



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

## Empowerment of Women in India

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**Abstract:** Women Empowerment is essential for the betterment of any country's future. Women empowerment implies the ability in women to take decisions with regard to their life, work and giving equal rights to them in all spheres like personal, social, economic, Political, legal and so on. Without women empowerment we can't eradicate injustice, gender bias and inequalities in our society. Empowerment acts as a powerful tool against exploitation and harassment of women. It is a great means to get adequate legal protection for women. The empowerment of women has become one of the most important concerns of 21<sup>st</sup> Century not only at national level but also at the international level also. Women empowerment is a strong instrument to eliminate the discrimination and all forms of violence against women and girl child. It is building and strengthening partnership with civil society particularly women's organizations. Women empowerment is essence for the up liftmen of society by the way of enforcement of Constitutional and legal provisions and safeguarding the rights of women.

**Keywords:** Benefits of Women, Gender Equality, Uniform Civil Code, Legal and Constitutional Status.

**Introduction:** Empowerment of women has become one of the most important concerns of 21<sup>st</sup> century. Empowerment is a process that support to reconstruction the ability and remove the all inequality from our society. Empowerment is a concept that provides the specific power to women and ultimately control over the materials. Women empowerment is essential for the betterment of any country's future. Women empowerment implies the ability in women to take decisions with regard to their life, work and giving equal rights to them in all spheres like personal, social, economic,, Political and legal and so on. Without women's empowerment we cannot eradicate injustice, gender bias and inequalities in our society. Empowerment acts as a powerful tool against exploitation and harassment of women. It is great means to get adequate legal protection for women. Hensch, women empowerment can be defined to promoting women's sense of self worth, their ability to determine their own choices, their right to influence social change for themselves and others.

**Research Methodology:** The present paper is evocative and logical in nature. The data for present study is from secondary sources like relevant books, journals, records and some are observable data, the data is taken as per the need of study.

**Objectives:** The major objectives of this study are as –

- a. To explain the importance and benefits of women empowerment.
- b. To point out on the Constitutional laws for the welfare of women empowerment.
- c. To explain the legal provisions for the protection of women.
- d. To analyze briefly the schemes which are meant for the welfare of women empowerment.

**Importance and Benefits of Women Empowerment:** Women empowerment means equalitarianism of women from the atrocious grips of social, cultural, economic, and political and gender based discrimination. It means women should be able to express them just like a men freely. The Constitution not only grants equal status but also empowers the state to adopt positive measures to empower women.

India is a Union of States is a Sovereign, Socialist, Secular, Democratic and Republic with a Parliamentary system of Government. The Constitution of India was adopted on 26 Nov. 1949 and came into force in 26 January 1950. The Constitution of India guarantees equal status to men and women.

Women empowerment raises confidence of women in their ability to lead meaningful and purposeful lives. It eliminates their dependence on others and makes them individuals in their own right. They are able to lead their lives with dignity and freedom which increase their self esteem and give them a unique identity. They are able to gain recognition and form a meaningful contribution to the well being of society.

Women act as capable citizens to make the country achieve and boost Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth as they are financially independent. They are able to spend on all their needs and desires and they also get fair and equitable access to resources of the country.

**Legal and Constitutional Provisions for Women in India:** The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles of State Policy. The Constitution of India not only grants equality to women but also empowers the state to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women. Within the framework of a democratic polity, our laws, development policies, plans and programmes have aimed at women's advancement in different spheres. Gender equality includes protection from sexual harassment and right to work with dignity which is universally recognized basic human rights.

**Legal Provisions:** To uphold the Constitutional mandate, the state has enacted various legislative measures intended to ensure equal rights, to counter social discrimination and various forms of violence and atrocities and to provide support services especially to working women. Although women may be victims of any of the crimes such as murder, robberies, cheating etc. the crimes which are directed specifically against women, are characterized as crime against women. These are broadly classified under two categories –

### 1. The Crimes Identified under the Indian Penal Code (IPC):

- a. Rape (Sec.376 IPC),
- b. Kidnapping and Abduction for different purposes (Sec. 363 – 373),
- c. Homicide for Dowry, Dowry Deaths or their attempts (Sec. 302/ 304 – B IPC)
- d. Torture, both mental and physical (Sec. 498-A IPC),
- e. Molestation (Sec. 354 IPC),
- f. Sexual Harassment (Sec. 509 IPC),

g. Importation of Girls (Up to 21 years of age).

## 2. The Crimes identified under the Special Laws:

Although all laws are not gender specific, the provisions of law affecting women significantly have been reviewed periodically and amendments carried out to keep pace with the emerging requirements. Some acts which have special provisions to safeguard women and their interests are –

- a. The Special Marriage Act. 1954.
- b. The Hindu Marriage Act. 1955.
- c. The Maternity Benefit Act. 1961 (Amended in 1995).
- d. Dowry prohibition Act. 1961.
- e. The medical termination of Pregnancy Act. 1971.
- f. The Equal Remuneration Act.1976.
- g. The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act. 2006.
- h. The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 1983.
- i. Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986.
- j. Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987.
- k. The protection of women from Domestic Violence act, 2005.

**Constitutional Provisions:** The Constitution of India not only grants equality to women but also empowers the state to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women for neutralizing the cumulative socio-economic, education and Political disadvantages faced by them. Fundamental Rights, among others ensure equality before the law and legal protection of law; prohibits discrimination against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth and guarantee equality of opportunity to all citizens in matters relating to employment, Articles – 14, 15, 15(3), 16, 39(a), 39(b), 39(c), and 42 of the Constitution are of special importance in this regard.

Article – 14: Equality before law for all persons.

Article – 15(1): Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth, etc.

Article- 15(3): Special provisions for the welfare of women and children.

Article-16: Equal opportunity in Employment.

Article-39(A): Equal right to adequate means of livelihood.

Article- 39(B): Equal pay for equal work.

Article- 39(C): Securing health and strength of workers and not to abuse the tender age of children.

Article -42: Work and maternity relief for women.

Article – 51 A (2): Renounce practices which are derogatory to the dignity of women.

Article – 243 D (3): Reservation of total number of seats in Panchayat.

Article – 343: Reservation of total number of seats in Municipalities

## Special Initiatives for Women:

1. **National Commission for Women:** In January 1992, the Government set up this statutory body with a specific mandate to study and monitor all matters relating to the Constitutional and legal safeguards provided for women, review the existing legislation to suggest amendments wherever necessary, etc.
2. **Reservation for Women in Local Self Govt.:** The 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment Acts, passed in 1992 by the Parliament ensure one-third of the total seats for women in all elected offices in local bodies whether in rural areas or urban areas.
3. **The National Plan of Action for the Girl Child (1991 -2000):** The Plan of Action is to ensure survival, protection and development of the girl child with the ultimate objective of building up a better future for the girl child.
4. **National Policy for the Employment of Women, 2001:** The Department of Women and Child Development in the Ministry of Human Resource Development has prepared a National policy for the Empowerment of Women in the year 2001. The goal of this policy is to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women in socio-economic and politico-cultural aspects, by creating in them awareness on various issues in relation to their empowerment.

**Government Enactments/Schemes:** National Commission for Women has in the last few years introduced several new bills in the parliament from time to time towards eradication of many social evils. Some of the significant enactments or schemes are mentioned here –

- a. Beti Bachao Beti Padho Scheme, 22 January 2015.
- b. One Stopn Centre Scheme, 01 April 2015.
- c. Women Helpline Scheme, 01 April 2015.
- d. Ujjawala Scheme December, 2007.
- e. Working Women Hostel, 1972-73.
- f. Swadhar Greh Scheme, 2002.
- g. Support to Training and Employment programme for women, 1986-87.
- h. Rajiv Gandhi National Crèches Scheme for the Children of working mothers 2006.
- i. Mahila E Haat, 07 March 2016.
- j. Nari Shakti Puraskar, 1999.
- k. Nirbhaya, 2012.
- l. Mahila Shakti Kendras , 2017.
- m. Rashtriya Mahila Kosh, 1993.

## National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW) Scheme:

The Govt. of India aims to strengthen the process to promote all round development of women. To achieve the ultimate goal of empowering women and ensuring their all round development. The scheme “National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW)” has been envisaged. NMEW scheme will be implemented in the states /Union Territories through the State Resource centre for women (SRCW). Poorna Shakti Kendra, Village level convergence and Facilitation Service comes under the purview of National Mission for Empowerment of Women.

At the state level, the State Resource Centre for Women (SRCW) under State Govt. (Department of WCD/Social Welfare) will work towards implementing gender sensitive programmes, laws and schemes through effective coordination at the State/Union Territories level. SRCW may review and evaluate existing policies, programmes and legislations so that activities which are cross-cutting and multi-disciplinary nature synergies harmoniously to reach women beneficiaries.

SRCW in consultation with key stakeholders will prepare State Action Plans for respective States/Union Territories with a focus on women issues and provide technical support and coordination for implementation of the BBBP Scheme while working in coordination with the State Task Force mandated under the said scheme.

**Conclusion:** Women Empowerment helps to make the society and world a better place to live in and march forward on way to inclusive participation. The empowerment of women has become one of the most important concerns of 21<sup>st</sup> 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. At present, there is a crying need for the elimination of the male superiority and patriarchal mindset for the better empowerment of women.

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