



## WOMENS ACHIEVERS OF FREE INDIA

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### Abstract:

Empowerment of women means the process to make women economically, socially, educationally, psychologically and politically strong as they are traditionally underprivileged ones in the society. It is the process of protecting them against all forms of social violence. Women empowerment involves the building up of a new society in which women can breathe freely and explore their maximum potential in a traditionally male dominated existing society. Women constitute almost 50% of the world's population but India has shown disproportionate male female ratio. The female population is comparatively lower than males. As far as their social status is concerned, they are not treated as equal to men in all the sphere of life. Whereas in the Western societies, the women have got equal right and status with men in all walks of life. The grave gender discriminations are found in India even today. Thus this article has explained the women's achievers of India who have come out of all the present days odd and emerged as successful women in Indian orthodox society of India. It has employed the methodology of case studies quoted from life achievements of great women's achievers of India, along with an analysis of secondary data collected from several scientific and non-scientific sources.

**Key words:** Women Empowerment, Education, Discrimination, Orthodox.

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### INTRODUCTION:

Empowerment means to make someone powerful to be capable of deciding for themselves. Women empowerment points to making women powerful to make them capable of deciding for themselves, to decide for their social and economic perspectives. Women have suffered a lot in the past years at the hands of men. In past centuries, they were treated as a homemaker and nanny for their children. All the rights belonged to men even the voting right. As the times evolved, women woke up and realized their power. There on began the Feminist movement and revolution for women

empowerment. As women were not allowed to enjoy their basic rights women empowerment came in like a breeze of fresh air. It made them aware of their basic rights and make their own place in society rather than depending on a man. It recognized them the fact that things cannot simply work in someone's favor because of their gender.

However, we still have a long way to go when we talk about the reasons why we need it. Why should women get empowerment Women empowerment in India

### NEED OF STUDY:

Need of women empowerment in India is more than



ever. India is among one of the country which is not safe for women. There are various reasons for this:

1. Women in India are in danger of femalefeticide before their birth
2. They are victims of honor killings as their family thinks its right to take their lives if they bring shame to family legacy.
3. The education and freedom to enjoy their basic rights is quite poor here. Women are not allowed to pursue higher education; they are married off early.

The men are still dominating women in some regions like woman's duty to work. They do not have freedom of any kind. Domestic violence is a major problem in India. Here the men beat up their wife and treat as their property. Similarly, the women who do the same work are paid less because of their gender.

Thus, we see how women empowerment is the need of the hour in a country like India. We need to empower these women to speak up for their rights and in justice.

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

1. To understand the concept of women empowerment in detail.
2. To study about the achievements of women in social field.
3. To study about the achievements of women in economical field.
4. To study about the achievements of women in the field of education.
5. To study about the achievements of women in the field of psychology.
6. To study about the achievements of women in the field of politics.
7. To understand the need of women empowerment

in India.

#### **METHODOLOGY**

This article has adopted descriptive analytical method to understand the various fields of women's empowerment in India. It has also employed the methodology of selected case studies quoted from the live achievements of few women achievers of free India, along with selected secondary sources analyzed to understand their achievements.

#### **WHAT IS EMPOWERMENT?**

Empowerment means to make someone powerful to be capable of deciding for themselves. Women empowerment points at making women powerful to make them capable of deciding for themselves, to decide for their social and economic perspectives. Women have suffered a lot in the past years at the hands of men. In past centuries, they were treated as a homemaker and nanny for their children. All the rights belonged to men even the voting right. As the times evolved, women have woken up and realized their power. There on began the Feminist movement and revolution for women empowerment.

#### **WOMEN IN INDIA:**

As per Indian constitution, the women in India enjoy a unique status of equality with the men. But the Indian women have come a long way to achieve the constitutional rights. In Indian society, a female was always dependent on male members of the family even last few years ago. A female was not allowed to speak with loud voice in the presence of elder members. As a widow her dependence on a male members of the family still more increase. In many social activities she is not permitted to mix with other members of the family. They have meager share in political, social and economic life of the society.

In the early twentieth century, Mahatma Gandhi who



was in favor of removing all the disabilities of women. At the same time, Raja Ram Mohan Rai, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar and various other social reformers laid stress on women's education, prevention of child marriage, withdrawals of evil practice of sati, removal of polygamy etc. After independence of India, the constitution makers and the national leaders recognized the equal social position of women with men. The Constitution of India guarantees equality of sexes and in fact grants special favors to women. These can be found in three articles of the constitution. Article 14 says that the government shall not deny to any person equality before law or equal protection of the law. Article 15 declares that government shall not discriminate against any citizen on the ground of sex. Article 42 directs the state to make provision for ensuring just and human conditions of work and maternity relief. Above all, the constitution regards a fundamental duty on every citizen to renounce the dignity of women.

#### HOW CAN WE EMPOWER WOMEN?

- Education for girls must be made compulsory so that women can become literate to make a successful life for themselves.
- Women must be given equal opportunities in every field, irrespective of gender.
- We can empower women by abolishing child marriage and female feticides should be stopped completely.
- Various skill development programs must be started for them to overcome financial crisis if any in future.
- The shame of divorce and abuse must be wiped out completely from their mind by getting humble support from society and family.

As per Keshab Chandra Mandal female empowerment could be defined in five separate categories:

1. Political Empowerment
2. Educational Empowerment
3. Social Empowerment
4. Psychological Empowerment
5. Economical Empowerment

#### WHY IS WOMEN'S POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT IMPORTANT?

Women's political participation is a fundamental prerequisite for gender equality and genuine democracy. It facilitates women's direct engagement in public decision-making and is a means of ensuring better accountability to women. Women's political participation is a fundamental prerequisite for gender equality and genuine democracy. It facilitates women's direct engagement in public decision-making.

Sushma Swaraj - A Former Supreme Court lawyer, Sushma Swaraj, served as the Minister of External Affairs of India from 2014 to 2019. Daughter of Hardev Sharma, a prominent leader of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh leader, Sushma Swaraj had multiple achievements in her political career that spanned over 40 years - Haryana's youngest cabinet minister at 25 in the year 1977, first woman chief minister of Delhi in the year 1998, leader of the opposition in the Lok Sabha from 2009 to 2014, so on and so forth. She was a powerful Hindi orator with a flair for witty expressions articulated during Parliamentary sessions.

Mayawati - The former Prime Minister of India, P. V. Narasimha Rao, had once referred to her as the 'miracle of democracy', Mayawati served as the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh for four terms. Well-



known for her contribution towards improving the condition of Dalits and Other Backward Classes in India, Mayawati is credited to have reinstated efficiency in administration and everyday governance. Her government worked tirelessly towards development in Uttar Pradesh - the Yamuna Expressway, first solar plant, financial assistance for the girl child, Indian Grand Prix 2011, to name a few. Mayawati not only brought back law & order but also reduced corruption, thereby leading the state to achieve a 17% GDP growth rate.

Jayalalitha - Jayaram Jayalalithaa, popularly known as Amma, had served as the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu for five terms, i.e., from 1991 to 2016. As a first in the country, she had established 57 women-run police stations during her tenure in the state and had reserved a 30% quota for women in law enforcement.

Mamata Banerjee - Mamata Banerjee is the first female and current Chief Minister of West Bengal since 2011. After splintering off from the Congress party in 1998, she went on to form her political party called 'Trinamool Congress'. Lovingly referred to as 'Didi', her party eventually won the West Bengal legislative assembly election of 2011. In the year 2019, Nirmala Sitharaman became India's first female Finance Minister. With the COVID-19 pandemic and rounds of lockdowns across the country, she faced the significant challenge of reviving the country's economy after experiencing an economically all-time low performance. In her budget presentation, she announced a package of Rs 1.70 lakh crore as relief to pull the country out of the financial quagmire

Indira Gandhi- Daughter of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, is the only woman who served as the Prime

Minister of India. Born in the political family, she was the second longest serving Prime Minister of the country after her father. She was appointed the President of Congress party in 1959 and also served as her father's personal assistant from 1947 till 1964. After Nehru's death in 1964, she served as a Cabinet minister under Lal Bahadur Shastri's leadership but later became Prime Minister of the country in 1966 after Shastri's sudden death. From 1966 to 1977, she was able to retain the position but lost after an emergency was imposed by her in 1975 leading to a national discontent and countrywide protests. She returned to power in 1980 and during this time she ordered storming of Sikh Holy Shrine Harmandir Sahib in Amritsar and was assassinated on October 31, 1984 by her two Sikh bodyguards. Violence erupted in several parts of the country after her death in which Sikhs were killed by angry protesters. She was known for her strong personality and also went to war with Pakistan supporting the Independence Movement in East Pakistan leading to formation of Bangladesh. In 1999, Indira Gandhi was named 'Woman of the Millennium' by a BBC poll.

#### **EDUCATIONAL EMPOWERMENT:**

Education can increase women's awareness of their rights, boost their self-esteem, and provide them the opportunity to assert their rights. Education is not universally available and gender inequalities persist. Savitribai Phule was India's first female teacher of the first women's school of India. She was the founder of modern Marathi poetry. She worked for the upliftment and education of females in India. At the time when women's potential and caliber were underestimated. She opened a school for the untouchable girls. Despite many milestones from the society she kept on teaching and was later honoured



by the British Government.

Anju Seth- The woman who is behind changing the history of the IIM Calcutta. From being, an alumnus and a Professor at the same institution to being the first director ever at IIM Calcutta; she has been a true example of hard work and perseverance. She has been teaching since over 25 glorious years. She has also been honored with the Executive and Professional Development Award, College of Business in 2002 and List of Teachers Rated as Excellent by their Students (1997-2003).

GeetaDharmarajan- One lady playing so many roles. She is a teacher, social worker, children's book writer, editor and what not. She established Katha around 30 years. It is an organization which runs schools for the underprivileged children in many locations of India. Not only this, but she was also honored with the Padma Shri award in 2012 for her contributions in the field of Literature and Education.

Vasudha Prakash- The founder of founded V-Excel – A learning center which teaches medical, vocational and educational skills to people with developmental disabilities. There are nine centers of V-Excel today in various cities. She has taken up the challenge of changing the mindset of adults for such children and has truly been an inspiration for all.

VimlaKaul- The lady who has spent her entire life as a teacher. Even after retiring from her job, she did not leave her passion and opened a school named Guldasta- a school for the underprivileged in a Municipality Park in Delhi in 1993. Her urge to do something for the society kept her going as she taught the kids from the slums. And yes, she became successful in giving such kids a childhood that they deserve.

### **SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT:**

Social Empowerment means all the sections of society in India, have equal control over their lives, are able to take important decisions in their lives, and have equal opportunities. Without empowering all sections of society equally, a nation can never have a good growth trajectory.

MedhaPatkar is a social reformer turned politician. Born in Mumbai, Medha had a keen interest in public service at a very early age. Being a daughter of a trade union leader, she started understanding the problems faced by the underprivileged and felt the need to serve them. Her father took active part in the Indian Independence Movement, while her mother was member of Swadar, an organisation formed to assist and support women who are financially weak, and helped them in getting educated. Patkar is an MA in Social Work from Tata Institute of Social Science. She left her position from the faculty as well as her unfinished PhD when she became completely involved in the tribal and peasant communities in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and Gujarat. She is best recognised as the founding member of the famous Narmada BachaoAndolan – a movement to save the rivers and people of Gujarat.

Kiran Bedi was born and bred in the holy city of Amritsar, Punjab. She is a social activist and the first woman IPS officer in the country. She has not only served her department with full conviction, but has also made whole-hearted contribution to many social causes. A former tennis player, the multi-talented social activist from Amritsar is credited for bringing down the number of crimes against women in West Delhi during her service. She introduced several reforms at Tihar Jail, which gained worldwide acclaim and won her the Ramon Magsaysay Award



in 1994. In 2003, Kiran became the first Indian woman to be appointed as a Police Advisor to the Secretary-General of the United Nations in the Department of Peace Keeping Operations. She resigned in 2007 to focus on social activism and writing. She has written several books, and runs the India Vision Foundation.

Manasi Pradhan is an author and poet who received the Rani LakshmbaiStree Shakti Puraskar in 2013 for her work in fighting for women rights. Born to a poor family in the state of Odisha, she travelled 15 km daily to the only school in the entire region. She was the first woman from her village to earn a law degree. She has won many accolades including the 'Outstanding Women Award' in 2011 from the United Nation's UN Women and National Commission for Women. She is the founder of NirbhayaVahini and OYSS Women and head the Honour for Women National Campaign, a nationwide movement to end violence against women in India. She is also serving on the panel of Central Board of Film Certification (Censor Board) for India. She is a member of the International Governing Council of World Women Organization (WWO) and Inquiry Committee of the National Commission for Women.

IromSharmila popularly known as the "Iron Lady of Manipur" is the most recognizable face of the conflict-ridden state in the North East. In spite of not clearing her class XII, she has become an "icon of public resistance" in her state. For Irom, her father has had a great influence in her life. On November 2, 2000, she began a hunger strike after the "Malom Massacre" where 10 people were killed, which had a major impact on her. Having refused food and water for more than 500 weeks, she has been

recognized as "the world's longest hunger striker". On International Women's Day, 2014 she was voted as the top woman icon of India by MSN Poll.

Arundhati Roy is an author, actress, and political activist. She was best known for the award-winning novel *The God of Small Things* (1997) and for her involvement in environmental and human rights causes. Arundhati's father was a Bengali tea planter, and her mother was a Christian of Syrian descent who challenged India's inheritance laws by successfully suing for the right of Christian women to receive an equal share of their fathers' estates. Though trained as an architect, Arundhati had little interest in design; she dreamed instead of a writing career. She has campaigned along with activist MedhaPatkar against the Narmada dam project, stating that the dam will displace half a million people, with little or no compensation, and will not provide the projected irrigation, drinking water and other benefits. In recognition of her outspoken advocacy of human rights, Arundhati was awarded the Lannan Cultural Freedom Award in 2002, the Sydney Peace Prize in 2004, and the SahityaAkademi Award from the Indian Academy of Letters in 2006.

#### **PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT:**

This means formation of the belief that they can succeed in change efforts. The psychological empowerment is a blend of self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-determination, self-confidence, self-awareness, positive thinking and it ultimately leads to wellbeing and happiness of women.

NaliniAmbady was an Indian-American social psychologist and a leading expert on nonverbal behavior and interpersonal perception. She was born in Calcutta, India and earned her bachelor's degree



at Lady Shri Ram College for women, Delhi University.

Radhika Chandiramani Radhika Chandiramani is the founder of TARSHI, a New Delhi-based NGO that works on issues of sexual and reproductive health and rights. She is a clinical psychologist, writer and editor. Her published works on sexuality and human rights have been covered in media and scholarly reviews.

Dr. Prerna Kohli is a clinical psychologist, social worker and author. She was awarded the '100 Women Achievers of India' in 2016 by the President of India for her work on mental health.

Vindhya Undurti Vindhya Undurti is a feminist scholar known for her research on gender roles, women's health, and gender based violence, and for her advocacy work on behalf of Indian women. Undurti is Professor of Psychology in the School of Gender Studies at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences in Hyderabad, India.

#### **ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT:**

Economic Empowerment is imperative, especially for the downtrodden and women, in fact, it is one of the best ways for people to realize their potential and exercise their rights. It allows people to explore beyond their daily and general survival needs thereby making them more independent in terms of their way of living.

When the true potential is realized, assets and capabilities are improved, and the freedom of choice and action follows naturally. Economic Empowerment targets these aspects which help in liberating people from their vulnerable states, improving their standard of living, and further contributing to the overall economic development of the nation.

Women have largely been absent in India's economic and social policymaking. This under-representation at the high table impacts the well-being of half the population, especially when an emergency like the Covid-19 pandemic strikes. With few lobbying for their interests, it is only natural that women's issues and concerns get short shrift in a patriarchal society like India.

Devaki Jain is an Indian economist and writer, who has worked mainly in the field of feminist economics. In 2006 she was awarded the Padma Bhushan, the third-highest civilian award from Government of India, for her contribution to social justice and the empowerment of women.

Dr. Shruti Kapoor is an Indian economist, women's rights activist, and social entrepreneur. She is the founder of Sayfty, an initiative that aims to educate and empower young women and girls against all forms of violence.

Ashwini Deshpande is an Indian economist best known for her papers concerning various topics such as poverty, inequality, regional disparities and gender discrimination. She is currently working as a professor at Ashoka University, she has taught at Delhi School of Economics in the past as well. Wikipedia

Rohini Pande is an economist who is currently the Henry J. Heinz II Professor of Economics and Director of the Economic Growth Center at Yale University. She was previously the Rafik Hariri Professor of International Political Economy and Mohammed Kamal Professor of Public Policy at Harvard Kennedy School. Wikipedia

Bina Agarwal is an Indian development economist and Professor of Development Economics and Environment at the Global Development Institute at



The University of Manchester. She has written extensively on land, livelihoods and property rights; environment and development; the political economy of gender; poverty and inequality.

**ANALYSIS:**

NAME	CATEGORY OF EMPOWERMENT & WORK
1. SushmaSwaraj	Political'social justice
2. Mayawati	Political Upliftment of Dalit Women
3. Jayalalitha	Political 30% quota for women
4. Mamta Banerjee	Political Upliftment of Rural Women
5. Indra Gandhi	Political & Economy
6. Nirmala Sitharaman	Political & Economy
7. SavitribaiPhule	Education&Upliftment of Girl Child
8. Anju Seth	Education
9. GeetaDharamrajan	Education for underprivileged children
10. Vasudha Prakash	Education for disabled children
11. VimlaKaul	Education for underprivileged children
12. MedhaPatkar	Social reformer

A few names of women are given in the above table to showcase their achievements in various categories of women empowerment and their work in social,economical, psychological, educational and political fields.

**RESULT:**

Generally speaking, the women of India are relatively disempowered and they enjoy somewhatlower status than that of man.In spite of so many efforts undertaken by the government of India and NGOs the picture at present is not satisfactory.

13. Kiran Bedi	Social reformer, crime against women
14. Mansi Pradhan	Social reformer , women rights
15. IromSharmila	Social reformer ,Iron lady of Manipur
16. Arundhati Roy	Social reformer , rights of Christian women
17. NaliniAmbady	Psychologist , self confidence in women
18. Radhika Chandiramani	Psychologist , human rights
19. AnujaTrehanKapur	Psychologist , Social activist
20. PrernaKohli	Psychologist , Social worker
21. Vindhya Undurti	Psychologist , Gender based violence
22. Ela Bhatt	Economist , Sewa foundation
23. Devki Jain	Economist , Social justice
24. DrShruti Kapoor	Economist , Women's rights activist
25. Ashwini Deshpande	Economist , Women inequality
26. Rohinipande	Economist ,Political
27. Bina Agarwal	Economist , Property rights
28. IndraNooyi	Economist, Indian born American business women

Mere access to education and employment can only help in the process of empowerment.

**CONCLUSION:**

India's journey on women empowerment and gender equality started when it became a sovereign state in 1947. While visible gains have been made through legal reforms, human development and grassroots initiatives, New Delhi still has a long way to go in many areas of women empowerment. A more concerted effort is needed to close the urban-rural divide and ensure that women in rural areas





enjoy the same access to education, employment, healthcare and decision-making as their urban counterparts. The hardest challenge will be to change attitudes, given that many barriers to women empowerment are attributed to patriarchal and patrilineal traditions that are deeply entrenched in many South Asian societies.

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