

Women's Identity in the Transforming World

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Abstract: Little changes add up to big ones, and eventually the whole society feels the effects of a new way of thinking. We refer to this as the cumulative effect of social transformation. Historical revisionism, which seeks to expand or disprove the conventional historical consensus, is a common practice in women's history. While women's education was once considered unimportant because of quantitative shifts, it is now receiving equal attention. Legal, social, economic, and political rights for Indian women were lacking in earlier times. Over the last few decades, Indian women have transformed and made significant strides in numerous fields, demonstrating their ability to compete with men and demonstrating their potential. This study explores Indian women's experiences with societal transformation, providing a comprehensive summary of the topic.

Keywords: Women, education, social transformation, ability, potential.

INTRODUCTION

The role of women has undergone a significant transformation and is currently having the greatest impact on our society. Hundreds of years ago, men exerted control and restriction over the contributions of women to society. Previously, they were not involved in any political matters; however, they have made significant progress in numerous respects. Currently, in various substantial domains, women are taking on the roles of authority and standing up. The roles of women have evolved at an accelerated tempo, and they have participated in a range of fields, including politics, medicine, business, military, law, sports, entertainment, media, science and technology, space, professional training, and the list is numerous. As an instance, women's empowerment and success have been making significant strides.

The process of social transformation is cumulative, which means that minor changes accumulate numerically until they are substantial enough to generate qualitative changes across the entire society. Historical revisionism is a prevalent practice in the field of women's history, with the objective of either expanding or refuting the traditional historical consensus. Quantitative changes previously deemed women's education insignificant; however, it is now gaining greater prominence. Indian women did not receive the appropriate social, economic, political, or legal rights in the past. In the 21st century, Indian women have made substantial progress in a range of disciplines, challenging men and demonstrating their ability and promise, as they have evolved over the past few decades. This study has a comprehensive examination of the diverse phases and aspects of social change that Indian women have encountered.

Barriers to Women Empowerment

Traditional societal norms subject many women to pressures, while others have grown accustomed to being considered inferior to men. Despite the awareness among men, legislators, NGOs, and others regarding the advantages of women's empowerment and participation, many remain hesitant to challenge the status quo, allowing societal norms to impede progress. Numerous studies have demonstrated a correlation between increased internet access and an increase in women's exploitation. The dissemination of personal information on websites has jeopardised the lives of thousands of women. Victimization can manifest in various forms, including cyberstalking, harassment, online pornography, and flaming, among others. Sexual harassment represents a significant obstacle for women in the workplace and is prevalent across various sectors, including business, trade, banking and finance, sales and marketing, hospitality, civil service, as well as education, lecturing, and teaching, and in some cases, even within the home environment.

According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), sexual harassment is a clear form of gender discrimination based on sex, a manifestation of unequal power relations between men and women. Furthermore, the UN 'Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women' (CEDAW) is urging for increased measures of protection for women against sexual harassment and violence in the workplace. Gender-related barriers involve sexual harassment; unfair hiring practices, career progression, and unequal pay where women are paid less than men are, for performing the same job. While much of the public discussion of the "wage gap" has focused around women getting

equal pay for the same work as their male peers, many women struggle with what is called the “pregnancy penalty”. The main problem is that it is difficult to measure, but some experts say that the possibility of having a baby can be enough for employers to push women back from their line. Therefore, women are put in a position where they need to make the decision of whether to maintain in the workforce or have children. This problem has sparked the debate over maternity leave in the current society.

Identity Methods that Help to Empower

Land rights serve as a crucial mechanism for the economic empowerment of women, instilling in them the confidence necessary to confront gender inequalities. In many developing and underdeveloped nations, legal constraints often prevent women from accessing land solely due to their gender. Having land rights gives women a special kind of power that they don't normally have. As a result, they can assert their independence in many areas of their lives, including the home and beyond. An alternative approach to fostering women's empowerment involves assigning them responsibilities traditionally held by men. The economic empowerment of women serves as a means for society to recognise them as equal participants within the social fabric. In this manner, individuals cultivate greater self-respect and confidence through their meaningful contributions to their communities. The mere inclusion of women within a community can yield profound and far-reaching benefits.

In a study conducted by *Bina Agarwal*, women were given a place in a forest conservation group. This drove up the efficiency of the group, and the women gained self-esteem while others, including men, viewed them with more respect. Participation, which can be seen and gained in a variety of ways, has been alleged to be the most beneficial form of gender empowerment. Political participation, be it the ability to vote and voice opinions, or the ability to run for office with a fair chance of being elected, plays a huge role in the empowerment of women. However, participation is not limited to the realm of politics. It can include participation in the household, in schools, and the ability to make choices for oneself. It can be said that this latter participation needs to be achieved before one can move onto broader political participation. When women have the agency to do what they want, a higher equality between men

and women is established. They hope that lending money and credit allows women to function in business and society, which in turn empowers them to do more in their communities. One of the primary goals in the foundation of microfinance was women empowerment. Loans with low interest rates are given to women in developing communities in hopes that they can start a small business and provide for their families. It should be said, however, that the success and efficiency of microcredit and microloans is controversial and constantly debated.

Female Paradigms and Roles

It's never been an effortless road for women to adopt positions in leadership. The numbers adeptly describe the stark reality of inequalities that still prevail across western societies. Women often face the conventional pressures of dual responsibility: the caretaking role and having successful careers. People often undermine them for their inability to perform both tasks simultaneously and efficiently, resulting in significant internal pressure.

A McKinsey report on ‘Women in the Workplace’ showed that a disproportionate amount of women were impacted by the pandemic and that women were more likely to leave their jobs as opposed to their counterparts. The reversing of gender norms is a double-edged sword. On one end, young women are encouraged to pursue careers in demanding fields ranging from medicine to business. However, in the process of playing catch up, women are expected to do much more to earn their place at the top. The scarcity factor can lead to competitive strife between women in the workplace. It's more pertinent than ever for leaders, both men and women, to understand the paradigms within their own organisations. There is unclear differentiation between how the genders perform in leadership roles. Instead, it's about accepting that people are marginalised all the time, whether actively or subconsciously, under heavy structural barriers that have been ingrained for centuries on end.

It's a leader's responsibility to cultivate a safe culture. One way of achieving this is by eliminating barriers that might inhibit people from meeting their full potential. For instance, making the workplace diverse, inclusive, and collaborative reduces the internal competition between team members, which can create a toxic work environment and added stress. No one deserves to be marginalised because of their race, gender, or other personal choices. Thus, disseminating the

beliefs we have about gender roles in the workspace begins with developing greater self-awareness. Understanding the messaging, events, or circumstances that may have influenced our decision-making or how we interact with others at work is crucial. Leaders who want to build a more inclusive workspace need to ensure they're providing the right tools. This tool should help reduce some of the barriers that marginalised groups may face.

A Tool of Identity- Education and Internet

Enhancing educational opportunities for women contributes to elevated health and nutrition standards while simultaneously leading to a decline in fertility rates. Education enhances individuals' self-assurance and empowers them to secure improved employment opportunities, participate in civic discourse, and advocate for governmental provisions related to health care, social security, and various entitlements. Through education, women can make informed decisions that improve their own and their children's well-being, increasing their chances of survival. Education plays a crucial role in the prevention and containment of disease, serving as a fundamental component in the initiatives aimed at alleviating malnutrition. Moreover, education equips women with the ability to make informed decisions that enhance their well-being, such as postponing marriage and opting for fewer offspring. Importantly, education enhances women's understanding of their human rights, bolsters their confidence, and empowers them to effectively assert those rights.

In spite of notable advancements over recent decades, access to education remains uneven, and disparities based on gender continue to endure. A significant issue in numerous nations is not only the restricted enrolment of girls in educational institutions but also the limited opportunities for those who do enter the classroom. This encompasses, in greater detail, the strategies to tackle the diminished engagement and academic performance of girls in the domain of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education.

The increasing availability of the internet in the late 20th century has enabled women to enhance their agency through the use of diverse online resources. The advent of the World Wide Web has prompted women to engage with social networking platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and blogs as a means of online

activism. Through digital advocacy, women can assert their agency by orchestrating campaigns and articulating their perspectives on equality rights, free from the constraints imposed by societal members. For example, on May 29, 2013, a concerted online initiative launched by a hundred female advocates compelled the prominent social networking platform, Facebook, to eliminate numerous pages that propagated animosity towards women.

In recent years, blogging has emerged as a significant instrument for the educational advancement of women. A study conducted by the University of California, Los Angeles, reveals that medical patients who engage in reading and writing about their illness tend to exhibit greater happiness and a deeper understanding compared to those who refrain from such activities. Through the examination of others' experiences, patients can enhance their understanding and implement strategies proposed by their fellow bloggers. The ease of access and cost-effectiveness of e-learning enables women to pursue their studies from the convenience of their own homes. Through the pursuit of education via innovative technologies such as e-learning, women are acquiring valuable skills that are increasingly relevant in our rapidly evolving global landscape.

TO SUM UP

The most important feature of any culture is its festivals which are celebrated with zest and joy by every community irrespective of their place of settlement. *The Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) measures women's political and economic participation in a given nation.* GEM is calculated by tracking “the share of seats in parliament held by women; of female legislators, senior officials, and managers; of female professionals and technical workers; and the gender disparity in earned income, reflecting economic independence.” Other measures that take into account the importance of female participation and equality include the *Gender Parity Index* and the *Gender-related Development Index (GDI)*. Entire nations' businesses, communities, and groups can benefit from the implementation of programmes and policies that adopt the notion of identity for women empowerment. Empowerment is one of the main procedural concerns when addressing human rights and development. The *Human Development and Capabilities Approach*, the *Millennium Development Goals*, and other credible approaches/goals point to empowerment and

participation as a necessary step if a country is to overcome the obstacles associated with poverty and development.

Indian women are transitioning from roles characterised by victimhood, oppression, and dependency to embracing education, modernisation, and independence. Traditionally, husbands, fathers, or other male associates accompanied Indian women on their migration journeys. However, the circumstances have evolved today. Given their economic and social independence, women undertake migration to many countries on their own. They have transcended the need for male dependency in migration and settlement across the globe, and they no longer harbour fears regarding the social stigma and challenges presented by Indian society. The evolving dynamics of Indian women's migration have afforded them a novel identity, poised to influence global perceptions significantly. The global community has recognised the rise of a distinct identity for women in the Indian diaspora across various platforms (Sahoo, 2006).

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