

## Preface

Friends, we obtained information about different weaker sections of society in unit-3. Time was when women were considered weak; but in the present time they are gaining power. In the context of women empowerment, Swami Vivekananda has said that 'unless there is an improvement in women's status, there will not be any opportunity of development for welfare of the world. It is impossible for any bird to fly with one feather'. Somewhat similar has happened in our society and therefore the issue of women's empowerment has attracted attention of whole of the world. The first step towards women's empowerment is women exercising their rights in an independent, equal and justified way. It is necessary to understand the concept, features and importance of women empowerment. In India, among others, it is also related to sex ratio. With the change in perception towards women, the advancement of perspectives about their development and their inclusion in the process of development, women empowerment began to increase in educational, economic, social, political and health related fields. The process of women empowerment got momentum because of constitutional support, different laws and schemes and programmes for their welfare. Friends, in this unit, we will get acquainted with the meaning, features and importance of women's empowerment, sex ratio in India, different programmes and schemes for women's empowerment and laws about women.

### Meaning of women's empowerment :

As noted by Evelin Hust, the word empowerment was originated in 1970s in education related discussion in Latin America. This concept was moved forward by feminist thinkers and activists. After 1980, it was in more use.

According to Indian sociologist Yogendra Singh, the concept of empowerment has vast implications. It originated from the thinking of movements of black and marginal groups and it emphasized access to resources, occupation, education and health. In the context of India, thinking and movement for women empowerment is found in connection with the agitation for independence and women-liberation.

The word power in empowerment means intimate relation with liberal thinking about decision making process. Power is important in women empowerment and it includes strength and influence.

In simple words, women's empowerment is indicative of the power among women which makes them able and independent to live their life the way they want.

**Renuka Pameya-** 'Women's empowerment means social justice and equality or independent recognition of women or their acceptance as human beings'.

**Sushila Paarik-** 'Women's empowerment is indicative of women becoming resourceful. Concepts of both power and resource are linked with quality of life.

Thus, women's empowerment is changeable and multi-dimensional concept and it includes change in self and social image. Its basics are, make them empowered, include them in decision-making process, give them authority and posts and develop their strengths.

### Women's empowerment has following features, as mentioned by Chandrika Rawal :

- It is a process
- Women get their place and space in this process
- This process is a chain of collective and conscious efforts made by women
- It makes women feel about their rights

- It is a new concept of authority
- It is a process of social change
- It is linked with consciousness, experience, thoughts and behaviour of women
- It transforms the traditional beliefs towards women
- It is not anti-men but aims at advancement of women with self-dignity and self-confidence in the society

### **Importance of women's empowerment :**

Women's empowerment has its own importance in social, economic, educational, political and legal fields of Indian social life.

#### **(1) Individual importance :**

Women's empowerment is necessary in the context of multiple aspects. They need to become aware individually so that they can face problems and challenges, develop skills, have decisive power, understand their value and contribute towards the development of society. It is also necessary so that they can have self-respect, understanding and respect from others, and activate themselves to eliminate injustice.

#### **(2) Social importance :**

Women's empowerment ignores the inferior feelings towards women in society and makes efforts to get them respect. In this context, Mahatma Gandhi has said that ' If we want to develop our country, first of all, we need to develop Indian women. Since family is formed through women, society is formed through families and the nation is formed through societies. 'Woman' is a fundamental unit of society'.

Women's empowerment is an important process liberating women from injustice, exploitation or harassment and leading them towards freedom. Movements have also occurred for this purpose. Women-organizations and social reformers have raised the social consciousness supporting women's empowerment.

Women's empowerment is useful for women to bring about changes in their status and make them able for adequate socialization of their children. It is also necessary to increase leadership and self-confidence among them.

#### **(3) Educational importance :**

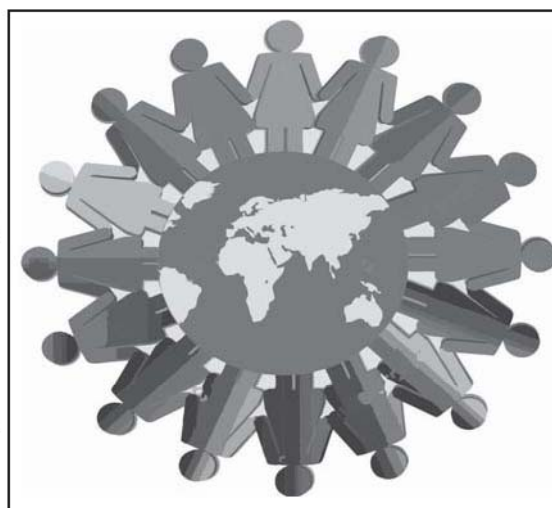
Women's empowerment is necessary in the field of education as, by acquiring education of their choice, they can fulfill their aims, achieve success and through cultivating self-confidence, become self-reliant and capable.

Special facilities available to women in the field of education make the process of women empowerment more dynamic. Educational empowerment is the medium which helps in changing their traditional attitudes and leads them towards right direction. It is also important from the view point of increasing occupational skills among them.

#### **(4) Economic importance :**

Economic empowerment is a prerequisite for development of any nation. Women's empowerment is necessary to provide equal property rights to women, to raise awareness among them for equal property rights, to make them economically self-reliant and for working women to have control over their income.

Friends, as you know, many institutions such as internationally acclaimed Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) of Gujarat have made efforts for economic self-reliance of women.



**Women's Empowerment**

Empowerment is required for women, engaged in agriculture and allied agricultural activities, to have adequate compensation for their work and recognition of their economic contribution. Increase in economic empowerment will lead to equality in wages. It will eliminate gender discriminations. There will be an increase in saving schemes of women. Thus, empowerment is essential for long-term balanced economic development.

#### **(5) Political importance :**

The concept of empowerment is linked to political field. Though equality before law, prohibition of discrimination on grounds of sex and equality of opportunity in matters of public employment are mentioned in articles 14, 15 and 16 of the constitution of India, the real picture was quite different. However, the provision of women's reservation in local self-government institutions has given an opportunity for political empowerment of women. Women's empowerment is necessary for voting, registering candidature and sharing authority after winning election. You will have a detailed understanding about this in unit-8.

In addition, there have been efforts for women's empowerment through certain laws related to women. Women empowerment is also necessary for creating health and fitness related awareness.

#### **Sex ratio in India :**

In India, sex ratio indicates number of females per thousand males. Biologically, women are considered stronger than men and so they live longer than men; but under the influence of certain factors, difference emerges in their proportion which leads to uneven sex ratio.

#### **Sex Ratio (females per 1000 males) in India and Gujarat, 1901-2011**

Year	Sex ratio	
	India	Gujarat
1901	972	954
1951	946	952
2011	940	918

**(Source : Gender Composition of Population, Provisional Population Totals, India - Page - 80)**

In India, before independence, in 1901, number of females per 1000 males was 972, which reduced to 946 in 1951 and then reduced further to 940 in 2011. As revealed by the figures, there has been a gradual decline in sex ratio for India.

In Gujarat also, as the figures reveal, there has been a gradual decline in sex ratio, from 954 in 1901 to 952 in 1951 and then to 918 in 2011. The gap between sex ratio of 1951 and 2011 is wider (reduced by 36) in Gujarat than in India and it is a matter of concern. Following table shows rural and urban sex ratio for India and Gujarat in 2011.

#### **Rural and Urban Sex Ratio in India and Gujarat, 2011**

Country/state	Total	Rural	Urban
India	940	947	926
Gujarat	918	947	880

**(Source : Census, India and Gujarat, 2011)**

As it is clear from the above table, rural sex ratio for both India and Gujarat is similar though there is a considerable difference between them in terms of total sex ratio (940 and 918, respectively). On the other hand, compared to India, we find greater difference between rural and



urban sex ratio of Gujarat (947 and 880, respectively) owing also to the process of male dominated migration.

Friends, we learnt about the sex ratio of rural and urban areas of India and Gujarat. However, sex ratio among children aged 0 to 6 for India and its states and union territories is really a matter of great concern. The number of girls per 1000 boys is 914 in India. In Gujarat, this ratio is much lower (890) than the national average. Mizoram has the highest child sex ratio of 971 and Punjab has the lowest (846).

Variation in proportion of males and females in different states of India has created inequality in sex ratio; which is attributed to natural, biological matters, migration and social and cultural attitudes towards women. Each state has emphasized formation of various programmes and schemes and their effective implementation to eliminate this inequality.

### **Programmes for women's empowerment**

Gender equality is mentioned in preface, fundamental rights, fundamental duties and directive principles in the constitution of India. The constitution of India not only considers women as equal to men, it authorizes the state to take constructive steps in favour of women.

Women's empowerment has been emphasized in our post-independent development policy as our five-year-plans include various programmes for the same. The international women's year organized in whole of the world during the period of fifth five year plan (1974-1978) and declaration of years - 1976-1985 as UN Decade for Women were also supportive of women empowerment. In 1990, the Parliament of India formed a national commission for women by enacting a law; in 1993, conferences were held for elimination of all kinds of discriminations against women and thereafter voluntary organizations, working to resolve women's problems, have been playing an important role for women's empowerment.

Friends, there is a very broad range of programmes for women's empowerment; we will try to evaluate them here in the context of national policy for women's empowerment of 2001. Gujarat has formulated *Nari Gaurav Niti* (State Policy for Gender Equity). Both these policies encompass various aspects of women's empowerment and aim at authority, advancement and development of women. Corresponding to our syllabus, we will discuss educational, economic, health related and welfare schemes for women.

#### **(1) Educational programmes :**

Gandhiji has said that, 'If you educate a boy, you educate an individual; but if you educate a girl, you educate the whole family'.

The constitution of independent India emphasized women's education to establish the value of gender equity. The National Policy for women's empowerment also accepts the necessity of women's education. The Government of India has initiated many programmes in order to provide momentum to women's education. Let us observe some of the programmes in the context of Gujarat.

- **Kanya Kelavani Rathyatra :** In order to increase enrollment rate and to improve quality of primary education, *Shala Praveshotsav* is organized in whole of the state with public participation.
- **Awards to talented students :** Students of class 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> who have scored high in their board examinations are awarded with scholarships. Attempts are also made to generate interest in education, particularly of girls, through conversations with such talented students.
- **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) :** Various awareness programmes are organized under SSA to provide momentum to girl-education. Means of publicity and dissemination are used amply.

- **Shala Lokarpan** : Schools newly built or schools with improved facilities are dedicated to people under the programme *Shala Lokarpan* meant for promoting education, particularly for girls.
- **Distribution of cycles** : Girls, who wish to study in higher primary schools and having schools 3 Km. away from home, are given cycles so that they can commute easily.
- **Distribution of food grains** : In order to encourage girls of tribal areas for acquiring education and to give impetus to the positive attitude of their parents towards women's education, girls studying in 1 to 7 standard and having 70 percent attendance are given food grains free of charge. This also helps in reducing dropout rates in tribal areas.

In addition, girl-education is also emphasized in other programmes such as Right to Education, *Saptdhara*, *Gunotsav* etc. Thus efforts are made for women's empowerment through emphasizing girl-education in education related programmes.

## **(2) Economic programmes :**

Economic independence, which makes an individual powerful, is mandatory for women's empowerment. Our National Policy emphasizes economic self-reliance for women.

### **Economic programmes under the national policy :**

Women are made aware and able through following programmes under the national policy :

- By providing information about employment opportunities to women engaged in informal sector
- By providing information about equal wages
- By providing information about loans and savings
- Elimination of uneven distribution of economic activities
- By providing information about stipulated hours of work
- By providing information about legal provisions for safe environment at workplace
- By providing information about necessary qualification for livelihood in formal sector

Efforts are made for economic empowerment of women by organizing above mentioned programmes.

Various programmes are organized in Gujarat also.

**Training classes** : Efforts are made to make women self-supporting through training them, with demonstration, in subjects such as growing vegetables at home, canning, kitchen gardening etc.

**Fields of occupation** : Skill-augmentation among women is promoted by including them in programmes that disseminate information about occupations and employment in formal and informal sectors.

**Exhibition-sale** : Women involved in self-employment, small or cottage industries are encouraged through programmes of exhibition cum sale organized at national and state level. The aim of 'from skill to employment' is at the center stage in such programmes.

**Krishi Rath Mela** : Under this programme, agriculture related scientific information is given to women linked with agriculture so that they can have more income by producing more.

**Women's group and employment programme** : A number of programmes are organized to provide different information to *sakhi-mandals* and women's group to augment economic self-reliance among women. This includes information related to marketing, schemes of loans, saving schemes etc.

Thus, through various economic programmes, efforts are made for empowerment of women.

### **(3) Health related programmes :**

National Policy for women's empowerment of the Government of India emphasizes the issue of women's health.

Department of Health and Department of Woman and Child Welfare of Government of India make following efforts to provide health related information through various health related programmes :

**Social evils and women's health :** It is shown through programmes that how social evils affect women's health negatively; for example, health risks caused by child marriage, physical harm caused by sex determination test, which is illegal, etc.

**Mother-welfare programmes :** Efforts are made to maintain women's health by providing them scientific information about pregnancy, breast feeding and child rearing.

**Family welfare programmes :** These programmes are meant to provide scientific information to women about methods of family planning, advantages of small size of family and issues related to welfare of mother and child. In addition, programmes conveying information about usefulness of Primary Health Center and disadvantages of traditional methods of delivery etc. are also carried out.

**Programmes related to nutritious food :** In order to reduce malnutrition among women, Nutrition Week formulates programmes conveying information about nutritious food. Efforts are made to create awareness about immunity and consumption of energizing food

In addition to above, Gujarat has some other health-oriented programmes; such as :

**Save the girl child, welcome the girl child campaign :** Rallies, dramas, *shibirs*, seminars, conferences, discussions, etc. are organized under this campaign. The aim of this campaign is to eliminate gender disparity and make people welcome the girl child and maintain the health of women.

**Awareness programmes :** Awareness programmes are carried out to bring about change in the narrow thinking towards women's health. Particularly in rural and tribal areas, such programmes are carried out by health officials. Facilities at health centers are also increased.

Thus, efforts are made for women's empowerment through a variety of educational, economic and health oriented programmes. Governmental, non-governmental and autonomous institutions contribute to this process.

### **(4) Welfare schemes :**

The notion of 'welfare of all' is implied in the constitution of India. In national as well as state policies, provision of welfare schemes for citizens has been emphasized.

#### **Certain important schemes for women in Gujarat :**

Let us have a look at welfare schemes meant for women in Gujarat.

#### **(1) In educational field :**

According to census 2011, Gujarat has a literacy rate of 78.03 percent, with male and female literacy rates being 85.75 and 69.68, respectively. Rural Gujarat has a literacy rate of 61.4 percent while corresponding rate for urban Gujarat is 81.0 percent. Various schemes have been implemented aiming at improving female literacy.

#### **Educational schemes :**

- Vidya Laxmi Bond
- Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya



- Food assistance to guardians of tribal girls
- Provision of scholarship, uniform and training for students of Sainik Schools for girls
- Free education for girls
- Hostels for girls
- Free cycle
- Hostel facility for girls studying in government polytechnic or government engineering college.
- Hostel facility for girls studying in government polytechnic or government engineering college in tribal areas
- Vidya Sadhana Yojna
- Scholarship to tribal women for education after SSC



**Educational Schemes**

### **(2) In economic field :**

According to census 2011, the work participation rate (WPR) for Gujarat is 40.98 percent. Corresponding figures for males and females are 57.16 and 23.38 percent, respectively.

Of the total women working in formal sector, 57.47 percent are working in public sector and 42.53 percent are working in private sector.

Various schemes have been implemented with the aim of increasing female WPR. They are as follows :

- Training schemes for women
- Employment exchange for women
- Mission Mangalam Yojna
- Livelihood centers- scheme of federation of self-help groups in rural areas
- Mata Yashoda Gaurav Nidhi (insurance scheme)
- Ghar- Diwada Yojna
- Hostels for working women
- Women-managed rural milk cooperatives, schemes providing assistance to women engaged in animal husbandry

### **(3) In the field of health :**

In any nation or state, population with quality is emphasized and therefore schemes are formulated taking into consideration the aspects such as balance in birth and death rates, health and nutritious food, gender equity etc. In Gujarat also, various schemes have been formulated for the well being of its people, for example :

- Chiranjeevi Yojna
- E-mamta
- Beti Vadhavo Yojna (Welcome the girl child)
- Kasturba Poshan Sahay Yojna
- Janani Suraksha Yojna
- Dikari Yojna

- Motivating scheme for ASHA workers
- Stipend for girl students studying in nursing schools
- Assistance for maternity and child hospital
- Kishori Shakti Yojna
- Rajiv Gandhi Balika Samridhi Yojna – *Sabala*
- Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojna

**(4) In social field :**

Following schemes have been formulated in Gujarat for uplift of women of weaker section :

- Bhagvan Buddha Rajya Shishyavritti
- Dr. Ambedkar Government Hostels
- Dr. Savita Ambedkar Assistance to encourage inter-caste marriages
- Kunwarbai Nu Mamerun / Mangalsutra Yojna
- Mai Ramabai Ambedkar Saat Fera Samuha Lagn Yojna
- Training for sewing and economic assistance for women
- Saraswati Sadhana Yojna
- Viklang Vidhwa Makan Sahay Yojna
- Vidhwa Pension Yojna
- Vidhwaona Arthik Punervasan Mate Talim Ane Sahay Yojna (Training and asset assistance scheme for economic rehabilitation of widows)
- Scheme for economic compensation for rape victims
- Vividhlakshi Mahila Kalyan Yojna (Multipurpose Women Welfare Scheme)
- Abhyam-181 Mahila Helpline Yojna
- Renovation of government shelter homes for women
- Scheme for shelter homes for mentally retarded women or those living with HIV/AIDS
- Mukhya Mantri Paani Samiti Protsahan Yojna
- Suraksha Setu Yojna
- Assistance scheme for Samras Mahila Panchayat

**(5) In the field of sports :**

There are various schemes, as given below, for physical and mental development of women and for encouragement of women-players in Gujarat. With women empowerment, these schemes also aim at increasing women's participation in sports. Governmental, non-governmental and autonomous institutions play an important role in realizing aforesaid aims.

- Scheme for self-protection – 'Padkar'
- Scholarship for women players
- Award scheme for women players of scheduled tribes



## Women and law

Friends, we learnt about programmes for women empowerment and about welfare schemes meant for them. Now, let us understand their constitutional rights and the laws enacted for improvement in their condition. These can be classified into three sections :

### (1) Constitutional rights of women :

Constitutional laws are considered as fundamental laws in any country. In order to bring about social change with improvement in women's status and to provide them status and opportunities equivalent to men, the constitution of India has given women a variety of rights. These include right of living, marrying at adult age, marrying persons of their choice, getting divorce, remarrying, getting share from the property of husband or father, getting maintenance from husband, if divorced, living separately from husband to save herself from atrocity, having right over own earnings and dowry, getting protection against exploitative customs, etc. Women of weaker section have the right of getting free legal assistance and benefits of reservation in education, jobs and polity.

### (2) Laws providing protection to women :

Various protective laws have been enacted for empowering women in biological, socio-cultural and economic fields. Let us have a brief introduction of some of them.

Law	Year	Purpose of law
Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act	1956	Protection against sexual exploitation
Dowry Prohibition Act	1961	Elimination of the practice of dowry
Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act	1971	Protection of women's life and dignity
Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986.	1986	Protection of women against their insulting or cheap depiction
Sati (Prevention) Act (This law was first enacted in 1829. Thereafter, it was eliminated and reformulated in 1987)	1987	To insure life for widows
Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act	2005	Protection of women against domestic violence
Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act	2013	Protection of women against sexual harassment at work place

In addition to above, there are many other protective laws which by protecting women against detrimental events accelerate the process of women's empowerment.

**(3) Welfare oriented laws for women :** India is a welfare state. Considering this ideal, welfare-oriented laws for women were enacted. Let us know some of them.

Law	Year	Purpose of law
Factories Act	1948	To determine hours of work for women, arrangement of crèches
Employees' State Insurance Act, 1948	1948	To give benefits of delivery and insurance to working women
Beedi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act	1966	Provision of prohibition on night employment or job for women
Equal Remuneration Act	1976	Women to have wages equal to men
Family Courts Act	1984	Speedy justice to women, establishment of courts for child-welfare
Legal Services Authorities Act	1987	To provide free legal assistance to men and women of weaker section
National Commission for Women Act	1990	To insure effective implementation of women-oriented laws

Above mentioned and such other welfare oriented laws make the process of women's empowerment faster.

Friends, we learnt about women's empowerment in this unit. The change occurred in the status of women due to empowerment is visible. The social and cultural processes of change assume importance in sociology, about which we will learn in the next unit.

### Exercises

#### 1. Answer the following questions in detail :

- (1) Give interpretation of women's empowerment and explain its importance.
- (2) State major programmes of women's empowerment.
- (3) State educational and economic schemes for women in Gujarat.

#### 2. Give concise answers to following questions :

- (1) Explain the concept of women's empowerment.
- (2) State the features of women's empowerment.
- (3) State health related schemes for women in Gujarat.
- (4) Write a note on major laws which provide protection to women
- (5) State constitutional rights of women.

#### 3. Answer the following questions in brief :

- (1) What are the sex ratios of rural and urban areas of India and Gujarat according to census 2011?
- (2) Give names of five laws meant for women-welfare
- (3) Give interpretation of women's empowerment

**4. Answer the following questions in one sentence :**

- (1) When did the word 'empowerment' originate?
- (2) What is meant by sex ratio?
- (3) Give full name of SEWA.
- (4) When did the policy of women's empowerment formulate in India ?
- (5) In which three main sections women oriented laws can be classified?
- (6) When was Factories Act enacted ?

**5. Choose the right options from the following :**

- (1) What was the sex ratio of India in 1901 ? ☐  
(a) 954 (b) 946 (c) 972 (d) 952
- (2) Who is given the benefit of cycle assistance scheme ? ☐  
(a) Girls (b) Boys (c) Both of them (d) Old Persons
- (3) Which Indian state has the highest child sex ratio according to census 2011 ? ☐  
(a) Rajasthan (b) Mizoram (c) Tamil Nadu (d) Uttar Pradesh
- (4) Which Indian state has the lowest child sex ratio according to census 2011 ? ☐  
(a) Madhya Pradesh (b) Bihar (c) Chhattisgarh (d) Punjab
- (5) What type of scheme is Chiranjeevi scheme ? ☐  
(a) Educational (b) Economic  
(c) Health and family welfare (d) Social justice and empowerment
- (6) In which section does the scheme of Kunwarbai Nu Mamerun fall ? ☐  
(a) Social justice and empowerment (b) Economic  
(c) Educational (d) Health and family welfare
- (7) When was the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act enacted ? ☐  
(a) 1961 (b) 1955 (c) 1956 (d) 1971
- (8) When was the National Commission for Women Act passed ? ☐  
(a) 1990 (b) 1954 (c) 1955 (d) 1971
- (9) When was the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act enacted ? ☐  
(a) 2005 (b) 2013 (c) 1971 (d) 1956

**Activity**

- Obtain information about various government schemes for women's empowerment.
- Organize awareness programmes about women's empowerment in your residential area.
- Prepare a chart of leading women of India, and write a brief note about it.

