

Women's Empowerment in the Context of Aligarh District

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Cite this paper as: Ms. Sheena Chauhan, Dr. Md. Tarique Anwer, (2025) Women's Empowerment in the Context of Aligarh District. *Journal of Neonatal Surgery*, 14 (11s), 1166-1172

ABSTRACT

This Paper entitled “Women’s Empowerment in the Context of Aligarh District” explores the empowerment of women as a general and with special reference to Aligarh District. Even though the term ‘empowerment’ is now accepted in the vocabulary of development, it is hard to define and difficult to implement in this broadest sense. Empowerment may be described as a process that helps people to assert their control over the factors that affect their lives. Since independence, the Government of India has been making various efforts to empower women. In various plan periods, the issues regarding women's empowerment have been given priority. From the fifth five-year plan onwards, there has been a remarkable shift from a welfare-oriented approach of women's empowerment to a development approach. The National Commission for Women was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1990 to safeguard the rights of women. The 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution of India provided an opportunity to women to take part in active politics. Empowerment is not a new idea; it is as old as human civilization. From the beginning of Human Civilization, people have been engaged in the conflict to acquire power. The development of Human Civilization has been going on through the cooperation of both men and women. It is not possible to maintain the creation of a new generation without the help of both genders. So in this aspect, we can say that both men and women are equally important for our continuation of human civilization in the world. Therefore, both men and women must be treated equally. It has been seen that the economic empowerment status of women in our society is very low in practice. The present study tried to find the reason and solution for the upliftment of empowerment of women with reference to Aligarh District.

Keyword: Aligarh, Empowerment, Human Civilization, National Commission, Women.

1. INTRODUCTION

Empowerment is a concept that ensures a person’s liberty and decision-making process, whatever influences on his or her day-to-day life. In simple terms, we can say that empowerment is an issue that provides the opportunity among the people to make fruitful decisions which is an impact on their day-to-day life. There are different dimensions of empowerment in our society and state. As with political empowerment, social empowerment, and economic empowerment. Economic empowerment means the economic factors that have an impact on our day-to-day life; we should have the capability to control them according to our needs.

Empowerment means giving power or authority to a person, through which that particular person achieves their desired goal. Empowerment of women means equality between men and women in the context of opportunity and distribution of power. From this point of view, it is clear that the emancipation of women means improvement of status from a marginalized position to the expected level. Women are an integral part of family, group or organization, community, and society like men, so they also have the right to live with dignity. They should participate in all social functions so that they can express their opinion in the decision-making process with men.

In the Rig Veda, women’s status is portrayed with tremendous reverence. Gargi, Maitreyi, Apala, Ghosa, Sita, Savitri, and Draupadi are examples. They were given a respectable position in society. In the Vedic writings, the term ‘Dampati’ was found, which means “two joint proprietors of the household”. Apart from being economically independent, the women of the Vedic period had the religious liberty to perform various rituals. In this era, women’s participation in politics and involvement with education was very significant. According to the Atharvaveda, women are the most important members of society.

1.1 Broad Categories of Empowerment

Economic Empowerment: Present-day women’s empowerment abuse is a global issue particularly for the third world lace within countries. Economic empowerment is the key common end that may lead to all kinds of development. A family's economic empowerment in this context gradually increases the control of poor women. Economic empowerment intervention

is posited not only for enhanced income but also to increase the empowerment of women.

Political Empowerment: Till the end of the nineteenth century, women in India were crushed under the yoke of evil customs. They were socially weak, economically dependent, and politically powerless, and influenced by the male members of the family. Women's participation in political decision-making is the empowerment of women in a real sense.

Social Empowerment: Social empowerment is a long-term goal. It includes equality of treatment, equality of opportunity, equality of recognition, etc. The Constitution of India grants equality to women, and the fundamental rights ensure equality before law, equal protection of law, etc.

1.2 Women Empowerment

The question behind us was the empowerment of women in the context of economic empowerment, with special reference to Delhi. Empowerment has been regarded as one of the vital issues for human beings. The world is made by both living and non-living things. Out of these two categories, human beings have been regarded as one of the important living things in the world. Human civilization has been made by both males as well as by females. Therefore, they must be treated equally. So no need to discriminate amongst them, because the creation of a new generation of human beings requires the cooperation of both male and female. But since the birth of human civilization, women had not been treated equally to men. Women had been engaged in household activities as well as caring for the child, which was the basic duty and responsibility of women in those times. They had been treated as like a slave, and nowadays, women are not free from family bondage as well as social bondage. Empowerment of women in the twenty-first century concentrates on the overall development of women. As we know, all kinds of development will be possible if we have the scope to control our money and property. The issues of money are linked to the economic empowerment of women in India.

Empowerment of women is not a one-way process. Adult educators and activists cannot empower. It is a two-way process in which we empower and get empowered in turn. Empowerment implies power. This may be broadly defined as control over material assets, intellectual resources, and ideology.

Women's empowerment as a concept was introduced at the International Women's Conference, 1985 in Nairobi, which defined it as the redistribution of social power and control of resources in favour of women. Mass illiteracy, unemployment, ill health, and limited access to economic assets mark the situation of women in India. Therefore, women's empowerment in India primarily aims at enhancing their social functioning by qualitative and quantitative changes, particularly in the fields of education, health, and empowerment. Redistribution of social power and change in the control of resources in favour of women in any society is not possible unless they are healthy, educated, and provided with some gainful employment opportunities.

The topic of women's empowerment has emerged as an important one to explore in economics and development. Women who are economically empowered can control and benefit from their resources, assets, and income. In addition to this, it improves women's health and their ability to exercise better risk management. It is possible to assure perspective in order to support gender roles that are minimised within a specific economic or social setting. Literacy, education, training, and awareness design are all important components of women's empowerment, which serve to improve the status of women. In addition, the term "women's empowerment" refers to the ability of women to make important decisions in their lives, something that was formerly unavailable to them.

Women's empowerment can be defined as fostering women's sense of self-assurance, their capacity to make independent decisions, and their entitlement to affect societal change for themselves and others. People may be said to feel empowered when they go through a process that assists them in reaffirming personal authority over the aspects or factors that influence their lives. When we talk about empowering women, we are referring to the process of making them more self-aware, self-reliant, politically active, economically productive, and autonomous, as well as capable of having informed conversations about issues that impact them. There are numerous ways to interpret women's empowerment, also defined as female empowerment. Recognizing the efforts women make to pursue their interests is one of them, as is raising women's standing by encouraging them to pursue education, knowledge, literacy, and training. Women's empowerment enables them to make decisions about their personal development in the face of various societal issues. They might have the ability to reevaluate gender roles or other such roles, giving them more flexibility to pursue their goals or ambitions.

1.3 Women's Empowerment Policies in Aligarh District

In Aligarh, several policies and initiatives aim to empower women, focusing on education, economic independence, and social awareness. Here are some key efforts:

MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act): This program guarantees 100 days of unskilled manual work per year to rural households, with a stipulation that 33% of the work is reserved for women. [This helps improve the socio-economic status of women from Below Poverty Line \(BPL\) families.](#)

Economic Reforms: Various economic reforms have been implemented to enhance the participation of rural women in the workforce. [These reforms aim to provide better access to resources, credit, and land ownership, thereby promoting economic](#)

[independence.](#)

Educational Initiatives: Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) has been actively involved in promoting women's education and empowerment. [Programs and awareness campaigns emphasize the importance of education, training, and economic self-reliance for women.](#)

Historical Efforts: The Aligarh Movement, initiated in the late 19th century, also played a significant role in advocating for Muslim women's education. [This movement laid the foundation for ongoing efforts to improve educational opportunities for women in the region.](#)

These initiatives collectively aim to uplift women in Aligarh by providing them with the necessary tools and opportunities to achieve greater autonomy and participation in society.

Objective of the Study:

To explore government initiatives aimed at empowering women

To examine the need for a government initiative to increase the awareness of women's empowerment

To analyze the change in the view of the political, social, and economic level of women's status

To find out gender discrimination with a focus on empowering women

To analyze the success and failure of the steps taken to ensure women's empowerment

Hypothesis:

There will be no government initiatives because of women's empowerment

There will be no need for government initiatives for the upgradation and empowerment of empowerment

There will be no discrimination between males and females with special reference to empowerment

There will be no change in women's lives

There is a difference in the empowerment level of working and non-working rural and urban women in the Aligarh District.

Statement of the Problem:

In the Vedic period, women had a higher position and status in society. Just as women were economically independent, they also had free access to religious, political, and educational fields. According to the Atharvaveda, women were the most valuable members of society, but from the post-Vedic period, women started facing various problems and prejudices in society. In the 18th and 19th centuries, women were plagued with social, political, economic, educational, and health problems. Even in the 20th century, women were victims of social and economic discrimination in terms of caste, creed, sex, etc.

Empowerment of women has been a major issue on which almost all the forms of governments across the world have fixed their attention and endeavours. The growth and development of a society can be possible in the right earnest when people of all strata enjoy the fruits of equal rights and liberties without experiencing any discrimination. The members of the International Community are much too concerned about the uplift of marginalized and backward sections of society, with special focus on the issue which is called 'women empowerment'. The primary objective of women's empowerment is to build a just, democratic, and equal society. The process of enabling women to express their interest in politics was accelerated in the International Conference on Women held in 1975 under the auspices of UNO.

The Commission on the Status of Women was set up by the United Nations in 1946. It was established to deal with women's issues. The UDHR was enacted in December 1948. It affirmed the principle of the inadmissibility of discrimination and proclaimed that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. It declares that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms without distinction of any kind, including distinction based on sex. The General Assembly on November 7, 1967, adopted a 'Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women'. The Assembly, in order to implement the principle set forth in the Declaration, adopted a 'Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women' on the 18th December 1979. The Convention is often described as an "International Bill of Rights for Women" and it came into force in 1981.

The Indian Constitution has guaranteed various constitutional rights for them, but due to a lack of awareness, they have been deprived of enjoying those rights. The Government of India has launched various schemes to empower women from this place of discrimination; among them, the introduction of microfinance self-help groups in India in the 1990s was a significant initiative. Almost 50% of the total population is constituted by women in India; therefore, without them, the overall development of the country would never be possible. In this situation, self-help groups have paved the way for women to become economically self-reliant. The International Women Conference, or Women Conference at the national level, has arranged to provide small loans with much easier conditions than all the conditions required in the case of bank loans. As a result, women are getting connected with economic activities by taking loans easily and ensuring the improvement of their

financial condition, as well as increasing their social status.

Overview of Aligarh till the 18th century

Aligarh was popularly known by the name Kol. The district lies on the plains of the river Ganges and Yamuna. The prominent Aligarh Muslim University is situated in the Aligarh district. The city is also famous for the manufacturing of Locks and brass artifacts. The locks of the city are so renowned and famous that it is known as 'Tala Nagri' (City of Locks). Tourists come to Aligarh to visit the AMU Campus, the Jama Masjid of Aligarh, and Aligarh Fort. The city has 5 Tehsils, 20 Towns, and 1750 Villages spread over the area. There are 12 blocks, 112 Nyaya Panchayats, 853 Gram Panchayats, 1 Corporation, 2 Municipal Councils, and 9 Nagar Panchayats.

Review of Literature:

Datta, P. & Debnath, K. (2022). In his book, the study focused on Education and Tribal Women Empowerment in Tripura. It also tries to find out how education can change the scenario of Tribal women's empowerment. In this study, both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered for the study. This ensured that statistical and non-statistical analysis was used to support the study findings.

Ahuru. (2021). In the study titled "Empowerment of Rural Women through Health Care," the empowerment of rural women in terms of their health is examined. The core premise of this school of thought is that empowering women requires raising people's knowledge of their health behaviors, especially those of children and women. The study's main goals were to determine how well the respondents understood basic health practices related to personal hygiene and to assess how well they were aware of the needs of infants and young children in terms of health.

Cornish. (2021). The researcher highlights with 1360 deaths per 100,000 live births, according to the author of the article, Sierra Leone has one of the highest rates of maternal mortality during childbirth in the entire globe. The nation's newborn death rate is estimated to be 39 per 1000 live births. The detrimental consequences of gender inequality on health are becoming better understood, despite the challenges in addressing it. The decisions that men commonly make regarding their family's health, such as whether or not to seek medical attention, affect the results of health outcomes.

Anderson. (2021). The impacts or outcomes of interventions are frequently the focus of meta-analyses and systematic reviews. Reviews of the ideas and underlying assumptions behind the causal linkages linking intervention and result, however, are less common. We examine a hypothetical scenario in which policies supporting female farmers would prioritize them for new investments or redistribute existing resources. Empowerment is the process of giving women more control over agricultural resources, management, and income.

Hota, P. (2020). His book is concentrated on the socio-economic profile of elected women members in the PRI. It also examines the pattern of political culture and orientation of elected women members. Moreover, this study investigates the nature and extent of political participation of the elected women leaders and their role in the electoral process. Data for the present research have been collected from various sources. Apart from this, the sample of the study comprised the elected women members of three-tier PRIs in Balangir district. Since it is an empirical data has been collected and then analyzed. Hence Qualitative method has been used to find out certain factual information available from the society. This type of research aims at discovering the underlying motives of human behavior. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were adopted to seek information from the women members in PRIs. On the basis of the qualitative method, certain factual information is made available to society. It is the understanding of human behavior and the reasons that govern such behavior, while in the quantitative method, data is measured and statistics is an important research tool.

Debbarma, R. (2020). In his book, the study mainly focused on the need to empower tribal women as part of development in the Sepahijala District of Tripura. It also concentrates on the socio-economic and political conditions of the tribal women. From this research work, one will acquire some knowledge relating to tribal and non tribal women and the empowerment of tribal women in Tripura, as empowerment of tribal women is in progress, but the effective empowerment of tribal women is essential to harness the talents in the mainstream of economic development.

Cabeza-García. (2019). In his essay on total economic growth, the impact of female financial inclusion is explored. Income inequality is aided by financial inclusion, which is defined as the "availability and use of a wide range of high-quality financial goods and services." More specifically, the inequality gap narrows when women engage in the financial system, allowing for increased economic growth that improves both social and physical well-being.

De A. and Das, A. (2019). In his book, the study is concentrated on outlining the trend of political participation of women in Tripura. Moreover, this study also focuses on the political status of women in comparison to men in Tripura. According to the nature of the topic, the descriptive method is used as a suitable research method for this study, and data are collected from various secondary sources.

Kapoor. (2019). The author claims: In the modern world, "a nation cannot afford to have any of its economically productive citizens remain unproductive." However, 75% of people are unemployed as a result of a lack of resources, skills, and skills. The government may step in and bring this up by giving them direction and a reason for their livelihood. Having control over

one's life and the ability to make independent decisions are examples of being empowered. It improves one's sense of self-assurance, self-worth, well-being, and self-control. Through focus group discussions and interviews, the study explores the influence of self-help groups on economic development and livelihood initiatives that can enhance the lives of persons living below the poverty line

Guarnieri. (2018). The author poses the following query at the outset: "Has the Economic Empowerment of Women had a Long-term Impact on Policies and Institutions Related to Intimate Partner Violence?" We provide an answer to this topic by drawing on a classic natural experiment from Cameroon. From the end of World War I until 1961, France and the United Kingdom arbitrarily divided the western regions of what is now Cameroon, and during these colonial regimes, women had access to a variety of different economic opportunities in a region that was otherwise culturally and geographically homogeneous.

Debnath, S. (2018). In his book, the author study the focuses on the issues related to section 498 A of IPC to examine and investigate the grassroots realities by re-examining the concept of women empowerment, status of violence against women in Tripura, and the impact of UIPC 498 A. To conduct this explorative descriptive research, Purposive-Random Sampling has been carried out with Primary and Secondary data through questionnaire, interview schedule, judgments of court on cruelty using case study method, survey method & observation method. This study is intended to examine women's empowerment, to investigate what extent women have been empowered under the protection of section 498A, to explore different aspects of the enforcement of section 498A. The significance of the study is that it is helping to understand the legal framework, as to know how far it is supportive in empowering women in our society.

Alam. (2012). The authors of the study "Role of Micro Finance & Self-Help Groups in Women Empowerment: A Case Study of District Mewat" look into how joining self-help groups might provide women in the Haryana district of Mewat additional power. The study's main goals were to look at the socioeconomic backgrounds of SHG members and analyse their motivations for joining. Additional goals included examining the composition, conduct, and effectiveness of self-help groups as well as figuring out how SHGs affected women. The data required for the inquiry was compiled using both primary and secondary sources. It was decided to employ a multistage random sampling technique.

2. CONCLUSION:

To conclude, we can say that in Aligarh District, the local self-government is basically classified into three categories- Gram Panchayat, Block, and Nyaya Panchayat. Municipality- Municipal Corporation, Municipal Council, and Nagar Panchayat. Out of these local self governments, the present study is basically focusing on Urban and Rural Local Self Governments and relates them to women's empowerment. Political participation provides an opportunity to people, especially to women, to make the political system to their aspirations and ambitions, and at the same time lends legitimacy to the system, which is the hallmark of democracy. Though women were denied to participate in the political process due to several historical reasons but now it has been realized that the participation of women in politics has brought a radical change in the state. One of the most important features of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992, is the setup of the finance commission once every five years. Hence, it should be constituted every five years to give necessary suggestions for improving the financial position of the urban and rural local bodies, and it should also suggest the ways and means for making the ULBS strong from an economic point of view. Finally, State Government should take into consideration the observations and suggestions of the Finance Commission in right earnest the observations and suggestions of the Finance Commission in right earnest. Again, we can also say that it is a revolutionary chapter in the empowerment of women that has started in India and the developing countries. Even after this, it cannot be said that the overall development of women has taken place. They are still fighting against various discrimination. The question remains whether we have been able to give equal status to women in society

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