a good progress in overall enrolment of girl students in schools. The term empowers means to give lawful power or authority to act. It is the process of acquiring some activities of women. **M. Bhavani Sankara Rao (2011)** has highlighted that health of women members of SHG have certainly taken a turn to better. It clearly shows that health of women members discuss among themselves about health related problems of other members and their children and make them aware of various Government provisions specially meant for them. **Doepke M. Tertilt M. (2011)** Does Female Empowerment Promote Economic Development? This study is an empirical analysis suggesting that money in the hands of mothers benefits children. This study developed a series of non cooperative family bargaining models to understand what kind of frictions can give rise to the observed empirical relationship. **Duflo E. (2011)** Women's Empowerment and Economic Development, National Bureau of Economic Research Cambridge The study argues that the inter relationships of the Empowerment and Development are probably too weak to be self sustaining and that continuous policy commitment to equally for its own sake may be needed to bring about equality between men and women. **Sethuraman K. (2008)** The Role of Women's Empowerment and Domestic Violence in child Growth and Under nutrition in a Tribal and Rural

Community in South India. This research paper explores the relationship between Women's Empowerment and Domestic Violence, maternal nutritional status and the nutritional status and growth over six months in children aged 6 to 24 months in a rural and tribal community. This longitudinal observational study undertaken in rural Karnataka, India included tribal and rural subjects. **Venkata Ravi and Venkatraman (2005)** focused on the effects of SHG on women participation and exercising control over decision making both in family matters and in group activities. The World Bank's Empowerment and Poverty Reduction: A Sourcebook defines empowerment in its broadest sense as the "expansion of freedom of choice and action". Empowerment is the process of enabling or authorizing an individual to think, behaves, take action and control work in an autonomous way. It is the state of feeling of the self-empowered to take control of one's own destiny. It includes both control over resources (Physical, Human, Intellectual and Financial) and over ideology (Belief, Values and Attitudes) (Batliwala, 1994). The feminist empowerment paradigm did not originate as a Northern imposition, but is firmly rooted in the development of some of the earliest micro-finance programmes in the South, including SEWA in India. It currently underlies the gender policies of many NGOs and the perspectives of various consultants and researchers looking at gender impact of micro-finance programmes (e.g. Chen 1996, Johnson 1997). Based on participatory principles to build up incremental knowledge of industries to enable women to develop their strategies for change (Chen, 1996), we find a lot of literature and studies. According to Sen (1990) and Kandiyoti (1999) neither of these outcomes can be assumed. Women's perceptions of value and self-worth are not necessarily translated into actual well-being, benefits or change in gender relations in the household. Worryingly in response to women's increased (but still low) income, evidence indicates that men may be withdrawing more of their own contribution for their own luxury expenditure.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

2. To know the Awareness of Women Empowerment in India.
3. To analyze the Factors influencing the Women Empowerment in India.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper is basically descriptive and analytical in nature. In this paper an attempt has been taken to analyze the empowerment of in India. The data used in it is purely from secondary sources according to the need of this study.

**Need of Women Empowerment:** India women particularly in rural areas needs to address the issue of empowering women. About 66% of the female population in rural area is unutilized. This is mainly due to existing social customs. In agriculture and Animal care the women contribute 90% of the total workforce. Women constitute almost half of the population, perform nearly 2/3 of its work hours, receive 1/10th of the world's income and own less than 1/ 100th the world property. Among the world's 900 million illiterate people, women outnumber men two to one. 70% of people living in poverty are women. Lower sex ratio i.e. 933, the existing studies show that the women are relatively less healthy than men though belong to same class. They constitute less than 1/7th of the administrators and managers in developing countries. Only 10% seats in World Parliament and 6% in National Cabinet are held by women.

**Government Schemes for Women Empowerment:** The Government programmes for women development began as early as 1954 in India but the actual participation began only in 1974. At present, the Government of India has over 34 schemes for women operated by different department and ministries. Some of these are as follows:

1. Rastria Mahila Kosh (RMK) 1992-1993
2. Mahila Samridhi Yojana (MSY) October,1993.
3. Indira Mahila Yojana (IMY) 1995.
4. Women Entrepreneur Development programme given top priority in 1997-98.
5. Mahila Samakhya being implemented in about 9000 villages.
6. Swayasjdha.
7. Swa Shakti Group.
8. Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP).
9. Swalamban.
10. Crèches/ Day care centre for the children of working and ailing mother.
11. Hostels for working women.
12. Swadhar.
13. National Mission for Empowerment of Women.
14. Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) (1975),
15. Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescence Girls (RGSEAG) (2010).
16. The Rajiv Gandhi National Crèche Scheme for Children of Working Mothers.

17. Integrated Child Protection scheme (ICPS) (2009-2010).
18. Dhanalakahmi (2008).
19. Short Stay Homes.
20. Ujjawala (2007).
21. Scheme for Gender Budgeting (XI Plan).
22. Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP).
23. Training of Rural Youth for Self Employment (TRYSEM).
24. Prime Minister's Rojgar Yojana (PMRY).
25. Women's Development Corporation Scheme (WDCS).
26. Working Women's Forum.
27. Indira Mahila Kendra.
28. Mahila Samiti Yojana.
29. Khadi and Village Industries Commission.
30. Indira Priyadarahini Yojana.
31. SBI's Sree Shaki Scheme.
32. SIDBI's Mahila Udyam Nidhi Mahila Vikas Nidhi.
33. NGO's Credit Schemes.
34. National Banks for Agriculture and Rural Development's Schemes

The efforts of government and its different agencies are ably supplemented by nongovernmental organizations that are playing an equally important role in facilitating women empowerment. Despite concerted efforts of governments and NGOs there are certain gaps. Of course we have come a long way in empowering women yet the future journey is difficult and demanding.

**Reasons For The Empowerment of Women:** Today we have noticed different Acts and Schemes of the central Government as well as state Government to empower the women of India. But in India women are discriminated and marginalized at every level of the society whether it is social participation, political participation, economic participation, access to education, and also reproductive healthcare. Women are found to be economically very poor all over the India. A few women are engaged in services and other activities. So, they need economic power to stand on their own legs on par with men. Other hand, it has been observed that women are found to be less literate than men. According to 2001 census, rate of literacy among men in India is found to be 76% whereas it is



only 54% among women. Thus, increasing education among women is of very important in empowering them. It has also noticed that some of women are too weak to work. They consume less food but work more. Therefore, from the health point of view, women folk who are to be weaker are to be made stronger. Another problem is that workplace harassment of women. There are so many cases of rape, kidnapping of girl, dowry harassment, and so on. For these reasons, they require empowerment of all kinds in order to protect themselves and to secure their purity and dignity. To sum up, women empowerment cannot be possible unless women come with and help to self-empower themselves. There is a need to formulate reducing feminized poverty, promoting education of women, and prevention and elimination of violence against women.

**Challenges:** There are several constraints that check the process of women empowerment in India. Social norms and family structure in developing countries like India, manifests and perpetuate the subordinate status of women. One of the norms is the continuing preference for a son over the birth of a girl child which is present in almost all societies and communities. The society is more biased in favor of male child in respect of education, nutrition and other opportunities. The root cause of this type of attitude lies in the belief that male child inherits the clan in India with an exception of Meghalaya. Women often internalize the traditional concept of their role as natural thus inflicting an injustice upon them. Poverty is the reality of life for the vast majority women in India. It is the factor that poses challenge in realizing women's empowerment.

### **Constitutional Provisions For Empowering Women In India**

Equality before law for all persons (Article-14).

Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth (Article 15(I)).

However, special provisions may be made by the state in favors of women and children Article 15(3).

Equality of opportunity for all citizens relating to employment or appointment to any office under the state (Article 16).

State policy to be directed to securing for men and women equally the right to an adequate means of livelihood (Article 39(a); (v) equal pay for equal work for both men and women (Article 39(d).

Provisions to be made by the state for securing just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief (Article 42).

Promotion of harmony by every citizen of India and renouncement of such practices which are derogatory to the dignity of women Article 51A (e).



Reservation of not less than one-third of total seats for women in direct election to local bodies, viz; Panchayats and Municipalities (Articles 343(d) and 343 (T).

**Women Empowerment:-**The World Bank's Empowerment and Poverty Reduction: A Sourcebook defines empowerment in its broadest sense as the "expansion of freedom of choice and action". Empowerment is the process of enabling or authorizing an individual to think, behaves, take action and control work in an autonomous way. It is the state of feeling of the self-empowered to take control of one's own destiny. It includes both control over resources (Physical, Human, Intellectual and Financial) and over ideology (Belief, Values and Attitudes) (Batliwala, 1994).The feminist empowerment paradigm did not originate as a Northern imposition, but is firmly rooted in the development of some of the earliest micro-finance programmes in the South, including SEWA in India. It currently underlies the gender policies of many NGOs and the perspectives of various consultants and researchers looking at gender impact of micro-finance programmes (e.g. Chen 1996, Johnson1997).

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**Women's empowerment through Panchayati Raj:** Suppression of women's political rights is only another manifestation of the patriarchal mindset which seeks to smother women from birth till death and contends that a woman's identity always derives from a man be it her father or husband. A Panchayat, in the traditional sense, is a body of 5 elders of the village who help resolve conflict amongst the villagers. Yet, women & lower castes were not allowed membership of this body. In pre-independence India, legal provisions made it difficult for women to participate actively in politics. For instance, the Bombay Village Panchayat Act, 1920 stipulated that no female could become an elected member. The Constitution of Independent India only spoke of local self-governing bodies in Part IV, the Directive Principles of State Policy, and did not make any provisions for specific reservation for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs).In the light of these historical circumstances, one can quite categorically say that the 73<sup>rd</sup>Amendment Act, 1992, mandating reservation in at least 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the seats of all

Panchayat Councils and 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the Pradhan (head of the Panchayat) positions for women, was a landmark for women's political empowerment. This was followed by the 74<sup>th</sup> Amendment Act, 1992, which established similar reservations in Nagar Palikas & Municipalities. In addition, Bihar became the 1<sup>st</sup> state to reserve 50% of seats for women with Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan & Himachal Pradesh following suit. Today, 54% of elected representatives of PRIs in Bihar are women.

**Mahila Samakhya A Programme for Women's Empowerment:** The Mahila Samakhya programme, currently running in eight states of the country, is a programme of the Department of Education, Ministry of Human Resources Development, and Government of India. The MS programme was started as a consequence of the National Policy on Education formulated in 1986 after two years of intense debate and discussion. It was born out of the realization that despite the many developmental initiatives since independence, gender inequalities persisted in all spheres of development. Women remained exploited and oppressed. Poor rural women, regardless of caste and community, geography and state-wise development initiatives, remained the most powerless and marginalized group of all. The main objective of Mahila Samakhya is to reverse the processes responsible for the subordination of women, by empowering them with self esteem, and the knowledge with which to determine their own destinies. The unique feature of the MS programme is the emphasis given to changing these perceptions it is this rejection of victimhood which enables women to challenge patriarchal power equations in the family, community and society.

While Mahila Samakhyawas set up in many states, the Women's Development Programme was launched exclusively in the state of Rajasthan. It was founded on a triadic structure involving the state, NGOs and academics/universities. More specifically, these were the Department of Women and Child Development (DWCD) of Rajasthan, the state's Information Development and Resources Agency (IDARA) and the Institute of Development Studies, Jaipur (IDS). (Kapadia Katrin 2002:398).

**The Women's Development Porgramme:** Was oriented towards achieving a shift in women's consciousness rather than towards the formation of self help groups that would foster economic self-reliance. The latter was the model that the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) and the Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) programme represented. The WIG initiative was launched through women's quotas in panchayat institutions. In contrast to GAD where the focus was on the state and policy makers, WIG once again returns to society and focuses on the need to provide a space in the state apparatus for the untapped energy of its

female members. (Mayaram in Kapadia, Karin 2002:399). A series of questions assume relevance with respect to 'engendering' panchayat democracy. How is affirmative action in the institutions of local governance working on the ground in rural India? What is the impact of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment on rural women, especially those who belong to the poor, backward, low and Dalit castes? What is the meaning, given social, structural and other constraints, of women's political presence? What is the response of the rural power structure to the presence of women? How is the institutional fabric, including ruling groups and bureaucracies, caste associations, formal civil society and the new social and women's movements, responding to women's presence? What is the nature of the nascent 'feminization' of the rural public sphere? By 'feminization' I mean not only the visibility of women in politics and their presence in institutions of representative democracy

### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION:**

Women empowerment seems to be comparatively poor. Women's empowerment is not a Northern concept women all over the world, including countries in South, have been challenging and changing gender inequalities since the beginning of the history. These struggles have also been supported by many men who have been outraged at injustice against women. Women represent half the world's population and gender inequality exists in every nation on the planet. Until women are given the same opportunities that men are, entire societies will be destined to perform below their true potentials. The greatest need of the hour is change of social attitude to women. "When women move forward the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves". Let women build up their identity in the society. The Empowerment of Women has become one of the most important concerns of 21st century not only at national level but also at the international level. Government initiatives alone would not be sufficient to achieve this goal. Society must take initiative to create a climate in which there is no gender discrimination and women have full opportunities of self decision making and participating in social, political and economic life of the country with a sense of equality. The first and foremost priority should be given to the education of women, which is the grassroots problem. Hence, education for women has to be paid special attention. Awareness programmes need to be organized for creating awareness among women especially belonging to weaker sections about their rights. Women should be allowed to work and should be provided enough safety and support to work. They should be provided with proper wages and work at par with men so that their status can be elevated in the society. Strict implementation of Programmes and Acts should be there to curb the mal-practices prevalent in the society.

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