

# EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN INDIA

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**ABSTRACT:** *There is no denying the fact that women in India have made a considerable progress in almost seven decades of Independence, but they still have to struggle against many handicaps and social evils in the male-dominated society. Many evil and masculine forces still prevail in the modern Indian society that resists the women. The position and status of women all over the world has risen incredibly in the 20th century. A long struggle going back over a century has brought women the property rights, voting rights, equality in civil rights before the law in matters of marriage and employment. The main focus is to empower women so that they can participate not only in the decision making process but in the planning and execution too. At present focus has been given to associate common people with the Panchayati Raj institution, Gram Sabhas and village Panchayats which are the real institution of people democracy. Importance of gender balance in local works and importance of networking and association building is the key. The subject of empowerment of women has becoming a burning issue all over the world including India since last few decades. Women Empowerment itself elaborates that Social Rights, Political Rights, Economic stability, judicial strength and all other rights should be also equal to women. There should be no discrimination between men and woman. Inequalities between men and women and discrimination against women have also been age-old issues all over the world. Women should know their fundamental and social rights which they get once they born. This paper aims to explain and understand the following questions related to women empowerment and to what extent legislative measures have been able to raise the status of women in India? Are women now feel empowered in the sense that they are being equally treated by men in all spheres of life. What about the social, political and judicial rights of women? These are the important questions to be investigated with regard to women's empowerment in India.*

**Index Terms-** Empowerment, Social Rights, Political Rights, Economic Stability.

## I. INTRODUCTION:

Acquirement of self-reliance, self-esteem, and self-empowerment begins with and is supported by economic control over production resources; knowledge and awareness; self-image; and autonomy for women empowerment. Most men view themselves as being the superior life-form in society. They justify this belief by saying that they are stronger and more capable; thus, making those more qualified for the important roles in society. They place themselves on pedestals and force women to believe in their own inferiority to men and their incapability to excel educationally, politically, economically, and domestically. But the truth is that women will eventually advance in all these areas and come to realize that they do not need men to survive. Hence women empowerment is an essential element.

Women constitute almost half of the world's population, two-third of the world's labour force but get 1% of the world's wealth. As per 2001 census, 23% of women are in the work force. 94 percent of all working women are in the informal sector. In case of India, as according to 2001 census, out of the total population of 1,027,015,247, the female population was 495,732,169 accounting for 48.2 % of the total population. But, their participation in economically productive activities is often underestimated. For last two decades, women's work participation rate increased from 22.73% in 1991 to 28.6% during 2001.

## II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

This study has been planned with the following focuses -

1. To understand the concept of women empowerment
2. Find out whether legislative measures have been able to raise the status of women in India.
3. To develop conceptual framework about social, political, economical and judicial rights of women.

## III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

This study is a qualitative research where theoretical information have been collected, analysed and discussed on women empowerment. The data and information have been collected from government portals, journals and previous research papers.

## IV. EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN:

Most of the Indian women have been suffering from the lack of self space, disempowerment, disadvantage, sexist discrimination, gender inequity, invisibility, asymmetries, and marginalization. Discrimination of a person based on his or her gender especially against women is the oppression of women by men. It is a common problem in India and its outcome is disastrous for our country. Improvement in women's social status is generally accompanied by advance in their education which leads to employment. Education is the most significant instrument for changing women's subjugated position in society. The empowerment of women involves awareness raising, building self-confidence, and control over resources.

There are an estimated 314 million people in the workforce, ninety million of whom are women. Almost 90 per cent of these women are employed in agriculture and related activities, which include work in informal household industries, petty trades and services, and construction. Only about 6% of women employed are in the formal sector with social benefits, such as pensions or maternity leave that can influence participation. In the informal sector, there are no government agencies or procedures to determine wage structure, working hours, working conditions, grievance management, or retirement and other benefits for self-employed women. Women tend to work in less productive jobs than men. More than a third is unpaid self-employed helpers, compared to 11% of working men. Women labour shares are higher in low-productivity agriculture, traditional small-scale manufacturing, and in services such as education and household employment.

This is not necessarily gender-specific as most jobs in India are in the informal sector as many companies stay informal to avoid stringent regulations on labour or business establishment.

The quality of female jobs has improved somewhat over the past seven years as the share of female unpaid work declined in rural areas and organised employment (salaries) rose slightly in services and manufacturing in the urban areas. However, most of the rise in these jobs was still in the informal sector without social benefits.

The key to women's economic empowerment is related to women's:

- a) Employment generation;
- b) Poverty elimination;
- c) Development of entrepreneurship;
- d) Efforts to develop organisation and managerial management system;
- e) Grant of access to related socio-economic parameters.

#### V. LEGISLATIVE MEASURES:

The Constitution of India establishes a parliamentary system of government, and guarantees its citizens the right to be elected, freedom of speech, freedom to assemble and form associations, and vote. The Constitution of India attempts to remove gender inequalities by banning discrimination based on sex and class, prohibiting human trafficking and forced labour, and reserving elected positions for women.

The Constitution of India, both in case of Directive Principles of State Policy & as a part of the Fundamental Rights, has laid down that the State shall direct its policy towards securing that health & strength of workers, men & women, & the tender age of children are not to be abused and for this some of the following acts had been passed by parliament, they are as follows:

1. Workmen's Compensation Act, 1932
2. The Minimum Wages Act, 1948
3. The Factories Act, 1948
4. Equal pay for Equal Work, 1975
5. Maternity Benefits Act, 1961
6. Legal Services Act, 1986
7. Equal Remuneration Act, 1976

The Government of India directed state and local governments to promote equality by class and gender including equal pay and free legal aid, humane working conditions and maternity relief, rights to work and education, and raising the standard of living. Women were substantially involved in the Indian independence movement in the early 20th century and advocated for independence from Britain. Independence brought gender equality in the form of constitutional rights, but historically women's political participation has remained low.

#### VI. SOCIAL MEASURES:

Women-folk of India continue to suffer and emotional, sexual and asexual in nature. In continuation adjudicate cases of rape, community policing by (Gender and Development). Government of India is making continued efforts for women empowerment so that women are not considered as objects of mercy, pity.

#### VII. POLITICAL MEASURES:

India has a multi-party system with the 24 registered parties at the national level. The three largest parties in India are the Indian National Congress (INC), the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and the Communist Party of India (CPI). The BJP's wing is the BJP Mahila Morcha, the INC's wing is All India Mahila Congress, and the CPI's wing is the National Federation of Indian Women. There is 33.5% reservation for women in local government bodies. This law has placed a million of women in elected positions to the panchayat in the country. Both the INC and BJP have encouraged greater representation of women's participation by instituting a 33% quota for women in all levels of the party.

Government also encouraging voting in various elections. Indira Gandhi former Indian Prime minister is the world's largest serving women prime minister. As of 2013, it has been reported of the members of parliament 11% were women in Lok-Sabha and 10.6% in Rajya Sabha.

The term 'political participation' has a very wide meaning. It is not only related to 'Right to Vote', but simultaneously relates to participation in: decision making process, political activism, political consciousness, etc. Women turnout during India's 2014 parliamentary general elections was 65.63%, compared to 67.09% turnout for men. India ranks 20th from the bottom in terms of representation of women in Parliament Women's involvement in political parties are tied to the increasing demand for equal rights. Women in India participate in voting, run for public offices and political parties at lower levels more than men. Political parties have increased outreach among women voters as India's party system has become more competitive. Political activism and voting are the strongest areas of women's political participation. Women have held the posts of president and prime minister in India, as well as chief ministers of various states. Indian voters have elected women to numerous state legislative assemblies and national parliament for many decades. In spite of all these steps taken by government still there are very few women in national level politics.

#### VII. JUDICIAL MEASURES:

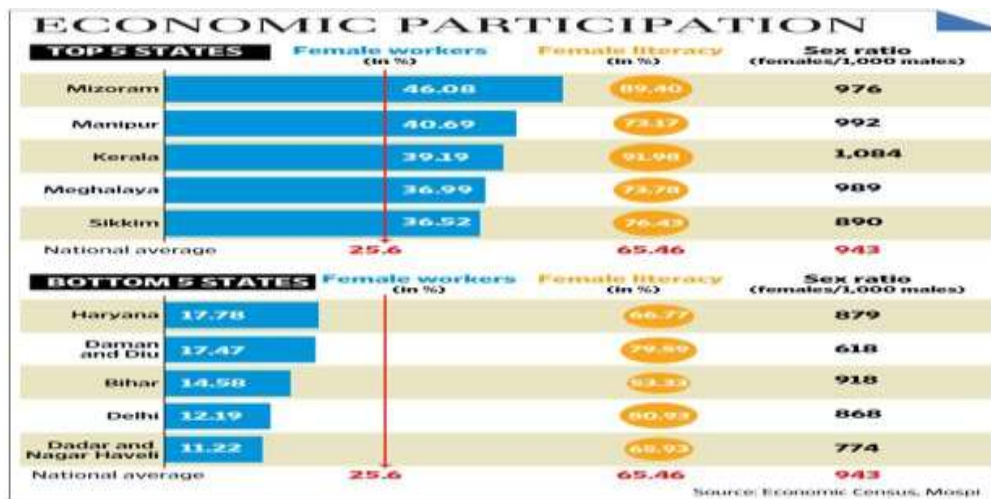
The three-tiered system of Indian Judiciary comprises of Supreme Court (New Delhi). High Courts standing at the head of state judicial system, followed by district and sessions court in the judicial districts, into which the states are divided. The lower rung of the system then comprises of courts of civil (civil judges) & criminal (judicial/metropolitan magistrates) jurisdiction.

Indian government has made many laws and act to protect women. The payment of a dowry has been prohibited under the "1961 dowry prohibition act" in Indian civil law. Women are protected from domestic violence under the law "protection of women from domestic violence act 2005". For protecting women from sexual violence government passed "criminal law act 2013".

#### VIII. ECONOMIC MEASURES:

It is worthwhile to mention that traditionally women most important economic activity (60 percent) is women's involvement in cultivation harvesting of wheat and cotton crops. The economic census captures, which include data on both agricultural and non-agricultural

employment, show that India today has among the lowest female labour force participation in the world because of a massive withdrawal of women from farms in the past few years.



The economic participation of women is considerably lower than men in most of the states; there is wide inter-state variation across India. As the accompanying chart shows, all the top five states ranked according to the proportion of female workers Mizoram, Manipur, Kerala, Meghalaya and Sikkim have above average female literacy rates. Also, the sex ratios in these states barring Sikkim are considerably higher than the national average. In stark contrast, the bottom five states (and Union Territories) Haryana, Daman and Diu, Bihar, Delhi, and Dadra and Nagar Haveli have below average sex ratios. Their average female literacy is also lower than the national average. The difference in proportion of female workers between the two groups of states is considerably large. Participation in the labour force is higher in the South and West of India compared to the East and North, which may reflect religious customs. Participation is also higher in rural than urban areas and among the poor, and declines with family income and education, but rises again among the highly educated. While the average proportion of women workers in the top five states is nearly 40% that in the bottom five is only 14%. The latest economic census results have once again thrown the spotlight on the wide gap between employment of men and women in the country. Only a quarter of workers employed in India are women, according to the census. The figure is lower for urban India at 19% which include data on both agricultural and non-agricultural employment, show that India today has among the lowest female labour force participation in the world because of a massive withdrawal of women from farms in the past few years.

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## IX. CONCLUSION:

Empowerment of women in India has a specific goal, a gender specific goal. The satisfaction index on empowerment of each woman in India would be of great importance for a lady, in deciding, in decision making, role of employment which increases the family income. It has to eliminate marginalization, devaluation, displacement and ultimate dispensability of women in India. Hence it is arrived that the desired holistic empowerment is when each Indian woman feels that she that she is capable of becoming or performing anything in accordance to her desires.

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