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## An Analytical Study of Women's Empowerment in the Global Era

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### Introduction

India has come a long way since independence. Women, who constitute nearly half of the population, play a very significant role in the homes and outside. The future of mankind is thus linked to the development of women's potential. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had said "To awake people it is the women who must be awakened once she is on the move, the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves." After independence the constitution has given equal opportunities to men and women on paper yet women remain secondary to Men. Female employment in India has an intrinsic relationship with female empowerment. Female employment and empowerment have been considerable issues over the years. The rise in economic growth in India has brought significant change to the lives of Indian women and ultimately affects the female employment. The national Household survey, Periodic Labour Force Survey, conducted by National Statistics Office (NSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), reveals the female employment status in India. No doubt that the Female labour force participation (FLFPR) rate in India, which refers to women who are either working or looking for a job, is below the global average of 47 percent for several years. But the commendable fact is that the women empowerment over the years has taken the female employment at the rising steps. Though it is still not at par with global average, however, it's improving over the years. The latest Periodic Labour Force Survey for 2021-22 highlights that the FLFPR for prime working age group (15 years & above) has increased considerably and stood at 32.8% in India. Experiencing structural improvements to their lives, such as decline in fertility rates and expansion of women's education brought India's female LFPR on an upward track. Now, India is a country where one third of women have joined the labour force

**Women empowerment** refers to the process of enabling women to gain control over their lives, make independent decisions, and access the same opportunities and rights as men in all spheres of life. It involves the removal of barriers that restrict women's social, economic, political, and educational participation, and it aims to address inequality, promote gender justice, and create an environment where women can thrive and achieve their full potential. In today's interconnected world, the concept of women empowerment has gained significant attention as a crucial element for achieving gender equality and social justice. This analysis seeks to explore the multifaceted dimensions of women empowerment in the context of globalization, highlighting its importance, challenges, and potential

solutions. In conclusion, the empowerment of women in a globalized era is a complex yet vital endeavor. It requires collaborative efforts from individuals, communities, and nations to address the challenges and leverage the opportunities presented by globalization. By recognizing and supporting the empowerment of women, societies can work towards achieving equality and fostering sustainable development for all. Women empowerment is a multifaceted concept aimed at addressing the historical and systemic inequalities faced by women. By promoting education, economic participation, legal rights, political representation, and social equality, the empowerment of women is essential for building a more just and inclusive society. It is a powerful tool not just for women's development, but for the progress of entire communities and nations.

## **II. Present Status of Indian Women: An Overview**

The status of women in India has evolved significantly over the years, influenced by cultural, economic, and political factors. Despite notable progress, women continue to face challenges that impede their full participation in society. This overview aims to highlight the current status of women in India, focusing on education, employment, health, and social issues.

**Education** is a fundamental aspect of women's empowerment. The literacy rate for women in India has increased over the years, reaching approximately 70% in recent statistics. Government initiatives, such as the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme, have encouraged families to educate their daughters. However, disparities remain, particularly in rural areas, where cultural norms may prioritize boys' education over girls'. Access to quality education is still a challenge, with many girls dropping out due to early marriages and household responsibilities.

**b. Employment** is another critical area where women face hurdles. While more women are entering the workforce, they often occupy lower-paying jobs with limited opportunities for advancement. According to recent data, women's participation in the labor force is around 23%, which is significantly lower than that of men. Factors contributing to this gap include societal expectations, lack of childcare facilities, and workplace discrimination. Women entrepreneurs are emerging, yet they encounter barriers such as access to finance and business networks.

**c. Health** is a vital component affecting women's status in India. Women face various health issues, including maternal mortality, malnutrition, and reproductive health challenges. Although the government has made strides in improving healthcare access, many women still lack necessary information and services. Awareness campaigns and healthcare programs targeting women's health have been introduced, but societal stigma around certain health issues persists, hindering progress.

**d.Social issues**, including gender-based violence and discrimination, continue to impact women's status. Reports of domestic violence, sexual harassment, and human trafficking are concerning. Legal frameworks exist to protect women's rights, but enforcement remains weak. Initiatives to raise awareness and educate communities about gender equality are crucial in addressing these issues.

### III.Sex Ratio in India

The sex ratio in India has shown long-term fluctuations since 1901. It stood at 972 females per 1,000 males in 1901 and steadily declined until 1971. After 1991, gradual improvement was observed due to social awareness and government initiatives, reaching about 945 females per 1,000 males in recent years.

**Table 1: Sex Ratio (No. of Women per 1000 males)**

Year	No. of Women	100% Males
1901	972	97.2
1947	946	94.6
1971	930	93
1981	934	93.4
1991	927	92.7
2001	933	93.3
2011	943	94.3
2021	945	94.5

**Source:** Census Report, Government of India.

Table 1 presents the trend in India's sex ratio from 1901 to 2021. In 1901, there were 972 women per 1,000 males (97.2%), indicating a relatively balanced gender composition. The ratio declined steadily over the decades, reaching a low of 930 women per 1,000 males (93%) in 1971, reflecting adverse social practices and gender bias. A marginal recovery was observed in 1981, followed by another decline in 1991. From 2001 onwards, the sex ratio shows consistent improvement, rising to 945 women per 1,000 males (94.5%) in 2021. This positive trend suggests the impact of increased awareness, legal safeguards, and government initiatives aimed at protecting the girl child and promoting gender equality. Overall, while the gap has narrowed in recent years, the data indicates the continued need for sustained efforts to achieve a balanced sex ratio.

### IV.Literacy Rate India

The literacy rate in India has improved significantly since 1901, when it was only about 5.4 percent. Steady progress was observed after Independence due to expansion of schooling and adult education. Literacy rose to 74 percent in 2011 and is estimated to exceed 77 percent in recent years.

**Table 2: Literacy Rate in India**

Year	Total	Male percent	Female percent	Differential
1951	18.33	27.16	8.86	18.30
1961	28.30	40.40	15.35	25.05

1971	34.45	45.95	21.97	23.98
1981	43.57	56.38	29.76	26.62
1991	52.21	64.13	39.29	24.84
2001	65.38	75.85	54.16	21.69
2021	77.70	84.70	70.30	14.4

**Source:** Census Report, Government of India

**Table-2 depicts** Seventies the male literature population was 46.77 percent compared to 24.68 percent for females. As per the 1981 census, 75 percent of women were illiterate. According to 1991 Census the female literacy rate was 39.4 percent compared to 63.86 percent for males. 2001 figures showed 75.85 percent literate males and 54.16% literate females. In 2021 was 77.70%, with 84.70% of men and 70.30% of women being literate. This is an increase of 2.6% from 2018 to 2021, and an increase of 0.8% from 2020 to 2021. The gender gap is more pronounced in rural areas, where only 66% of women aged 15–49 are literate, compared to 81% of men.

## V. Crimes against Women in India

Crimes against women encompass a wide range of offenses that specifically target women based on their gender. These crimes include domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, and harassment. Understanding the nature and impact of these crimes is crucial for fostering a safer society and advocating for women's rights.

**Domestic Violence** is a pervasive issue that affects individuals regardless of age, race, or socioeconomic status. It refers to abusive behaviors in intimate relationships, where one partner seeks to gain or maintain power and control over another. This abuse can be physical, emotional, sexual, or financial. Victims often face challenges in seeking help due to fear, stigma, or lack of resources. Raising awareness about domestic violence is essential to support victims and implement preventive measures.

**Sexual Assault** is another critical area of concern. It includes any unwanted sexual contact, ranging from groping to rape. Research indicates that a significant number of sexual assaults go unreported, often due to feelings of shame or fear of not being believed. Educational programs that focus on consent and respect are vital in addressing this issue, particularly among college students, who may be at increased risk.

**Human Trafficking** is a severe violation of human rights and often disproportionately affects women and girls. Victims are often deceived or coerced into sex work or forced labor. This crime thrives in environments of poverty, instability, and lack of education. Combating human trafficking requires a multifaceted approach, including legal action, support services for victims, and public awareness campaigns.

**Harassment**, whether in the workplace or public spaces, remains a significant barrier to women's safety and equality. This can manifest as verbal abuse,

unwanted advances, or threats. Establishing clear policies against harassment and promoting a culture of respect and accountability can help mitigate this issue.

**Table 3: Crimes against Women**

Year	Dowry deaths	Reported Rapes	Domestic Violence
2008	8172	21467	81344
2009	8383	21397	89546
2010	8391	22172	94041
2011	8618	24206	99135
2012	8233	24923	106527
2020	6843	28046	136000
2021	6753	31677	137956
2023	6400	31204	28811

**Source:** Government Data (OGD)

Table 3 shows the trend of selected crimes against women in India over different years. Dowry deaths remained consistently high between 2008 and 2012, peaking at 8,618 in 2011, and then showed a gradual decline by 2023, indicating some improvement due to legal measures and social awareness. Reported rape cases increased steadily from 2008 to 2012 and remained high in the later years, reflecting both rising incidents and improved reporting mechanisms. Domestic violence cases show a sharp rise from 81,344 in 2008 to over 1.36 lakh in 2020–2021, highlighting growing vulnerability of women, especially during stressful periods. Overall, the data indicates that crimes against women remain a serious social issue, requiring stronger enforcement, awareness, and preventive measures.

#### **VI. Participation of women in workforce**

Approximately 90 percent of the women workers are engaged in the unorganized sector. Of these over 80 percent are in agriculture and allied occupations. In the organized sector women constitute only 13.3 percent of all employees. In the public sector, they account for 11 percent of total employment and in the private sector for 17.8 percent. Apart from their domestic duties, women are engaged in agricultural operations. Despite this, their access to ownership of land, credit and other productive resources remain negligible. The data on Employment and Unemployment is collected through Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) which is conducted by the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MoSPI) since 2017-18. The survey period is July to June every year. As per the latest available Annual PLFS Reports, the estimated Worker Population Ratio (WPR) and Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) on usual status for females of age 15 years and above during the years 2017-18 to 2022-23 are as follows:

**Table 4: Participation of women in workforce**

Year	LFPR(in%)	WPR (in%)
2017-18	23.3	22.0
2018-19	24.5	23.3
2019-20	30.0	28.7
2020-21	32.5	31.4
2021-22	32.8	31.7
2022-23	37.0	35.9

**Source: PLFS, MoSPI**

Table 4 highlights a steady improvement in women’s participation in the workforce in India. The Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) increased from 23.3 percent in 2017–18 to 37.0 percent in 2022–23, indicating greater entry of women into economic activities. Similarly, the Worker Population Ratio (WPR) rose from 22.0 percent to 35.9 percent during the same period. The sharp rise after 2019–20 reflects increased employment opportunities, policy support, and growing acceptance of women’s work, especially in rural and informal sectors. Overall, the trend signifies gradual progress in women’s economic empowerment, though participation levels still remain below potential.

#### **VII. Women’s Empowerment in India during the Global Era**

Women’s empowerment in India during the global era from 1991 to 2025 reflects significant and sustained progress across economic, educational, political, and social dimensions. Economic liberalization created new employment opportunities and encouraged women’s entrepreneurship, while improvements in education, digital literacy, and skill development enhanced their capabilities. Political empowerment expanded through greater participation in local governance and leadership roles. Strengthened legal frameworks and increased awareness of rights improved women’s social status and security. Overall, globalization, combined with supportive government initiatives and technological advancement, has played a crucial role in advancing women’s empowerment in India.

#### **Table-5 Women’s Empowerment in India during the Global Era (1991-2025)**

**Source:** Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India, *Annual Reports*.

The table-5 presents a comprehensive overview of the changing status of women's empowerment in India across the post-globalization period, highlighting multidimensional progress over time.

In the **1991–2000** periods, women's empowerment was at a *low but emerging* stage. Economic participation of women was minimal and largely confined to the informal sector. Access to higher and technical education was limited, restricting skill development. Political empowerment was restricted mainly to reservations in local bodies, while strong patriarchal norms and low legal awareness constrained women's social and legal status.

During **2001–2010**, a phase of *moderate growth* is observed. Women's economic participation improved gradually due to the expansion of self-help groups and microfinance initiatives. Girls' education and literacy levels showed notable improvement. Increased involvement of women in Panchayati Raj Institutions strengthened political participation, while new legislations on domestic violence and property rights enhanced legal protection and social security.

The **2011–2015** period marks a transition towards *moderate to high* empowerment. Expansion of the service sector and rising women entrepreneurship enhanced economic independence. Digital literacy initiatives improved access to education and skills. Women gained greater visibility in leadership roles, and awareness of rights increased, contributing to higher social mobility.

Between **2016–2020**, women's empowerment reached a *high* level. Government initiatives such as Digital India, Start-up India, Skill India, and MUDRA loans significantly boosted women's employment, entrepreneurship, and vocational skills. Political participation at the grassroots level strengthened, while improved safety laws and the use of social media amplified advocacy and awareness regarding gender issues.

In the **2021–2025** periods, empowerment is described as *high and strengthening*. Women's increasing participation in STEM, artificial intelligence, and digital platforms reflects advanced economic and educational empowerment. Expansion of online education and continuous skill up gradation, along with stronger representation of women in governance and policy-making, indicate sustained progress. Growing gender sensitivity and inclusion policies further consolidate women's empowerment.

Overall, the table clearly demonstrates that globalization, supported by policy reforms, education, digital initiatives, and legal frameworks, has played a crucial role in progressively strengthening women's empowerment in India from 1991 to 2025.

## **VIII. Suggestions**

## **1. Strengthen Female Education**

Greater emphasis should be placed on universal female education, particularly in rural and backward regions. Scholarships, digital learning facilities, and measures to reduce school dropouts due to early marriage and domestic responsibilities must be expanded.

## **Enhance Women's Employment Opportunities**

Skill development programs aligned with market needs should be promoted to improve women's employability. Encouraging women's participation in emerging sectors such as technology, services, and entrepreneurship can help increase labour force participation.

## **3. Formalization of Women's Work**

Since a large proportion of women work in the unorganized sector, policies should focus on formalizing employment, ensuring job security, fair wages, social security benefits, and safe working conditions.

## **4. Improve Access to Resources and Credit**

Women should be provided better access to land ownership, institutional credit, and financial inclusion. Strengthening Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and microfinance institutions can support women entrepreneurs.

## **5. Ensure Safety and Legal Enforcement**

Strict implementation of laws related to crimes against women is essential. Fast-track courts, effective policing, and awareness programs can help reduce gender-based violence and increase confidence among women.

## **6. Promote Work-Life Balance**

Availability of affordable childcare facilities, maternity benefits, and flexible working arrangements can encourage more women to join and remain in the workforce.

## **7. Address Social and Cultural Barriers**

Awareness campaigns, community participation, and gender-sensitization programs should be intensified to challenge patriarchal attitudes and promote gender equality at household and societal levels.

## **8. Policy Monitoring and Data-Based Planning**

Continuous monitoring of women-centric schemes using reliable data such as PLFS and Census reports is necessary to assess progress and redesign policies for better outcomes. These measures, if effectively implemented, can significantly enhance women's empowerment and contribute to inclusive and sustainable national development.

## **IX. Conclusion**

The analysis clearly shows that the status of women in India has undergone significant transformation since independence, influenced by constitutional safeguards, economic growth, educational expansion, and policy interventions. Improvements in key indicators such as sex ratio, literacy rate, and workforce participation reflect gradual progress toward women's empowerment. Rising female

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literacy and increasing labour force participation indicate growing awareness, skill development, and acceptance of women's economic roles. Government initiatives and social reforms have played an important role in this positive shift.

However, the persistence of gender disparities remains a serious concern. Crimes against women, unequal access to resources, concentration of women in the unorganized sector, and lower workforce participation compared to global standards highlight deep-rooted social and structural challenges. Despite improvements, women continue to face barriers such as limited employment opportunities, wage inequality, lack of asset ownership, and safety concerns.

Empowering women is not only a matter of social justice but also a prerequisite for sustainable and inclusive development. Strengthening education, ensuring safety, expanding decent employment opportunities, and promoting gender-sensitive policies are essential for enhancing women's participation in all spheres of life. A holistic approach involving government, society, and institutions is necessary to transform women from passive beneficiaries into active contributors to national development. The progress achieved so far must be consolidated to ensure equality, dignity, and empowerment for Indian women in the years ahead.

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