

# Vital Analysis of Women Empowerment in Marginalised Communities

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## Abstract

**Agenda:** The aim of this research is to provide awareness and information about women empowerment in marginalised communities in today's world. The aim of this paper is to help you understand what women empowerment is and how it can help marginalised people. Women have less economic opportunities than men, have less access to basic and higher education, face greater health and safety threats, and have less political representation globally. The empowerment of women is a crucial component of achieving gender equality. It entails boosting a woman's self-esteem, decision-making capacity, access to opportunities and resources, and power and influence over her own life, among other things. Contrary to the general belief that development is gender neutral, statistics show that women lag behind men all over the world including India in almost all aspects of life. It is for this reason that the focus on human development has been to highlight the gender dimension and continuing inequalities Confronting women since 1995 (UNDP 1995).

**Approach:** Based on a systematic review of multiple sources of data emerging around women empowerment and advancement, including the topics debated on a variety of women's issues.

**Keywords:** Empowerment, Marginalized Communities, Capacity Building, Skill Development, Finance, Education.

**Introduction:** One of the key aims of the Act is 'aiding in the empowerment of the marginalised communities', especially women, the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and the Scheduled Tribes (STs)<sup>1</sup> (MoRD 2012, 1).

**EMPOWERMENT** may be described as a process which helps people to assert their control over the factors which affect their lives. Empowerment of women means developing them as more aware individuals, who are politically active, economically productive and independent and are able to make intelligent discussion in matters that affect them. Although the empowerment initiative in its current form is novel, it is frequently mentioned in contemporary development discussions. It can be used to communicate about human rights, basic needs, economic security, capacity building, capability growth, or the conditions of a renowned community's continued life in virtually any context. Empowerment is described as a process in which people are able to maximise their effectiveness and take advantage of the opportunities and opportunities that are available to them regardless of the constraints imposed by their environment or state. Empowerment may also be described as the acquisition of increasing levels of personal, interpersonal, or political power so that individuals, families, and societies can engage in certain behaviours to improve their circumstances. Women are making progress in schooling, the economy, and government around the world. However, many women and girls continue to face challenges, especially in marginalised indigenous and ethnic minority communities and in developing countries. The central government has articulated many progressive steps to advance gender equality in social, economic, and political arenas, and policies relating to women's rights have had a positive trajectory in the last few decades. With a thriving women's rights movement in India, there is a constant demand for better rules, provisions, and implementation transparency. Women's inheritance rights have also improved, but implementation problems remain.

## **Literature review:**

### **Objectives:**

1. To understand the importance of women empowerment and its role in society.
2. To extend the stability of life amidst women.
3. To thoroughly educate women about their rights.
4. Enabling women to gain equal access to and control over the resources (material, human and intellectual).

### **Meters/Indicators of empowering women:**

#### Decision Making Power:

Gender inequality is also reflected in decision-making authority. Decision-making is an important part of women's empowerment, and it is often mistaken for the only instrumental predictor. Its utility, however, extends beyond the result of women making more decisions, to areas such as self-confidence in their ability to do. Women's decision-making influence in the home is one of the most powerful markers of women's empowerment. It has been discovered that few married women engage in making decisions about their health care, major household purchases, purchases for everyday household needs, and visiting their family members, either alone or jointly with their spouse.

#### Freedom of Movement:

Women's freedom of movement is another symbol of their empowerment. Women's mobility can be hampered by legal limitations on their ability to leave the marital or family home, travel abroad, and apply for passports and other travel permits. In certain jurisdictions, it is more difficult for women to pass on citizenship rights to their children or husbands, or for married women to apply for a passport or visa than it is for men. They are subjected to several social and legal constraints. Rural women have less mobility than urban women. Women's mobility is often influenced by factors such as age, education, marital status, and family structure.

#### Access to Education:

Education for girls is a strategic growth goal. If they want to become mothers, better educated women are more knowledgeable about nutrition and healthcare, have less children, marry later in life, and their children are typically healthier. They are more likely to work and make more money in the organized labour market. Both variables, when combined, will aid in the alleviation of poverty in families, populations, and nations. The gender gap in literacy rates and enrolment in various stages of school education can be used to assess women's access to education, which is one of the most significant sources of empowerment.

#### Access to Employment:

Women have a distinct advantage in terms of decision-making power when they are working. Women who are working are more likely to engage in all decision-making processes. The arrangement of the household has a major impact on Women's financial empowerment. Women in towns, on average, have more control over their earnings than women in rural areas.

#### Political Participation:

One of the most critical topics in the sense of empowerment is women's political participation. In India, women vote, run for public office, and join political parties at a lower rate than men. Women's electoral engagement is strongest in the fields of activism and voting. The Indian government has taken steps to address gender discrimination in politics. Political interventions by

women of India today range from movement for peace and good governance to protest against dowry, rape, domestic violence, food adulteration, price rise etc. [Desai et al, 2007].

### **Few other Indicators of Women Empowerment are as follows: -**

Beijing Conference 1995 had identified certain quantitative and qualitative indicators of women empowerment Indicators:

- Increase in self-esteem, individual and collective confidence.
- Increase in personal leisure time and time for childcare.
- Increase on decrease of workloads in new programmes.
- Change in roles and responsibility in family and community.
- Visible increase on decrease in violence on women and girls.
- Increase in bargaining and negotiating power at home, in community and the collective.
- Increase access to and ability to gather information.
- Formation of women collectives.
- Positive changes in social attitudes

### **Quality of an empowered women**

- Empowered women define their attitude, values and behaviours in relation to their own real interest.
- Empowered women maintain equal mindedness.
- Empowered women use their talent to live fulfilling lives.
- Empowered women maintain their strength on the face of pressures from the religion and work.

### **Constituents of Women Empowerment: -**

- Acquiring knowledge and an understanding of gender/ power relations and ways in which these relations may be changed.
- Developing a sense of self-worth, a belief in one's ability to secure desired changes and the right to control one's life.
- Gaining the ability to generate choices and thereby acquiring leverage and bargaining power.
- Developing the ability to generate, organise or influence the direction of social change to create more just social and economic orders nationally and internationally.

### **Riddance of discrimination against women's participation are in the areas of:**

1. Access to food
2. Equal wages
3. Property rights
4. Family resources
5. Freedom of movement and travel
6. Access to credit
7. Control over savings, earnings and resources
8. Guardianship and custody of children and their maintenance.

### **Constraints to Women Empowerment:**

The process of women's empowerment in India is hampered by several obstacles. In developing countries including India, social expectations and family systems manifest and reinforce women's subordination. Women's economic participation and empowerment are essential for women's rights to be strengthened and for them to have control over their lives and exercise influence in



society. They are provided less opportunity than males in education, employments and in other fields. The study finds that women are discriminated in all walks of life and making them handicapped and obstructing their empowerment. Women are considered as burden and debarred from their fundamental rights. For the majority of women in India, poverty is a fact of life. Girls are the primary victims in impoverished families; they are malnourished and denied access to better education and other opportunities. However, whether they are financially self-sufficient or have more control over their finances, they have more autonomy in the home and in the public domain and are no longer poor. Lack of awareness about legal and constitutional provisions and failure in realizing it, is another factor that hinders the process of empowerment. The majority of women are unaware of their civil rights. And women who are aware of the problem lack the ability to take legal action. The provisions of Acts such as the (1) Child Marriage Resistance Act of 1930, (2) The Suppression of Immoral Trafficking of Women Act of 1987, and (3) The Indecent Exposure of Women Act have not resulted in the suppression of the practises mentioned.

### **Hindrances to the Empowerment of the Marginalized Communities: -**

The following factors have been stated that prove to be barriers to the empowerment of the marginalized communities:

1. Poverty – An individual or a family is stated to be in the conditions of poverty when their per capita income is extremely low, when they do not possess enough resources to meet their day-to-day requirements, when there is paucity of food within their households, then they are stated to be living in the conditions of poverty. This is a barrier because, when a person or a group of individuals are in the conditions of poverty, they become helpless and cannot prove or accomplish themselves.
2. Unemployment – Education has been regarded as a significant aspect and has become widespread amongst the deprived, marginalized and disadvantaged sections of the population as well. When a person has acquired educational and literacy skills, but is unable to obtain a job, then this proves to be a barrier within the course of their empowerment. Every individual desires to obtain a job, earn a source of income for their effective living.
3. Illiteracy – There are significant proportions of people among the deprived, marginalized and disadvantaged sections of the population who lack the basic literacy skills, who are not educated; this proves to be a barrier during the course of their empowerment, when a person is illiterate, he becomes deprived and dependent, he faces impediments during the course of self-sustenance and autonomy.
4. Inequality – There are differences in the status and position of marginalized and disadvantaged communities and upper class, wealthier individuals. It has been observed that in the houses of the upper class individuals, marginalized people are made to sit on the floor and they eat in different utensils, though well educated people communicate with them in an appropriate manner, show courtesy but there are differences observed as it has been stated above; therefore, it can be stated that inequality proves to be a barrier during the course of empowerment of the marginalized communities.
5. Health and Welfare – Though there have been healthcare and welfare facilities available for the marginalized and disadvantaged sections of the population, but when a person is unwell, or suffers from the condition of malnutrition, or is in a depressed condition or suffers from health problems such as hearing impairments, visual impairments, autism, disabilities and so forth, then these health problems prove to be barriers during the course of their empowerment.

## **The Role of Sociocultural Determinants in Maternal and Child Under-nutrition:**

In India, moderate malnutrition continues to affect 46% of children under the age of five and 47% of rural women. The chronic incidence of malnutrition is thought to be a product of women's lack of empowerment. Women's empowerment in India differs greatly by class, with tribes being the most egalitarian at times.

Women's empowerment and child health: - A number of studies have searched for links between indices of women's empowerment and child health outcomes. The rise in women's education from 1970 to 1995 is one measure of women's empowerment that has led to a decrease in the prevalence of underweight by more than half. According to studies, secondary education benefits women the most, and education benefits mothers the most because they also have modest access to capital and wealth. There is a shaky connection between maternal jobs and child health outcomes. Women in urban areas tended to have social norms that were supportive of their empowerment, while women in rural areas tended to have the opposite. The Soliga tribe lived in the forested areas of southern Karnataka, with scheduled and backward caste families living in the surrounding rural population. The tribal group lived more than 20 kilometres from the nearest major town or district, while rural villagers lived 5 to 8 kilometres away. Initially, access to this tribe and the surrounding rural population was provided by Vivekananda Girijana Kalyana Kendra (VGKK), a local nongovernmental organisation that has been serving this population in the BR Hills (Biligiri Renganna Betta Hills) since the 1970s.

### **Liberation on women in India's Rural and tribal area:-**

In India, some tribal groups have social norms that empower women more than on tribal rural counterparts [39, 40]. Women, for example, are more active in decision-making, have more freedom of movement, are free to choose their marital partners, and may divorce and remarry without stigma in these cultures. In tribal and rural communities in South India, investigated the connection between women's empowerment, maternal nutrition, and the nutritional status of their children aged 6 to 24 months.

### **Power of Women empowerment on Poverty:-**

The concept of strengthening women is used to understand what it is necessary to change the state of low permeable and powerless women. The situation of women in the reality in the third world and in developing countries does not seem to be very encouraging. They are not that lucky when it comes to decision making and have few opportunities and choices to make decisions for their life. In developing countries, there are many reasons for disempowerment of women, poverty is the largest among them. According to Moser (1989: 1815) empowerment is "... the capacity of women to increase their own self-reliance and internal strength. This is identified as the right to determine choices in life and to influence the direction of change, through the ability to gain control over material and non-material resources".

Poverty and disempowerment go hand in hand for some people. Women are becoming more driven as income poverty decreases. Women's income and material assets will be improved as a result of development interventions that concentrate on & quot; practical gender needs & quot; Women's savings groups and microcredit are examples of initiatives. Women make up the majority of the poor, and they are also among the poorest of the poor. Since they are women, they face social deprivation and injustice that forms their experience of poverty differently than men, increases their vulnerability, and makes it more difficult for them to climb out of poverty. Women, on the other hand, face major barriers to maximising their efficiency. They frequently lack fair access to viable inputs and markets for their products. They own just 15% of the world's property, work longer hours, and earn lower wages than men. They are overrepresented among employees in the informal labour market, in seasonal, insecure employment that are not covered by labour laws.

## **Dalit Women in India**

### Women's Rights-

Policies relating to women's rights have had a positive trajectory in the past few decades with the central government articulating many progressive measures to advance gender equality in social, economic, and political arenas. With a vibrant women's rights movement in India, there are continuous demands for better laws, provisions, and accountability for implementation. There also have been gains in women's inheritance rights, yet challenges remain in implementation.

### Trafficking of Women and Girls-

India is both a source and destination for trafficked women and girls into prostitution and bonded labour. Anti-trafficking measures in India have increased with India's commitment to international human rights protocols, and through strict legal provisions at the national level. The anti-prostitution law is seen by many to criminalize and further marginalize women who are in the sex trade. a. The debate over legalization of sex work continues today and sex-work supporters are lobbying to change the ITPA for better rehabilitation measures for those who have been rescued during brothel and street raids. The ITPA also does not give adequate measures for those who are trafficked for purposes other than sex work<sup>24</sup>, and disproportionately targets women, making them further vulnerable to poverty and exploitation.

### Women's Security-

The multiple forms of violence experienced in the household, at the community level, and in some instances by the state, threaten women's security in India. In many parts of North India son preference is a widely practiced phenomenon. Research conducted by the International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW) found that, although not universal, particularly in households where there is more than one daughter there are significant differences in nutrition and health levels between male and female children. Women and girls in urban India are also at high risk of gender-based violence. The National Crime Bureau claims that a woman is raped every 29 minutes in Delhi. In the northeast (as in most conflict-ridden regions) women bear the brunt of war from both sides. There have been numerous instances of violence perpetrated by state security forces against local and tribal women.

## **Economic prospects for women in India:-**

India is one of the world's fastest growing economies, with women mainly from the middle class increasingly entering the workforce. The Global Gender Gap Report by the World Economic Forum in 2009 ranked India 114th out of 134 countries for inequality between men and women in the economy, politics, health, and education.<sup>26</sup> On equal economic opportunities and women's participation in the labour force, India ranked 127th and 122nd respectively. In rural India, women's economic opportunities remain restricted by social, cultural, and religious barriers. Most notably inheritance laws embedded in Hindu and Shariat civil codes continue to marginalize women in the household and the larger community. There is a movement at the policy level to organize domestic workers and to create laws to regulate minimum wage, working hours, and other measures such as life and health insurance. On the other end of the spectrum, while India has one of the highest percentages of professional women in the world, those who occupy managerial positions are under 3%.<sup>33</sup> Most women work in low administrative positions, and many of the young women migrating to urban centres mostly work in service and retail industries, although more and more women are entering the IT and other technical sectors.



### Women's Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights: -

The movement to assure women's economic, social, and cultural rights (ESCR) as basic human rights is just emerging in India. ESCR attempts to look at the broader issues facing women, namely poverty, housing, unemployment, education, water, food security, trade, etc. While the human rights movement on ESCR is largely contained at the international policy level, there are emerging social movements around the world. In the Indian context, projects like the Programme on Women's Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (PWESCR), for example, is creating linkages between the international human rights movement and the local articulation of women's rights. PWESCR aims to build a women's rights movement in India that creates equality in all spheres of women's lives. Women's economic opportunity in India is a rapidly changing landscape. Women are increasingly entering the workforce— particularly women professionals—and are creating change, but there remains a large number of invisible women workers in unorganized and volatile sectors.

### 33% Reservation for Women:-

The Women's Bill in April 2010, which gives 33.3% reservation for women in all levels of Indian politics, took 14 years after its introduction to finally pass by the Rajya Sabha (the upper house of parliament). It is yet to be passed by the Lok Sabha (the lower house of parliament).<sup>4</sup> This is a historic move in the Indian political landscape, as currently women occupy less than 10% of seats in the national Parliament. The Women's Bill will also significantly change the demographics of class and caste among women politicians in leadership positions in the Indian political structure. It will create a path for women from lower classes and castes (who are currently confined to local-level governance) to enter state and national level governments. Other Backward Class (OBC) members are not included in the reservation due to the wide disagreement about who constitutes OBC and a lack of existing data on the OBC population. However, supporters of the bill do not agree with creating quotas within the existing 33% women quota in parliament, as SC and ST quotas already exist. The passage and implementation of the Women's Bill, and its impact on the existing gender, class, and caste barriers, is yet to be realized, but one thing is clear: India's politics is moving closer to equitable inclusion than ever before.

### **Inspiring entrepreneurs are leading by example to empower women in marginalised and impoverished communities:**

Worldwide, women are gaining ground in education, in the workforce and in government. But there are still many women and girls—especially in marginalised indigenous and ethnic minority communities and in less developed countries – who face an uphill battle. Women in ethnic minority groups are generally more disadvantaged than the men in their communities when it comes to opportunities for education, employment and community leadership roles. These inequalities are often made worse by a lack of access to government assistance. In addition to the challenges related to poverty and disenfranchisement, marginalised groups have less access to capital. This makes it difficult to build wealth and start businesses.

The Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative estimates that 70% of women-owned SMEs in developing countries can't get the capital they need, resulting in a credit deficit of nearly \$1.5 trillion. Starting or sustaining a business without access to capital is nearly impossible. Despite these seemingly insurmountable obstacles, inspiring female entrepreneurs and change-makers in marginalised communities are making inroads. They're inspiring the younger generation and helping to lift their communities out of poverty in the process.

### Rising up -

One way that women in marginalised communities are fighting back against inequality and disadvantage is by challenging the status quo by starting socially conscious businesses that can help their communities. Teara Fraser, a pilot and member of the Métis Nation of Northwest

Territories, is the first Indigenous woman in Canada to own an airline, Iskwew Air (the Cree word for woman). Fraser always dreamt of flying, and with this venture, she aims to connect communities and support tourism to remote, indigenous lands. Iskwew's first plane was blessed by elders from the Musqueam nation and the airline will begin services on International Women's Day 2019.

### Exponential empowerment -

Beyond the myriad individual success stories about women in marginalised communities fighting for increased power and opportunity, global organisations and multinational corporations are putting their weight behind the cause as well. The Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative (We-Fi) is a consortium of governments, development banks, and other public and private sector stakeholders, hosted by the World Bank Group. Its mission is to address the financial and non-financial constraints faced by women run SMEs in developing countries. In April 2018, We-Fi announced its first \$120 million round of funding allocations (which is expected to mobilise an additional \$1.6 billion from the private sector). This is for programmes designed to tear down the barriers facing women entrepreneurs in developing countries. Here's a selection of those. There's a proposal from the Islamic Development Bank to expand successful initiatives in Yemen, Mali and Nigeria. The Asian Development Bank is looking to improve the business environment for women in Sri Lanka. Finally, the World Bank Group will use its funds for activities to increase public and private sector support for women in business, with a focus on the poorest and most fragile environments.

### Empowerment and its critics:

In the 1980s, feminist critics of the Global South raised questions about the 'welfare approach' to women's predominance within development debate, or that women had been brought into development policy on very gender-specific terms, primarily as housewives, mothers, and reproducers. These discussions, which arose primarily in response to the modernisation approach, emphasised women as active contributors to economic growth rather than passive recipients of welfare programmes. With the UN International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo (1994) and the fourth UN Conference on Women in Beijing (1996), these ideas gained official recognition in the 1990s (1995). Questioning and confronting oppressive systems and processes is central to empowerment. A woman who refuses to share her MGNREGA wage with her alcoholic husband is not only making a significant life decision, but she is also challenging patriarchal social norms. The emphasis on individual choice does not diminish the significance of its collective dimension. Many of the improvements we describe would not be possible without the collective action that has occurred in India over the last few decades.

### Household domain:

How the MGNREGA scheme, which provides paying work to anyone who asks for them, can assist women in gaining decision-making power. We focus solely on women in this article since, in India, household and intrafamilial relations can be a major source of women's disempowerment. In the household domain, we look at how women's empowerment is mixed, and context based. We discovered in this study that work for women under the MGNREGA can be transformative. Dalit women are often recruited for the first time under the MGNREGA scheme, and they are paid equally to their male counterparts. This contrasts with when they work in other paying occupations, mostly as agricultural labourers, where their salaries are often paid to their husbands or other male family members and are a fraction of what men would earn for comparable work, due to the gender specific nature of agricultural tasks. Men, on the other hand, are not eligible for MGNREGA benefits. In addition, for some women, the MGNREGA is an extra burden on top of their household duties, which are almost never shared with their husbands. These are several of the unintentional disempowerment processes that occur alongside empowerment. Salary is often charged by a bank/post office account transfer to which they have exclusive access.



Community domain:

Dalits have become more self-sufficient as a result of their decreased dependency on upper-caste employers. The dominant castes describe the Dalits behaviour with euphemisms like "insolence," "arrogance," and "disrespect." This change in power relations raises the morale and dignity of the poor. The Dalits are thought to be fully dependent on the upper dominant caste or upwardly mobile backward caste.

Agricultural labourer's ability to negotiate their work with landowners is nothing short of a challenge to the social order in a social context where lower caste people are expected to be fully at the mercy of upper dominant castes or upwardly mobile backward castes, and, more importantly, this change in power relations improves poor people's morale and sense of dignity.

Market domain:

The key empowerment mechanism in this domain stems from MGNREGA's facilitation of alternative sources of employment for agricultural labourers. This increase in income security and thus reduced need for loans, especially for basic sustenance such as food. But in other cases, labourer's decreased reliance on farmers has resulted in real disempowerment. For example, a group of Uttar Pradesh women told us that since the MGNREGA was implemented, they have stopped working in agriculture – a powerful sign of empowerment, given that their decision was motivated by a desire to avoid sexual and other types of abuse.

### **Conclusion: -**

It is critical that oppressed groups be provided with resources that will contribute to their advancement in order for the country to advance in all areas, including culturally, politically, socially, financially, and administratively. On the basis of factors such as per capita income, poverty, industrial development, agricultural growth, literacy, and transportation and communications, there have been inequalities among communities and regions; changes in these areas are needed to create empowerment opportunities for marginalised communities. It is critical that oppressed groups be provided with resources that will contribute to their advancement in order for the country to advance in all areas, including culturally, politically, socially, financially, and administratively. On the basis of factors such as per capita income, poverty, industrial development, agricultural growth, literacy, and transportation and communications, there have been inequalities among communities and regions; changes in these areas are needed to create empowerment opportunities for marginalised communities. The main factors that need to be underscored to bring about empowerment of the marginalized communities are education and literacy, health and family welfare, labor and employment, women and child development, rural development and urban development; advancements in these areas would certainly bring about empowerment of the marginalized communities. Besides the identification of factors that bring about empowerment of the marginalized communities, there are certain factors that prove to be barriers such as poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, inequality, health and welfare. Family planning and welfare programs should be organized in such a manner that the requirements of the consumers must be adequately met. There have been provision of microfinance and other programs that meet the financial requirements of the marginalized and the economically backward sections of the society such as loans and grants, income generation projects, disability benefits, assistances, interest rates, pensions, provision of loans to women who belong to the other backward classes and loans for educational, training and skill development programs. Empowerment opportunities for the marginalized sections of the society would contribute in the advancement of the country as well as eradication of all kinds of problems such as poverty, illiteracy, inequality and unemployment.

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