



## The Trail of Women Empowerment in India

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### Abstract

The goal of the essay is to highlight some significant issues relating to women's empowerment in India and how the nursing profession serves as a symbol for women's progress toward financial independence. Women have been at the forefront of global policy in recent decades. More than ever, women are speaking out in favour of gender justice, social security, and health. In other words, women's empowerment is a strategy for overcoming challenges, boosting acceptance, and expanding the capacity to actively participate in decisions that affect her and her family. Due to a lack of educational options, women are disadvantaged when it comes to decision-making autonomy and an equal distribution of power. The majority of nursing practitioners in India are female, and the career is widely recognized as a respectable one in Indian society. Nursing is the profession of choice for women in India.

**Keywords:** Women's Empowerment; Nurses; Nursing Profession; Independency

### Introduction

Through their efforts and dedication to putting their families first, women play a crucial role in society and are the primary architects of the family. It is understandable why women have traditionally been expected to do domestic duties such as caring for family members and answering "Yes" to everything within the confines of the home. India is the second-largest democracy in the world and one of the world's oldest civilizations [1]. The Indian Constitution's Articles 14 through 16 provide equal treatment for male and female citizens. Additionally, Article 15 of the Constitution forbids government discrimination against its inhabitants based on gender. Additionally, Article 15 [3] grants the state the authority to implement measures to protect the rights of women [2].

The concept of empowerment is frequently used to refer to the growth, independence, and autonomy of underprivileged people as well as their ability to access fundamental opportunities. Women's empowerment is a proactive, multifaceted process that aims to help women fulfill their full potential in all areas of life. In other words, it is a strategy for overcoming challenges and enhancing their capacity to embrace her and actively participate in decisions affecting her and their families [3].

Since India's independence, the journey toward women's emancipation has been turbulent and has encountered many challenges. Surprisingly, India granted women unrestricted suffrage from the moment of the country's independence in 1947, long before devel-

oped countries gave their citizens equal rights to vote in elections. In actuality, the history of women's emancipation began in 1966, when India became the second nation in modern times to elect a woman as prime minister, Smt. Indira Gandhi. Since then, there have been numerous female chief ministers, cabinet members, the president of India, and other prominent political figures in India [4].

India has struggled with a lower level of literacy, social inequality, poverty, and limited employment throughout the previous seven decades since gaining its independence. Both the past and current administrations have made appropriate efforts to address these challenges. The administration at either center of the state, particularly in the last two decades, has implemented several programs and schemes and adopted numerous legal provisions by amending the constitution to defend the rights of women [5,6].

The national government under Narendra Modi works to advance female equality through its signature program, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, which ensures health, safety, and the availability of compulsory education. The Indian Parliament passed the historic 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment Act of the Constitution in 1992 to guarantee women one-third of the seats in the Panchayat. However, women's empowerment is not complete until it reaches rural sections of the nation. Out of a total of 20, 56, 882 members of the laces Gaon panchayat, there are now about 8, 38, 244 (40.48%) who are women [7,8]. Women in India still lag behind men despite all these initiatives and acts. In addition, the unchecked population expansion has undone all of the progress.

### Women's education as a game changer

Due to the dependence of education on the other two crucial pillars of health and finance, education is playing a major role in human progress. A significant metric for evaluating the social change of women in each nation is the percentage of literate women [2].

The underinvestment in women's education remains an issue even after decades of literacy program implementation in India, where women continue to be glaringly underrepresented in every field. A national average literacy rate of 74.04 percent was reported in 2011. While the scores of 82.14 for men and 65.46 for women revealed significant differences in policy implementation and actual practice in the real world.<sup>5</sup> Given the gender disparity in literacy between men and women, equal access to education for women

is one of the key sources of empowerment. Due to poverty and the lack of nearby schools, a significant fraction of middle school girls nearly 40% in the age range of 15 to 18 years skips school [9,10].

One of the key markers of women's progress toward emancipation is the autonomy in the decision-making capacity of women in the home and society. Women who complete higher education are more likely to find employment and enjoy financial stability.

### Journey of Indian women's empowerment in the "patriarchal society era"

The status of the lady has always been one of the highest respected in Indian society. Evidence from the Vedic era demonstrates that women have the same rights as men in terms of education, marriage, and the choice to pursue knowledge and self-realization when single or married. The national preamble proudly mentions the foundation of gender equality, which is cherished in the heart of our constitution. Statistics paint a different image than the widely held belief that progress is gender-neutral, as women play a supporting role and trail behind men in gaining equal chances. Due to the ingrained belief that women are largely in charge of taking care of family matters, women are alone accountable for maintaining work-family balance. In Indian society, gender inequality is so ingrained that it has come to be accepted as normal. Even though in any society, there has never been parity between men and women in the workplace. Even when coworkers or women are more qualified and capable of handling the responsibilities, top positions in prominent businesses are frequently held by their male counterparts [11].

India tops the list of nations with the worst rate of sex discrimination since birth. According to the 2011 census, there are 1000 boys in India compared to 918 girls. Sadly, a lot of Indian states have an unequal gender distribution, with a smaller proportion of women than men. The preference for having a son over a girl kid is out of proportion to the gender ratio, particularly in the northern regions of the country. The fundamental reason for this mindset continues to be the long-held conviction that a male child inherits the clan, which is likely the source of India's shameful ranking of 112 out of 153 nations in the annual Global Gender Gap Index for 2020, even behind Sri Lanka and Bangladesh [12].

The most recent changes to the law recognize the government's initiatives to enhance gender equality, and the situation in India is

getting better. Nowadays, girls have more control over their marital choices and place a lot of emphasis on their employment and higher education. Many people are encouraged by the top three female positions in the most recent UPSC exam results.

### Financial independence

If given greater social and economic freedom, women can innovate and contribute significantly to the growth of the national economy. The unpleasant reality is that women make up half of the world's population and frequently take a second seat, depending on their husbands or families for financial support. This financial dependency on males is in and of itself a primary cause of gender inequality. Due to a lack of economic prospects and restricted access to resources like inheritance and land ownership, over 30% of India's population lives below the poverty line, with women making up 70% of this group [2]. To improve their capacities and self-employment, significant action should be performed.

According to data from the National Family Health Survey released by the Indian government, just 43% of married women have jobs compared to 99% of married men, illustrating the gender pay disparity in work prospects. The main obstacle to gender equality in India is the lack of equal jobs and remuneration for female employees. According to the Global Wage Report 2018/19 from the International Labor Organization (ILO), India has the largest average pay gender disparity among the 73 nations, standing at 34.5 percent [13].

### Women's empowerment and nursing

In India, one of the most popular occupations for women is nursing. The majority of nursing professionals in India are women, as the nursing profession historically originated as a gendered vocation. As a respected profession, nursing is more widely accepted in Indian society. The majority of healthcare personnel and the foundation of any nation's healthcare system are nurses. In India, nurses make up around 30.5% of the total number of health professionals [14].

Given that the World Bank predicts that there will be a need for 80.2 million health care workers worldwide by the year 2030, there are numerous opportunities for women to work in the health sector. By then, India would require an additional 2 million physicians and 6 million nurses. Currently, the central government has

approved an 80% female hiring preference for nursing positions. As a result, women will have greater access to stable employment.

Unquestionably, nurses who treat patients with compassion and excellence continue to be the link between science and the human touch. Our nurses were leading from the front during the deadly COVID-19 outbreak and even did not hesitate to give their lives if necessary. Women's lives are reorganized as a result of the nursing profession, which also boosts their autonomy, self-efficacy, and self-esteem. The professional reputation of nurses will be well-positioned to influence other women and their families for the better.

### Conclusion

The key drivers of women's empowerment are access to education, employment possibilities, societal acceptance, and family status. Two of its key traits are highlighted by women's empowerment. First of all, it is the ability to accomplish necessary objectives without dominating others. Second, the concept of empowerment is more applicable to those who lack authority, regardless of their membership in a certain group, class, or caste. The progress made for women's welfare, despite the abundance of initiatives, falls short of expectations. To guarantee women's equal access to and full involvement at all levels of decision-making platforms, all necessary steps should be done. To ensure that catalysts participate in filling in the gaps in policy and implementation, policies should be centered on women.

The nursing profession can take on the challenge and empower women at a time when the economy is facing the possibility of stagflation, sluggishness in economies throughout the world, diminishing economic growth, and rising unemployment during the current recession. Our country has improved literacy significantly in recent years. India is always attempting to close the gender equality gap. Ratifying international agreements and developing national policies aimed at eradicating gender inequality have benefited the cause.

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### Conflict of Interest

None.

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