



## Women Empowerment In Bihar In The Light Of NEP 2020

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*Abstract:* Women Empowerment is a multifaceted concept which promotes the role and power of women in various spheres of life- from personal autonomy to economic stability and political representation. It is an inclusive concept which talks about creating a society where women can take decisions, exercise their rights and have access to opportunities and resources. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, a landmark policy with a vision of complete rejuvenation of education system in India has acknowledged that education is a powerful weapon for promoting gender equality and women empowerment. The policy advocates for a safe and secure learning environment in schools for girls including improved infrastructure (provisions of sanitation and toilets), provision of bicycles, scholarships for meritorious students etc. The formation of Gender-Inclusion Fund is proposed by NEP 2020 for financial assistance in quality education for girls and transgender. The Government of Bihar in the last few years has been making concerned efforts for women empowerment which includes 50% reservation of women in Panchayati Raj which was the pioneer in the entire country, 35% reservation in government jobs, various schemes such as Mukhyamantri Balika Posak Yojana, Mukhya Mantri Kanya Uthan Yojana, Jeevika ,HUNAR and AUZAR schemes etc. Through this paper the researcher has attempted to explore the initiatives taken by the government of Bihar for promoting women empowerment in the light of NEP 2020 with the help of secondary sources of data.

*Index Terms* - Women Empowerment, NEP 2020, Bihar

### I. INTRODUCTION

There is no chance of the welfare of the world unless the condition of the women is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on one wing.”— Swami Vivekananda). It is well said by Swami Vivekananda that the development of a society can't be imagined without women. Both men and women equally contribute to the society. (Sumanlata 2024). Women play multifaceted role in society from a house maker to a community leader. For this women empowerment is essential. Women empowerment is enabling women to take control of their lives, make decisions about themselves, take part in social, economic & political development of the country. Education is necessary for making women aware about their rights, responsibilities and opportunities. “Education is the single greatest tool for achieving social justice & equality.” NEP 2020). National Education Policy 2020 has acknowledged the importance of women education and proposed certain provisions promoting gender equity and equality.

Despite successive government initiatives, women still remain under marginalized and socially disadvantaged group. According to UDISE 2016-17 data, there is a gradual decrease in enrolment of female students within the each of the Social disadvantaged groups. Minorities women are more underrepresented in school and higher education. National Education Policy 2020 advocated for the equitable quality education of women. The policy has drawn attention towards the fact that women make up about half of all socio-economically disadvantaged Groups. Exclusion and inequity largely affect women population under SDGs. The policy has recognized the important role of women in shaping society and therefore it is necessary that they should be well educated and empowered. The different

policies and schemes designed to include students from SEDGs should largely focus on women. It is proposed by the policy that basic infrastructure and facilities for women such as provisions of sanitation and toilets, bicycles, conditional cash transfer etc. will be designed. Financial assistance will be sanctioned through Gender Inclusion Fund to provide quality Education to girls. Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas will be strengthened to increase the participation in quality schools (up to Grade 12) of girls from socio-economically Disadvantaged Groups.

When talking about education and literacy, the name of Bihar can't be overlooked. Besides having a great history of ancient universities like Nalanda, Takshshila and Vikramshila Bihar is among the poorest literacy rate states. (Kaur, H 2023). As per the 2011 census, it ranked last in terms of literacy with an overall percentage of 61.80% in which women literacy rate was about 51% indicating a significant gender gap in the educational attainment. Only 29% of women in Bihar have completed at least 10 years of education compared to 43% of men (Barua and Chandra-Mouli 2016). The literacy rate of rural women in Bihar is 58%, the lowest rate among the larger states in the country. However the government of Bihar has been working effortlessly for education and empowerment. Various schemes have been launched such as mukhyamantri poshak yojna, mukhyamantri balika cycle yojna etc. for increasing the enrollment of girls in school. As a result the improvement in female literacy rate was 20% during 2001-11 which is the largest improvement in any state of the country. It was also seen an increase of 9% in women literacy from 2011 to 2017. (NSC Survey 2017).

A Women empowerment policy was implemented in 2015 by Women & Child Development Corporation to ensure gender parity, equal opportunities, access to health, nutrition, education and capacity building for women. In 2018, Bihar Gender Report Card has been started by C3 (Center for Catalyzing Change) India and Gramener funded by The Bill Gates Foundation which is a snapshot of Bihar's Progress with regard to women empowerment. This Report Card is a vital measure of the transformational approaches undertaken in the State in order to achieve equitable socio-economic development and gender parity. This provides important information on the health, education, water and sanitation, social, economic and political empowerment of women and girls in Bihar (Gender Report card 2019). According to the data recorded in Gender report card 2019, only 12% (29 in numbers) females are member of the Legislative Assembly and four females are members of Legislative Council. These data clearly indicate the unequal status and opportunities of women.

II. Initiatives and efforts made by the government of Bihar for increasing women empowerment in the state of Bihar.

1. Reservation of women in Panchayati Raj: Bihar is pioneer in the entire country in providing 50% reservation to women in Panchayati Raj institutions and urban & local bodies. This step leads to enhance political empowerment of women.
2. Aarakshit Rojgar Mahilaon ka Adhikar: The state government has provided 35% reservation to women in all government jobs to increase participation of women.
3. Mukhyamantri Balika Poshak Yojna: This yojna has been launched to attract girls % their parents towards school education. A fixed amount of ₹ 600 for class I to II, 700 for class III to V & 1000 for class VI to VII is granted to the girls for regular attending school from class 1 to 8.
4. Mukhyamantri Balika Cycle Yojna: The scheme was launched for girls who dropout school due to long distance of school from their home.
5. Mukhyamantri Balika Protsahan Yojna: It aims to provide financial assistance of 10,000 to girls for securing first Di in matriculation.
6. Civil Seva Protsahan Yojna: A lump sum amount of ₹ 50,000 & ₹ 1,00,000 to such women who have cleared Preliminary Examination of the Civil Services.
7. Bihar Rural Livelihood Promotion Society (BRLPS): It is popularly known as JEEVIKA which is a world Bank support Ed poverty alleviation program has been operating in Bihar since 2007. It aims at socio-economic empowerment of women.
8. Janani Bal Suraksha Yojana : Health Protection was provided to pregnant women & nursing mothers through trained health workers like ASHA & MAMTA. The infant Mortality Rate has decreased from 61% in 2005 to 35% at present.
9. Mukhyamantri Kanya Vivah Yojana: The scheme has been operational since 2007 and aimed at providing financial assistance to poor families for the marriage of girls and preventing child marriage.
10. Mukhyamantri Kanya Uthan Yojana: This scheme aims to prevent child marriage female feticide, encourage immunization and encourage the girls to Pursue higher education. ( Sumanlata , 2024)

11. Reservation of girls in medical & engineering colleges: 33% of seats has been reserved for females in engineering and medical colleges of Bihar. This will increase the girls participation in technical field promoting girls empowerment.
12. Hunar& Auzar Programs: A number of girls belonging to minorities has been provided vocational training of 20 different trades under 'hunar' program . This will promote self employment & self dependence among female population of minorities group and increase their representation in society. Different tool kits have been provided to the minorities women under 'Auzar' program to help them to begin self employment and become self resilient.
13. Sabla Program: This program is launched in 12 districts of Bihar with an aim to provide skill development training to adolescent girls to make them self-reliant and self-employed, providing skill development training and to provide supplementary nutrition.
14. Mukhyamantri Akshar Anchal Yojana: The scheme aims to enhance women literacy & empowerment with a target to literate approximately 40 lakhs women in a period of 6 months . School teachers are deployed for this purpose .
15. Gender Budgeting: To fill the gender gap in Bihar , the government has introduced the concept of gender budgeting which is an important tool to change the existing inequalities pattern and lead the state to achieve the goal of gender equality. Bihar is one of the early starter in Indian states to start the concept of Gender Budgeting. (Sumanlata, 2024).

### Conclusion:

Women are one of the wheels of the without which the vehicle of society can't reach to the destination of development. Therefore women should be given equal status, respect, power and opportunities as the constitution of India guarantees equality to its every citizen irrespective of caste, gender, race and language (Article 14 ). The government of Bihar has made significant efforts in improving the condition of women including girls' education, increasing participation of women in the policy making promoting economic, social and political empowerment Significant changes have been made towards gender inequality and empowerment. The literacy rate among women has increased from 53.3% in 2011 to 60.5% in 2021.But still more effort is needed for making the condition of women in Bihar from better to best.

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