

---

**mLAC Journal for Arts, Commerce and Sciences (m-JACS)**  
**Volume 4, No.5, June 2026, P 1-7**  
ISSN: 2584-1920 (Online)

---

**WOMEN IN INDIA: EMPOWERMENT FOR INCLUSIVE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC GROWTH**

Praveen Kumar S<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Sri Adichunchanagiri First Grade College, Channarayapatna, Hassan (D)-573116, Affiliated to Hassan University, Karnataka, India  
Corresponding author email address: [praveenbn12@gmail.com](mailto:praveenbn12@gmail.com)

Paper Received: 23.01.2026 | Revised: 28.04.2026 | Accepted: 29.05.2026

---

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59415/mjacs.365>

---

**Abstract**

Women's empowerment remains a critical issue in the 21st century, often more ideal than reality. Despite their vital role in family and society, women continue to face discrimination in key areas such as education, income, inheritance, property rights, decision-making, and leadership. The need for empowerment arises from these persistent inequalities.

Empowerment involves awareness, capacity building, and enhancing decision-making power, enabling women to take control over their lives and contribute meaningfully to society. It includes improving women's social, economic, political, and legal status, allowing them to access resources, claim rights, and enhance their well-being.

The progress of any nation is closely tied to the upliftment of its women. While efforts by the Indian government, NGOs, and international organizations have gained momentum, women's status remains unequal. The study, based on secondary data, highlights the need for a multidimensional, committed approach—especially in education, employment, and social reform—to achieve true empowerment and national development.

**Keywords:** Women Empowerment, Gender Inequality, Capacity Building, Social Inclusion, Economic Independence, Political Participation, Women's Development, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

---

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Nobel Laureate Malala Yousafzai rightly said, “We cannot succeed when half of us are held back,” captures the essence of women empowerment in today's world. Despite advancements, gender discrimination remains widespread across the globe. Patriarchal societies continue to exploit and marginalize women, denying them basic rights such as education, freedom of speech, and equal representation.

In India, constitutional and legal provisions promote gender equality, and numerous initiatives have been introduced to empower women. However, the persistence of issues like dowry deaths, female foeticide, and domestic violence highlights the gap between policy and practice. True development can only be achieved by eliminating deep-rooted gender biases—such as restricted mobility, limited access to healthcare, education, and employment, and exclusion from public and political spheres. Empowering women requires not only legal support but also a shift in social attitudes and structures.

### **Empowerment: Concept**

The concept of women empowerment is very earlier notion, In each and every individual, group and society has wanted to develop their life style by the process of empowerment. Though professionally this term is known recently, but the term and practices of empowerment actually a long-term in usually and also in practically. All the development in cultural material and non-materials objects are the effort of empowerment. So in broad sense empowerment is a process of around development.

### **Meaning**

The word empower is derived from the French word ‘en’ meaning “into,” and ‘power’ meaning “strength,” “ability,” or “capacity to act.” It carries both professional and social meanings. In the professional context, empowerment refers to career advancement and skill enhancement, though this is a relatively narrow perspective.

In a broader social sense, empowerment refers to the holistic development of society, focusing on the individual's growth and well-being through their own effort and abilities. While empowerment is often associated with economic development, it also encompasses personal and social upliftment. Economists and social scientists have consistently emphasized the importance of economic development at the individual, family, and community levels, without discrimination based on gender, caste, or community.

In the 21st century, there has been a growing focus on **women empowerment**. Social scientists and reformers increasingly recognize it as a crucial process through which economically disadvantaged women gain financial independence and improve their social status.

## **2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT**

With women's empowerment becoming a key issue in recent times, numerous studies have been conducted by researchers, policymakers, and both government and non-governmental organizations, exploring various dimensions of empowerment in India and across the globe.

Nobel Laureate **Amartya Sen** describes empowerment as the freedom to lead different types of lives, which is reflected in an individual's capability set—a concept dependent on personal characteristics and social arrangements. According to **Sen (1997)**, empowerment involves transformative change, especially for those who have historically lacked control over their lives. This change encompasses two core aspects: access to and control over resources (economic, physical, and human) and control over ideology, beliefs, values, and attitudes.

The **World Bank (2001)** defines empowerment as “the process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes.” Similarly, the **United Nations (2001)** views empowerment as a process through which women gain control and ownership of their lives by expanding their range of choices.

**Hemalata Prasad** identifies key parameters of women's empowerment, including:

- Enhancing self-esteem and self-confidence.
- Recognizing and valuing women's contributions to society and the economy.
- Encouraging critical thinking and independent decision-making.
- Promoting collective action and participatory processes.
- Enabling informed choices in areas like education, employment, and reproductive health.
- Ensuring equal participation in the development process.
- Providing knowledge, skills, and information for economic independence.
- Improving access to legal literacy and awareness of rights to foster full participation in public life.

Despite these evolving perspectives, India remains strongly influenced by patriarchal norms and deep-rooted socio-cultural values, which continue to hinder women's progress. Achieving genuine empowerment requires building an egalitarian society that rejects gender-based superiority. Government policies must focus on identifying and dismantling the structural and cultural forces that perpetuate male dominance and gender inequality.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The role of women in human development is now widely acknowledged and increasingly accepted across the globe. In India, the growing emphasis placed by the Government on women's empowerment necessitates a detailed analysis of its progress and challenges.

This study aims to assess the impact of various strategies implemented by both Government and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in empowering women across different sectors. The methodology involves an evaluative approach, examining policy measures, programs, and initiatives designed to enhance women's social, economic, and political status.

The **general objective** of this study is to analyze how women's empowerment contributes to the overall development of the nation. By reviewing secondary data and existing literature, the study evaluates the effectiveness of institutional efforts and identifies areas for improvement in achieving gender equity and inclusive growth.

### 4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study titled “**Women in India: Empowerment for Inclusive Social and Economic Growth**” has been undertaken with the following key objectives:

- To analyze the importance and relevance of women empowerment in the current context.
- To evaluate the present status of women in Indian society.
- To examine the strategies adopted and efforts made by both Governmental (GOs) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in promoting women's empowerment.
- To assess the impact of various policy reforms and initiatives aimed at empowering women.
- To study the effects of empowerment on the social and economic status of women.
- To identify the challenges and constraints hindering the process of women's empowerment.
- To evaluate the role of women's empowerment in the overall development and progress of the nation.

### 5. DATA SOURCE

To accomplish these objectives, the study relies on **secondary data**. These data have been collected from various sources including government and non-government reports, published academic journals, research articles, newspapers, official publications, and relevant websites. These secondary sources provide valuable insights into the initiatives and outcomes related to women's empowerment in India.

### 6. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The present study makes a meaningful contribution by evaluating the current state of women's empowerment in India, particularly in the context of a developing economy. It seeks to identify existing gaps and challenges that hinder progress, thereby offering insights into areas where further development and intervention are needed.

The findings of this study can help uncover untapped opportunities for promoting gender equality and empowering women, especially through employment generation and capacity building. In doing so, it aligns with broader national goals such as economic growth and self-reliance.

Moreover, this study holds relevance for researchers, policymakers, and practitioners interested in exploring different dimensions of women's empowerment. The methodologies and approaches adopted here may serve as a useful reference for future studies in related fields, enabling comparative analysis and informed policymaking.

## 7. ANALYSIS

Women constitute nearly half of the world's population, yet they receive less than 20% of the global income and own less than 2% of the world's property. According to the **2011 Census of India**, women make up approximately **48.5% of the country's population**. However, they continue to face significant discrimination in key areas such as literacy rates, labor force participation, and earnings.

Economic empowerment plays a critical role in enhancing women's status across various dimensions—social equality, access to opportunities, property rights, political participation, personal freedom, family welfare, community development, and ultimately, national progress. Thus, women's empowerment is not only a matter of justice and equity but also a foundational element of sustainable development.

Recognizing these challenges, women's empowerment has become a central issue in contemporary policy and social discourse. Major strategies for achieving empowerment include promoting **social, economic, and political inclusion**, ensuring **gender justice**, and working toward **demographic equity**. Together, these efforts aim to eliminate systemic barriers and enable women to contribute fully to all aspects of development.

## 8. TOWARDS WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA

The Government of India has implemented numerous initiatives and legal frameworks to promote women's empowerment across social, economic, and political domains.

Key milestones include the establishment of the **National Commission for Women (1990)** to safeguard women's rights, the **73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments (1992)** mandating reservations for women in Panchayats and Municipalities, and India's ratification of the **CEDAW Convention (1993)** to ensure gender equality.

In 2006, the Department of Women and Child Development was elevated to an independent Ministry. The Indian Constitution enshrines gender justice and equality through Articles **14, 16, 19, 23, 39, 40, 42, and 51A(e)**, empowering the state to promote affirmative action for women.

### Notable policies and programmes include:

- **National Policy for Empowerment of Women (2001)**: Aimed at ensuring equal access to health, education, employment, and decision-making, and integrating gender in development planning.
- **National Mission for Empowerment of Women (2010)**: Launched to coordinate efforts across ministries for women's social, economic, and educational advancement.
- **Draft National Policy for Women (2016)**: Proposed to create a comprehensive framework for ensuring equal opportunities in family, workplace, community, and governance.

### Major Schemes for Socio-Economic Upliftment

Various schemes have targeted the holistic development of women:

- **IRDP, TRYSEM, DWCRA, and SGSY** focused on rural employment, income generation, and poverty alleviation with earmarked benefits for women.
- **STEP, Swayamsiddha, and Swa-Shakti** supported skill development and self-help groups.
- **MSY and RMK** promoted savings and microcredit access through NGOs and SHGs.

- **Swadhar, Ujjawala, and Working Women's Hostels** addressed vulnerable women's needs like shelter, safety, and rehabilitation.
- **RGSEAG-SABLA and IGMSY** improved adolescent girls' and mothers' health, nutrition, and life skills.

#### **Institutional Support**

- **State and Service Homes, Vocational and Craft Training Centres, and Working Women's Hostels** have offered women support, skill training, and safe accommodation, especially for those in difficult circumstances.

#### **Special Legislation for Women in India**

India has enacted several laws to safeguard and empower women, including:

- Legal Practitioners (Women) Act, 1923
- Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956
- Maternity Benefit Act, 1961
- Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961
- Equal Remuneration Act, 1976
- Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986
- Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987
- Pre-conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act, 1994
- Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005
- Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006
- POCSO Act, 2012

These laws address crimes such as dowry, domestic violence, child marriage, human trafficking, and indecent representation, while ensuring legal protections like maternity benefits, equal pay, and safeguards against sexual offences.

#### **Means of Empowerment**

##### **1. Social Empowerment**

Focuses on improving women's health, reducing maternal mortality, addressing malnutrition, protecting girl child rights, and supporting victims of violence or abandonment.

##### **2. Economic Empowerment**

Aims to enhance women's productivity, especially in poverty-stricken households, by promoting income-generating activities, financial independence, and self-reliance.

##### **3. Educational Empowerment**

Education is a vital tool for transformation. Ensuring girls' access to education, reducing dropout rates, and promoting gender sensitivity are essential steps.

#### **Key Factors Influencing Empowerment**

- Economic independence
- Personal identity and confidence
- Risk-taking ability
- Equal status and opportunity
- Supportive leadership and motivation
- Freedom and mobility

#### **Challenges to Women Empowerment**

- Lack of decision-making power
- Low education and mobility

- Dual work burden
- Limited training and loans
- Gender bias and family restrictions
- Caste-based discrimination
- Workplace harassment and skill gaps

### **Role of Supporting Agencies**

#### **1. NGOs**

Play a critical role at grassroots to global levels. Their flexible, committed, and participatory approach helps raise awareness, eliminate discrimination, and organize skill-building activities.

#### **2. Self-Help Groups (SHGs)**

SHGs are community-based groups promoting economic activities, credit access, and social support among women, especially in rural areas. They have become key tools in women's development.

#### **3. International Agencies**

UN bodies like UN Women, CEDAW, and the Commission on the Status of Women advocate for gender equality, eliminate violence, and promote women's participation in decision-making across sectors.

## **9. CONCLUSION**

Women empowerment has emerged as a critical issue in India, drawing attention from policymakers, media, and international platforms. According to the Government of India, empowerment is the transition from a position of weakness to one of strength. A nation's progress is reflected in the status and participation of its women. Despite being called the "better half" of society, women still face inequality in a male-dominated structure.

Over the decades, policies have evolved from welfare to development and now to empowerment. Achieving true empowerment—social, economic, political, educational, and legal—is a challenging task due to entrenched gender biases. However, meaningful change is possible with time, sustained efforts, and focused government action. Only when women are truly empowered can India realize its full potential as a progressive and powerful nation.

## **10. STATEMENTS & DECLARATIONS:**

### **Use of AI Statement**

The authors declare that they have not used generative artificial intelligence, specifically ChatGPT in the writing of this manuscript and/or in the creation of images, graphics, tables, or their corresponding captions

### **Conflict of Interest and Declarations:**

Authorship contribution statement: Praveen Kumar S: Carrying the Experimental work, Data curation and writing the original manuscript and original draft

Acknowledgements: Nil

Compliance with Ethical Standards:

Conflict of Interest : The authors state that they don't have any conflict of interest.

Animal and Human Participants: Nil

Informed consent : Authors stated that there is no informed consent in the article.

Funding : Nil

Data availability: All the data included in this research article will be provided on request

## **11. REFERENCES**

1. Draft National Policy for Women, "Articulating a Vision for Empowerment of Women," 2016.
2. Sen, A. (1997). Empowerment as an Approach to Poverty, Human Development Report, p. 96.
3. Prasad, H. (1995). Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas: Successful Case Studies, Journal of Rural Development, 14(1), 85–87.

4. Singh, K. D. & Sinha, J. K. (2006). Indian Economic Association, 89th Annual Conference, Vol. 2, pp. 1070–1071.
5. Women Sub-Plan, 1997–98, pp. 41–42.
6. Maurya, M. K. & Agarwal, M. (2013–2018). Series of studies on motivation, workplace harassment, trust, mental health, leadership, and job satisfaction among police personnel.
  - o Journal of Psychosocial Research, 8(1), 13–21.
  - o Indian Journal of Health and Wellbeing, 4(4), 785–789.
  - o Indian Journal of Community Psychology, 10(1), 162–177.
  - o Journal of Indian Academy of Applied Psychology, 41(3), 103–111.
  - o Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology, 33(1), 9–20. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11896-017-9230-4>
7. State Reports, Department of Women Development and Child Welfare, Hyderabad, 1996, pp. 5–6.
8. Budget Management (1997–98), Govt. of Andhra Pradesh (Telugu), pp. 4–5.
9. Activities of Women and Children in Andhra Pradesh, 1997.