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Women's Empowerment in India-South Korea Relations: A Shared Journey

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Abstract

One thread, the common dedication to women's empowerment, shines out clearly in the complex tapestry of India-South Korea ties. The essay highlights the advancements achieved by both countries in advancing women's rights, education, and workforce involvement as it examines the changing landscape of gender equality programmes. Governments have passed laws to remove gender barriers, creating an atmosphere where women may succeed both personally and professionally, from Seoul to New Delhi. We explore into the transforming impact of cross-cultural interactions, such as Bollywood and K-dramas, on social perspectives and women's empowerment. We look at programmes and possibilities in school that provide South Korean and Indian women the information and abilities they need to succeed in a variety of disciplines, including STEM. We also discuss issues like gender-based violence and job discrimination that affect women in both nations, as well as joint initiatives aimed at addressing these obstacles. Inspiring women who have achieved success in their various communities and established themselves as role models for others are also highlighted in this article. Together, India and South Korea are paving the way for a more accepting and fairer world for women, reiterating the notion that it is not just a local issue but also a shared journey that is deepening the ties between their two countries.

Key Words: *Women Empowerment, Cross-cultural interaction, STEM.*

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Introduction

The term 'empowerment' is widely used in the area of international development. In the 1980s and 1990s, a new concept emerged, known as 'women's empowerment', It sought to change the balance of power to support women's rights and increased gender equality (Batliwala, 2007). The Pathways project was established to explore how mainstream development programs for women and girls could support justice, equality, and democratization of power relations in society. Researchers associated with Pathways focused on investigating women's experiences of empowerment and the effectiveness of interventions designed to enhance their rights, power, and agency. This interdisciplinary approach brought together scholars from social sciences, arts, and humanities to engage in dialogue on these important issues (Cornwall, 2016).

It is of utmost importance to recognize that there are numerous factors that influence the degree of empowerment a woman experiences or lacks. These determinants encompass a wide range of aspects, including but not limited to her social class, caste, ethnicity, financial status, age, and familial position. However, it is crucial to understand the dynamics of gender relationships in order to promote women's collective empowerment (Mosedale, 2005). By analysing how power imbalances between genders are created and maintained over time, it can gain a deeper understanding of how to promote gender equality and enhance women's empowerment worldwide in both India and South Korea. Therefore, any efforts aimed at strengthening women's empowerment must take into account these additional contributing factors. The bilateral talks must also have a platform dedicated to women where issues related to women needs to be discussed. India can also provide its advantage of a positive demographic dividend which can be coupled with technical expertise of South Korea to ensure shared empowerment of women in both the countries. Therefore, regardless of one's history or circumstances, it is imperative to work toward establishing an atmosphere where all women have equal opportunity to develop.

It must be also remembered that the idea of empowerment of women is very important when it comes to making the world a better place. It means giving people the power and ability to make decisions for themselves and have control over their lives particularly the women which lacks decision making powers. In international development, we need to focus on empowering women and promoting gender equality in order to create fairer societies around the world. There are many different factors that can influence how empowered someone feels, so it's important to look at things from an interdisciplinary perspective. Researchers who work in this area use lots of different approaches to try and figure out what works best when it comes to empowering women as a group. Overall, everyone wants to make progress towards creating more just societies around the world, it needs to keep working on ways of empowering women and promoting greater gender equality. The concept of empowerment remains crucial in international development today. Specifically focusing on enhancing women's rights and promoting greater gender equality is essential for creating more just societies around the world. Through interdisciplinary approaches like those taken by Pathways researchers can gain insight into effective strategies for empowering women as a group while recognizing that multiple factors influence individual levels of empowerment.

Women's Situation in the Past

The status of women's leadership in the asian environment frequently include accounts of prejudice, gender bias and discrimination (Cheung & Halpern, 2010). India and South Korea are culturally integrating in recent years. The popularity of Korean dramas in India and the recognition of Bollywood in South Korea is growing. It can be leveraged as a soft power to keep women issues at centre and raising voice against injustice in both the society. Both nations

suffer from gender-based violence which is detrimental to the growth of any nation. Both needs to collaborate in this field too.

In India, women have traditionally been viewed as inferior to men in terms of their position and roles within society. This is largely due to the economic and social structure of Indian society, which places women in a subservient and secondary position within the household and as a result, in society at large. Despite this, women play an incredibly important role in India's agricultural production, rural development, household duties, and familial obligations. Unfortunately, planners and decision-makers have largely remained unaware of the significant effort put forth by women in these areas. As a result, the position of women in Indian society has widely remained stagnant. The ancient folkways, social structure, and value systems always place Indian women at a disadvantage when it comes to their role connections (Chakrapani & Kumar, 1994).

Similarly, Korean society is not so alike. It has also historically placed women at a disadvantage. The social structure of Korea was characterised by a monarchy with strong class awareness and an extended family system that was patriarchally ruled. This system placed great importance on maintaining family ties while also keeping the roles of men and women distinct and unequal (KWDI, 1985). Confucianism played a significant role in perpetuating this division between genders which was a manifestation of patriarchy. Confucianism holds that women have three obligations to their fathers: when they are young, when they are married, and to their sons when they are old. Although, despite decades of discrimination against women and their traditional place as subordinates in Korean culture, with the emergence of modernisation and industrialisation, the status of women in society has advanced. But It is crucial to remember that both Indian and Korean culture still have a long way to go before there is gender equality. There remains a disconnect between industrial progress and cultural response or behavioural culture (Palley, 1990). While material culture has progressed significantly over time through technological advancements and economic growth for both India and Korea alike; Behavioural culture continues to lag behind due to deeply ingrained societal norms that favour men over women. It is important for policymakers to recognise these disparities so that efforts can be made towards creating more equitable societies where all individuals regardless of gender can flourish.

Cultural leadership in India and South Korea

Since more firms use a multigenerational workforce and the globe becomes more interconnected, academics of leadership have particularly urged for an increase in cross-cultural (Bullough et.al., 2012) and cross-generational study, since these two factors have the prospects to significantly alter the dynamics of women's leadership (Roebuck et.al., 2013). Nath (2000) stressed that further understanding is required in order to look at leadership of women from a cross-generational standpoint. Furthermore, as culture establishes the norms for how both gender should behave in social situations, it is impossible to overlook the backdrop of nation-specific cultures. The unwritten rules of businesses vary greatly between cultures, and these constraints have frequently stunted the advancement of women into positions of strategic leadership (Cheung & Halpern, 2010). Perhaps as a result of the distinct institutional and social cultures seen in asian nations, the glass ceiling issue is particularly prevalent in the majority of asian enterprises (Cho et.al., 2015).

The literature comparing women leaders across cultures is few. The ingrained cultural norms of India and Korea that are relevant to women's experiences with work-life balance, professional growth opportunities, and informal support. Despite the fact that both nations have patriarchy, which poses difficulties for women in leadership positions (Chaudhuri et.al., 2019). Recently, a number of academics from Korea and India have tried to classify generations using the globally recognized framework that is often used in the West. Interestingly, several features, including birth year, employment characteristics, and work ideals, strongly coincide with the

commonly acknowledged Generations of the baby boomer generation and millennials, even if important life events deviate considerably from the Western context (Ghosh & Chaudhari, 2009).

Twenty years ago, Indian and Korean communities were quite strict, and there was no official or informal backing for elder women leaders. Due to shifting attitudes, internationalization, and a different economic climate where the idea about working women is becoming acceptable, younger women leaders have access to considerably more support than their older counterparts (Budhwar et.al., 2005). This has led to an increase in leadership chances. Compared to women in India, younger female Korea leaders are more conscious about the 'shame culture' that is unique to the country and frequently influences them to assume that they must handle their own difficulties instead of asking for unofficial assistance (Lee and Padilla, 2016). Furthermore, the dearth of positive female role models in Korean companies hinders the hand-holding and behaviour modelling that young women leaders need to grow and develop. Hence, compared to younger women leaders of Korea, younger women leaders of India may be more prone to look for unofficial backing.

India and South Korea's Partnership in Technology

In the early 1990s, The Korea (ROK) was one of the first nations to place a wager on India's economic liberalization. Korean businesses have made significant investments in India, including Samsung, Daewoo, and Hyundai. As of right now, the ROK ranks as India's 14th largest supplier of FDI. Between 2000 and June 2019, the ROK invested almost to US\$ 4 billion on machine tools, cars, electronics, metals, and medical equipment. The automotive and telecommunications industries have seen the largest investments from South Korea; names like Hyundai, Samsung, LG etc. are widely known in India (Kesavan et.al., 2020). During a state visit to the Republic of Korea in 2015, Prime Minister of India paid homage to President Park Geun-hye's visitation to India in 2014. The two parties upgraded their connection to a 'special strategic partnership' during their visit in 2015 with the goal of bringing 'speed and content' to their interactions in the fields of commerce and investment, foreign policy, defence, and science and technology. President Park outlined the Northeast Asia Peace and Collaboration Initiative during the talks, and India reiterated that it saw the ROK as a crucial component of its recently announced Act East Policy (Government of India, 2015).

During his official visit from July 2018, President Moon Jae-in, the longest visiting leader between the two nations, demonstrated the rising interest in the connection between the two countries. The joint statement released after the visit emphasized how the Act East Policy of India and the New Southern Policy of the ROK were seen as complementary by both nations (Tyagi & Baitha, 2023). The declaration also aimed to promote cooperation at all levels and acknowledged the 'strong complementarities between the two countries in the area of science and technology' (Government of India, 2018). The 4th meeting of Steering Committee of Indian-Korean S&T Ministers, took place during the 2018 visit, carrying on the topic of collaboration in S&T. The consentient accordant to build a Centre for Research and Innovation (CRI) of Indo-Korean was one of the major choices made. The leaders also decided that the Group for Future Strategies will create a cooperative platform to leverage the innovative possibilities of both nations. The two parties will co-financing cooperative, enterprise-headed R&D initiatives in the first phase of the strategy that address:

- a) High-tech Conversion,
- b) Upcoming production,
- c) Upcoming Commodities,
- d) Health Protection.

Furthermore, the establishment of two further India-Korea Joint Network Centers for Partnerships in Technology was decided upon, with a focus on cyber-physical systems,

artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, and semiconductor electronics (Government of India, 2018).

Government Initiative and Women Empowerment

The governments of South Korea and India have put in place a number of plans and programmes to support empowerment of women. For the purpose of empowering women economically and socially, initiatives like ‘Stand Up India’ and ‘Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao’ have been launched in India. Given that the Stand-Up India initiative is a digital platform, the Indian government ought to provide the internet connectivity to whole nation’s distant regions so that entrepreneurs may implement their ideas in their particular contexts. According to the 280th report of the department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee, women are increasingly choosing entrepreneurship as a career. The percentage of women creating accounts against loans in public, private, and RRBs is higher than the percentage of SC or ST applicants. The percentage of loans accepted for women is also greater than the ST/SC counterpart. The campaign seems to be a good place to start for India’s startup industry (Dutta, 2018). Women professionals desire to take on additional responsibilities and participate more actively in Make in India, according to a GE and Avtar study (Mahesh, 2021).

On the other side, initiatives like the ‘Women-friendly Workplace Certification’ and the ‘National Plan for Promoting Gender Equality and Family Responsibility’ have been put into place in South Korea. These countries have been working together to exchange best practises and policy-making experiences. South Korea has been especially helpful in imparting its knowledge on creating a workplace that is welcoming to women and reducing the gender wage gap. In order to increase chances for women in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) disciplines, India has looked to South Korea for inspiration. To evaluate the effects of the important policies of the government on gender equality, the government of Korean created the analysis of the influence of gender system. According to the Gender effect study and Assessment Act, key programmes and projects carried out by the federal and municipal governments as well as other laws and regulations (both passed and amended) are subject to gender effect study (UN Women).

Women-led development has been a significant topic of attention during India’s G20 Presidency from a life-course perspective, changing the focus from only women’s empowerment. With the aid of 86 virtual international meetings and six in-person conferences, which attracted over 300 participants from 18 G20 and 7 Guest nations, India served as a global paradigm for progress in elevating women throughout the world. India has increased its emphasis on local or community-level women’s empowerment and recognition. India focused its educational efforts on STEM, and one of the key contributions of its presidency was the creation of ‘TechEquity’, a digital inclusion platform that enables girls and women to learn, advance, and retrain in technical skills such as financial literacy and digital literacy. The portal will provide courses in more than 120 Indian and foreign languages thanks to contributions from all G20 Member States. The KPI Dashboard for G20 EMPOWER would examine the position of women in Small and Medium Enterprises for the first time. India’s presidency of the G20 has significantly increased the number of CEOs, association presidents, and other leaders who support women’s progress. From 380 to 544, they have expanded, with 100 of the new recruits coming from India. Additionally, modified to improve pledges to gender equality is the G20 EMPOWER advocacy pledge (PIB Delhi, 2023).

Conclusion

Delhi has been mentioned as a key participant in the Pacific Islands in Seoul’s recently released Indo-Pacific plan, which points to India’s enormous economic potential as a result of its sizeable market, sophisticated IT, and space technologies. Seoul has also promised to upgrade the CEPA (Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement) between the India and Korea in order to improve the framework for greater economic cooperation. Additionally,

Korea's second vice foreign minister, referred to India as a crucial partner in the area and pledged to strengthen their economic and strategic relations during the G20 Minister Summit in New Delhi (Singh, 2023).

Despite these contrasts, patriarchal societies, social norms, and traditional forces are ingrained in both Korea and India, preventing them from fully embracing the cohabitation of women leaders on an equal footing with men (Lee & others, 2011). Governments and organisations in India and Korea have launched several work-life balance-focused programmes, laws, and organisational practises after taking inspiration from Western models and seeing the value and strength of their female workforces. The impact of work-life balance programmes hasn't yet been seen due to the fact that many of them haven't been tailored to the cultural or social needs of Indians or Koreans (Chandra, 2012). Through their joint efforts, India and South Korea have started a wonderful journey towards the empowerment of women. Their dedication to gender equality is evidenced by their shared ideals, governmental efforts, economic collaboration, educational exchanges, and support for entrepreneurship. Both countries stand to advance women's empowerment even further as they continue to share their experiences and learn from one another. The way forward entails fortifying current partnerships, looking into potential new directions, and resolutely overcoming obstacles.

Recently, the government and several groups have initiated efforts aimed at addressing work-life conflict and providing equitable benefits to the female workforce. Role conflicts between work and life have been somewhat lessened by these government-driven regulations, but suitable practices still need to be effectively applied within the cultural and social settings of both nations. For example, women may find telecommuting and flexible scheduling more taxing since the rigid division between work and family may require them to fulfil dual responsibilities. Although the majority of these practices are found in big, international firms and government agencies, many institutions have started to implement life-work balance efforts and promote different employee-friendly policies. Programs for structured leadership should be promoted so that female workers may utilize organizational resources equally and without fear, as pragmatic recommendations for Human Resource Development (HRD) practitioners in India. Family-friendly social activities organized by the organization may also contribute to the expansion of family support for female employees and their leadership. Since child care is the top worry among women leaders of Korea who have children, HRD practitioners may offer interventions to alleviate female workers of their child care obligations. Policies that encourage formal women leadership development and require equal application from all staff members may also stop companies from undervaluing women's professional growth potential.

The cooperation between South Korea and India for women's empowerment is a significant confluence of two culturally diverse countries dedicated to promoting rights of women and gender equity. This collaboration represents a multidimensional strategy meant to tackle the various obstacles that women in both countries encounter. The alliance works to establish a supportive environment where women may flourish and make significant contributions to the socioeconomic fabric of their individual nations via cooperative efforts in the areas of education, employment, healthcare, and social changes. Together, India and South Korea have the technological, innovative, and governance capacities to carry out significant projects that support and empower women in all spheres of life. This coalition aims to maximize women's potential as change agents while acknowledging their crucial role in advancing sustainable development.

Regarding social changes, the collaboration between India and Korea is dedicated to tackling ingrained gender norms and stereotypes that sustain violence and discrimination against women. Both countries are working to build a more gender-responsive and inclusive society where women can live without fear of assault or harassment by enacting new laws, raising

public awareness, and organizing community members. Through enabling women to claim their rights and pursue justice, the alliance hopes to promote an environment that values equality, respect, and human dignity for everyone. In conclusion, the alliance between South Korea and India for women's empowerment is a ground-breaking collaboration that promises a more promising future for women and girls in both countries. Through the combined application of their resources, knowledge, and political will, India and South Korea have the capacity to achieve major progress in the worldwide advancement of rights of women and gender equity. The partnership, as trailblazers in the fight for gender equity, is a compelling model for other countries to follow, proving that societies flourish when women achieve success.

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