

The Future is Female: A Critical Study of Women's Empowerment in the 21st Century

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Abstract: Empowerment of women is the symbol or indication of prosperity, development or advancement of human society. It is a multi-dimensional concept. Where in the context of women, it is an exercise of powerless women becoming aware of their situation, organizing themselves, and asserting their rights to make choices, control resources, and access opportunities to improve their position. In the pursuance of constitutional mandate, the govt. has enacted several laws and acts for women empowerment. But due to lack of education, poverty, unawareness and orthodox thinking of society this effort could not get success as desired. Still victimized of cruelty, verbal abuse, physical abuse, sexual harassment, neglect, discriminatory treatment, poverty, illiteracy, unawareness and present unemployment. The present study deals with women empowerment in 21st century. The aims of this study are to find out women education in pre-colonial, colonial and modern India, the forms of empowerment of women, the violence against women, women rights, legal protection of women in Indian constitution, the Government schemes and programs for women empowerment, educational awareness. As a result, it is observed that the historical background of women education in Indian society in Vedic era women education was good. This study also shows that women empowerment refers to increasing and improving the social, economic, political and legal strength of the women, to ensure equal-right to women and to make them confident enough to claim their rights. A country's all-round development is only possible when its women become powerful. women education is inevitable to rejuvenate woman empowerment. The women will be self-conscious socially, politically and economically by education. Overall, this study shows that by women empowerment Indian society is developed and changing in the 21st century.

Keywords: Women, Women empowerment, Women Education, Women Rights, Violence against Women

1. Introduction

Empowerment of women has become one of the most important topics in the present context of India, as well as of the world. 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. The term Empowerment of women refers to the development of the spiritual, social, political, economic strength, decision making, rights and human dignity of all women. The women empowerment has been growing up day by day after the independence, as a result Indian women live in standard. Women constitute roughly 50% of the nation's population and a majority of them remain economically dependent, without employment. Women empowerment is very necessary to make the bright future of the family, society and country. Empowerment of women would mean encouraging women to be self-reliant, economically independent, have positive self-esteem, generate confidence to face any difficult situation and incite active participation in various social-political development endeavors. Women empowerment will be more relevant if and only if women are educated. If women are uneducated, the future generations will be uneducated. For this reason, the Greek warrior Napoleon once said, "Give me a few educated mothers, I shall give you a heroic race." When you educate a woman, you create a nation. In the recent years, various constitutional and legal rights have been implemented by the government of Indian in order to eliminate ill practice and gender discrimination against women. There is a list of safety laws for women in India working in the field to provide safety to the women from all types of crimes against women. Women empowerment in India plays a very important role in

the overall development of the country. So, in order to make the country fully developed, women empowerment is an essential tool for the country in 21st century.

The statistics mention that women harassment compared to the male counterparts is significantly higher all over the world. Even though the government has brought in very stringent laws for violence against women, women's safety has been a debatable and major social issue (Jewani, Ajmire, Brijwani, 2024). Women's empowerment has been thoroughly discussed in the last two decades, yet the research on the components of women empowerment on the national level is still lacking. Despite the efforts and initiatives, women's empowerment in India continues to face several challenges and roadblocks. poor implementation and monitoring of policies and programs is also a primary hinderance to women's advancement. Women experience problems and challenges that leads to a drop in their social standing, these are verbal abuse, physical abuse, sexual harassment, negligence, discriminatory treatment, poverty, illiteracy, unawareness and unemployment (Jain, 2024). women's empowerment has emerged as significant global-scale in the 21st century, acknowledged not merely as human rights imperatives but as essential foundations for peaceful, flourishing, and sustainable societies. In India, this agenda infers particular significance given the country's complex sociocultural landscape, where traditional patriarchal norms coexist with transforming constitutional structure and accelerated socio-economic development. Despite notable progress in legislative reforms, educational attainment, and economic participation over recent decades, Indian women continue to negotiate multifaceted barriers to their total advancement (Thorat, 2024).

The historical background of women education in Indian society in Vedic era women education was good. women

empowerment refers to increasing and improving the social, economic, political and legal strength of the women, to ensure equal-right to women and to make them confident enough to claim their rights. A country's all-round development is only possible when its women become powerful (Mandal, 2018). 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 (Suresh & Sivakumar, 2017). The role of women has also changed in the 21st century. People who exercise a great deal of choice in their lives may be very powerful, but they are not empowered, because they were never disempowered in the first place. Today women are leading in every field and society whether it be sports, commerce and industry, education, health, politics, technology, navy, army, agriculture. Due to advancement in the field of science and technology and the active involvement of women in it we have been able to overcome the evils of our society which were prevalent in our religion, caste and territory and were a danger to the world's peace. Yet they are not absolutely free from discrimination and harassment of the society. (Jain, Jain and Shah, 2017).

2. Need and Significance of the Study

The past two decades witnessed unprecedented developments in women empowerment in India. The government has made several announcements of policies and programs aimed at bringing an improvement in the status of Indian women. Empowerment of women in the 21st century is not a matter of individual achievement; it's a matter of establishing systems under which there is collective involvement, protection, and chance for all women on equal terms. Nevertheless, there was no 100% empowerment of women in the 21st century since there were a vast variety of social, cultural, economic, political, and organizational constraints that still affect women differently in various communities and geographical locations. Other scholars conducted studies on women's development empowerment without factoring in the interaction of individual, cultural, and structural factors. Nevertheless, there remains some evidence of policy gap in practice and awareness. An integrative approach is thus required at this juncture. Hence, the researcher feels to undertake "The future is female: A critical study of Women Empowerment in 21st Century."

Objectives of the Study

The following are the specific objectives of the study-

- 1) To find out Women Education in Pre-Colonial, Colonial and Modern India.
- 2) To explore the different dimensions of women's empowerment.
- 3) To find out the Violence against Women.
- 4) To analyze Women Rights, Legal Protection of Women in Indian Constitution.
- 5) To examine the role played by NGOs in advancing women's rights and empowerment.
- 6) To know the Government Schemes and Programmes for Women Empowerment.
- 7) To study the impact of education on empowerment of women.
- 8) To study the challenges to education in achieving women empowerment.

- 9) To examine how women empowerment is reshaping Indian society in modern time.

3. Methodology of the Study

The present study is a qualitative study. The researchers here collected data from different secondary sources like books, magazines, journals, various government organizations, website etc.

4. Discussion

Obj1: Women Education in Pre-Colonial, Colonial and Modern India: Women Education in Pre-Colonial Period: Pre-colonial period is diversified from ancient period to before British period. So, according to the steps of pre-colonial period there are three types of women education system-

- 1) Women Education of Ancient Vedic era.
- 2) Women Education of Buddhist era.
- 3) Women Education of Muslim era.

1) Women Education of Ancient Vedic era: The Vedic period of ancient India (1500 BCE-500 BCE) is known for its rich cultural and religious traditions. The women education in ancient Vedic era was very good. Women in ancient India had free access to education. They were expected to participate in Vedic sacrifices and utter mantras. In the earlier Vedic and Upanishad time, girls were free to go through the 'Upanayana' ceremony, live a life of celibacy, study Vedas, Vedangas and other subjects along with their brother pupils. The Vedas give a very honorable and respectable status. Ghosha being the most notable among them. Vedic history is replete with numerous scholarly women who were striving for excellence – Maitreyee was in pursuit of the philosophy of immortality, Gargi was the spokesperson of philosophers in King Janak's court, Atreyi was a dedicated student of sages Valmiki and Agastya. During the Vedic age women education was at a highest peak. Women got the same education as men and participated in the philosophical debates.

2) Women Education of Buddhist era: Women education during the Buddhist period was at its lowest ebb, as the women folk were despised in the sense that Lord Buddha had regarded them as the source of all evils. So he had advised during his lifetime not to admit women in monasteries. But after sometime due to the insistence of his dear pupil Ananda, Buddha had permitted about 500 women along with his stepmother for admission in Bihar with many restrictions and reservation.

3) Women Education of Muslim era: Education was theoretically a must for every man and woman in the Muslim society. But the Muslim girls, in general, had little time or opportunity to receive education. The Muslims in the middle ages were conservative in their outlook. They were not in favor of providing education to their daughters. They considered women's education as unnecessary. Their idea was to prepare the young girls for household work. Besides, due to the 'pardah' system, education of the Muslim women was naturally restricted. Still, there were some well-to-do persons who looked after the education of their daughters at home with the help of private tutors. Education of Muslim

women belonging to the higher and well-to-do classes made considerable progress during the middle ages. In the 'harems' of kings and nobles, some ladies were educated and some of them even won distinction, but the percentage of such educated ladies constituted only a microscope part of the total Muslim women population.

Women Education in Colonial Period: The ideas and pedagogical methods of education during the colonial period from 1757 to 1947 were contested terrain. The commercial British East India company ruled parts of India from 1764 to 1858. The idea of imparting education to women emerged in the British period. Earlier, it was almost universally hailed that since women need not earn their livelihood, there was no need of education for them. After the Bhakti Movement, the Christian missionaries took interest in the education of the girls. The Christian missionaries, whatever their motive, were the first to set up the Calcutta Female Juvenile Society in 1819. Vidyasagar established no less than 35 girl's school in Bengal. Charles wood's dispatch on education (1854) laid great stress on the need for female education. The Hunter Commission too emphasized on the need for female education in 1882. The Calcutta, Bombay and Madras institutions did not permit the admission of girls till 1875. It was only after 1882 that girls were allowed to go for higher education. Since then, there has been a continuous progress in the extension of education among females. Some women's organizations such as Bharat Mahila Parishad (1904), Bharat Stree Mahamandal (1910), Women's Indian Association (1917), National Council of Women India (1925) and All India Women's Conference (1927) took up issues like women's education, abolition of

social evils, Hindu law reform, equality of rights and opportunities and women's suffrage. The commission also commented at length on the condition of women education of that time. It recommended immediate arrangement of public funds for more schools for girls, appointment of lady teachers, a separate curriculum for girls, special hostels for girls and arrangements for higher education.

Women Education in Modern India: Women education in modern India is traced back to the years after the Indian Independence. University Education Commission (1948-49), Modular Commission (1952-53), Kothari Commission (1964-66), National Policy in Education (1968), National Policy for Education (1986), National education policy (2020) have recommended for giving important women education. Like gender inclusion find by the government to provide equitable quality education to all girls and transgender students, eliminating gender disparities in all educational stages. Special attention is to be given to marginalized groups, including girls, especially those from rural, SC/ST, minority, and socio-economically disadvantage backgrounds. In the present days, the government of India takes measures to provide education to all Indian women. Women literacy rate seemingly rose in the modern days. Women education in India became a compulsory concern and female literacy has gone higher than male literacy. At present, the Constitution of India grants free primary school education for both boys and girls up to age 14. After independence various actions are taken to improve women education.

Literacy Rate (%) in India: 1901-2011

Sl. No	Census year	Persons	Males	Females	Male-Female gap in Literacy rate
1.	1901	5.35	9.83	0.60	9.23
2	1911	5.92	10.56	1.05	9.51
3	1921	7.16	12.21	1.81	10.40
4	1931	9.50	15.59	2.93	12.66
5	1941	16.10	24.90	7.30	17.60
6	1951	18.33	27.16	8.86	18.30
7	1961	28.30	40.40	15.35	25.05
8	1971	34.45	45.96	21.97	23.99
9	1981	43.57	56.38	29.76	26.62
10	1991	52.21	64.13	39.29	24.84
11	2001	64.83	75.26	53.67	21.59
12	2011	74.04	82.14	65.46	16.68

Source: Census of India

Obj2. To explore the different dimensions of women's empowerment. Women empowerment means women gaining more power and control over their own lives. The empowerment of women and the improvement of their political, social, economic and health status is a highly important and in itself. In addition, it is essential for the achievement of sustainable development. If it is to be elucidated beyond the two self-explanatory words, 'Women Empowerment' refers to complete emancipation of women from socio-economic shackles of dependency and deprivations. Women empowerment needs to take a high speed in this country to equalize the value of both genders. To bring empowerment really every woman needs to be aware about her rights from her own end. There are different types of women empowerments. These are given below –

- **Economic empowerment:** - Efforts to enhance women's economic empowerment persisted through programs such as the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) and the Start-Up India initiative. These initiatives aimed to provide women with entrepreneurship opportunities, financial literacy, and access to credit and markets, thereby enabling them to participate more actively in the economy Economic empowerment:
- **Political empowerment:** - Providing means and ways of equal participations by women and fair representation at all levels of political processes and public life within every society and community and rendering possible the articulation by women of their concerns and needs and providing a promise for women's full and equal share in each field of decision-making. In India, pre-independence and post-independence reform movements have enabled

women to acquire some strength in politics too. They were among the first ones to develop active interest in politics. The 50 per cent reservation accorded to women at the local self-government level has enhanced political participation of women at the grass-roots level in India but political participation of women in Legislative Assemblies and Parliament remains very low in India. Women have held the posts of President, Prime Minister, Speaker, and Leader of Opposition in Indian politics and have established themselves (Mokta, 2014).

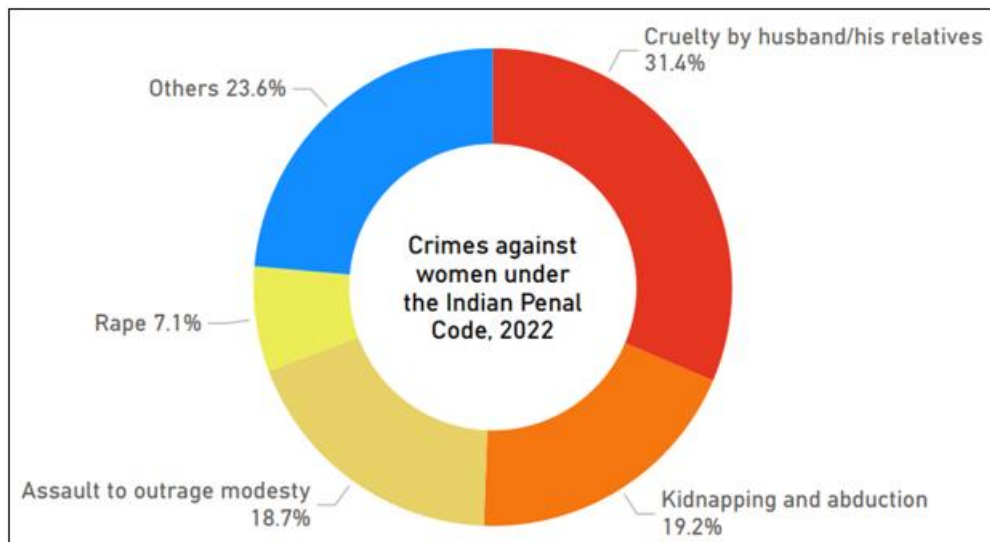
- **Educational empowerment:** - Education is viewed as being the best weapon to empower women with skills, know-how and confidence to play their part fully in the development process. Education is one of the key determinants of the success of women empowerment, development and well-being. Women's education is the centerpiece of India's overall development today. Education is an emancipatory tool for empowering women. Education is a milestone in women empowerment as it allows them to struggle with the hardships, to challenge their traditional role and transform their lives. Empowerment of women would imply making women economically independent, self-reliant, possessing a good self-image so that they can meet any adverse situation and they must be capable of joining developmental activities. Empowerment of gender cannot be attained without educating all children, including the girls. This adage - if one boy child is educated individually, he alone gets educated but if one girl child is educated the entire family gets benefited - has been achieved by the national political leaders, policy makers, administrators and bureaucrats of the nation
- **Social empowerment:** - Social empowerment it is a process to change the distribution of power in interpersonal relations among different people, cultures, activities of the society. Social empowerment refers to the enabling force that strengthens women's social relations and their position in social structures. Social empowerment addresses the social discriminations existing in the society based on disability, race, ethnicity, religion or gender.
- **Health empowerment:** - Women's safety and health is also a huge sector. Empowerment of women starts with the guarantee of their health and safety. Women's health issues are of highest priority for the well-being of a nation, and are key markers to measure the empowerment of women in a nation. The government of India is aware of the condition of women's health in the nation. The National Health policy 2002 barely mentions women's health, the domain of the National Population Policy 2000. Ensuring and expanding girls' and women's education will be crucial in propelling sustained improvement in female health gains. HIV/AIDS is the number one killer among

women of reproductive age in most poor nations. More educated girls and women are also likely to practice birth control, protecting them from disease, and delay childbearing. Astonishing issues exist where mother medical care is being sought.

- **Psychological empowerment:** The psychological component, on the other hand, would include the development of feelings that women can act upon to improve their condition. This means formation of the belief that they can success in change efforts.
- **Legal empowerment:** Make them aware of the civil rights, exercising the legal rights whenever necessary, preparing and canvassing the documents regarding the legal freedom for women, providing good literacy programs regarding the legal empowerment.

Obj3. The Violence against women: There are many violence against women in India because of the male dominated society here. Women generally face various kinds of crime like dowry death, sexual harassment, cheating, murder, girl child abuse, robbery, etc. Violence against women which counted as crimes under the Indian penal code are rape, kidnapping and abduction, mental and physical torture, death for dowry, wife battering, sexual harassment, trafficking, molestation, importation of girls, etc. The cases of violence against women is increasing day by day and becoming too broad. On the other hand, with the increasing level of violence against women they started losing their educational, social, political, economic and cultural opportunities in the society. Dowry related violence is a serious problem that affects the lives of women and girls. Dowry includes gifts, money, goods or property given from the bride's family to the groom or in-laws before, during or any time after the marriage. Indian women through the countries remained subjugated and oppressed because society believed in clinging onto orthodox beliefs for the brunt of domestic violence as well as public, physical, emotional and mental violence. Crime against women is a social menace, and a costly public health problem. It can take the form of threats, verbal abuse, battering, rape and murder. The latest NCRB data for the year 2022 shows that overall crimes against women in India was 4,45,256 in 2022. The majority of cases categorized as crimes against women were reported under 'cruelty by husband or his relatives' (31.4 per cent). This was followed by kidnapping and abduction of women (19.2 per cent), assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty (18.7 per cent), and rape (7.1 per cent).

Uttar Pradesh registered the highest number of 65,743 cases of crimes against women under IPC and special and local laws, Maharashtra recoded 45,331 cases, and Rajasthan reported 45,058 cases, each with varying chargesheet rate.



Source: National Crime Records Bureau

Obj4. Women rights, Legal protection of Women in Indian Constitution. The rights available to women in India can be classified into two categories, namely as constitutional rights and legal rights. The constitutional rights are those which are provided in the various provisions of the constitution. The legal rights, on the other hand, are those which are provided in the various laws (acts) of the parliament and the state legislatures.

Constitutional Rights to Women: The rights and safeguards enshrined in the constitution for women in India are listed below:

- 1) Article 15(1) The state shall not discriminate against any citizen of Indian on the ground of sex.
- 2) Article 15(3) The state is empowered to make any special provision for women. In other words, this provision enables the state to make affirmative discrimination in favour of women.
- 3) Article 16(2) No citizen shall be discrimination against or be ineligible for any employment or office under the state on the ground of sex.
- 4) Article 23(1) Traffic in human beings and forced labour are prohibited.
- 5) Article 39(a) The state to secure for men and women equally the right to an adequate means of livelihood.
- 6) Article 39(d) The state to secure equal pay for equal work for both Indian men and women.
- 7) Article 39(e) The state is required to ensure that the health and strength of women workers are not abused and that they are not forced by economic necessity to enter avocations unsuited to their strength.
- 8) Article 42 The state shall make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief.
- 9) Article 51-A(e) It shall be the duty of every citizen of India to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women.
- 10) Article 243-D(3) One third of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every panchayat shall be reserved for women.
- 11) Article 243-D(4) One third of the total number of offices of chairpersons in the panchayats at each level shall be reserved for women.

- 12) Article 243-T(3) One third of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every municipality shall be reserved for women.
- 13) Article 243-T(4) The offices of chairperson in the municipalities shall be reserved for women in such manner as the state Legislature may provide.

Legal Rights to women: To following various legislations contain several rights and safeguards for women.

- 1) Protection of women from Domestic Violence Act 2005.
- 2) Immoral Traffic (prevention) Act 1956.
- 3) Indecent Representation of Women (prohibition) Act 1986.
- 4) Commission of Sati (prevention) Act 1987.
- 5) Dowry Prohibition Act 1961.
- 6) Maternity Benefit Act 1961.
- 7) Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act 1971.
- 8) Pre-Conception and Pre-Natural Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act 1994.
- 9) Equal Remuneration Act 1976.
- 10) Dissolution of Muslim Marriage Act 1939.
- 11) Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act 1986.
- 12) Family Courts Act 1984.
- 13) Indian Penal Code 1860.
- 14) Code of Criminal Procedure 1873.
- 15) Indian Christian Marriage Act 1872.
- 15) Legal Services Authorities Act 1987.
- 16) Hindu Marriage Act 1955.
- 17) Hindu Succession Act 1956.
- 18) Minimum wages Act 1948.
- 19) Mines Act 1952 and Factories Act 1948.

The following other legislation's also contain certain rights and safeguards for women.

- 1) Employees' State Insurance Act 1948.
- 2) Plantation Labour Act 1951.
- 3) Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act 1976.
- 4) Legal Practitioners (Women) Act 1923.
- 5) Indian succession Act 1925.
- 6) Indian Divorce Act 1869.
- 7) Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act 1936.
- 8) Special Marriage Act 1954.

- 9) Foreign Marriage Act 1969.
- 10) Indian Evidence Act 1872.
- 11) Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act 1956.
- 12) National Commission for Women Act 1990.
- 13) Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, Redressal) Act the 2013

Obj5.to examine the role played by NGOs in advancing women's rights and empowerment. Participation of women in NGOs gave them an opportunity to foray into the social and political spheres which were not easily granted by the for profit and public sectors. Many NGOs that work to alleviate poverty among women, also focuses on advocating the important changes in the lives of women. NGOs play a major role in enforcing rights provided by legislation. Though there are few programs which have played a vital role in women

empowerment such as, women in development (WID) has help women to deal with market affairs. Only empowering women economically without noticing their social position in society also cause problems for women. The various roles of NGOs in women empowerment. These are-

- 1) Educating the Rural Women.
- 2) Supplementation of Government Efforts.
- 3) Representing the Rural Women.
- 4) Promoting Technology in Rural Areas.
- 5) Efforts Organizing the Rural Women.
- 6) Building Various Model and Experiment.
- 7) Providing Effective & Efficient Training to Rural Women.
- 8) Mobilizing the Optimum Resources.
- 9) Promoting Rural Leadership.



Source: Research Gate

Obj6. The Government Schemes and Programmes for Women Empowerment. The Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) and the Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB) are implementing various welfare schemes and programmes for Indian women. These schemes and programmes are listed below-

- 1) Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (RGSEAG)-Sabla.
- 2) Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY).
- 3) Support to Training & Employment Programme for Women (STEP).
- 4) Working Women Hostel (WWH).
- 5) Women Empowerment and Livelihood Programme in Mid-Gangetic Plain (Priyadarshini).
- 6) Swadhar Scheme for Women in Difficult Circumstances.
- 7) Scheme for Combating Trafficking.
- 8) Family Counseling Centers (FCCs).
- 9) Short Stay Home Programme.
- 10) Awareness Generation Programme (AGP).
- 11) Condensed courses of Education for Adult Women (CCE).
- 12) Integrated Scheme for Women's Empowerment (ISWE).
- 13) Gender Budgeting Scheme (GBS).
- 14) Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme.
- 15) One stop centre scheme
- 16) Women Helpline Scheme.

Many programmes have been implemented and run by the government such as international women's day, mother's day etc. In order to bring awareness in the society about the true

rights and value of the women in the development of the nation.

Obj7. To study the impact of education on empowerment of women. To develop the condition of the women the role of education is noteworthy. Education is considered as the most important tool for empowering women in society. It is not only limited to developing the personality of an individual but also plays an important role in economic, social and cultural development. The UNESCO put its effort in order to achieve the equal opportunity of education regardless of age, gender, race or any other difference in social and economic status. Education makes women conscious. As a result the women make effort to change their condition. Education brings change in society and culture. Its effect is seen in women also. Education helps men and women claim their rights and realize their potential in the economic, political and social arenas. Cultural and traditional values stand between girls and their prospects for education. The factors like cultural, social, political and technological changes in the world have revolutionized the education and social life of women. Increased awareness and education has inspired women to come out of the four walls of the home. Industrialized and technological change has opened vast opportunities of employment for women in different sectors of the national economy. Today Indian women go to the factory, the office, or the school, or the college to work for a wage. Women today are playing huge roles as investors, consumers, entrepreneurs, scientists, lawyers and doctors. Economic independence of women is important as it enhances their ability to take decisions and exercise freedom of choice, action.

Empowering Women Through Education



Source: Faster Capital

Obj8. To study the challenges to education in achieving women empowerment: Every year, according to the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), more than a million infant girls die because they are born female. Every year, because of discrimination, millions of women are mutilated, battered to death, burned alive, stripped of their legal rights, and bought and sold in an unacknowledged but international trade as slaves for domestic or sexual purposes. Because of their gender women are at risk of a range of violent abuses by private organizations and individuals (Mishra, 2014).

- **Violence:** Violence is the prime factor which opposes women's empowerment. Physical, emotional, mental torture and agony are deep rooted in the society from ancient times which are responsible for decline in female sex ratio.
- **Gender inequality:** Women empowerment is not only limited to economic independence of women; gender equality is the other side.
- **Family restrictions:** Illiterate guardians who are not willing to send their female children's to educational institutions.
- **Early marriages:** Early marriages result in dropouts from school. Lack of awareness on female education is also one of its causes.
- **Poorer health care:** women might have restricted access to good-quality health care, such as reproductive health, i.e., reproductive health, and might experience health inequities.
- **Social pressures:** girls are socially pressured to place caregiving and household work above formal education, thus experiencing lower enrollment and retention levels.

Obj9. To examine how women empowerment is reshaping Indian society in modern time.

Twentieth Century has brought a great change in the life of women all over world and 21st Century is the century of women. Woman's attitudes, values, inspirations, ways of feelings, standards of behavior and acting for effective participation in all walks of life are becoming reality. Rays of hope are becoming brighter and radical changes in and through women's thrust in socio-economic and political process, will be instrumental to healthier, happier and progressive state in near future. As the largest vibrant democracy in the world, India has been continuously experimenting with a number of forms and modes of

organizations and structures to achieve gender equality. Women empowerment in India has been a powerful factor in the growth of India by promoting gender equality and increasing economic growth. Women empowerment ensures active involvement of women in decision-making, both at home and in society, and results in better social and political structure. Increased participation of women in education, enterprise, and work has increased family income and national output. Women leadership in every walk of life has brought positive change and social reform. Furthermore, empowered women bring about health, education, and sustainable living, lifting entire communities to the level of dignity. Over the past two decades, India has tried to empower women and lift their status with laws in the public and private domains. However, despite all the attempts that have been made, gender-based violence and discrimination against women continue to be common features of Indian society.

The role of women empowerment in India has come a long way in the last twenty years. In spite of all problems, Indian women have achieved much in different aspects of life like education, politics, business, and social justice. The paper here endeavors to give a critical overview of the role of women empowerment in India in the 21st century. Most of the women embraced and were active in the nationalist movement and acquired overpowering roles and positions and governance and public life in new India. The future of Indian women's empowerment will be shaped by resolute will, creative planning, and coordinated action to combat present ills and fashion a fairer and more equitable society for men as well as for women.

5. Conclusions

Empowerment is not a technocratic goal—it is a wholesale political commitment. Achieving it requires a long-term process in which all cultural, social, political and economic norms undergo fundamental change. It also requires an entirely new way of thinking—in which the stereotyping of women and men no longer limits their choices, but gives way to a new philosophy that regards all people as essential agents of change that views development as a process of enlarging the choice of both sexes, just not one. Therefore, we see that in 21st century societies have been accepted women's empowerment for development of the world, women as an

active agent for development, participation in and guiding their own development. Women education is essential in the 21st century for women empowerment. This study highlights the significant role of women's education in India's development. Historically, women enjoyed strong educational status during Vedic era, but over time, their position declined. Today, education is a recognized as a key tool for empowering women social, economically and politically. Government of India, through various laws, policy and programs such as the Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao scheme has taken active steps to eliminate violence against women and promote their rights. The constitution provides a strong foundation for gender equality, while numerous NGOs and government initiatives continue to support women's empowerment. Education remains central to enabling women to gain knowledge, skills and independence which are essential for the sustainable development of the country.

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