



Learning Descriptive





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Essays on Women Empowerment: (300 WORDS)

First:

"I raise my voice not so that I can shout, but so that those without a voice can be heard. We cannot succeed when half of us are held back." - Malala Yousafzai

As India celebrates Smt. Droupadi Murmu's ascension as its 15th President, we are reminded that she is only the second woman to hold this office in 75 years of independence. Despite progress, women's representation in global parliamentary appointments remains a mere 26.9%, as highlighted in the 2023 Parliamentary Report by the Inter-Parliamentary Union. This underscores the persistent gender disparities that continue to hinder true equality.

Discrimination, violence, and unequal access to education and policymaking are significant barriers to women's empowerment and societal progress. The limited representation of women in leadership positions necessitates further action to address these disparities. Education plays a pivotal role in this empowerment. A 10% increase in educated and skilled women in the workforce can contribute to a 1% GDP growth, challenging social issues like child marriage and female foeticide. United Nations Women reported that from 1992 to 2011, women's participation in policymaking was only 9%. However, India's recent achievement of having one-fourth of its ministers as women in 2023, along with the introduction of the Women Reservation Act, 2023, which ensures 33% reservation for women in Central and State legislative assemblies, marks a positive step forward.

Nevertheless, significant challenges remain. UNICEF estimates that 130 million girls are out of school, with 97 million lacking secondary and higher education. The denial of access to early education, gender-based violence, unequal representation in the judiciary, and a 20% gender pay gap further hinder progress. Cultural norms and societal expectations reinforce gender roles and limit women's autonomy, presenting additional obstacles to their empowerment.

Overcoming these challenges requires concerted efforts, including policy reforms, investment in education and healthcare, and changing societal attitudes to create a more equitable and inclusive environment. Only then can we truly celebrate milestones like the appointment of Smt. Murmu as our President and move towards a society where all voices are heard and valued equally.



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Second:

Emerging as a pioneer and breaking stereotypes, Sripathi, a 23-year-old tribal woman from Tamil Nadu, became the first lady appointed as a civil judge. Remarkably, she gave birth to a baby girl just two days before the exam. From time immemorial, women have proven their stance as great leaders and changemakers. Whether it's Kalpana Chawla, Marie Curie, or Mother Teresa, the list goes on. Is this patriarchal society really acknowledging women's worth? Let's find out if women are actually empowered together.

A JOURNEY FULL OF THORNS From infancy to adulthood, women face countless social evils, discrimination, and inequality. Even in the mother's womb, a girl is unsure if she will ever see the light (according to UNHRC, at least 117 million girls go missing due to sex-selective abortions). The story doesn't end there. As a child, she experienced discrimination in nutrition, health, and education (Census 2011 reports education provided to males 78.8% and females 59.3%). Furthermore, in adolescence, she endures eve-teasing and sexual harassment.

CLAWS THAT NEVER SEEM TO PART Patriarchal dominance hinders gender equality, leading to honour killings (like Manoj and Babli) and violence against women (Shraddha murder case). It perpetuates gender discrimination and unequal pay for women (Forbes reports women earn an average of 16% less than men). Additionally, a woman's worth is often judged solely by how efficient a homemaker she is.

POTENTIAL REMEDIES: GLIMMER OF HOPE To measure the degree of progress of a community, one must see how well women have achieved. As rightly said by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, "A community flourishes where women flourish." Initiatives like "Beti Bachao Beti Padhao," "Mahila Police Volunteers," and NGOs like "Nai Roshni," "Shanti Sahyog," and "Akshara" are impactful. Self-help groups (SHGs) such as "ASHA" and "ANM" effectively combat domestic violence.

Lastly, it's not only our moral duty but also our responsibility to educate, empower, and encourage women for the greater good of society, ensuring a prosperous future.



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Third:

It is impossible to talk about India's success without recalling the heroic deeds of women like Rani Lakshmibai and Neerja Bhanot, who defied colonial rule and sacrificed their lives to save passengers. Yet, women continue to face glass ceilings. The need for women's empowerment persists as they continually shatter stereotypes and challenge inequalities, embodying "strength in her voice." Before delving deeper into the causes of inequalities and their remedies, let's explore further.

Silenced Voices

According to ancient texts like the Atharva Veda, an ideal woman is one who gives birth to a child and does not argue with her husband, highlighting deep-seated cultural norms in India. However, vulnerability is not solely biological but also cultural, originating from historical divisions of labour, as highlighted by Yuval Noah Harari in "Sapiens." Today, women's unpaid care and domestic work in India represent an economic value of almost 15%-17% of the country's GDP, according to the Times of India. The preference for sons fuels inequality, leading to sex-selective abortions and female infanticide, contributing to a skewed child sex ratio of 919 girls per 1,000 boys (Census 2011). Furthermore, 51% of crimes in India involve women, including harassment, rape, dowry killings, and acid attacks. For instance, Laxmi Agarwal became a symbol after surviving an acid attack.

Not only this, but with a literacy gap of 12.9% between men and women, significant economic and political disparities persist. From only 15 women out of 309 members in the Constituent Assembly to 15 women in parliament out of 543, and only 3 out of 38 judges in the Supreme Court, inequalities are pervasive. However, they are not insurmountable, and efforts for change have already begun.

Raising Voices for Change

Undeniably, women's position in society has improved over time, starting with reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, who fought against practices like Sati. Legal strides such as Article 14 have contributed to equality. Over the years, the gross enrollment ratio for girls in education has increased significantly. Initiatives like Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao and digital platforms like Mahila E-Haat provide excellent opportunities for women entrepreneurs. Women athletes like P.V. Sindhu and leaders like Deepa Malik, awarded for her initiative "The New Green," which promotes gender equality, are leading the charge.

It's amazing to note that empowering women equally could potentially lead to a 1.9% higher GDP in India. Therefore, gender equality, especially in India, is not just desirable but crucial for progress. It's time to start at home by educating and empowering women around us to build a better India because empowering women shapes destiny and architects a brighter future.



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Fourth:

The confining walls, the defined roles, the usual gifts of long veils and dolls, the training to be humble, nice, and meek, the advice of men that women are weak. These are the societal norms that shape the lives of women from a young age. News headlines such as "A girl stabbed to death by her lover on refusal of marriage," "Two teen sisters assaulted and brutally killed for wearing jeans," and "A girl's family members eloping with a woman hacked to death with her lover" are just the tip of the iceberg. They barely represent the vast extent of violence towards women in the country. It is time to accept the truth: gender-based violence is real, and addressing it is crucial for women's empowerment.

Understanding Gender-Based Violence

There is no denying that violence and crimes are prevalent in every society, and they can be classified into social, political, legal, and economic factors. However, gender-based violence is a pervasive issue that intersects all these categories and is rarely addressed in detail. This type of violence stems from deeply ingrained societal norms and beliefs that need to be understood to be effectively tackled.

Roots of Gender Inequality

Family is often considered the first teacher, where children learn how to treat others and understand societal roles. From a very young age, children are taught the differences between boys and girls, with notions of girls being weak or inferior ingrained early. Society, an environment encompassing numerous families, further enforces these beliefs. It sets clear boundaries for women, with any violations subject to penalties. The distribution of roles within a family, the view of girls' marriages as a duty, and the expectation that women should not compete with men are all societal mechanisms to maintain gender hierarchy.

Challenging Norms and Seeking Solutions

Addressing gender-based violence requires acknowledging how society and family normalise it, making such violence seem like isolated incidents rather than a systemic issue. To question its justification and seek solutions, society must first raise awareness. People, regardless of gender, need to think critically and express themselves, breaking societal barriers. "One step to change the journey" encapsulates the idea that every effort counts in creating a more equitable society.



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By fostering awareness and encouraging critical thinking, we can start to dismantle the harmful norms that perpetuate gender-based violence.

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