

# **WOMEN STUDIES**

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## Unit- I

Women Empowerment – Meaning – Nature- Concept and Strategies – Classification and Dimensions of Women Empowerment - Role of Women in Freedom Struggle.

### Objectives

- To the meaning and concept of women empowerment.
- To the nature and dimensions of women empowerment.
- To study the strategies adopted for empowering women.
- To the role of women in the Indian freedom struggle.

### What is Women Empowerment?

Women empowerment means emancipation of women from the vicious grips of social, economical, political, caste and gender-based discrimination. It means granting women the freedom to make life choices. Women empowerment does not mean ‘deifying women’ rather it means replacing patriarchy with parity. In this regard, there are various facets of women empowerment such as given hereunder:

#### **Human Rights or Individual Rights:**

A woman is a being with senses, imagination and thoughts; she should be able to express them freely. Individual empowerment means to have the self-confidence to articulate and assert the power to negotiate and decide.

#### **Social Women Empowerment:**

A critical aspect of social empowerment of women is the promotion of gender equality. Gender equality implies a society in which women and men enjoy the same opportunities, outcomes, rights and obligations in all spheres of life.

#### **Educational Women Empowerment:**

It means empowering women with the knowledge, skills, and self-confidence necessary to participate fully in the development process. It means making women aware of their rights and developing a confidence to claim them.

#### **Economic and occupational empowerment:**

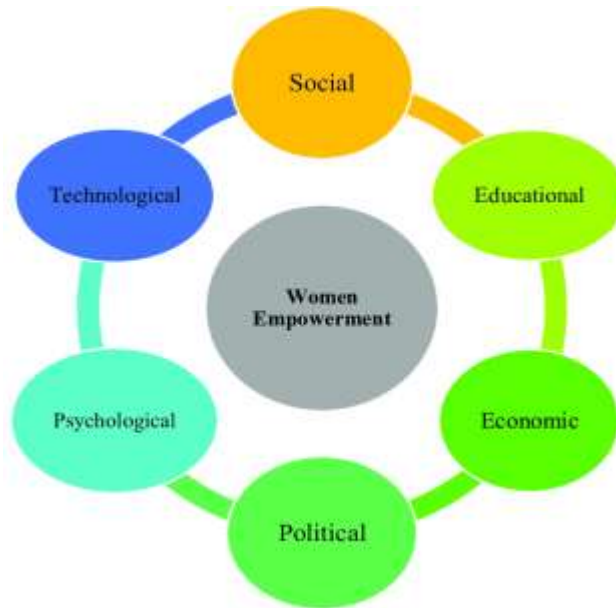
It implies a better quality of material life through sustainable livelihoods owned and managed by women. It means reducing their financial dependence on their male counterparts by making them significant part of the human resource.

**Legal Women Empowerment:**

It suggests the provision of an effective legal structure which is supportive of women empowerment. It means addressing the gaps between what the law prescribes and what actually occurs.

**Political Women Empowerment:**

It means the existence of a political system favoring the participation in and control by the women of the political decision making process and in governance.

**The position of Women in India:**

The position enjoyed by women in the RigVedic period deteriorated in the later Vedic civilization. Women were denied the right to education and widow remarriage. They were denied the right to inheritance and ownership of property. Many social evils like child marriage and dowry system surfaced and started to engulf women. During Gupta period, the status of women immensely deteriorated. Dowry became an institution and Sati Pratha became prominent. During the British Raj, many social reformers such as Raja Rammohun Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, and Jyotirao Phule started agitations for the empowerment of women. Their efforts led to the abolition of Sati and formulation of the Widow Remarriage Act. Later, stalwarts like Mahatma Gandhi and Pt. Nehru advocated women rights. As a result of their concentrated efforts, the status of women in social, economic and political life began to elevate in the Indian society.

### **Current Scenario on Women Empowerment**

Based on the ideas championed by our founding fathers for women empowerment, many social, economic and political provisions were incorporated in the Indian Constitution. Women in India now participate in areas such as education, sports, politics, media, art and culture, service sector and science and technology. But due to the deep- rooted patriarchal mentality in the Indian society, women are still victimized, humiliated, tortured and exploited. Even after almost seven decades of Independence, women are still subjected to discrimination in the social, economic and educational field.

### **Major landmark steps taken for women empowerment**

Provisions made under the Constitution of India such as: Right to equality under Article 14 of the Indian Constitution guarantees to all Indian women equality before law; Equal pay for equal work under Article 39(d), guards the economic rights of women by guaranteeing equal pay for equal work; and Maternity Relief under Article 42, allows provisions to be made by the state for securing just and humane condition of work and maternity relief for women. Acts like the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, prohibits the request, payment or acceptance of a dowry. Asking or giving dowry can be punished by imprisonment as well as fine; Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, provides for a more effective protection of the rights of women who are victims of domestic violence. A breach of this Act is punishable with both fine and imprisonment; Sexual Harassment of Women at Work Place (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013, helps to create a conducive environment at the workplace for women where they are not subjected to any sort of sexual harassment. Panchayati Raj Institutions As per the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act, all the local elected bodies reserve one-third of their seats for women. Such a provision was made to increase the effective participation of women in politics.

### **Women's Reservation Bill:**

It is a pending Bill in India which proposes to reserve 33% of all seats in the Lok Sabha and in all State Legislative Assemblies for women. If passed, this Bill will give a significant boost to the position of women in politics.

## **Various Government Policies and Schemes**

The Government of India is running various welfare schemes and policies, both at State and Central levels for the empowerment of woman. Some of the major programs and measures include Swadhar (1995), Swayam Siddha (2001), Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP-2003), Sabla Scheme (2010), National Mission for Empowerment of Women (2010) etc. All such policies and programs focus on social, economic and educational empowerment of women across various age groups. Thus, there has been no dearth of social, economic, political, legal and Constitutional efforts made for the empowerment of women both prior to and post-Independence. However, women in India continue to face atrocities such as rape, dowry killings, acid attacks, human trafficking, etc. According to a global poll conducted by Reuters, India is the “fourth most dangerous country in the world for women”.

## **Women Empowerment — Challenges Perspective:**

The most widespread and dehumanizing discriminations against women are on the basis of the biased perspective. The discrimination against the girl child begins from the birth itself. Boys are preferred over girls; hence, female infanticide is a common practice in India. The ordeal that an Indian girl faces at birth is only the beginning of a lifelong struggle to be seen and heard.

## **Patriarchate Bottlenecks**

The traditional Indian society is a patriarchal society ruled by the dictats of self-proclaimed caste lords who are the guardians of archaic and unjust traditions. They put the burden of traditions, culture, and honor on the shoulders of women and mark their growth. The incidences of “honor killing” reveal the distorted social fiber in the male dominated society.

## **Economic Backwardness:**

Women constitute only 29% of the workforce but forms majority of the destitute in the country. There has been a failure in transforming the available women base into human resource. This, in turn, has hampered not only the economic development of women but also of the country’ as a whole. Implementation Gaps Through all these years, the attention is only on developing and devising new schemes, policies and programmes and have paid less attention to the proper monitoring system and implementation

shortsightedness, for e.g. despite the presence of the Pre-Natal Diagnostic Technologies Act and various health programmes like Janani Suraksha Yojana and National Rural Health Mission (NHRM), our country has a skewed sex ratio and a high Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR). Loopholes in the legal structure Although there are a number of laws to protect women against all sorts of violence yet there has been the significant increase in the episodes of rapes, extortions, acid, attacks etc. This is due to delay in legal procedures and the presence of several loopholes in the functioning of a judicial system.

#### **Lack of Political Will:**

The still- pending Women's Reservation Bill underscores the lack of political will to empower women politically. The male dominance prevails in the politics of India and women are forced to remain mute spectators. Way ahead starts with bridging the deep-rooted biases through sustained reconditioning. It is only possible by promoting the idea of gender equality and uprooting social ideology of male child preferability. This concept of equality should be first developed in each and every household and from there, it should be taken to the society. This can be achieved by running sustained awareness programs with the help of NukkadNatak or dramas, radio, television, Internet, etc. across the country.

#### **Replacing 'Patriarchy' with Parity:**

A strong patriarchate society with deep-rooted socio-cultural values continues to affect women's empowerment. The need of the hour is an egalitarian society, where there is no place for superiority. The Government should identify and eliminate such forces that work to keep alive the tradition of male dominance over its female counterpart by issuing inhumane and unlawful diktats. Education is the most important and indispensable tool for women empowerment. It makes women aware of their rights and responsibilities. Educational achievements of a woman can have ripple effects for the family and across generations. Most of the girls drop out of schools due to the unavailability of separate toilets for them. The recently launched 'Swachh Bharat Mission' focusing on improving sanitation facilities in schools and every rural household by 2019, can prove to be very significant in bringing down the rate of girls dropping out of school.

**Political Will:**

Women should have access to resources, rights, and entitlements. They should be given decision-making powers and due position in governance. Thus, the Women Reservation Bill should be passed as soon as possible to increase the effective participation of women in the politics of India. Bridging implementation gaps: Government or community-based bodies must be set up to monitor the programs devised for the welfare of the society. Due importance should be given for their proper implementation and their monitoring and evaluation through social audits.

Justice delayed is justice denied. Efforts should be made to restructure the legal process to deliver fair and in- time justice to the victims of heinous crimes like rapes, acid attacks, sexual harassment, trafficking and domestic violence. The idea of fast-track courts, devised to impart speedy justice to the victims of rapes and other crimes against women, is a good initiative taken by the judiciary and the Government of India. Empowering women socially, economically, educationally politically and legally is going to be a Herculean task. It is not going to be easy to change the culture of disregard for women which are so deep-rooted in Indian society. But it does not mean that it is implausible. Only revolutions bring changes in a day, but reforms take their time. This one, in particular, will take its time as well. The idea of women empowerment might sound hard by the yard, but by the inch, it is just a cinch. All we need is a concentrated effort focused in the right direction that would rest only with the liberation of women from all forms of evil.

**Meaning**

Empowerment can be viewed as means of creating a social environment in which one can make decisions and make choices either individually or collectively for social transformation. It strengthens the innate ability by way of acquiring knowledge, power and experience.

Empowerment is the process of enabling or authorizing individual to think, take action and control work in an autonomous way. It is the process by which one can gain control over one's destiny and the circumstances of ones lives. Empowerment includes control over resources (physical, human, intellectual and financial) and over ideology (beliefs, values and attitudes). It is not merely a feel of greater extrinsic control, but also



grows intrinsic capacity, greater self-confidence and an internal transformation of one's consciousness that enables one to overcome external barriers to accessing resources or changing traditional ideology.

Women's empowerment is very essential for the development of society. Empowerment means individuals acquiring the power to think and act freely, exercises choice and fulfill their potential as full and equal members of society.

- As per the United National Development Fund for women (UNIFEM), the term women's empowerment means:
- Acquiring knowledge and understanding of gender relations and the ways in which these relations may be changed.
- Developing a sense of self-worth, a belief in one's ability to secure desired changes and the right to control one's life.
- Gaining the ability to generate choices exercise bargaining power.
- Developing the ability to organize and influence the direction of social change, to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally.

Batliwala (1974) defines empowerment as "the process of challenging existing power relation and of gaining greater control over the source of power". Women's empowerment is seen as the process and the result of the process of:

- Challenging the ideology of male domination and women's subordinations.
- Enabling women to gain equal access to and control over the resources (material, human and intellectual)

Thus, empowerment means a psychological sense of personal control or influence and a concern with actual social influence, political power and legal rights. It is a multi-level construct referring to individuals, organizations and community. It is an international, ongoing process centered in the local community, involving mutual respect, critical reflection, caring and group participation, through which people lacking an equal share of valued resources gain greater access to the control over these resources.

### **The Concept of Women Empowerment**

- It is a process or art of giving women the ability to live a happy and respectful life in society. Women are empowered when they have unrestricted access to chances

in a range of domains, such as education, professional life, and lifestyle among others.

- "It involves things like, education, awareness, literacy, and training to help them improve their level or position in society's giving them decision-making authority. A woman feels powerful when she takes significant decisions.
- Empowering women is the most important factor in a country's overall growth.

The term 'empowerment' has been widely used in relation to women and has been given currency by United Nations in recent years. It is being increasingly felt that empowerment of women will enable a greater degree of self-confidence, a sense of independence and capability to resist discrimination imposed by the male dominated society. Women empowerment is a stage of acquiring power for women in order to understand her rights and to perform her responsibilities towards oneself and others in a most effective way. Many well-known writers and researchers have provided wide-ranging definitions of empowerment. Their definitions of empowerment in a broad sense cover aspects such as women's control over material and intellectual resources. Empowerment is a process, which challenges traditional power equations and relations. Abolition of gender-based discrimination in all institutions and structures of society, and participation of women in policy and decision-making process at domestic and public levels are but a few dimensions of women empowerment. In the context of women, empowerment is referred as a process whereby women become able to organise themselves to increase self-reliance, to assert their independent right, to make choices and to control resources which will assist in challenging and eliminating their own subordination.

"Women empowerment is any process that provides greater autonomy to women through the sharing of relevant information and provision of control over factors affecting their performance". The editor of the book, 'Capacity Building for Effective Empowerment of Women', Ranjani K. Murthy refers empowerment as a process of 'exposing the oppressive power of the existing gender (and social) relations, critically challenging them and creatively trying to shape different social relations'.

Empowerment as the word suggests, is to empower or enable women to do certain things and in most cases it connotes women wielding political power. A deeper

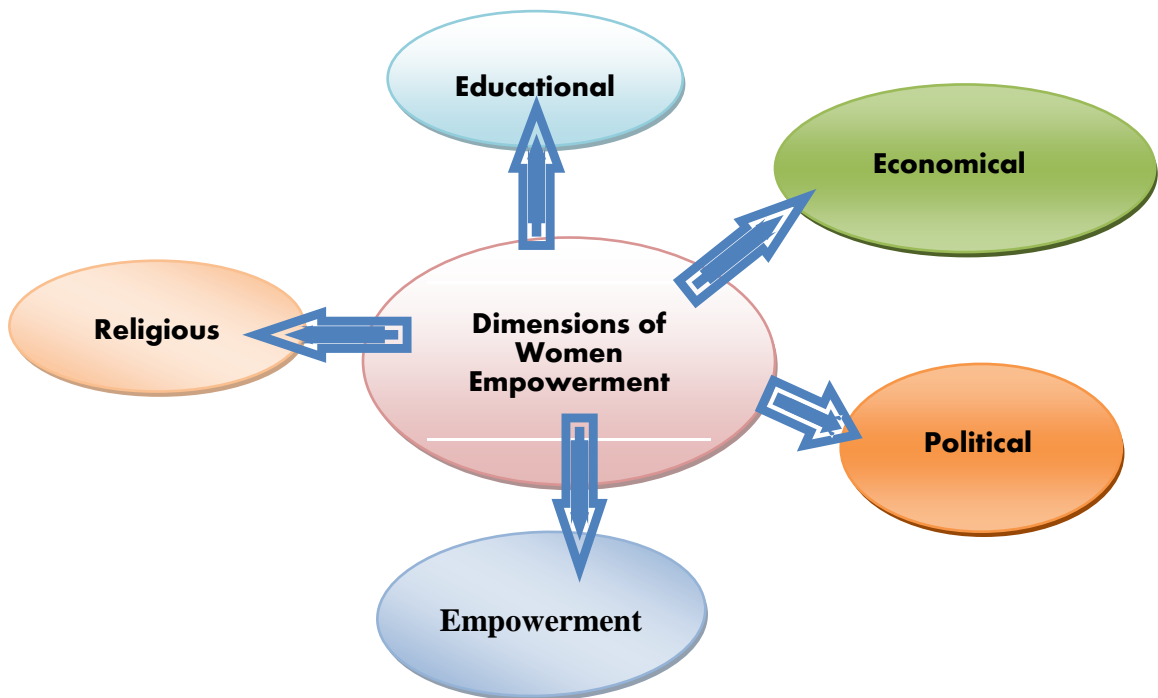
understanding of the word throws light on many of its dimensions and implications. The very concept of empowerment of women which is based on equality between genders, is a long drawn, conscious and continuous process comprising enhancement of skills, capacity building, gaining self-confidence and meaningful participation in decision-making. As the foremost precursor to development, empowerment of women comprehensively seeks to ensure an equitable division of resources and carve a clear role for them in decision-making. It helps them articulate theirs as well as others rights and participate actively in the democratic processes. Empowerment also wards off retrogressive practices like female infanticide and gender based violence.

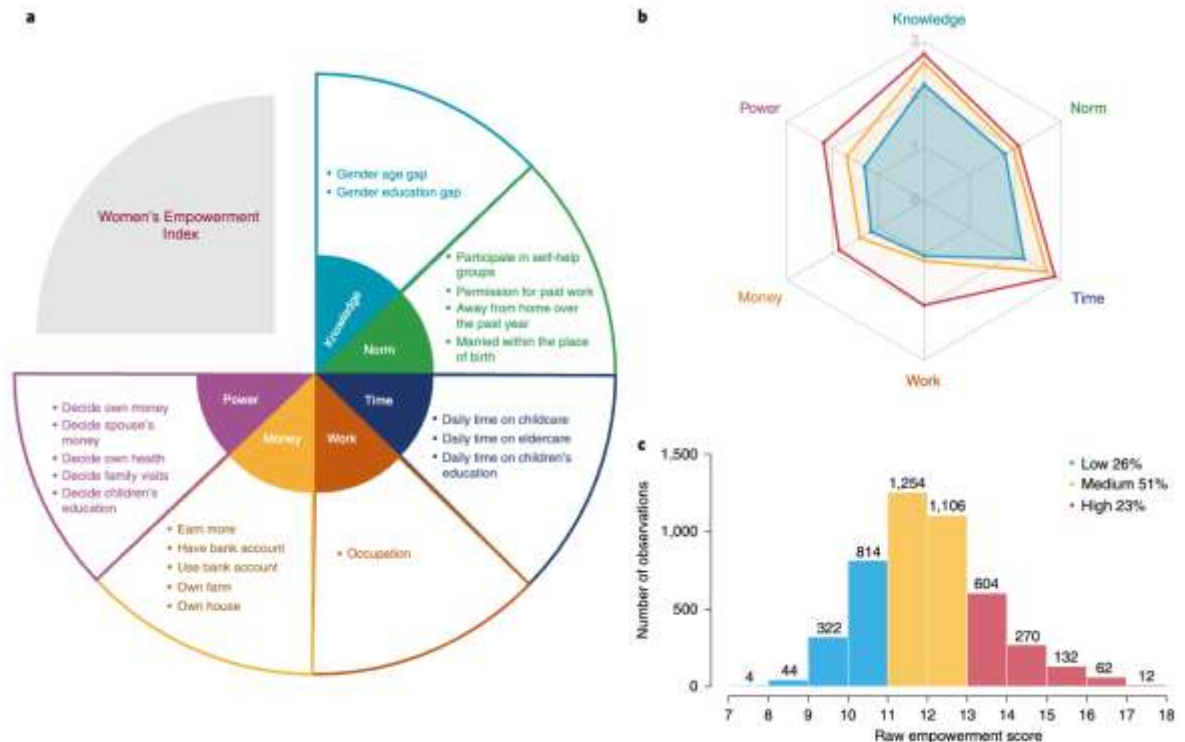
Empower means to make one powerful or to equip one with the power to face challenges of life, to overcome the disabilities, handicaps and inequalities. Empowerment is an active multi dimensional process, which would enable women to realise their full identity and powers in all spheres of life. It would consist in providing greater access to knowledge and resources, greater autonomy in decision-making, greater ability to plan their lives, greater control over the circumstances that influence their lives and freedom from the shackles imposed on them by custom, belief and practice.

Empowerment does not mean setting women against men. Indeed it means making both men and women realise their changing roles and status and develop a consensus for harmonious living in the context of an egalitarian society. It means redistribution of work roles, redistributing their values to the changing world and attitudes and evolving new kinds of adjustments, understanding and trust with each other. Empowerment of women is a new ideology for carrying democratic values into the family and society.

Empowerment is an active process of enabling women to realize their identity, potentiality and power in all spheres of their lives. Empowerment of women also means equal status to women. Here the balance of power between men and women is equal and neither party has dominance over the other. Empowering women socio-economically through increased awareness of their rights and duties as well as access to resources is a decisive step towards greater security for them. Empowerment includes higher literacy level and education for women, better healthcare for women and children, equal ownership of productive resources, increased participation in economic and commercial

sectors, awareness of their rights and responsibilities, improved standards of living and acquiring self- reliance, self-esteem and self-confidence. Thus the framework of empowerment encompasses the welfare of women, satisfaction of basic needs, access to resources, conscientisation to attain gender equity participation in the decision-making alongside men, and control, which refers to the ultimate level of equality and empowerment. In short, the philosophy of women's empowerment needs a total overhauling of the Indian society.





## Dimensions of Women Empowerment

Women empowerment is an active and multi-dimensional process which enables women to realize their identity and power in all aspects of life.

1. **Educational Empowerment:** Universal tool to empower the growth of any human being. It empowers women to understand their rights, fight for their freedom and improve their awareness.
2. **Political Empowerment:** Women's reservation and participation in political decision-making matters will contribute to the nation's growth.
3. **Economical Empowerment:** Can be achieved by gender equality at the workplace and equal pay for equal work. Providing her the job training and development programs can help her to achieve economic independence.
4. **Social Empowerment:** Social values set for women are different from men. Education can be imparted to her through various social awareness programs in order to make her aware of raising her voice on social evils like dowry, domestic violence, and rightful maintenance through ; Dowry Prohibition Act- 1961. Domestic Violence Act – 2005 Women has got right to maintenance under section 125 of Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 etc.

5. Religious Empowerment: Religion is often seen as a barrier to gender parity. Stories abound of gender-based violence done in the name of religion. As a result, in many cases, the issues of religion and gender parity are often dismissed as too complicated to address.

### **Role of Women in Freedom Struggle**

India's struggle for freedom was a long and difficult battle. Although it began mainly in the second half of the 19th century, there were several earlier attempts in different parts of the country to end British rule. The British gained real power in northern India in 1757. The loss of independence became the main reason for Indians to fight for freedom. People from different regions tried to throw off the control of the foreign rulers.

It took more than 100 years for the struggle to gain full strength. From 1757 to 1857, the country rarely remained free from civil or military uprisings. Many common people actively took part in these struggles against British rule.

In the early years, opposition to British rule mostly came from peasants, labourers, and weaker sections of society rather than from the educated classes. The British traders behaved selfishly and exploited the poor, which made their rule hateful to the people. The Christian missionaries' efforts to spread their religion were also strongly opposed. The destruction of Indian industries and handicrafts caused poverty and economic suffering. These factors created anger and discontent among the people, leading to many local uprisings throughout the country.

One of the earliest revolts was the uprising of the **Chauri in 1799** in the districts of **Manbhum, Bankura, and Midnapur**. It became serious under the leadership of the **Rani of Midnapur**. She was captured on **April 6, 1799**, which made the Chauri even more violent. This uprising is considered one of the earliest examples of rebellion caused by the unfair treatment and excessive taxes on farmers (*ryots*).

### **India's Early Struggles for Freedom**

The revolt of **Kittur in 1824** deserves special mention. **Rani Channamma of Kittur** bravely resisted the British when they tried to annex her kingdom. Her fearless fight for freedom has become a legend in the history of **Karnataka**.

Another important uprising in India's freedom struggle was the **Santhal Rebellion of 1855**, which took place in the **Rajmahal hills**. The Santhals revolted against the British Government and the **moneylenders (mahajans)**, who exploited and oppressed them. There were even reports of cruelty and mistreatment of Santhal women. Throughout the first century of British rule, India witnessed many such revolts. It was clear that there was a strong and continuous desire among the people to “**drive out the British**” from the country.

However, the British ignored these warnings. They had grown too confident in their power and believed that no one could challenge their rule in India. Therefore, when the **Great Revolt of 1857** broke out, they were completely shocked. It was the first large-scale, organized attempt by Indians to free their country from British control. Although the British eventually defeated the rebels, the revolt became a **symbol of inspiration and sacrifice** for future generations.

The leaders of the 1857 uprising included both **men and women**. Among the women, **Begum Hazrat Mahal, Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi**, and the **Rani of Ramgarh** played heroic roles. They led their troops into battle and fought bravely. Many of them were captured, imprisoned, exiled, or killed.

**Begum Hazrat Mahal**, wife of **Nawab Wajid Ali Shah**, the deposed ruler of **Avadh (Oudh)**, rose in revolt against British rule and became one of the main leaders of the 1857 Revolt. With the help of revolutionary forces, she successfully captured **Lucknow** after defeating the British troops. She then declared her son **Birjis Qadr** as the **King of Avadh** and acted as his regent. Begum Hazrat Mahal personally led the defense of Lucknow against the invading British forces under **Sir Colin Campbell**, showing remarkable courage and leadership.

She is reported to have appeared in the battlefield on February 25, 1858, mounted on an elephant. Even according to the British historians, she was a brave and courageous lady who inspired her troops in the battlefield. Under adverse circumstances, the Begum had to escape to Nepal and refused to surrender to the British authorities even when a pension and an “honourable position” was offered to her. In reply to the Proclamation of Queen Victoria (1858), she issued a counter-proclamation guaranteeing the rights, honour and dignity of the Indian princes. She warned the people not to have faith in the British

promises “for it is the unvarying custom of the English never to forgive a fault, be it great or small”.

Many other women laid down their lives in defence of the city of Lucknow but, unfortunately, their names remain unknown. The contemporary accounts of the British officers bear testimony to it. For example, Sir W. H. Russel noted in his Diary “a wrinkled hag with age grown double, lurking near the iron bridge and gathering up little bits of rags. She was later found quite dead and close to her hand lay a piece of cotton, like a candle-wick, and partially burnt, while nearly hidden by the rubbish, appeared through the floor, close to where the dead woman’s hand rested, a bamboo containing a slow match. The bamboo led to an enormous mine.” What wrongs her feeble hands were trying to avenge will never be known. Another British officer mentioned “an unknown brave woman who perched herself on a large peepul tree in the court of Sikandar Bagh, shot a number of British soldiers and was shot dead in her turn”. A British army officer observed that “among the slain at Sikandar Bagh there were a few Amazon Negresses who fought like wild cats and it was not till after they were killed that their sex was even suspected.” In Delhi there was another woman known as the ‘Maid of Delhi’ who was a terror to the British soldiers. She took part in the battle in a soldier’s uniform and won laurels.

But the crowning glory of 1857 was the famous Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi (1835–1858) who had taken a vow to take revenge on the British for their annexation of her State after the death of her husband Raja Gangadhar Rao. She took up arms against Cut in twin the most politically advanced and flourishing society in India and to crush the political power and influence of the educated opinion of Bengal. Hundreds of meetings were held in different parts of the country protesting against the partition. The women too were stirred by this political upheaval. Some 500 women held a meeting at Jenokand village in Murshidabad District to protest against the Government decision. They urged the people to boycott foreign goods and use only indigenous articles, whence the movement came to be called the Swadeshi Movement. In other parts of the country too, women did not lag behind. Mrs. Ramsay Mac Donald who visited India during this period noticed that “this movement seems to be spreading as much among women as men”. Valentine Chirol, the British author of *Indian Unrest* recorded that “the revolt



seems to have obtained the firm hold of zenana (female apartment) and the Hindu woman behind the purdah often exercises a greater influence on her husband and her sons than the British woman who moves freely about the world. In Bengal even boys of so tender an age as still to have the run of zenana, I am told, have been taught the whole pattern of sedition and go about from house to house dressed up as little sanyasis in little yellow robes preaching hatred of the English”.

The women contributed their gold bangles, nose rings, bracelets etc. for the promotion of the Swadeshi Movement. In villages too, a handful of grains was kept apart daily by the rural people for this purpose. Sarojini Bose, wife of Tara Prasanna Bose, took a vow that she would not put on gold bangles till the Vande Mataram circular prohibiting the use of the slogan, was withdrawn. Kumudini Mitter, daughter of Kristo Mitter, a well-known public leader, was quite active and helped in the circulation of the revolutionary literature. She propagated the cult of revolution through ‘Suprabhat’, a Bengali magazine. In Bombay, Mrs. Ketkar (Tilak’s daughter) and Mrs. A. V. Joshi, according to an intelligence report of the Government of India, were very active in propagating the Swadeshi Movement. In other parts of the country as well, the women were equally active. Sushila Devi of Sialkot, Hardevi of Lahore, Purani of Hissar, and Agayavati of Delhi were some of the important women who played a notable role spreading the message of extremist nationalism. Sarla Devi, niece of Rabindranath Tagore, also deserves mention in this connection. She tried to revive the heroic spirit among the people and established a centre for physical culture in Calcutta. She opened a shop called Lakshmi Bhandar for popularising Swadeshi goods.

Thus the Swadeshi Movement, perhaps for the first time, drew women out from the seclusion of their homes, and in many instances made them active participants in the grim struggle for Swaraj. It was also during this period that 500 women of Calcutta congratulated the mother of Khudi Ram Bose (1889–1908), the revolutionary youth, who was hanged for throwing a bomb at the carriage of Kingsford, Sessions Judge at Muzaffarpur, which accidentally killed two British ladies. His mother appreciated and extolled the patriotic act of her son.

The development of terrorism was a notable feature of this movement. The declared object of these revolutionaries was to bring about the independence of the

motherland for the attainment of which there should not be any hesitation to use arms. Secret societies were established in Bengal, Bihar, Maharashtra and the Punjab. Some of the important revolutionary organisations were 'Anusilan Samiti' and 'Jugantar Samiti' in eastern India and 'Abhinava Bharat' in western India. Numerous conspiracies and acts of terrorism were worked out by the revolutionaries, many of whom were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment, transported to Andamans or died on the gallows. Some of the daring young men such as Shyamji Krishna Verma went abroad and set up centres for propaganda in London, Paris and other places in Europe and smuggled arms into India. Madam Bhikaji Cama (1861–1936), a Parsi lady of Bombay, decided to work outside India against immense odds to build up public opinion in favour of India's freedom. She left India in 1902 and joined the noted revolutionary Shyamji Krishna Verma in London. She undertook travels in Europe and America. She established contracts with revolutionaries in Ireland, Russia, Egypt and Germany and tried to smuggle revolvers to the extremists.

She attended Socialist Congress at Stuttgart in Germany in August 1907, where she, for the first time, unfurled the flag of Indian freedom. She wrote articles in the 'Indian Sociologist' and spoke frequently at the Hyde Park, London apprising the British people about the political condition in India. She had to shift her centre of activities from London to Paris where she started the Journal "Bande Mataram" to propagate her ideas. A large number of copies of the journal were smuggled into India and distributed throughout the country. She was also a very active member of the 'Abhinav Bharat Society', started by V. D. Savarkar in India and London which was responsible for the murder of Jackson at Nasik and Ashe in the Tinnevely district. She was imprisoned during the First World War by the French Government and later on joined hands with the French Communists.

The repressive measures of the British Government failed to crush the spirit of the Indians who continued their struggle relentlessly. The British Government now tried to pacify the moderates in the Congress by announcing the reforms of 1909 which raised the number of elected members of the Viceroy's Legislative Council and also enlarged the size of the Provincial Legislative Councils. But by introducing the provision for separate electorates on the basis of religion, it created complications in the struggle for Swaraj.

Before Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) came to the fore-front of the national movement and became its undisputed leader, two women, Annie Besant (1847-1933) and Sarojini Naidu (1879-1949), had already made a deep impact on the minds of Indian women. They rendered a great service to the nation by involving women more and more in India's national movement.

Annie Besant was a dynamic force in Indian politics and rendered valuable service to the cause of national regeneration in India both from political and cultural points of view. She worked with zeal and energy to make the idea of Home Rule popular in large parts of India. She founded the Home Rule League in 1916 and edited two Journals, *The New India* and *the Commonwealth*. She remarked in 1917 that the strength of the Home Rule movement was rendered ten-fold greater "by the adhesion to it of a large number of women who brought to the uncalculating heroism, endurance, self-sacrifice of the feminine nature. Our League's best recruits and recruiters are amongst the women of India, and the women of Madras boast that they marched in procession when the men were stopped and that their prayers in the temples set the interned captives free."

It was at the call of this crusader for India's freedom, Annie Besant, that Sarojini Naidu decided to enter into active politics and joined the Home Rule League in 1916. The former was the first President (1917) of the Indian National Congress who showed by her action that the Presidency "was not a passing show or a three-day festivity", but involved shouldering of responsibility throughout the succeeding year.

Born in a family of scholars, Sarojini Naidu was educated at Cambridge. She showed a marked flair for literature at an early age which later on found expression in beautiful English verses and earned her the title of the "Nightingale of India". She became one of the chief lieutenants of Mahatma Gandhi and was the first Indian lady to preside over the Indian National Congress Session (Kanpur, 1925) which was followed by Nalini Sen Gupta in 1933 and later by Smt. Indira Gandhi who was elected President in 1959-60. "The entry of a woman of such eminence into active politics", as has been rightly observed was "not only a great asset to the Congress but a real inspiration to the hesitant womanhood of India. The fact that she left home, husband and children to identify herself with the movement for freedom, had a tremendous impact on women in determining their future participation in the national movement".

Meanwhile, World War I had come to an end and the Indian people hoped that they would be given the status of a self-governing dominion in view of the great sacrifices they had made during the War. But they were completely disillusioned by the Government of India Act, 1919 or the Montague-Chelmsford reforms as they were called. The Congress in its session Bombay (1918) criticised the proposals as disappointing and unsatisfactory. The Government of India took steps to forestall political agitations, particularly terrorism, and assumed special powers under the Rowlatt Bills passed in 1919. These laws known as the 'Black Bills' shook the entire nation as they deprived them of their ordinary rights and privileges of trial in courts and defence under the law. There were riots in the Punjab where martial law was imposed. The greatest tragedy however occurred at Amritsar (April 13, 1919) where under the orders of General Dyer, British troops fired over sixteen hundred rounds on the unarmed and defenceless people who had gathered at a meeting at Jallianwala Bagh with hardly any means of escape. At the end of the firing, there was not a place where people were not lying dead in large numbers. The ghastly sight, however, failed to move the callous heart of Dyer who deliberately took no steps to provide medical aid to the wounded. On the other hand, he ordered that nobody should move out of his house after 8 p.m. Even so, there were some daring persons who risked their lives to visit the place and make a search for those still alive. Among them, the name of Shrimati Attar Kaur deserves special mention. The official estimates put the casualties at 379 killed and twelve hundred wounded. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya's report issued on behalf of the Congress stated that one thousand people were killed. There were instances of harassment of women by the British soldiers. Which were brought to the notice of the Secretary of State by Sarojini Naidu.

This national tragedy moved the whole nation which was now determined to throw off the foreign yoke under the leadership of Gandhiji who, on his return from South Africa, threw himself heart and soul in the national movement. His leadership opened a new chapter in India's struggle for freedom. He chalked out a programme of action which had not been adopted by any other leader so far. He transformed the national movement into a mass movement for liberty. He lived in the villages and led the simple life of a peasant. The masses understood him and responded to his call. He was a champion of Hindu-Muslim unity and regarded it as essential for the achievement of freedom. The

whole-heartedly supported the Khilafat cause as he felt that the Indian Muslims were genuinely aggrieved over the wrong done to Turkey by the British. He therefore declared that he would launch a non-violent non-cooperation movement (1920-22) on a mass scale to compel the British to grant independence to India and to rectify the wrong done to Turkey. Gandhiji's non-cooperation movement included boycott of Government offices and institutions, courts, legislatures, etc., besides complete adoption of swadeshi cloth and boycott of foreign goods. People defied the law and nearly thirty thousand men and women courted arrest. The participation of women in this movement was unprecedented. In the words of Jawaharlal Nehru, "It was Gandhiji, that wonderful man and great revolutionary, who brought a dramatic change among our women, when at his bidding, they came out in large numbers from the shelter of their homes to take their part in the struggle for India's freedom. Once the old shackles were removed, it was no longer possible to replace them in the same way. Attempts were no doubt made to go back, but they were bound to fail".

Gandhiji's appeal brought forth an amazing response. Women-folk flocked to the organisation and threw themselves whole-heartedly into the movement. Sarla Devi Chaudhurani, Sarojini Naidu and Kamala Devi Chattopadhyaya were in the forefront of the struggle in Bengal. Basanti Devi, wife of Deshbandhu C. R. Das, his sister, Urmila Devi, Sumati Devi, Neli Sen Gupta, wife of Deshpriya J. M. Sen Gupta, Renuka Ray. Malti Chaudhury. Leela Roy, Aruna Asaf Ali, Santosh Kumari Gupta, Shanti Das (Kabir), Indumati Goenka, Ila Sen and Bina Das were some of the other prominent ladies who led the young women of Bengal in the non-cooperation movement.

In Maharashtra, women held meetings and exhorted the people to boycott the Prince of Wales's visit. Shrimati Kasturba Gandhi toured the various provinces and appealed to the women to boycott foreign goods and spin and wear khadi. "If we want to earn Swaraj", she said, "we will have to all the bowl of the Goddess of Freedom".

In the Punjab. Smt. Radha Devi, wife of Lala Jajpat Rai. was in the forefront of the struggle. Parvati Devi of Layallpur was arrested and taken to Agra where she was sentenced to two years imprisonment. Abida Bano Begum, popularly known as Bai Aman, mother of Mohammad Ali and Shaukat Ali, under-took tour of many provinces and exhorted Muslim ladies to give up purdah and work for the freedom of the country.

Mahatma Gandhi paid her a handsome tribute when she passed away in 1924. He said, "She realised that the freedom of India was impossible without Hindu-Muslim unity and khaddar. She there-fore ardently preached unity which had become an article of faith with her".

In Uttar Pradesh, Swarup Rani Nehru, Kamala Nehru and Begum Abdul Qadir were in the vanguard of the non-cooperation movement. Kamala Nehru endeared herself as the 'Pride of Allahabad'.

Women from almost all the provinces were represented in this movement launched under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. The names of Rajkumari Amrit Kaur and Amar Kaur in the Punjab and Ansuya Bai Kale in Madhya Pradesh deserve special mention. Rural areas also became politically alive. The peasants in Midnapur, and the tenants in Bareilly and Faizabad and Adivasis of Chhota Nagpur refused to pay taxes. The British Government adopted repressive measures and declared both the Congress and the Khilafat organisations unlawful. However, there was a case of mob violence at Chauri Chaura in U.P., resulting in the death of a few policemen which led Gandhi to suspend the movement. The negotiations between Gandhiji and the British Government failed as the latter refused to agree to the demand of the Congress for Dominion Status. Consequently, the Congress at its meeting at Lahore in December 1929, under the President ship of Jawaharlal Nehru, declared complete independence as the national goal. As the British Government refused to yield, Gandhiji decided to defy the Salt Law. He launched his Civil Disobedience Movement by under-taking the historic March to Dandi, a village on the sea coast about 332 kms, from the Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad. Gandhiji was arrested. The Civil Disobedience Movement now gathered momentum and about ninety thousand satyagrahis courted arrest. The participants in the Salt Satyagraha came from the different strata of Indian society. The participation of women in the agitation everywhere was unprecedented. Kamala Devi Chattopadhyaya's account of the part played by the women at this stage of struggle is worth quoting. "Gandhiji's first instinct was to reserve women for some special work and not allow them to participate in the general struggle. But the movement proved too big for that. Even though only a few women were chosen officially in the salt satyagraha with which the Indian revolution

opened on the morning of April 6, 1930. by sunset of that first day it had turned into a mass movement and swept the country.

"On that memorable day thousands of women strode down to the sea like proud warriors. But instead of weapons, they bore pitchers of clay, brass and copper, and instead of uniform. The simple sari of village India. One watched them fascinated and awe struck. How had they broken their age-old shell of social seclusion and burst into this fiercesht of open warfare? Undoubtedly, the women turned the struggle into a beautiful epic. As Mahatma Gandhi said 'the part the women of India played. will be written in letters of gold' AF "Unlettcred, untrained, unprepared, they assumed new duties with unexpected courage. It was the women who made law breaking universal. Following the violation of the Salt Act came effective attacks on the forest laws and other obnoxious taxes and regulations".

The response of Indian women to Gandhiji's call took by surprise not only the Government but even the Indians themselves. Miss Mary Campbell, who had carried on the temperance work in India for forty years. has vividly described the political awakening of the women in Delhi where alone 1600 women were arrested. Besides prominent ladies such as Mani Bhen Patch. Satyavati, Memo Bai, Savitri Devi, Brij Rani, Chandravati Devi, daughter-in-law of Swami Shardhanand, and Kaushalya Devi, there were many other ladies, belonging to the different strata of society such as Anar Devi, Champa Devi, Chameli Devi, Chand-ravati, Dayawati, Durga Devi, Ganga Devi, Jai Devi, Javitri Devi, Kalawati, Kamla Devi and Kaiser Devi who courted imprisonment. The condition in other parts of the country was not different. Dhangopal Mukherjee has given a lively description of a meeting in Bombay where "a large number of ladies belong-ing to aristocratic families were holding a closed door meeting to discuss the political situation in the country, while the men were waiting, moving the screen, and exposing them in the full glare of light to the gaze of a bewildered throng of men". Foreign visitors like H. N. Brailsford and G. Slocombe were greatly impressed by the impact the movement made on the women of India almost overnight and observed that "if Civil Disobedience Movement has accomplished nothing else but the emancipation of the women of India, it would have fully justified itself."

In Madhya Pradesh, the names of Reyana a labourer and Demo Bai, a farmer, deserve special mention. Both of them were killed by police firing during the Civil Disobedience Movement. Vanara Senas were also organised in the various parts of the country to harness the enthusiasm and energy of the youth. At the tender age of 12, Jawaharlal Nehru's daughter, Indira had built up an army of 6,000 children at Allahabad and similar armies were organised at Bombay by Kamala Devi and by Rameshwaramma at Madras. These young volunteers did intelligence work, brought valuable information and carried messages.

It was at this time that the Garhwali troops refused to open fire on an unarmed crowd at Peshawar and many of them were court-martialled. The revolutionaries also became active and there was a raid on the Chittagong armoury under the leadership of Surya Sen. Their objective was to capture the armoury of the police auxiliary force, massacre the Europeans in the Chittagong club and to destroy the telephone exchange and the tele-graph office. They were successful in their attempt and after killing the sepoy and the Sergeant-Major, they armed themselves with pistols, revolvers and rifles. But they forgot to take the cartridges which were kept in a separate locked room. They were, however, not able to destroy the Telegraph office and returned to the police lines where they joined the main party and declared the Provisional Independent Government of India with Surya Sen as President. The raiders were also able to cut all telegraph communications between Chittagong and the outside world.

The information was, however, sent out by wireless by the British authorities and reinforcements reached Chittagong. Then followed a regular pitched battle in which 11 revolutionaries lost their lives. The casualties on the Government side were also heavy but exact figures are not available. Another free fight took place at Chandernagore when the Police Commissioner surrounded a house in which a few of the Chittagong raiders had taken refuge. Kalpana Dutt, one of the few ladies who had played such a notable role in the revolutionary activities, was arrested in 1973 in a house in Gohira village and was tried along with Chittagong armory raiders. Surya Sen was sentenced to death while Kalpana Dutt to transportation for life.

Earlier two teen-aged girl students of the Government High School, Shanti Gosh and Sumiti Chaudhuri, had killed the District Magistrate of Tipperah. Both of them were



tried by a Special Tribunal which sentenced them to transportation for life. Equally daring was the attempt of Bina Dass to kill the Governor of Bengal. She came to the convocation at Calcutta University Senate Hall on February 6, 1932 to receive her graduate degree. As soon as the Governor Sir Stanley Jackson stood up to read his address, she fired five shots from her revolver on him. The Governor saved himself by ducking while the Vice-Chancellor was slightly injured. In her statement in the court, Bina Dass took the entire responsibility for her act and said 'my job was to die. and if to die, to die nobly, fighting against this despotic system of Government, which has kept my country in perpetual subjection to its infinite shame and endless sufferings; and fighting in a way which cannot but tell. She was sentenced to nine years rigorous imprisonment.

The other famous woman revolutionary, Pritti Lata Waddedar was an important member of the militant organizations known as 'Dipali Sangh', and "Chhatri Sangh". She was the leader of the party which attacked the Phaartali European Club at Chitta-gong on September 22, 1932. To avoid capture, she committed suicide on the spot by swallowing cyanide poison. Banalata Das Gupta another revolutionary was detained without trial for possessing unlicensed arms in her hostel. She refused to give an undertaking to the British authorities to keep away from political activities and died on July 1, 1936 at Calcutta while still under internment.

Unable to suppress the upsurge by force the Government finally decided to open negotiations which resulted in the Gandhi-Irwin Pact (1931) under which the Congress agreed to suspend the movement and attend the Round Table Conference which was convened in London for seeking the greatest possible measure of agreement between the ripper tentative of both British India and the Indian States. Gandhiji attended the second session of the Round Table Conference from September 7 to December 1, 1931. The final agreement foundered on the communal deadlock and Gandhiji returned to India on December 28, 1931, and resumed the civil disobedience movement. The British Government declared the Congress unlawful and thousands of people were arrested.

The movement continued till May 1934 when the Congress decided to allow the proposed new constitution of 1935 a fair trial and the movement was withdrawn. The Congress fought elections at the Centre and in the provinces and formed Ministries in 7

provinces. It did useful work in the field of education, and social and economic uplift for about 2 years when the Second World War broke out. The British Government declared war against Nazi Germany on September 3, 1939. The Viceroy pro-claimed that India too was at war with Germany. As he did not care to consult the Central Assembly or the representatives of the people and expressed Britain's inability to grant independence to India, the Congress ministries resigned immediately in October 1939. Meanwhile, the war took a turn for the worse for the Allies as Germany over-ran almost the whole of Europe. The Congress did not like to exploit the situation and offered to co-operate with the British Government if a Provisional National Government was set up at the Centre and the right of India to independence was recognised. The British Government rejected the Congress offer. The Congress decided to start the Individual Civil Disobedience Campaign in October 1940. as a protest against the British policies. It continued for 14 months and about 20,000 persons were convicted. Included among them were a large number of ladies.

While the Indian people were thus feeling completely disillusioned frustrated the War took an alarming turn so far as India was encored, due to the entry of the Japanese as an ally of the Axis power against Britain. With lightning speed the Japanese forces took over Singapore, overran Malaya and captured Rangoon and Mandalay. Thus in 1942, India came very near to the theatre of war and in fact there were air raids on Vishakhapatnam and Kakinada in April 1942. At this crucial hour the British Government decided to depute Sir Stafford Cripps, a Member of the War Cabinet, to hold discussions with the Indian leaders. However, he was unwilling to accept the Congress demand that there must be a Cabinet Government with full powers. There was also a difference of opinion about the retention of the Defence portfolio by the British. The Indian leaders felt that complete transfer of power to the Indian people was essential to organise what could be a People's War.

The failure of the Cripps Mission brought out a distinct change in Gandhiji's mood. Hitherto he was against launching any mass movement during the war. He did not wish to hamper the British efforts in their struggle. He now asked for complete British withdrawal from India. He argued that by doing so India would not only regain her freedom but would at the same time avoid becoming a theatre of war between Britain and

Japan. With the passing of the Quit India Resolution by the All India Congress Committee on August 8, 1942, the die was cast. Early next morning August 9, 1942, Gandhiji and the members of the Working Committee were taken into custody under the Defence of India Rules. All Congress Committees were declared unlawful organisations, Congress headquarters sealed up and AICC funds confiscated. Wholesale arrests of Congressmen began in every province. Ordinances under the Defence of India Rules were issued imposing strict control over the publication of news and contents to such an extent that several newspapers preferred to close down as a protest. There were spontaneous rallies throughout the country and protest meetings were held. Thousands of women and girl students took part in the struggle and went through the horrors of police repression. Prominent women such as Sucheta Kripalani, Aruna Asaf Ali and others went underground to carry on the struggle. They were among those who chalked out the programme of action after the arrest of Gandhiji. Aruna Asaf Ali was able to hoist the National Flag on August 9 at Gowalia Tank Maidan, Bombay. in spite of police firing which resulted in eight deaths. The police failed to arrest her in spite of their best efforts. As a fugitive, Aruna Asaf Ali paid frequent visits to Delhi which had become a nerve centre of activities for north India. The Government had declared her an absconder and her belongings were given away in auction. She managed to elude the British authorities and it was only on January 25, 1946, when the warrant against her arrest was officially withdrawn that she made her appearance, Usha Mehta broadcast news and gave talks in Hindustani on a secret transmitter till she was arrested on November 12, 1942.

Rajkumari Amrit Kaur and Smt. Rameshwari Nehru, who had been arrested immediately after the movement started, were treated harshly by the police. Sarojini Naidu and Mira Behn were also arrested and kept in the Aga Khan Palace at Poona, along with Gandhiji. Many women belonging to different strata of society laid their lives in this movement. Kasturba Gandhi met the martyr's death while a prisoner in the Aga Khan Palace on February 24, 1944.

The brave Kanaklata Barua, a girl in her teens, was shot dead while leading a procession to Gohpur police station to hoist the tricolour. Before she died she handed over the flag to her grandmother who also met the same fate. The other important women leaders in Assam were Annupriya Barua and Sudha Lata Dutta. In Bengal, Matangini

Hajra led the procession to the Tamluk Civil Court to hoist the tricolour on September 29, 1942. She was brutally shot dead by the military. Sasibala Dasi participated in the attack on the Keshpur police station and died of bullet wounds received in firing by the police. In Maharashtra, Shrimati Sakhamate met the same fate while hoisting the national flag at Nagpur. In Bihar there were many cases of heroic sacrifices by the women belonging to the peasant classes such as Akli Devi of Lasarhi, Dhaturi Devi of Rohiyar and Lakshmi Hazarika of Barhampur.

The Government thus used the most stringent measures to suppress the movement. A large number of people were killed by the firing of the police and the military. It is very difficult to assess with accuracy the exact number of persons condemned to cruel punishment or done to death as martyrs in the cause of the country's freedom. According to Jawaharlal Nehru, the figures of the dead might vary from 4,000 to 10,000. Over 60,000 persons had been arrested up to 1942. The number of persons convicted was 26,000 and 18,000 persons had been set after the British decision to send a Cabinet Mission to India. The Mission held meetings with leaders of the Congress and the Muslim League on the formation of an interim Government and the setting up of a Constituent Assembly to frame a constitution for India. The Cabinet Mission's proposals were not considered satisfactory by the Congress and the Muslim League. The Interim Government formed with the Congress and Muslim League ministers did not work as the League refused to accept the convention of collective responsibility. Attlee, therefore, made an announcement on February 20, 1947, declaring that the British Government proposed to leave India at a date not later than June, 1948. Lord Mountbatten was appointed the new Viceroy to take the necessary steps for the final transfer of power. Mountbatten held discussions with the leaders of the various political parties and announced his plan on June 3, 1947. On the basis of the agreement arrived at, power ultimately transferred to the two successor dominions on August 15, 1947.

**Self Assessment Questions**

1. What is meant by *Women Empowerment*?
2. State any one characteristic (nature) of women empowerment.
3. Explain the concept of women empowerment in one or two lines.
4. Mention any one strategy used to promote women empowerment.
5. List any one classification of women empowerment.
6. Identify any one dimension of women empowerment.
7. How does education help in empowering women?
8. Name one woman freedom fighter from India.
9. Describe briefly one role played by women in the national freedom struggle.
10. Analyse how women empowerment is linked to India's freedom movement.

## Unit- II

Social Empowerment – Women's Education – Women and Health - Contribution of Periyar - Bharathiar - Bharathidhasan - Annadurai – Karunanidhi – MG.Ramachandran - Jayalalitha.

### Objectives

- To understand concepts and strategies for empowering women.
- To identify classifications and dimensions of women empowerment.
- To learn the role of women in the Indian freedom struggle.

### Social Empowerment

Education is an organic entity that recognizes the changes in the environment and responds to new demands of the society. Education of the human being is started with the time of conception in the mother womb and continues as life-long process.

One should be educated both formally and non-formally. It can bring awareness related to women's social status, injustice, differentiation with men, violence against women, etc. It is a great determinate and plays a vital role in the empowerment of women. Education empowers women in two ways: direct and indirect. To enhance productivity of a nation, education is essential. There are several studies done in this regard which focused the relationship between education and earnings, higher education higher will lead to the earnings and higher the earnings will be the empowerment of women. Education increases a woman's chance of earning income and it is important for them to provide food, clothing, health care and education of their children. The educated woman tends to have more decision-making authority within home and outside their home.

Education allows the women to go outside from their home and where she can share her opinions, knowledge, etc. with her other fellows and get the opportunity to deal with her potentialities and abilities. It is necessary for her empowerment. Empowerment refers to mounting the economic, political, social, educational or spiritual potency of an individual and of an entity or entities. It also includes encouraging, and developing the skills for, self-sufficiency, with a focus on eliminating the future need for charity or welfare in the individuals of the group.

## **Women's Education**

"I was so immersed in the sea of housework that I was not conscious of what I was going through day and night. After some time the desire to learn how to read properly grew very strong in me. I was angry with myself for wanting to read books. Girls did not read".

"In a reformer's family, higher education for a girl was tolerated. But in a middle class family, an unmarried girl taking education in a college in a class with boys around was just impossible. A person going against the norm has to be ready for all kinds of ridicule, comments and hurdles. In my class (in 1899) we were only two girls, one Parsi girl and myself. Though it was a completely new experience, I was feeling hesitant. But I had tremendous desire to learn".

"All of us had vivid memories of colonial rule and the freedom movement. Some had been fully active in the struggle. Those of us who were younger had only partial experience as students, during the last phase. We were the daughters of Independence" (Vina Mazumdar, reminiscing about the early years of independence).

"The modern educated Indian woman is neither happy nor contented nor socially useful. She is a misfit in life. She is highly suppressed and needs opportunities for self-expression. The new education must provide this opportunity" (remarks of a woman who gave evidence before the Radhakrishnan Commission on education, 1949).

These perceptions, articulated by sensitive, educated women at different periods of time, encompassing about 150 years, are pointers to women's desire, expectations and imprints of education. Society has always looked upon education as a gateway enabling individuals to be equipped for the world of work, to become useful citizens and for personal enhancement. The passage from acceptance of the legitimacy of education for women to recognising education as empowering women has been long and protracted, marked by the recurrence of ever widening, questioning and struggle leading to reluctant concessions of legitimacy.

## **Milestones in Education Policy**

The entry of women into the formal education system began in the mid-19th century, but it got wider acceptance only in the mid-20th century. The government was slow to push policies promoting education, but social reformers and women's

organizations realized the significance of women's education at all levels. The efforts of Maharshi Karve, Mahatma Gandhi, Maharshi Tagore, as well as organisations such as the All India Women's Conference not only pleaded for giving women access to education, but declared that education helped women perform their roles and become useful citizens.

Still unresolved, even after Independence, is the dilemma of the proper role for Indian women. All are agreed that women are entitled to education, but ambivalent about the kind of education appropriate for women.

The Constitution of the Indian Republic introduced in 1950 included a number of important provisions which had a direct or indirect bearing on education. Article 45 imposed direct responsibility for education on the states. The state shall endeavour to provide, within a period of 10 years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years (that this has still not been achieved after five decades is a different story). Article 16 imposed non-discrimination on grounds of sex in public employment, and Article 15(3) empowered the State to make special provisions for the welfare and development of women and children, the provision which was invoked to justify special allocations and relaxation of procedures/conditions to expand a girl's access to education at different levels.

Considering the importance given to education as an essential instrument of the nation-building process by leaders of the national movement from the 19th century onwards, it is surprising that a comprehensive review of the entire education system was undertaken only two decades after Independence. Previous reviews had been sectoral. The University Education Commission or the Radhakrishnan Commission was the first review body, which submitted its report in 1949. The Secondary Education (Mudaliar) Commission was in 1952-53, and the National Committee (Durgabai Deshmukh) on Women's Education in 1958-59. The recommendations of the Hansa Mehta Committee on Differentiation in Curricula for Boys and Girls in 1964 were endorsed by the Indian Education Commission (1966), well known as the Kothari Commission, which was followed by the National Policy on Education in 1968. The next National Policy on Education came only in 1986, with a plan of action. Both documents were revised further in 1992.



After Independence, the first major step taken by leaders in the Nehruvian era was establishing a University Education Commission headed by Dr. Radhakrishnan. It is very significant that the Commission devoted a full chapter to women's education, discussing various dimensions. However, the views of the all male commission on women's roles appeared to have advanced little beyond the views held a few decades ago. The following statement is quite revealing: "The Commission believes that a well-ordered home helps to make well-ordered men. The mother who is inquiring and alert, well informed and familiar with subjects such as history and literature, and who lives and works with her children in the home, will be the best teacher in the world of both character and intelligence."

This kind of observation in 1949 indicates the persistence of the perception of the wife-mother role of a woman, though reality was changing fast, and that the Commission did not take note of the prevalence of unequal gender relations in the household. The Commission seems to waver between accepting that education for both men and women with the same curriculum had the same aim, and that home-making was the primary role for women who therefore needed to be taught special skills.

The Commission mentions that there cannot be educated people without educated women, and therefore opportunities should be given to women to get an education, but the commission states that the basic objective of education is to pass tradition on to the next generation. While elaborating on the education of women as women, it avers that women are as able as men to do the same academic work, with no less thoroughness and quality, but adds that it does not follow that men's and women's education should be identical in all things. The Commission felt that giving a woman a higher education would be an obstacle in her preparation to be a home-maker, and that the skills she needed would have to be learned then in the wasteful school of experience.

In spite of the conviction that the greatest profession of woman is that of a proficient homemaker, the Commission had to mention that a woman's world should not be limited to only one relationship. It was forced to take note that women were entering the world of work. Therefore, it ended the section on women's education by remarking, "The educational system at all levels should prepare men and women for such varied callings."

As the first document on education to come out after Independence, this report persistently swings between the specific wife mother role of a woman and the need to equip her for wider participation.

The First Five Year Plan realised the significance of the problems of education for women and the need to adopt special measures to solve them. From this phase onwards, there seems to have been a toning down of ambivalence regarding women's education, though the underpinning of the domestic role persists. The First Five Year Plan mentions that the general purpose and objective of women's education cannot be different from those of men's education, but also stated that there are vital differences in "the way in which this purpose has to be realised."

The Secondary Education Commission (Mudaliar Commission) of 1952-53 appears to have been less preoccupied with gender differences. On the issue of a girl's education, the Commission reiterated, "In a democratic society, where all citizens have to discharge their civic and social obligations, differences, which may lead to variations in the standard of intellectual development achieved by boys and girls, cannot be envisaged."

The National Committee on Women's Education popularly known as Durgabai Deshmukh Committee on Women's Education (1958-59), was one of the most significant committees appointed to look specifically into the question of women's education. Recognising the slow progress of women's education, the focus had shifted from higher education to school education. The major purpose of this Committee was to look into the difficulties that hindered the progress of girls' education and to make recommendations to the Government regarding the manner in which this could be brought on par with that of boys.

The Committee (Hansa Mehta) on Differentiation of Curricula for Boys and Girls was appointed in 1962. After reviewing historical developments during the last 150 years in official policies and public attitudes regarding coeducation, the Committee took an unequivocal stand against differentiation. In its view, the responsibility for the existing gap between the education of boys and girls lay in the continuation of traditional attitudes and values which regarded girls as inferior to boys in physique, intellect and aptitude, and the perpetuation of such ideas through the existing practice of prescribing subjects for

girls that reinforced the tradition of division of tasks and roles between men and women. Besides recommending co-education at the elementary and secondary stages and the freedom to opt for co-education or separate institutions, the most significant recommendation of this Commission was that home science and vocational courses should be provided for boys and girls.

The Education Commission (1964-66), popularly known as Kothari Commission, which examined indepth the role and goals of education in the process of national development towards a secular, socialist and democratic society, endorsed the views of the Hansa Mehta and Durgabai Deshmukh Committees, and observed: "In the modern world, the role of women goes much beyond the home and the bringing up of children. She is now adopting a career of her own and sharing equally with men the responsibility for the development of society in all its aspects. This is the direction in which we shall have to move. In the struggle of freedom Indian women fought side by side with men. This equal partnership will have to continue in the fight against hunger, ignorance and ill health."

The commission had the mandate to look into education at all stages and from various dimensions, but in spite of this scale of mandate, it is a sad story that only two pages have been devoted to women's education, and only a few paragraphs to women's higher education! The Report started by mentioning that special efforts are needed to expand higher education of women, though the general feeling is that women have entered the portals of University education and therefore one should not worry about it any more. With this note of optimism, the Commission made only two suggestions to enhance women's higher education-provision of financial assistance and hostels!

The dual stance of higher education being liberal and technical, the Commission mentioned that universities must encourage individuality, variety and dissent within a climate of tolerance, seek new knowledge and inculcate fearlessness in the pursuit of knowledge. Education should provide society with competent men and women. The liberal stance of the Report is evidenced in the following: "It would be wrong to restrict the (girl's) choice or to compel them to take particular courses. The more academic type of girls with ambitions of pursuing careers of research or teaching at the college or

university level, or in professions such as medicine or technology should have all the opportunities and incentives for doing so."

To sum up, it may be mentioned that all committees and commissions on education headed by a man or a woman, Gandhian or non-Gandhian, failed to articulate the relationship between women's equality, their participation in national development and the pattern and thrust of education itself. No thought was given to the possibly adverse aspect of the educational process on social values, the construction of gender, and how women's equality as a value could, or needed to, affect the educational process.

A major change was, however taking place in Indian society with the rapid growth in the number of educated women, but this in a way hid a severe contradiction, for though the number of women in higher education was growing at a fast rate, the spread of literacy itself was dismal. Educated women represented a mixed bag of aspirations, governed by conflicts of identity, internalisation of a value set and social approval. At the same time, they also gave visibility to the national advance that was made in two decades of Independence and provided leadership in various segments of public life. With a woman Prime Minister a seal was stamped, demonstrating the achievement of Indian women in the public arena.

When the Committee on the Status of Women in India was constituted in 1971 by a resolution of the Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, the Government had not expected the startling and appalling Report on the condition of Indian women, which reopened the women's question for the government, academia and women's organisations. It is therefore imperative to refer to the emergence and impact of the CSWI Report on Women's Education.

A team of academics, social workers, non-governmental personnel and members of Parliament prepared the report, entitled Towards Equality. The Report is an eye opener to the stark inequalities between men and women, "summarised by chilling statistics of imbalanced child and adult sex ratios that indicated significant differential in male-female mortality. The subordination of women was now part of the official record, there to be cited by anyone wishing to address women's issues.' The Report was to significantly affect government policy in the context of promoting women's welfare and empowerment. On the other hand, the findings crucially influenced a section of Indian

academia in their research and teaching, pushing them away from the old approach of seeing women's role as related to family well-being to looking at women's condition as an input in the process of development and a critical issue.

The gravity of the crisis in women's status, bursting the bubble of complacency, was articulated years later by Vina Mazumdar, Member-Secretary of the CSWI. 'The one definite outcome of those shocks was an acute sense of unrest about the roles we ourselves as teachers, researchers, political and social activists had played.'

The culmination of all the government efforts was the declaration of A National Policy on Education in 1968, which was finally enshrined in the document entitled Challenge of Education: A Policy Perspective, 1985, was adopted in 1986 as the National Policy on Education (NPE), and the formulation of a programme of action in August 1986. The policy set a target date for universalisation of elementary education for children 6-14 years old and the eradication of illiteracy in the 15-35 age group by AD 2000. Further, it was stated that the outlay on education would be stepped up and would uniformly exceed six per cent of the national Income.

Part IV of the revised policy on Education mentions in para 4.2: "Education will be used as an agent of basic change in the status of women. In order to neutralize the accumulated distortions of the past, there will be a well conceived edge in favour of women. The National Education System will play a positive, interventionist role in the empowerment of women. This will be an act of faith and social engineering." Para 4.3 mentions the "removal of women's illiteracy and obstacles initiating their access to any retention in elementary education will receive overriding priority through provision of special support services, setting of time targets, and effective monitoring. The policy of non-discrimination will be pursued vigorously to eliminate stereotyping in vocational and professional courses and to promote women's participation in non-traditional occupations, as well as in existing and emergent technologies."

We have quoted at length the most current objectives of the policy makers with regard to education, so that it will be possible to evaluate the real situation. In fact we have moved a long way from hesitant, reluctant and limited approach to woman's education towards accepting establishment of gender equality in access, objectives and

commitment of the government, in order to enable women to be equal partners. In the next section we will examine the extant condition.

In a developing society, formal education becomes a fundamental prerequisite for improving a person's status. Better skills, a wide range of information (much more so in the information explosion era) and more knowledge are essential for administering programmes and agencies, improving productivity and a meaningful role in democratic processes. If a part of society is denied access to knowledge or skills, the deprived group will not only fail to be part of the development but also may eventually become a victim of development. The denial of access to education is the denial of access to status and power. In the Indian situation though, the right to education is accepted, yet it is deeply affected by the stratificatory system of caste, class and gender. Access to education is easier for boys than girls, for upper caste than for scheduled caste and scheduled tribe, and for the upper and middle classes than the poor. This will be borne out by looking at data of accession and retention.

### **Women's Education at various levels**

Since Independence there is undoubtedly an overall increase in the female literacy rates in the country. In 1951 the percentage of female literates was barely nine per cent, while in 1991 it has gone to about 40 per cent, though compared to males the picture is not very bright. In 1951, 27.16 per cent men were literate, while in 1991 the percentage was 64.13. Vimla Ramachandran's remarks in terms of elementary education are very significant. She says, "In the last ten years the importance of universal elementary education (five years of schooling for all children) has come to be accepted as a societal non-negotiable. Sustained international pressure, coupled with availability of international aid and loans for basic education, has forced the attention of administrators" (Seminar 474:20). As a consequence there are a number of basic education programmes and innovative experiments mainly by the NGOs.

Another crucial issue is that of regional variation along with gender differences. Whereas Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Maharashtra show better results, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Orissa have made very little progress in education at all stages. Table 1 (see Appendix/indicates gender and class influences in

the progress of girls in the middle school (age group 10-14) and high school (15-19 age group) levels.

In rural India, with less than Rs. 120 per capita income, 54 per cent boys are in school while only 31 per cent girls attend school. In urban areas, in the same income bracket 64 per cent boys are in schools while 51 per cent girls attend classes. With the rise of income, attendance increases substantially, but in rural areas the school attendance by girls in the age group 15-19 is just 37.4 per cent, which may indicate that the remaining 63 per cent girls have been married or are helping their mothers, hence they find it difficult to attend classes. Adolescent girls are particularly vulnerable. "The NCAER/HDI survey reveals that even in advanced regions like Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, while enrolment rates are higher, most of the discontinuation happens in the 12-14 age group, especially for girls".

The situation is really very disturbing. Being out of school, boys enter the world of work, or while away their time in wandering. Girls enter the world of work may be in the unorganised sector but are also likely to be married, could even be mothers. It is imperative to give attention to this section of society or else, apart from physiological problems, there could be psychological disturbances.

### **Women in Higher Education**

Whereas literacy and elementary education fulfil social and human development needs and become instruments of better health and for income generation, the higher education of women promotes social and occupational mobility and leads to intellectual and personal development, quite often resulting in generating elitist culture. Thus, higher education is seen as a crucial step in personal, famulial and societal mobility.

One of the paradoxes of women's education has been that whereas literary and elementary education which touches the mass of women presents a gloomy senate, the picture of women in higher education is not so depressing Karuna Chanana mentions that while the proportion of women to total enrolment was 10.9 per cent in 1950-51, it increased to 27.2 per cent in 1980-81 and 52 per cent in 1996-97. The immediate decades after Independence were full of developmental and technical activities, in which education was an important requirement. Thus, the national agenda helped women of the upper middle class and the upper castes to enter the portals of higher education. Chanana

points at slow growth after the Eighties as a consequence of the lack of specific policies and measures to encourage women's education.

Another indication of the growth of women's higher education is the proportion of level wise women students in higher education.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Under-graduate</b>	<b>Graduate</b>	<b>Research</b>
1994-95	33.6	35.6	38.5
1995-96	34.1	34.0	39.2
1996-97	34.1	34.0	39.2

The higher proportion of women at the research level indicates the growing employability of women in the higher echelons of power. If this data is looked at discipline wise, the picture becomes clearer.

The shift of women students towards commerce has been operating since the Eighties. In 1975-76, 6.6 per cent of the total enrolment of girls was in the commerce faculty, in 1986-87 the proportion went up to 19.7 per cent, and in the Nineties it was nearly 25 per cent. Though the Arts faculty continued to attract women students, the decline in the Science and Education faculties has been striking. Similarly, in Medicine, which attracted 16 per cent of girl students in the Fifties, attracted considerably fewer girls in the Nineties.

The shifts in the orientation to various disciplines suggest major changes in the economy, career orientation in the individual and family expectations. Though not many empirical studies are available on these shifts, some observations on these trends are possible. The women students who are career oriented have shifted from Arts faculties and especially Science faculties to Commerce and Law. In Commerce, there is the attraction to jobs in banks and other commercial firms. Law, which was considered a man's domain, has opened its gates to women not merely by providing opportunities to practice Law or to join the Judiciary, but also because of the substantial desk and research work in the legal field where women can be accommodated. Further, with the rise of litigation and assertion for gender just implementation of law on women's issues, the feminists believe that women lawyers can better represent the case of women. The entry of women into job-oriented courses, such as Commerce, Law, Engineering and technical fields, suggests that, though the liberal stance of education may prevail for a majority of



students, the trend of the employment orientation of women is also visible. Another significant factor is growing numbers of girls in short-term courses such as polytechnics, computer courses and information technology. The opening up of job opportunities, possibilities of self-employment as well as the need to combine both familial and occupational roles is clearly visible in women opting for non-traditional courses.

The observations of Karuna Chanana are also worth considering. She says, "These students (joining the new disciplines) belong to urban, middle and upper strata of professional and salaried class in the metropolitan cities.

They are also the ones who belong to small families where the norm of two children has meant that they may be only daughters. These daughters are given the best of education by their parents. It has also been found that the fathers of engineering students have been engineers. Thus parental aspirations have been very crucial in the new orientations of women students in higher education".

The enlargement of choices and the advent of careerism in urban middle class women can be linked with the forces generated during last four decades, which have accelerated in the post-liberalization phase. Better skills, wider information and knowledge and professionalization are considered essential for administration, improvement in productivity and market orientation. Today the technically-trained, management-trained, and computer savvy have better marketability. These requirements, on the one side, emphasize efficiency and a professional approach to work, and on the other side, they generate keen competition among aspirants. Many women in urban areas opt for some of these courses, and those who are enterprising or have the backing of parents or husbands may venture into self employment by starting small or medium business. An important fall-out of the changed situation is that whereas the first-generation professional women had quite often to make a choice between marriage and career, the present generation can have both but have to struggle hard to maintain the balance.

### **Regional Variations**

Besides shifts noticed in the various disciplines, regional variations are also an important factor in the spread of higher education among women. The general pattern of distribution is thus: The four Southern states register better enrolment than the Northern

Hindi-speaking states. As recently as the mid-Nineties, Goa, Kerala and Punjab registered enrolment between 50-52 per cent while Bihar, Arunachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh have very low enrolments, between 18 per cent to 26 per cent. Data on engineering courses reveal that whereas in 1991, of the 4,419 girl students enrolled, 1,989 were from Southern states, 608 from Western states, 224 from Eastern states and 267 from the Northern region.

There are a number of reasons for variations: the comparatively lower status of women in these regions, a delay in opening the doors of education for women, the slow development of technical education and economy, and the political climate.

When we look at the spread of higher education among the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, the picture becomes more skewed. In 1996-97, the all-India proportion of SC/ST men students is very low (8.7 per cent SC, 3.02 per cent ST). The SC women students constitute only 2.4 per cent, while ST women are just 0.9 per cent of the total enrolment..

### **Role of Non Government Organisations (NGOs)**

As mentioned earlier, though there has been considerable progress in women's higher education, the advance in elementary education, especially literacy, is quite disappointing. Apart from the enrolment of girls, the serious problem is of retention. In this section we will examine the status of elementary education and the role of the NGOs.

Though the significance of universal elementary education (five years of schooling for children) has been accepted as a non negotiable issue, the advance is not striking. A number of programmes have been initiated by the Government and various funding agencies, but the problem of education of girls after attaining primary education becomes serious. As Ramachandran mentions, the discontinuation rate after primary school is particularly high in rural India, more so among girls, children from socially and economically disadvantaged communities and those living in remote areas. It is now widely recognised that these sections of Indian society have not been able to access educational facilities, or even if they do enroll they drop out due to a wide range of demand side and supply related factors (Ramachandran, 1999: 20). In rural India only 30.6 per cent girls in the 15-19 age group have gone beyond middle school, while the

percentage for boys is 49.6. Similarly, 63.8 per cent of girls in urban areas are in secondary school.

When this data is looked at in relation with the income level, it becomes clear that many families in the lower income group are constrained not to educate their daughters. The gender difference is quite notable. Where resources are limited, the first casualty is a girl's education. For human development, two age groups are very crucial, 6-10 years and 12-18 years. Though some efforts are made to provide education to the 6-10 age group, the age group 12-18 is comparatively ignored.

In the age group 6-14 years, nearly 52 per cent of girls are out of school. The picture is very dismal for states like Uttar Pradesh (68.36), Bihar (70.90) Rajasthan (72.17), Madhya Pradesh (57.46). However, the situation is much better in Kerala (7.63), Tamil Nadu (27.4), Maharashtra (32.93), Gujarat (41.08) and Karnataka (42.71).

When nearly 50 per cent of girls are not attending school, the question is, what is happening to these girls? What are they doing? Many of the girls get married early and perhaps become mothers; Many girls are involved in household work, working in fields, looking after younger siblings or working in the unorganized sector. The socialization which both boys and girls receive emphasises that the home-oriented tasks are to be done by girls. Thus, whether girls are going to school or not, they are expected to help their mothers in all the household work. When education is expected to provide meaningful skills which will help a person enter the labour market and also inculcate values which may motivate the person to live a socially useful life, if nearly half the number of girls is out of the range of this advantage, one can imagine the volume of human wastage! Various studies have been carried out to locate the factors why girls are not going to school. Though the major constraint is poverty and the vast number of families which constitutes economically deprived sections of society, it has been noticed that the supply and demand factor influences enrolment. It has been noticed that on the supply side, besides the basic framework, state policy has a major role to play. But the pedagogical factors such as structure, environment, ideology, content of the curriculum, commitment of teachers, institutional factors such as availability of school, cost of education, availability of girls' schools, childcare facilities and familial factors such as socialization, parental attitude to girls' education, access to resources within home etc.

influence enrolment. On the demand side, enrolment and retention depend on the parents' keenness to educate daughters. Further, if the community exercises pressure for better provision of education, the authorities have to respond. Due to various reasons, there is skepticism about the utility of education as its potential for employability. As one illiterate woman remarked, "If I were to read and write, will my wages increase from the next day? Will water come to my doorstep? Will my husband stop drinking and harassing me? First show me how to solve my problems, and then I will gladly learn to read and write". It is in this context of certain inherent problems with the delivery of the education system and its relevance that the role of NGOs becomes crucial. We will briefly assess their role in basic education.

Indian educational history is resplendent with the contribution of various social reform and community organisations. In the pre-Independence period, the literacy movement was one of the important items on the agenda of the Freedom Movement. After Independence, in the early years we were all confident of reaching the target of total literacy and in that buoyancy it was stated in the Indian Constitution that free and compulsory education to all children up to the age of 14 will be guaranteed. The Constitution directed the state that facilities be provided to achieve the target in 10 years. The reality is quite different, as we have seen. Though the period of target achievement was extended to AD 2000, no such realisation is in sight. In spite of the recommendations of various bodies to accelerate the pace of the literacy movement, until 1978 little concerted effort was visible. The National Adult Education Programme (NAEP) was introduced during the period when the international atmosphere was vibrant with the idea of education as an emancipator tool, an agency for social transformation. A space was created for the collaboration of NGOs in this programme. This was the period of post-Emergency where people's participation was highly valued. As Ramachandran observes, "The post-Emergency euphoria of the restoration of democracy, coupled with the recognition that the state alone cannot deliver the goods in an iniquitous market-oriented society, led to the emergence of new movements, new organisations, new activities, new actors and new issues. Concerns of gender, environment and human rights were taken up in a new 'entitlement' framework".

Thus the literacy movements were not merely for disseminating the three Rs but had to nonscientist the learner to some critical issues and impart self-confidence. The government realised it needed the partnership of NGOs to achieve some of the targets, and NGOs themselves realised that it did not merely have to deliver the goods but introduce new methods and new perspectives. In this context, it would be useful to recall the fall-out of Arak movement from the programme of literacy. In Nellore, a coastal district of Andhra Pradesh, the initial mobilisation of women for literacy classes was quite successful. In the primer, used as a textbook, a chapter on the effects of alcoholism on the family and some efforts at eradicating this evil created an unprecedented upheaval. Almost immediately thousands of women came out of their homes and the 'anti arak' movement started in 1992. The agitation was so effective that in 1993 the Andhra Pradesh government declared Prohibition. As an offshoot, a movement for, self-help was also launched and became successful. Similarly, Puddukottai district in Tamil Nadu in 1992 witnessed unprecedented mobilisation of women through the literacy movement. It is interesting to note that women here adopted the cycle as a symbol of their power. Learning the alphabet and acquiring means of mobility opened new hope in the programme.

Literacy changed the life of these women. As observed by the evaluators of all these programmes, the literacy programme not only provided skills but also gave space to women to conduct dialogue among themselves and with the teachers. New feminist groups also encouraged women to speak out and share their concerns. But the significance of education programme was realised later. The role of NGOs has to be assessed against this background.

The involvement of NGOs with education is not recent. In fact, for many NGOs, education was their entry point for development work in the community. India's many NGOs work on a variety of programmes. Kishore Bharti and Eklavya in Madhya Pradesh, PROPEL in Maharashtra, and the Research Centre at Tilonia in Rajasthan are among the early NGOs which took on the educational needs of women both in terms of skills as well as an innovative approach to learning. They have also been working as a resource base for grassroots women's organisations.

Malvika Karlekar has tried to categorise NGOs into pedagogic innovators, institutional innovators and familial innovators. PROPEL Lok Jumbesh, Education Guarantee Scheme, BODH Shiksha Samiti, PRATHAM fall in the first category: they involve the community, the teachers familiarize themselves with the dialects, songs, artifacts of the group and use nontraditional tools. The second category includes NGOs such as the Lok Jumbesh, the Palmyrah Workers' Development Society, and AVEHI. They realised that to persuade girls to come to the organisation, their mothers' support is necessary. The process of transforming knowledge has to be innovative and relating to the problems of girls. Therefore, all these programmes are flexible in timings, courses, attendance and environment. Childcare becomes one of the important inputs to enable girls to attain these educational facilities. Finally there is the familial component, wherein programmes such as the Mahila Samakhya if adequately operated have been very meaningful in attracting girls by providing familial support in terms of childcare, building contacts with the mothers and make them sensitive to other issues such as gender violence.

The effort in this section is to give a glimpse into the role of NGOs rather than to provide a full account of all NGOs. With the background of widespread illiteracy and limited reach-out of elementary education, when the state itself has not been able to improve the situation, NGOs have at least shown the path along which efforts could be made to achieve goals. Of course, NGOs cannot completely shoulder the responsibility of the state to provide basic facilities for education. They can work as active partners. Besides, since NGOs by definition are at the ground level, they can substantially help create a climate for the demand of educating girls. Thus, with their other programmes-the creation of awareness, resistance to violence, the building up of confidence among women-education becomes an act of empowerment.

### **Privatization and Woman's Education**

In a gendered society in which the education of a girl is a low priority, the cost of education works as a deterrent. As many studies have shown, in poor households the first casualty is woman's education. As mentioned earlier in school attendance rates by age group and household monthly per capita expenditure class, in rural households with a per capita income of less than Rs 120-140, in the age group 10-14 years, 65.4 per cent of

boys attend school compared with 31.1 per cent girls. In urban India in the same group, the respective percentages are 72.8 and 63.6. In the 15-19 age group, in the same income bracket, boys are 28.3 per cent and girls 6.4 per cent in rural India. Urban areas record 31.6 percent for boys and 17.4 per cent girls. When the income is higher, for instance, more than Rs 560, in the 10-14 age bracket in rural areas, the girls statistics is 78.5 per cent, while in urban areas it is 93.5 per cent. The data is Indicative of the relationship between income and enrolment, as well as rural-urban differences in the context of a gendered value system. In such a scenario, if the state withdraws its support to education, the worst sufferers are the poor and girls.

As a welfare state with development as one of its primary goals, the state had initially taken the responsibility of providing free education. Some states, for instance Maharashtra and Gujarat, had adopted a policy of providing free education to girl's up to college level. Looking at some data on percentage allocation of expenditure on education over a period of five decades, we see significant shifts. For instance, whereas the Centre was spending about 28 per cent on technical education in the Seventies, in Nineties the amount fell to 19 per cent. Though there has not been much change in expenditure on elementary or secondary education, there has been a substantial reduction in the Centre's share in the Nineties. The period since 1992 has been marked by the new economic policy moving towards liberalisation of the economy. Many of the programmes to spread elementary education have been supported through foreign funding. For instance, nearly 85 per cent funding for the District Primary Education Project came from foreign donors. In fact, it is contended that all educational programmes that have targeted women or girls have been supported by foreign donors. The onset of the period of structural adjustment was followed by a decline in public expenditure in various sectors, including education. In higher education, the decline is quite marked. Currently, with the UGC relegating its responsibility of maintenance to the respective universities, the universities in turn have had to turn to the private sector. The increase in fees and the trend of taking capitation fees in professional courses may jeopardise women's education. In short, the privatization of education is likely to especially affect girls and women from economically weaker strata.

## **Women and Health**

Anthropologists study and analyze individual behaviors, interactions, social structures, health, and illness within cultural contexts. Culture acts as a guide or framework influencing how people interpret and respond to health and disease. In pluralistic societies, multiple cultures coexist, but biomedicine often dominates as the “core” system, while other healing traditions are viewed as alternative. Biomedicine focuses on diseases through observable symptoms, often neglecting patients’ own perceptions. In contrast, the ‘emic’ perspective values patients’ cultural interpretations of illness, such as their feelings of discomfort, misfortune, or inability to function normally. Understanding health solely through culture, however, can lead to cultural determinism. Anthropological perspectives on health have evolved from cultural to ecological and critical medical anthropology, recognizing the interplay of biological, cultural, social, psychological, and political factors. Anthropologists have long documented women’s health concerns, emphasizing their lived experiences through ethnographic research. Yet, most studies have centered on reproduction, leaving other health aspects underexplored. In India, research on women’s health from an anthropological viewpoint is limited, with most studies conducted by foreign scholars. Hence, insights from public health and feminist research are often used to fill these gaps. This broader approach helps in understanding women’s morbidity and mortality patterns, largely drawn from demographic data.

This unit addresses three main areas: first, the global and national indicators of women’s morbidity, mortality, and reproductive health; second, the social determinants contributing to poor women’s health in India; and third, the analysis of government programs and policies on women’s health, including their limitations from both anthropological and public health perspectives.

### **Health Status of Women**

Even though biologically women are a stronger species in terms of survival at birth, and also live longer than men, the social practices put the women in the most disadvantageous position, from womb to tomb and they are discriminated. Most often they are killed when they are still in the womb (foeticide) or when they are born (infanticide), or they are abandoned, sold or neglected. When they are growing they are



subjected to all sorts of discrimination from food, to education to health care. These atrocities are conducted, all due to the preference of a son.

In the marital home, women continue to live subjugated lives, until she bears children, more importantly sons. It is only when the sons grow up, she may exercise some power within the family. Women as care givers in the family often give priorities to the needs of other family members at the cost of their own health. They neglect their health till it becomes critical. Old age adds to the woes of women, especially health care when she is either deserted or live at the mercy of her children.

### **Women and Ill Health: Understanding the Causal Factors/ Linkages**

#### **Patriarchy**

*Women are the only oppressed group in our society that lives in intimate association with their oppressors. ~Evelyn Cunningham.*

Cunningham's quote is apt for understanding patriarchy in the real sense. It is ironical that women are most oppressed by men and they live in intimate relationship with their oppressor. Health of the women has to be understood within the concept of patriarchy Valentine Moghadam has written that under classic patriarchy, "the senior man has authority over everyone else in the family, including younger men, and women are subject to distinct forms of control and subordination" (Moghadam 2004, p. 141). Furthermore, property, residence, and descent all proceed exclusively through the male line. Today, however, this definition may be considered an overly simplistic description because the phenomenon has evolved substantially over time.

As already mentioned, to varying degrees, patriarchy is nearly universally prevalent. Although, as Gerda Lerner (1986) has noted, anthropologists have found societies in which sexual differences are not associated with practices of dominance or subordination, patriarchy does exist in the majority of societies.

*Anthropologist Margaret Mead (1973, 48) too is of the opinion that "All the claims so glibly made about societies ruled by women are nonsense. We have no reason to believe that they ever existed.....men everywhere have been in charge of running the show. ... men have been the leaders in public affairs and the final authorities at home."*

However, many scholars today hold that patriarchy is a social construction. Lerner has written that there are indeed biological differences between men and women, but “the values and implications based on [those differences] are the result of culture.

The existence of patriarchy may be traced back to ancient times. Lerner has stated that the commoditization of women’s sexual and reproductive capacity emerged at about the same time as the development of private property, thus setting the stage for patriarchal social structures. The sexual subordination of women was subsequently written into the earliest system of laws, enforced by the state, and secured by the cooperation of women through such means as “force, economic dependency on the male head of the family, class privileges bestowed upon conforming and dependent women of the upper classes, and the artificially created division of women into respectable and not-respectable women”.

Modern patriarchy is structural, meaning that it underlies the foundations of all of society’s institutions. In most societies, any accomplishments in the direction of gender equality must be made within a larger patriarchal structure. This is one reason why women are at such a constant disadvantage socially, politically, and economically. In the world today, the vast majority of leaders are men. Moreover, Laura Bierema has noted that while women make up over half the workforce, they fall far short of men in terms of pay, promotions, benefits, and other economic rewards.

Often, patriarchy is associated more strongly with nations characterised by religious fundamentalism. Yet male domination and female subordination are salient features of social structure in virtually all societies, regardless of the race, ethnicity, class, or religion of the members. Most patriarchal societies have adopted characteristics associated with male domination, namely, aggression and power, as well as the consequences of these characteristics, ill health for women.

Resulting from patriarchy is the control of sexuality of women. Some of the cultural, religious practices arising out to control and regulate women’s sexuality are quite harmful for the health of women. In some societies of sub-Saharan Africa, Arab, Malaysia, Indonesia, 80 millions girls and women living today have undergone female circumcision, also called female genital mutilation (FGM). These cultural practices are done on adolescent girls as ‘rites the passage’ and also in order to control their sexuality

which are brutal and painful. In some states in USA, this practice has been banned and it is a punishable act under the law. However, in other countries it still persists. There are serious health risks of FGM, like infections, hemorrhage, damage to adjacent organs, scar tissue formation, long term difficulties with menstruation, sexual intercourse and child birth.

### **Poverty**

Women constitute 70% of the world's poor (UNDP 1995, 4). Under feminisation of poverty, women are much poorer as compared to men world over. Poverty is the underlying factor for poor health status for not just women but the whole Indian population. Women's low status, poverty and the reproductive risks add to their morbidity conditions. As mentioned earlier girl child is discriminated against boys for all the resources. Girls have higher malnutrition levels due to the disproportionate distribution of food to them as compared to their male counterpart.

A study in the Delhi slums revealed that 40 percent to 50 percent of the female infants below the age of one year were malnourished. And in female children in the age group 5–9, the rate of malnutrition increased to 70 percent (Mahbub ul Haq Development Centre, 2000: 127). Child malnutrition depends not so much on income or food availability as on the health care available to children and women. Income poverty explains only about 10 percent of the variation in child malnutrition.

### **Gender**

Under gender dimension it is pertinent to see how men's and women's life circumstances affect their health status. Gender is socially and culturally constructed and politico- economically situated. It is widely agreed that sexratio is a powerful indicator of the social health of any society, it conveys a great deal about the state of gender relations. Worldwide, there are 43 million more men and boys than women and girls. According to Amartya Sen, there are 32 million missing females in India. Sometimes it is not so much to do with poverty but gender discrimination. It is seen that the sex ratio has been declining, especially in more prosperous states like Punjab and Harayana. The sex selection is much more in better socio-economic background, the plush areas of South Delhi has adverse child sex ration compared to East and West Delhi. In rural Punjab, 21 percent of girls in poor families suffer severe malnutrition compared to 3 percent of boys

in the same families. Thus, sometimes poor boys are better fed than rich girls. It shows that the gender discrimination is much more significant than poverty. The gender difference in seeking medical help is quite obvious from the childhood. Medical help will be more likely to be sought for boys compared to girls. UNDP (1995) reports this difference to be as great as 10 percent. Other social factors like; early marriages, repeated pregnancies further disadvantage women and leads to ill health as compared to men.

### **A Dozen Messages on Women's Health**

This subsection is based on the list of 157 ethnographies, where Marcia Inhorn captured dozen most important thematic messages about the women's health. It is important to understand the wide range of spectrum in which women's health is captured in anthropological literature. However, the dozen messages are given briefly and not elaborated.

1) The power to define women's health: It is ironical that women's health is usually defined by others i.e., powerful biomedical and public health establishments rather than women themselves. Numerous ethnographic studies from around the globe document the fact that women themselves rarely define their health problems in the same ways that the biomedical community defines them.

2) The reproductive essentialisation of women's lives: Women's lives are still essentially seen as reproducers. Child bearing and child rearing are seen as the most important aspects of their lives and tie them to the realm of reproduction, ignoring the other capabilities of women's lives like work, activism, leadership etc. 90% of what anthropologists have written in the area of women's health have focused on reproduction.

3) The cultural construction of women's bodies: Lock (1993) provides evidence Women and Health that the body itself is a cultural construction. Cultures construct the body images and notions of beauty. Plumpness in one culture may be viewed as beautiful and desirable and in other cultures it can be seen as obesity and disliked. Recent anthropological literature has gone beyond reproduction and there are excellent ethnographies on teenage dieting, breast augmentation, plastic surgery, living with disability.

4) The increasing medicalisation of women's lives: The normal stages of women's reproductive life cycle from menarche to menopause and most important child

birth have been pathologised. All the important stages of transition or growing up phase, like menarche, child birth, menopause, aging has been medicalised.

5) The increasing biomedical hegemony over women's health: Italian social theorist Antonio Gramsci defines hegemony as domination achieved through consent rather than force. In terms of biomedical hegemony over women's health, physicians rarely have forced women to accept them as their primary medical practitioners, such consent has come from women who have actively participated in this process of medicalisation and have often demonstrated their desire for cutting edge biomedical technologies, especially in western context. However, there is a resistance and protest against harmful technologies and its impact on women's bodies.

6) The production of health by women: Ethnographers who study ethnomedicines have documented the ways in which women around the world 'produce' health, often through their formal and informal roles of traditional healers and midwives. In medical anthropology the term 'household production of health' has been used to designate the ways in which women of the household produce healthy families by countering hegemony of biomedicine wither because they do not trust them or due to inaccessibility. Van Hollen study in Tamilnadu Birth on the Threshold: Childbirth and modernity in South India' (2003) documents the rituals related to pregnancy 'cimantan' to fulfill the desires of the pregnant women and also gives ethnographic accounts of giving birth literally at threshold.

7) The health demoting effects of patriarchy: Inhorn notes that whether it is the 'micropatriarchy' of authoritarian doctor –patient relationship found in many bio-medical settings or the 'macropatriarchy' of gender oppression and its ill effects on women's health, patriarchy has health demoting effects on women. It can be seen in many ways, 'missing girls' undernutrition, neglect, violence, abuse perpetrated against women. Elisabeth Croll's (2000) incisive ethnography Endangered Daughters: Discrimination and Development in Asia, shows how the perceived benefits of sons and the perceived disadvantages of daughters have led to cruel 'culture of gender' rife with both overt and covert daughter discrimination.

8) The intersectionality of race, class, gender (etc) in women's health: There is a need for exploring intersectionality of various forms of oppression in women's lives,

based on gender, race, class, age, nation, religion, sexual orientation, disability, or appearance. There are multiple forms of oppression that may intersect in women's lives. In Indian scenario, caste/ tribe is another major factor for ill health among the women, discussed in the previous section.

9) The state intervenes in women's health: State is the most powerful agents of surveillance and control over its citizens. Indian state has been controlling the population by having anti- natal policies, going in for coercive, targeted family planning program. This is one such intervention apart from other interventions, like immunisation etc.

10) The politics of women's health: Women's bodies and health becomes the site for overt and covert, micro and macro political struggle. Studies show how women's health is politicized and intern there is health activism and resistance. In Indian context, there are women's groups, feminist writers, public health activists who have been protesting and resisting coercive and harmful contraceptive technologies.

11) The importance of women's local moral worlds: Many women's issues are not just political but also moral in nature. Arthur Kleinman highlights the notion of 'local moral worlds' shows the importance of 'moral accounts....of social participants in a local world about what is at stake in everyday experience'. For women around the world the local moralities, often religiously based, have major effects on women's health decision making, particularly when the moral stakes are high. Issues related to abortion, assisted reproduction using third party donations in IVF – sperms, eggs, embryos, uterus as in the case of surrogacy are prohibited as per law or if there is a religious ban.

12) The importance of understanding women's subjectivities: There is need to understand women's own subjectivities by listening to the narratives of women on their subjective experiences of health and illness.

### **Policies and Programs for Improving Health of Women**

There are various programs for improving the health of women by the central government carried out by the state government. Two of them are given below.

Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme ICDS was launched on 2nd October 1975, today, ICDS Scheme represents one of the world's largest and most unique programs for early childhood development. Though the objectives of ICDS Scheme is to improve the nutritional and health status of children in the age-group 0-6

years, the services are also meant for lactating and pregnant woman. The services comprises of supplementary nutrition, immunisation, health check-up, referral services, and nutrition & health education . The pregnant and lactating women from the below poverty line families are given supplementary food, iron and folic supplements and immunization at the Anganwadi centers.

### **Reproductive and Child Health Program**

Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India identified National Institute of Health and Family Welfare, as National Nodal Agency for coordinating the training under RCH 1, in December 1997. The second phase of RCH program i.e. RCH II commenced from 1st April, 2005 till year 2010. The main objective of the program was to bring about a change in mainly three critical health indicators i.e. reducing total fertility rate, infant mortality rate and maternal mortality rate with a view to realising the outcomes envisioned in the Millennium Development Goals, the National Population Policy 2000, and the Tenth Plan Document, the National Health Policy 2002 and Vision 2020 India.

### **Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY)**

The JSY is an Indian government-sponsored conditional cash transfer scheme to reduce the numbers of maternal and neonatal deaths and increase health facility deliveries in BPL families. JSY was launched by the Indian government as part of the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) in 2005, in an effort to reduce maternal and newborn deaths by increasing institutional deliveries. The JSY covers all pregnant women belonging to households below the poverty line, above 19 years of age and up to two live births. The JSY integrates help in the form of cash with antenatal care during pregnancy period, institutional care during delivery as well as post-partum. This is provided by field level health workers through a system of coordinated care and health centers. Benefits for institutional delivery are more generous in rural areas and in low-performing states, ranging from Rs.600 to Rs.1,400. A subsidy is also available to private sector providers for emergency caesareans, on referral. The program also provides a cash incentive to the health worker who supports the woman throughout her pregnancy and accompanies her to the facility.

## Contribution of Periyar



Feminism occupies a prominent position in present-day Tamil society. Periyar E.V. Ramasamy had progressive and rational ideas about women's rights and equality. By the end of the 19th century, feminism had begun to emphasize equal rights and opportunities for women. Periyar believed that women could not achieve freedom without education and awareness of the world around them. He therefore strongly supported women's emancipation and demanded that women be treated as equals rather than as servants or child-bearing machines.

Periyar considered ignorance, illiteracy, social taboos, and restrictions as the main causes of women's backwardness. He insisted that women should have equal access to education, employment, and property rights. He viewed women as the creators of a new world and urged society to relieve them from household confinement. At the Chengalpattu Women's Conference in 1928, he demanded 50% representation for women in all fields, showing his firm belief in gender equality.

He also emphasized the need for women's awakening and self-respect. The idea that women exist only for men had to be abolished. According to Periyar, only through education and rational thinking could women overcome traditions that kept them dependent. He promoted widow remarriage as a means to end social evils such as prostitution and argued that the government should support educated and working women with job opportunities and incentives.

Periyar opposed customs like child marriage, polygamy, and the Devadasi system, which he saw as instruments of female exploitation. He supported Dr. Muthulakshmi



Reddy's Devadasi Abolition Bill and insisted that girls be educated up to at least 22 years of age and trained in practical skills for independence. He condemned the false ideal of chastity imposed on women to deny them property rights and called for rational, scientific thinking to eradicate superstition and oppression.

In conclusion, Periyar's concept of feminism was based on equality, education, rationalism, and self-respect. He envisioned a society where women could live independently, enjoy equal rights, and contribute equally to social and economic development. His feminist ideas remain a significant foundation for women's empowerment in modern Tamil society.

Periyar E.V. Ramasamy believed that gender disparities, social restrictions, and concepts like chastity and marriage were major causes of women's backwardness. He argued that men used marriage and chastity as tools to control women and that these must be abolished for true equality. Through the Self-Respect Movement and conferences at Chengalpattu (1929), Erode (1930), and Virudhunagar (1930), Periyar advocated widow remarriage, inter-caste marriages, abolition of child marriage, education for women up to the age of 30, and equal employment and voting rights. His efforts awakened society to the importance of women's dignity and self-respect.

Periyar pointed out that throughout history, women had been treated as property—bought with dowries, forced into prostitution, or enslaved during wars. Ignorance, poverty, and patriarchy pushed women into subjugation. He, along with Tamil reformers like Bharathiyar and Thiru.Vi.Kalyanasundaranar, urged society to spend money on women's education instead of on rituals and dowries. Education, he believed, was the key to women's independence and to ending discrimination such as child marriage and social oppression.

Periyar viewed chastity as a man-made weapon to suppress women and called for its rejection to ensure gender equality. He opposed the idea of love and marriage as systems that enslaved women and argued that genuine affection should be based on mutual understanding, equality, and human values. Marriage, he said, should not make women submissive or dependent but should be a partnership of shared responsibility and respect.

He also supported family planning as a rational measure to protect women's health and improve family welfare. According to Periyar, unless male domination was eliminated, women's emancipation would remain impossible. He demanded equal rights for women in property, education, and social life, rejecting the notion that women existed only for childbearing or domestic duties.

Periyar viewed feminism as a movement linked with history, sociology, psychology, literature, and economics. His feminist vision aimed not merely to oppose male chauvinism but to establish women's autonomy and equality in every sphere. He believed that men and women should enjoy the same rights, opportunities, and privileges, and that education and rationalism were essential for women's liberation.

In conclusion, Periyar's feminist ideology was practical, progressive, and deeply humanistic. He worked tirelessly to uplift women, promote self-respect, and eradicate gender discrimination. His vision of equality and empowerment remains a cornerstone of modern Tamil society and continues to inspire the struggle for women's rights today.

Discrimination against women and their enslavement have been two major evils in Indian society. In Hindu tradition, women historically held a lower status than men. Although women enjoyed a respected position during the Vedic period, their status declined sharply in the medieval era. Hindu scriptures portrayed women as weak, emotional, and sinful, prescribing complete dependence on men. Widows were denied normal social life and were forced to follow strict codes, while social evils like female infanticide, child marriage, sati, polygamy, dowry, purdah, and the Devadasi system prevailed.

Periyar E.V. Ramasamy emerged as a strong reformer who fought against these injustices. He condemned the idea that women were born to serve men or live as slaves. According to Periyar, treating half of the population as inferior was a national disgrace. He declared that any code of conduct, like *Manu Dharma*, which placed women below men, was barbaric. He believed that women's liberation should come through their own efforts, not through the mercy of men.

Periyar's views on feminism were unique and cannot be fully categorized under any existing feminist school. His approach, known as *Periyar Feminism*, emphasized equality starting from home and demanded that women form independent groups to fight

their oppression. He also took bold steps for widow remarriage, beginning the reform within his own family. His decision to remarry his widowed niece, despite strong opposition from his orthodox community, was a historic act of social reform.

Periyar's opposition to child marriage and his compassion for widows reflected his deep commitment to human rights and equality. He firmly believed that the Hindu social order had been manipulated by the powerful to oppress the weak, especially women. Through his rationalist and self-respect movements, Periyar championed women's education, independence, and dignity, laying the foundation for modern Tamil feminism and women's emancipation in India.

Periyar's heart trembled when he looked at the number of Hindu child widows as per the 1921 census

Infant widows younger than 1 year	597
1-2 year old child widows	494
2-3 year old child widows	1,257
3-4 year old child widows	2,837
4-5 year old child widows	6,707
Total (widows under 5 years)	11,892
05-10 year old child widows	85,037
10-15 year old child widows	2,32,147
15-20 year old child widows	3,96,172
20-25 year old child widows	7,42,820
25-30 year old child widows	11,63,720
Total number of widows	26,31,788

**He shuddered to hear that 11,892 widows are actually tender**

Kids less than 5 years of age who were forced to suppress their natural desires. In this situation Periyar raised the question which civilized world will accept such a heinous cruelty of widowhood? He noted the struggles to remove the hardships of widows of several intellectuals like Raja Rammohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, the Kolhapur Maharaja, Surendranath Bannerjee, Veeraselingam Panthulu, Mahadev Govind Ranade, Vemanna and Sir Gangaram. During that time several Punjabi leaders are working in this field of reform.

Periyar E.V. Ramasamy was a strong advocate for widow remarriage and women's rights. He urged society to abandon its indifference and actively promote widow remarriage for the welfare and progress of the nation. In the 1929 Self-Respect Conference at Chengalpattu, resolutions were passed demanding equal property rights for women, employment opportunities, education, the right to dissolve unhappy marriages, and the right to choose partners irrespective of caste or religion. These resolutions reflected Periyar's belief that true self-respect could be achieved only when both men and women enjoyed equal rights and dignity.

Periyar's views on love were rational and humanistic. He believed love was not divine or mystical but a natural feeling arising from affection, compatibility, and understanding. To him, love was similar to kindness or friendship and should not be confused with lust or social obligation. Regarding chastity, Periyar condemned the double standards imposed by religion and society. He argued that chastity should apply equally to both men and women, not as a tool of oppression against women. Forced marriages and religious restrictions that demanded women tolerate abuse in the name of chastity, he said, must be abolished to achieve true equality.

Periyar viewed marriage as a partnership based on mutual respect and understanding rather than ritual or tradition. He criticized the extravagant expenses and patriarchal customs of Hindu marriages, advocating instead for *Self-Respect Marriages*—civil, simple, and rational unions based on equality. He rejected the idea of women being “given” in marriage and proposed the Tamil term *Valkattunai*, meaning “help-mate in life.”

Periyar also championed birth control as essential for women's freedom and health. He argued that repeated pregnancies weakened women and prevented them from contributing equally to social progress. His campaigns for birth control faced opposition from religious authorities, but his rationalist movement eventually inspired many women to embrace it for their well-being.

He strongly condemned the Devadasi system and prostitution, calling them institutionalized forms of female exploitation. Periyar viewed these practices as products of poverty, patriarchy, and superstition. He insisted that women should never be treated

as sexual objects or instruments of pleasure and argued for their complete social and economic liberation.

In summary, Periyar's feminist philosophy centered on rationalism, equality, education, and self-respect. His efforts to reform marriage, promote widow remarriage, ensure women's rights, and abolish oppressive customs laid a solid foundation for modern feminist thought in Tamil society.

Periyar E.V. Ramasamy vehemently opposed the Devadasi system and prostitution, calling them institutions created to enslave women. He argued that society used the term "prostitution" only to condemn women while men remained uncriticized, exposing the hypocrisy and gender bias within moral and religious traditions. According to Periyar, words like *chastity* and *prostitution* were artificial tools invented to control women and had no place in a society based on freedom and equality.

Periyar strongly supported women's property rights, believing that the denial of inheritance was the main cause of their subjugation. He questioned why women, despite being capable of managing property and wealth, were deprived of equal rights. He urged women to fight courageously for property ownership and economic independence, which he saw as essential for true liberation. His efforts helped bring about major legal reforms such as the Hindu Women's Right to Property Act (1937), the Hindu Succession Act (1956), and later amendments ensuring women's inheritance rights.

Periyar also fought against child marriage and promoted widow remarriage, asserting that widows should enjoy the same freedom to remarry as men. Through his rationalist and Self-Respect Movements, he challenged religious oppression, gender inequality, and social customs that treated women as inferior. His relentless advocacy for women's education, property rights, and personal freedom made him one of India's greatest social reformers and earned him the title "Father of Modern Tamil Nadu."

### **Bharathiyar**

Bharathiyar, the illustrious Tamil poet, was a fervent advocate for women's equal rights, whose revolutionary ideas and powerful verses ignited the flames of social reform in early 20th-century India. Subramania Bharathiyar, revered as the greatest Tamil poet after Kampan, valiantly wielded his pen against British tyranny, championing freedom through his profound Tamil verses. His bold stance for women's equal rights, initiated

140 years ago, marks him as an extraordinary visionary, advocating for women's empowerment in a society plagued by poverty and oppression. Bharathiyar's powerful Tamil verses continue to inspire the entire nation, and not a single spokesperson for women's rights fails to invoke his poems when discussing equal rights for women.

Affectionately known as “Mundasu Kavingar” (Poet with a Turban), Bharathiyar envisioned a society where women were treated with equal dignity and respect as men. A staunch believer in the power of women, whom he termed “Sakthi,” he held the conviction that women could achieve anything if granted the same opportunities and freedoms. Through his poetry, he passionately emphasized the importance of education, equal rights, a fearless mindset, and the empowerment of women.

In one of his Tamil poems “Pudhumai Penn (New women)”, Bharathiyar describes the ideal women as who is strong, independent, and capable of achieving anything she sets her mind. He writes

“In this land of Tamil, let us forever cherish what is sweet. Let us praise and honor the feet of the brave women who have risen up”

Bharathiyar was a firm believer in the power of education to transform society. He argued that educating women was essential for the progress and prosperity of the nation. He envisioned a future where women would excel in various fields, contributing significantly to the growth of the world.

Bharathiyar was a staunch critic of the oppressive traditions that held women back. He boldly challenged societal norms and called for the abolition of practices like child marriage and the dowry system. In another poem "AchamillaiAchamillai" (Fearless, Fearless), he declares:

"There is no fear, there is no fear, there is no such thing as fear. If a woman dares to touch the sky, why should she be confined to the ground" Bharathiyar's fearless stance against injustice and his call for women to rise above societal constraints continue to inspire generations.

In his famous poem about the river Sindhu, Bharathiyar speaks of a land where women walk with their heads held high, free from oppression and discrimination. He writes

“Even if the Sindhu River dries up, let us live in this land with love as our elixir, where women walk with pride and dignity”.

Bharathiyar’s unwavering commitment to women’s rights and equality continues to inspire generations. His poetry serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of gender equality and the need to create a society where women are free to pursue their dreams and aspirations. By championing equal women’s rights, let us honor Bharathiyar’s legacy, vision and work towards building a more just and inclusive world. Let us strive to create a society where women are empowered, educated, and treated with respect they deserve, just as Bharathiyar envisioned.

### **PEN VIDUD ALAI**



### **Women's Liberation**

**The emancipation of women is a  
new law, I have proclaimed.**

**Listen to what it is:**

**If all the creatures of the world  
are considered gods,  
then isn't the wife too a goddess,  
you fools ?**

**You would talk tall of flying  
in the sky and all that;  
you would go into raptures  
over freedom and compassion;**

**but if you deny the liberation of women in our society  
what kind of life would there be on earth?**

**Pengal Vidudalai-K Kummi**

**Kummiyadi! tamizhnādumuzhudum  
Kulungida-k kaikoṭṭi-k kummiyadi !  
Nammai-p pidittapisāsugaḷpōyina!  
Nanmaikandomenrukummiyadi !(Kummiyadi) 1**

**Ettaiyumpengaltoduvadutimaienru  
Enṇiirundavarmainduviṭṭār;  
Vittukkullēpennai-p pūṭṭivaippōmenra  
Vindai manidartalaikavīzhndār. !(Kummiyadi) 2**

### **Women's Liberation Dance**

**Clap, Clap, Clap!**

**Let's clap our hands  
for all Tamils to hear!  
Let's dance and sing  
for all to hear !**

**Gone are the evil spirits that haunted us.  
Better days have dawned for us.  
We have good things coming up.  
Let us clap our hands and dance !**

**Gone are those who thought it wrong  
for women to touch books.  
They were a shame, those odd men.  
They wanted to keep the women  
locked in the house.**

**Let us clap our hands and dance !  
Karpunilaienrusollavandār, iru  
Katchikkumahdupoduvilvaippom  
Varpuruttipennai-k kattikkodukkum V**



**azhakkattai-t tallimidittiduvõm.(Kummiyadi)5**

**Pattangalālvadumsattāṅgalseyivadam  
Parinilpengalnadattavandom,  
Ettumarivinilāṇukkingē pen l  
aippillaikānenrukummiyadi !(Kummiyadi) 6  
PUDUMAI-P PEN**

**Nimirndanannadainērkoṇdapārvaikum  
nilattilyārkkumanjādanerigaḷum,**

**Timirnda jnana cherukkumiruppadal  
semmaimadartirambuvadillaiyām,  
Amizhndupēriṇḷāmariyāmaiyl  
avalameyidi-k kalaiyintivāzhvadai  
umizhndutaḷḷudalpeṇṇaramāgumām  
udayakanniuraippadukēṭṭirō 1**

#### **New Women**

**They are the ones with queenly gait, and they look  
straight in your eyes.  
They fear nothing on this earth.  
They are proud of their learning.  
Such women are steady, and they never go astray.  
They refuse to get lost in the darkness of ignorance.**

**They reject with contempt  
the uncultured life and  
all the sufferings it brings.**

#### **Bharathidasan**

Bharathidasan, a renowned Tamil poet, possessed remarkable imaginative power that enabled him to create ideal and inspiring women characters. His women are intelligent, courageous, and independent, often depicted as equals to men in thought and

action. They oppose injustice and superstitions and strive fearlessly for truth and freedom. Through his writings, Bharathidasan emphasized that behind every successful man stands a strong woman. His women characters—whether mothers, wives, or lovers—are portrayed as protectors, guides, teachers, and sources of inspiration. They embody virtues such as love, compassion, patience, and tolerance, symbolizing moral and emotional strength.

Bharathidasan was both a poet and a social reformer who sought to elevate the status of women in society. He envisioned a “New Woman” characterized by wisdom, fearlessness, and independence, breaking free from the image of subservience. His characters reflect the rising spirit of women’s emancipation and their right to live with dignity and autonomy. Through figures like Queen Vijayarani, who bravely takes up the sword to defend her son, Bharathidasan glorified motherhood, courage, and devotion. His works celebrate women’s power and highlight their vital role in building a just and progressive society.



**“O! you are the mother1 you are the strong  
and the brave!**

**Who can oppose the deep love of a mother?” (Bharathidasan  
Kavithaikal 49)**

Her efforts to educate her son making him shine in all arts are worthy of applause and praise. According to Bharathidasan, a woman’s love for her son is the greatest of all in the earth:

**“Even the hen opposes the eagle  
That tries to kill its young one  
You mistake woman that begets man**

**As weak as grass. Nay! She is snaky  
to the villain” (BK 49).**

Bharathidasan’s Vijayarani proves the poet’s regard to woman as mother by being a teacher and a protector to her son. Vijayarani succeeds in restoring the kingdom from the Cenatipati for her son and her diplomacy is praised by all kings:

**“You prove to be the mother, the teacher and  
the one who safeguards his life” (49).**

The Tamil poet Bharathidasan deeply admired his daughter, Saraswathi Kannappan, and created the character in *Kutumba Vilakku* inspired by her. Through this character, he glorified every woman who is loving, fearless, wise, rational, and capable of managing a family with strength and dignity. Bharathidasan saw it as his mission to make men recognize the true greatness of women by highlighting their virtues and capabilities. His female characters reflect emotional depth, intelligence, and the power to inspire men toward noble actions. In the story, Vanci’s love motivates Kuppan to take on the challenge of going to the Sanjeevi Hills, symbolizing the transformative influence of a woman’s affection and courage.

**“Even the side glance of love from the lover  
Makes the mountain seem a mole-hill for  
the Youth” (BK-I-P 122)**

Bharathidasan portrayed the radical woman as a protector, teacher, guide, and source of inspiration. He exalted women as leaders and motivators who inspire men to perform great deeds. In his work, Queen Vijayarani of Manipuri exemplifies these ideals. Taking advantage of the king’s weakness and despite the minister’s warnings, she disguises herself as an old man to secretly train her son, Prince Cutarma, in all the arts of leadership. At the right moment, she helps him reclaim the kingdom from the wicked Cenatipati. Through her courage, wisdom, and determination, Vijayarani emerges as a heroic mother and a symbol of justice and freedom. She stands as a human force working for a social order based on equality, liberty, and fraternity, ultimately restoring the land to its rightful owners—the people.

**“This Manipuri is the own property of the People, here  
All are free**

**The land is for all; the belongings for all  
Let all rights go to the people  
Let everyone possess good hearts too...”**

**(Express Week-End 3)**

In *Canjivi Parvatatin Caral*, Bharathidasan’s character Vanci strongly opposes the disgraceful treatment of women. Her life reflects freedom guided by reason and justice. As Dr. K. Chellappan observes, Vanci embodies pure love and life-affirming spirit, standing in contrast to her lover Kuppan’s superstitious and life-denying attitude. She represents the revolutionary energy of the world and serves as the voice for women’s rights. Her deep indignation against the denial of women’s freedom highlights Bharathidasan’s vision of the new, independent, and rational woman.

“Do you say that woman have no right to speak?  
Treat them worse than dust?” (BK-I-3)

Unlike Kuppan, she has discrimination between right and wrong and tries to dissuade the superstitions in Kuppan when he fears that the Sanjeevi will be lifted by Hanuman,

**“There was never a man to lift the mountain  
And will there be none” (P 10)**

She instills courage into Kuppan and convinces him that all books which do not promote discrimination should be discarded:

**“Books disagreeable to discrimination  
Can never cause me move;  
Can they decay what man makes?  
Can they create what he destroys?  
Nay, No redemption in such stupidity.  
Need of the hour is conviction” (BK 14)**

Bharathidasan’s women characters, such as Vanci, Cuppamma, Punkotai, Ponni, and Minnoli, embody love, courage, and a spirit of rebellion. Vanci represents the ideal woman—loving yet daring—contrasting with Kuppan’s fear. Bharathidasan, a poet of love and revolution, viewed love as a natural and transformative force, capable of changing the world order. In *Tamilacciya Katti* (*The Sword of the Tamil Woman*),

Cuppamma becomes a symbol of betrayed womanhood who avenges her dishonor and dies a heroic death. In *Pandiyar Parisu*, a woman redeems a lost treasure through her virtue, while Punkotai in *EtirparaMuttam* defies parental control to follow her love. Ponni in *Kadal Mel Kumilkal* boldly rejects caste inequality for love, and Minnoli stands up for the poor, denouncing oppression by the rich. Through these strong-willed heroines, Bharathidasan celebrates women's love, valor, and their role as catalysts for social change and justice.

**“I’ll never marry the king’s son  
Who swallows varied dishes on the leaf,  
Floating in the flowing stream of ghee.  
While the poor drink the gruel” (P 84)**

In *KutumpaVilakku*, Bharathidasan presents women as intelligent, free-willed, and powerful figures within the family. His heroines shine in all walks of life, combining a rebellious and revolutionary spirit with domestic responsibility. They are freedom-loving yet service-oriented, proving the saying, “The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world.” Bharathidasan's new woman leads in domestic life, balancing love, efficiency, and heroism. She is a militant in love, a devoted homemaker, and a heroic mother, sacrificing for the welfare of her family and society.

### **C.N. Annadurai**

C.N. Annadurai was an extremely popular leader who played a crucial role in shaping the political movements, the political agenda, the party system and social reforms in Tamil Nadu in the last century. His leadership was pivotal in the growth of regional parties in Tamil Nadu, much before it spread to other parts of the country. He was a symbol of the aspirations of the people of Tamil Nadu and effectively used a set of policies and programmes to awaken and empower those who were victims of caste system and unjust socio-economic conditions. Annadurai's influence in the transformation of Tamil Nadu politics and society after Independence and defining its socio-political patterns and governmental policies has been remarkable. As a political activist and leader, he had a steady growth since he joined the Justice Party in early 1930s. The culmination of his political journey was the victory of DMK in the elections to the Tamil Nadu State Legislative Assembly held in 1967. The legacy of Annadurai

lives even today in Tamil Nadu politics as a great inspirational force and the political line he drew for Tamil Nadu still acts as the guidelines for the major parties in Tamil Nadu.

### His Early Life



Conjeevaram (Kancheepuram in Tamil) Natarajan Annadurai, endearingly called 'Anna' (elder brother), was born on 15 September 1909 in a lower middle class family of the weaver community at Kancheepuram, the famous city of temples near Madras (renamed Chennai). His father, Natarajan was a handloom weaver. His mother's name was Bangaru Ammal and her younger sister Rajamani Aromal was the foster-mother of Annadurai. She brought him up and educated him from the elementary school to the college. In 1930, while still a student, he married Rani who came from a suburb of Madras. The couple had no offspring and Annadurai later adopted the four grandsons of his elder sister.

Annadurai had his early education at the Pachaiyappa's High School at Kancheepuram and completed his School Final in 1929. He had to discontinue his studies for a while on account of financial difficulties and worked as a clerk in the Local Municipal Office. He had secured a scholarship and joined the Pachaiyappa's College, Madras, and passed the Intermediate Examination in 1931. Continuing his studies in the same college he obtained his B.A. Honours and then the M.A. degree in Economics and Politics (1934). He won innumerable trophies in debates and oratorical contests and was elected Secretary to the College Union and Chairman of the Economics Association. He got fame as a brilliant speaker even during his college life as he attracted the students by his oratory in English and Tamil. His mastery of words earned him endearing admiration later during his political life. He had the ability to stir and stimulate people while conveying his deep and genuine concern for the people.

Even as a student leader he was extremely sensitive to the political and social injustice around him. At college, he was attracted by the programme and policies of the Justice Party, a party that stood for socio-economic emancipation of the large majority of non-Brahmins. After his M.A., he worked as a teacher in Pachaiyappa's School for nearly a year, and then turned to journalism and politics which became his principal field of interest in later life. He became the Sub-Editor of Justice, the English daily of the Justice Party.

### **Socio-Political Movements in Tamil Nadu before Independence**

Annadurai pursued through his political work and later through his own political party certain socio-political goals which came to the forefront in Tamil Nadu from the early 20th Century. A major feature of the political history of modern Tamil Nadu during the pre-independence period was the emergence of the Dravidian movement and anti-Brahminism. These two, along with the anti-Hindi movements, became important issues on which people found a political programme and both the Dravida Kazhagam and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam and its various offshoots could not ignore these. These two factors grew in strength and decisively influenced political alignments in the State especially since the establishment of the Justice Party in 1917.

More than eight decades have passed since the Dravidian movement was born in an organised manner in Tamil Nadu in 1917. In this long period, it has passed through many stages, changed many slogans and deviated from many of the ideals that it had been pursuing. There were several aspects behind the birth and growth of the Dravidian movement such as the domination of upper castes (Brahmins in Tamil Nadu) in education, employment, the unjust caste system, etc.

The South Indian Liberal Federation, founded by Theagaraya and T.M. Nair in 1916, soon came to be called the Justice Party. Its declared aim was to strive for an improvement in the educational, economic, political and social status of the nonBrahmins in South India. Though it was said to be a "non-Brahmin" movement, essentially it was a non-Brahmin non-Harijan movement against the Brahmin domination in various fields. It was against this background that the richer sections of the non-Brahmins started the Justice Party against the Brahmin rich with the objective of improving the lot of the backward classes and usher in an egalitarian society. Thus, of the many (around 200)

castes and sub-castes at that time; only a few castes and naturally the rich among them had the opportunity to acquire jobs and education.

In Tamil Nadu, even before Independence, a radical secular movement, led by E.V. Ramaswami, (EVR) was in full swing. It advocated the total abolition of the caste system and renaissance of TamillDravidian literature and its past greatness. The Dravida Kazhagam (DK) was formed in 1944 with the main aim to educate the masses (lower castes) about the oppression that religion placed on them. The DK was led by EVR and C.N. Annadurai, who was the charismatic leader with a widespread reputation as a skillful agitator, orator, propagandist and organizer.

### **Entry into Public Life**

Annadurai spent his early life when the socio-political situation in Tamil Nadu was undergoing a change. The social and political consciousness emerging in Tamil Nadu in the early 20th Century was partly influenced by a strong undercurrent of anti-brahmanical propaganda and a popular desire to keep a distinct identity for the people of Tamil Nadu. The politics of Dravidianism took a clear shape with the formation of the Justice Party. Annadurai's political guru was E.V. Ramaswamy, known as Periyar who started his life as a Congressman, but came out of the Congress on the issue of Brahmin domination and started the Self-Respect Movement in 1929. In his early life he was associated with the South Indian Liberal Federation, the organisation of the nonBrahmins, founded in 1917 by Sir P. Theagaraya and Dr. T.M. Nair. It was popularly known as the Justice Party after the name of the party's English daily. Annadurai served as sub-editor of the Justice. He was an active member of the Justice Party and did not support the views of the Congress Party. During this period he once contested the election to the Madras City Corporation but lost. Annadurai was deeply interested in improving the conditions of the poor and the down-trodden and organised small labour unions. In this field, he was greatly influenced by two Communist leaders, M. Singaravelu and C. Basudev. It was E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker, known as Periyar, the founder of the Self-Respect Movement, who first recognised the potentiality of this talented young sub-editor. Anna was also attracted towards Periyar's idealistic zeal in eradicating the social iniquities and he became an ardent follower of the Self-Respect Movement. He first met the iconoclast and agitator Periyar Thiru E.V. Ramaswamy in



1934 at Tirupur (Coimbatore District) at a Youth Conference and was immediately attracted to him. Even after the parting of ways and launching of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) in 1949, Annadurai continued to be magnanimous enough to acknowledge openly that the leader whom he met early in his life was his one and only leader. The causes and goals for which the Justice Party and Periyar's Dravida Kazhagam stood had a deep influence in moulding the political views of Annadurai.



### **DMK's Birth - A Leader's Vision**

The split in Dravida Kazhagam (DK) and the foundation of DMK under the leadership of Annadurai was a watershed in Tamil Nadu politics. The founding of DMK in 1949 was historic as it marked the beginning of regional parties in a significant manner. Both Periyar and Annadurai were together in pursuing the agenda of Dravida Kazhagam founded by Periyar in 1944. Annadurai was indeed the disciple of Periyar. Though he was a staunch follower of Periyar, Annadurai did not hesitate to differ with him sharply when the occasion arose. Unlike the strident views of Periyar at the time of India's Independence, the stand taken by Anna was patriotic. Anna wrote a courageous editorial in Dravida Nadu pointing out that DK had condemned foreign rule as early as 1939. He called on all Dravidians to celebrate Independence day as a day of deliverance. Annadurai was keen on preserving national unity, although fighting for the due rights of the Dravidians within the national political framework.

Owing to his differences with Periyar, Anna parted company with the Dravidar Kazhagam and formed a new party known as the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) on 17 September 1949, on the birthday of his political guru Periyar E.V. Ramaswamy. The parting of ways between Periyar and Annadurai marked the beginning of a new era in Tamil Nadu politics. The formation of the new political party was indeed a display of his confidence in his ability to organise people and propagate his views. The split came in

September 1949 when the majority of Dravida Kazhagam under Annadurai's leadership started the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam.

### **A Social Revolutionary**

Annadurai had his roots deep in the land of his birth and its culture. He was always dressed in simple South Indian style and presented a picture of tenderness. He was austere and quiet, but strong and dynamic when occasion needed. His ambition was to form a new society based on the principles of democracy and rationalism. It was his firm conviction that it was the only way to achieve the liberation of common people from the evils of exploitation and injustice. It is well known that his concern for the common man was so great that he considered himself one among them. Writing in Dravida Nadu he observed: "you and I are common men-me specially a common man, called upon to shoulder uncommon responsibilities".

He believed that "democracy is not a form of government alone, it is an invitation to a new life, an experiment in the art of sharing responsibilities and benefits, an attempt to generate and coordinate the inherent energy in each individual for the common task .. " Rationalism was his religion. He hated the cant and hypocrisy, the blind superstition and corruption which had obscured the purity of religion. He believed in real faith, in a faith which aspired to feed the hungry and comfort the suffering. "True faith in God is deep faith in human beings," as he himself said in one of his films, Sorgavasal. That true faith was his religion.

His socialism was scientific. He never confined himself to the four walls of set doctrines and never-changing dogmas. He wished society to rid itself of exploitation of all kinds. In fact Anna wrote: "Concentration of wealth in the hands of a few is like a deluge. That would destroy not only the weaker sections of society but even those possessing it." His entire economic philosophy was based on the socialistic approach of ensuring a good and decent living for one and all.

### **As Chief Minister**

On 6 March 1967, the DMK Government was sworn in, with Anna as the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. His Cabinet was unique in many ways. The youngest in his Cabinet was only 37 years old. The party presented a picture of youthful vitality. As Chief Minister, Anna himself set an example by continuing to live at his unpretentious

residence at Avenue Road, Nungambakkam. As Chief Minister he endeavoured to implement various policies and programmes for which DMK stood and strove for socio-economic development of the weaker sections. He took several steps to boost agriculture. Taxes on dry lands were abolished. Pre-University education was made free for the children of those parents whose annual income did not exceed Rs. 1,5001-

Anna's administration succeeded in projecting the image of his Government as truly representative of the man in the street. Though the period of his Chief Ministership was short, his achievements were many. As a rationalist, Anna got legislation passed legalising simple marriages performed without priestly intervention, in keeping with the self-respect principles preached by the social revolutionary Periyar decades before him. The State under Anna's leadership also was the first in India to foster and encourage inter-caste marriages by awarding gold medals for every inter-caste couple.

A cause which was dear to his heart all through his life was his abiding love for Tamil language. As one who worked for the renaissance of the Tamils and believed that it is only by furthering the cause of the Tamils, that he would be able to build a new society, it was a historic event for his homeland to be re-named 'Tamil Nadu' which was earlier called the Madras State. The Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly by a resolution unanimously adopted on 18 July 1967, recommended that steps be taken by the State Government to secure necessary amendment to the Constitution of India to change the name of Madras State as "Tamil Nadu".

Accordingly, the Madras State (Alteration of Name) Act, 1968 (Central Act 53 of 1968) was passed by the Parliament. The Act came into force on 14 January 1969.

### **In Rajya Sabha**

In early 1962, Annadurai was elected a member of the Rajya Sabha. As a parliamentarian he displayed his deep knowledge on various issues with his skillful presentation of facts and arguments. He was a leader who could speak in both Tamil and English with equal ease and eloquence. He made many forceful speeches. From price rise to drinking water shortage, from Kashmir problem to non-alignment, Annadurai spoke on various issues before the nation with conviction and brilliance. In fact he had greatly impressed his colleagues in Rajya Sabha with his maiden speech.

Participating in the debate on the Motion of Thanks on President's Address, C.N. Annadurai spoke on the DMK's role in the student agitation in Tamil Nadu in Rajya Sabha on 4 March 1965

"Our party, though it has been held responsible for all these things, I most sincerely and honestly declare that it had no lot or part in either the students agitation or in the subsequent violent activities. I am saying that not merely to vindicate the fair name of my party, but especially to convince Hon. Members of this august House that we have a philosophy as noble as that of any other political party, and therefore there is no connection or part or lot in the student's agitation as far as the D.M.K. is concerned. The unity of India has been taken to be a part and parcel of our philosophy; not because of your legislation but because of the Chinese menace we felt that we should stand or fall together."

He used to shower criticism on the Government by pointing out the acts of omission and commission in the House with his powerful expression of opinion and clarity of thoughts. He said on 4 March 1965 in Rajya Sabha on the President's Address to Parliament which spelt out the achievements of the Government,

"... the reading of the Government by the people is entirely different, and though the people have profound respect for the President, the explanation given by the President does not tally with the reading of the Government by the people. The people today do find that this Government has led the country and the people to great dangers, the dangerous food situation, the high prices, corruption and laxity in various other spheres, and therefore we cannot accept the President's remarks that his Government has carried out all that was expected of them".

On the language issue, Annadurai had strong views and he expressed them in unequivocal terms. He said during the debate in Rajya Sabha on 4 March 1965:

"It is so easy to argue that a common language is needed for the unity of India. Before we analyse that may I request the members of this august House to make a distinction between unity and uniformity. Is it merely unity that you want? You want uniformity through the bulldozer of a common language. If it is uniformity that you are going to aim at, you are not going to achieve it come what may. This country consists, as the late Prime Minister has stated in this very august House, of different ethnic elements,

different cultural elements and different linguistic groups. May I ask Members of this House and the Prime Minister whether language alone is the cementing force needed for the unity of this country? Is it language alone that stands as a handicap to that unity? Certainly not. There is regional imbalance, there are regional leanings, there are linguistic leanings. All these things have got to be bridged if you want to have a sort of unity without uniformity for this country".

Participating in the debate on the Motion regarding the International situation in Rajya Sabha on 23 November 1965 Annadurai said:

"As a matter of fact, the foreign policy of this country, or for that matter, of any country, is not strictly a one-way traffic. We cannot go on formulating certain foreign policies without taking into consideration the foreign policies and the situations that are being created in the world around. That is why when some of us begin to talk about a re-thinking on the policy of non-alignment and other policies, the members of the ruling party should not rush and dash against us saying that we are trying to sell goods and ideas of some other country. As a matter of fact, the DMK is not interested in any camps whatsoever. This non-alignment recalls to my mind a story of my student days. An applicant for a job wrote in his application form that he was a non-matriculate. The entry "nonmatriculate" of course, proved beyond doubt that he was not a matriculate. But the person who was to give the job put to the applicant the question, "Well, you are- not a matriculate. Then what are you? Have you passed the First Form, the Second Form or Third Form or what?" I am interested not in the particular question as to whether you are non-aligned or not, but I am perfectly legitimate in asking that the Government should place before us when they say that they are non-aligned, what exactly they are".

**M. Karunanidhi**



ON THE SCORCHING FRIDAY AFTERNOON of 11 May 2007, at Chennai's Island Grounds, Muthuvel Karunanidhi had some important business to settle privately with Sonia Gandhi.

Gandhi, the Congress party president, had come to Chennai—along with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and two former prime ministers—to join the celebrations marking Karunanidhi's 50th anniversary as a legislator, an unprecedented milestone in Indian politics. But on this humid summer day, as thousands of his followers from across the state gathered on the scorching sands to celebrate their leader's longevity, the then 83-year-old chief minister of Tamil Nadu had something else on his mind.

"It was like a thorn for him, and he had to remove it with as little damage as possible," said an associate of Karunanidhi, recounting the conversation.

Minutes before the golden jubilee celebrations began, Karunanidhi took Gandhi aside. "Daya has to be dropped," he said, referring to his grand-nephew Dayanidhi Maran, then the Union Minister for Communications and Information Technology. "He's failed us."

"Don't worry," she assured him. "Your wish will be fulfilled." The United Progressive Alliance (UPA) coalition government, then as now, relied on the support of Karunanidhi and his party, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK). Gandhi, as chairperson of the ruling coalition in the Lok Sabha, was unlikely to oppose his request.

Dayanidhi Maran, then 41 years old, had served three years as Communications Minister, a significant portfolio in New Delhi that Karunanidhi had personally requested for him. Maran quickly became the sophisticated face of the DMK in the capital: he spoke fluent English to the national press and wore designer shirts and trousers—a marked departure from the dhoti-clad DMK politicians who had preceded him.



**A picture of Karunanidhi as a child, displayed at the museum celebrating his life in Thirukkuvalai.**

Back home, tensions had been rising between Karunanidhi and his grand-nephews—Dayanidhi and his elder brother, Kalanithi—who had leveraged party connections to build a powerful media empire, including Sun TV, India's largest television network. Karunanidhi believed that his own family had been shortchanged by Kalanithi Maran, who had aggressively bought back the family's shares in Sun TV for well below market value before taking the company public in 2006. He also suspected the Marans of attempting to sow discord among his children, his chosen political heirs.

The immediate trigger for Karunanidhi's action was an opinion poll published in the Maran brothers' newspaper *Dinakaran* on 9 May 2007, asking who should succeed him. Seventy percent of respondents chose his younger son, and then deputy chief minister, MK Stalin; his elder son, MK Azhagiri, received only two percent. Days earlier, the paper had declared Dayanidhi Maran the most efficient Tamil minister in Delhi, overtaking even Congress's P. Chidambaram, then Union Finance Minister. Karunanidhi believed the Marans, who lacked a mass base, were using their media influence to promote Dayanidhi and fuel a succession conflict between Azhagiri and Stalin.

The poll sparked violence. On the morning it was published, an angry mob of about 50 people attacked the *Dinakaran* office in Madurai, Azhagiri's home base. They threw petrol bombs, setting the newsroom on fire, and killed two journalists and a security guard. Kalanithi Maran's deputy, RM Ramesh, claimed Azhagiri orchestrated the attack. Karunanidhi ordered an investigation but acted first by removing the Marans.

After consulting Sonia Gandhi privately, Karunanidhi moved swiftly. Within two days, he convened the 148-member DMK administrative committee, which passed a unanimous resolution to remove Dayanidhi Maran from the Union Cabinet for "violating party discipline," forcing him to resign.

In the months that followed, the political and familial feud escalated. Karunanidhi launched Kalaigamar TV to rival Sun TV and floated the state-owned Arasu Cable Corporation to compete with the Marans' cable distribution monopoly. In November 2008, he publicly accused his grand-nephews in the party newspaper *Murasoli* of attempting to create trouble in his family and cheating him in the Sun TV buy-back. Yet,

after a year and a half, the family reconciled, reportedly brokered by Karunanidhi's son Stalin and daughter Selvi. Leaked Niira Radia tapes suggested the Marans paid ₹ 6 billion to Karunanidhi's wife, Dayalu Ammal, allegedly to compensate for the undervalued Sun TV shares.

The split and reunion reflected key aspects of the DMK under Karunanidhi: family rivalries, big money, television power, greed, violent reprisal, and outsized influence in Delhi. Today, Dayanidhi Maran is Union Minister for Textiles, Kalanithi Maran heads Asia's most profitable television network, and Karunanidhi's elder son, Azhagiri, serves as Union Minister of Chemicals and Fertilisers. Yet controversies persist: Andimuthu Raja, Karunanidhi's favored ward, is jailed over the 2G spectrum scam; his two wives face accusations of amassing black money; and his poet-daughter, Rajya Sabha MP Kanimozhi, was questioned by the CBI over a suspicious ₹ 2.14 billion transfer related to the scandal.

As scams and allegations multiply, Karunanidhi faces one of the greatest tests of his six-decade career with the Tamil Nadu elections on 13 April. Despite projecting confidence, the 87-year-old, now confined to a motorized wheelchair, feels increasingly anxious and distrustful, likening Sonia Gandhi's actions to those of Indira Gandhi in the past.

Karunanidhi was born in 1924 in Thirukkuvalai, a small village 300 kilometres south of Chennai. His family, Isai Vellalar, traditionally temple musicians, had limited income. His father, Muthuvelar, sang ballads and practiced traditional medicine. As the first son after two daughters, Karunanidhi received special attention and was introduced early to epics, oral stories, and music. The house where he was born is now a museum, filled with family photographs and images of him meeting figures from the Pope to Indira Gandhi.

His early music lessons, though brief, exposed him to the rigid caste hierarchies of the time: he was not allowed to cover his upper body and could learn only a few songs. These lessons created fertile ground for the revolutionary ideas of EV Ramasamy, known as Periyar, who advocated a militant awakening of Dravidians—non-Brahmin southerners—against the hegemony of “Aryan” north Indians and Brahmin representatives.



Periyar, once in Congress, viewed it as a north Indian, upper-caste party insufficiently committed to social reform. His rationalist, anti-caste ideology, influenced by communism and Tamil epics, called for an independent South India, Dravida Nadu. In 1937, when Hindi became compulsory in schools, Periyar inspired students, including Karunanidhi, to protest. Karunanidhi staged agitprop dramas, gave speeches, and published a handwritten magazine. Recognized by Periyar and CN Annadurai, he became editor of the Dravidar Kazhagam magazine *Kudiyarasu* while continuing to write for theatre.

After India's independence, Karunanidhi joined Annadurai in founding the DMK in 1949 as its first treasurer. By the early 1950s, he had become a celebrity scriptwriter. His famous film *Parasakthi* (1952) combined melodrama and political message, dramatizing the Dravidian awakening and establishing the DMK's strategy of using cinema to reach the masses.

In the 1957 state assembly elections, Karunanidhi was among 13 DMK legislators elected. Within a decade, the DMK gained prominence, largely due to anti-Hindi agitations. In 1967, it became the first non-Congress party to win a majority in Tamil Nadu—a precedent that has continued, with DMK and AIADMK controlling the state ever since.



### **With CN Annadurai, his predecessor and founder of the DMK**

While Annadurai was the charismatic face of the DMK and its much-beloved leader, Karunanidhi's political skills were critical to the party's successes. "Annadurai brought the names together, but there was no one to run the party. Karunanidhi did that job," says AS Panneerselvan, who is writing a biography of Karunanidhi. Karunanidhi became a master at mobilizing crowds, organizing party cadres, and, most importantly, raising funds.

After losing to the Congress in 1957 and 1962, the DMK realized that Dravidian ideology alone would not secure victory in 1967; the party would also need financial resources. As the DMK's treasurer, Karunanidhi led this effort. He promised Annadurai that he would raise ₹ 1 million, a target Annadurai thought impossible. Karunanidhi not only met but surpassed this goal, raising ₹ 1.1 million. A stunned Annadurai publicly dubbed him *pathinorulatcham*—"Mr. Eleven Lakh"—at a rally in Madras.



With EV Ramasamy, known as Periyar, the father of the Dravidian movement.

Following the DMK's victory over the Congress and Annadurai's appointment as chief minister, Karunanidhi was made Minister for Public Works and Highways, the third-ranking position in the state cabinet.

When Annadurai died of cancer after only two years in office, Karunanidhi, with the help of matinee idol and DMK member M.G. Ramachandran (MGR), maneuvered past a senior party colleague to become chief minister. He then led the party to a decisive victory in the 1971 snap elections.

The following year, however, MGR split from the DMK after being denied a cabinet post and launched the AIADMK. Despite MGR's immense popularity, Karunanidhi dismissed the threat, famously declaring, "Without sacrifice and a party structure, he will achieve nothing." His overconfidence proved costly. MGR built a legendary political and cinematic persona, and in the 1977 elections, his party defeated the DMK so decisively that Karunanidhi remained out of power until MGR's death in 1987.

After MGR's passing, the AIADMK was divided between his wife, Janaki, and his protégé, Jayalalithaa. Karunanidhi initially underestimated Jayalalithaa, dismissing her as inexperienced, but she quickly emerged as MGR's true political heir, commanding loyalty among women and the poor. Karunanidhi's second fall from power came in the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly on 25 March 1989, when a heated confrontation with Jayalalithaa escalated into physical chaos. The incident, widely criticized in the media, tarnished Karunanidhi's image and contributed to the DMK's electoral defeat in 1991, when Jayalalithaa's AIADMK won 224 seats to the DMK's seven.

In the following decades, the DMK and AIADMK alternated in power, often using their influence to mitigate corruption charges and manipulate alliances at the national level. The parties, born from Periyar's Self-Respect Movement, largely abandoned their original Dravidian ideology, focusing instead on populist welfare schemes while consolidating personal and familial power.

Karunanidhi's rare visits to Delhi reflected moments of political necessity. During his January visit in the aftermath of A. Raja's resignation over the 2G scandal, Karunanidhi met key Congress leaders, including Sonia Gandhi, to safeguard his party's interests and maintain the DMK-Congress alliance. Despite careful planning, the visit failed to prevent subsequent CBI investigations into his family members, and the Congress forced the DMK to concede additional assembly seats.



Karunanidhi, while serving as chief minister of Tamil Nadu, presides at the inauguration of a steel plant with his then-ally, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, in 1970. Throughout his career, Karunanidhi balanced personal ambition, party loyalty, and strategic alliances, navigating both political crises and the rise of formidable rivals like MGR and Jayalalithaa, while maintaining his status as a central figure in Tamil Nadu's Dravidian politics.

### **Welfare Schemes**

The end of Congress rule in Tamil Nadu in 1967 marked a significant turning point in the political evolution of the Tamil people. The dynamic leadership of K. Kamaraj brought great credit to the Congress Party through his numerous social welfare measures. However, his successor, M. Bhaktavatsalam, who became Chief Minister in 1963, inadvertently created conditions that allowed the Dravidian movement to gain greater political momentum. During Kamaraj's tenure, the Congress government pursued a holistic political approach that resulted in all-round progress for the State.

Subsequently, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (D.M.K.) emerged as a strong political force, offering high promises and meeting the social and emotional expectations of the masses. The D.M.K. government emphasized the ideal of building a "casteless and

creedless society.” Its ideology leaned towards socialism and focused on improving the welfare of the poor and the downtrodden sections of society. The government’s policies were largely centered on welfare schemes, which were both a political necessity and a social commitment.

The concept of a Welfare State, as designed through various social actions and policies, aimed at establishing a society where social security and public services were considered the birthright of every citizen. Social policies were adopted not only for humanitarian reasons but also due to religious beliefs and utilitarian considerations. Such measures sought to protect vulnerable groups, such as the aged, and to promote economic security and prosperity through education and social equality. These policies aimed to extend opportunities in education, employment, and living conditions, thereby ensuring balanced social development.

Caste, however, remained a deeply rooted element of India’s social structure. It originated over 3,500 years ago with the arrival of the Aryans in India. The Brahmins occupied the top of the hierarchy, followed by the Kshatriyas or warriors, then the Vaishyas or traders, and finally the Shudras or laborers, who were engaged in menial tasks. Outside this varna system were the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, often regarded as “untouchables,” who were historically denied their basic rights and subjected to severe social discrimination.

After India attained independence, the Constitution of India, which envisions the welfare of all its citizens, incorporated these principles into Article 38 under Part IV — Directive Principles of State Policy. This article directs the State to strive to promote the welfare of the people by securing and protecting a social order in which justice — social, economic, and political — shall inform all institutions of national life.

### **Child Welfare Plans**

The First Five Year Plan (1952–1957) recognized the need to give greater attention to child welfare. It emphasized that the responsibility for children’s welfare should be shared by the family, community, and the State. Earlier, voluntary agencies had undertaken child welfare activities without adequate state support. To strengthen and expand their work, the government began providing grants-in-aid. In 1953, the Indian

Council for Child Welfare (ICCW) was established to coordinate and assist these voluntary organizations.

In 1954, the ICCW launched the Welfare Extension Project (WEP) to serve rural populations. Later, these projects were integrated into community development blocks and renamed Coordinated Pattern Projects, focusing on education, health, nutrition, and welfare. Although progress was limited, these efforts laid the foundation for future schemes. In 1959, India accepted the UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child, affirming every child's right to love, care, education, health, and protection from exploitation and discrimination.

During the 1960s, several key measures strengthened child welfare. The Children Act of 1960 penalized cruelty to children and prohibited child labor in begging, dangerous trades, and factories. A new Family and Child Welfare Scheme was launched in 1967, providing integrated social services and promoting education and recreation for women and children. The ICCW trained personnel such as *Mukhya Sevikas*, *Balsevikas*, and *Grish Sevikas* for this purpose. The Kothari Commission (1966) recommended expanding preschool facilities, especially for disadvantaged groups, and the Ganga Saran Sinha Committee (1967) studied children's needs and proposed action programmes. These efforts culminated in the National Policy on Education (1968).

The Indian Constitution also safeguarded the interests of weaker sections. Article 46 directed the State to promote the educational and economic interests of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and protect them from social injustice. Articles 244, 330–342, and Part XVI provided special provisions such as reservations in legislatures and public services, commissions for welfare, and the power of the President to specify castes and tribes eligible for assistance.

To improve living conditions for the urban poor, the Tamil Nadu Slum Areas (Improvement and Clearance) Act of 1971 was enacted. It defined slums as congested residential areas lacking sanitation, ventilation, and basic amenities. The formation of slums was mainly due to migration from rural to urban areas in search of employment. Recognizing the human potential of slum dwellers, C. N. Annadurai emphasized the need to clear slums and utilize their energy for national progress. Following his vision, the Tamil Nadu Government launched a Slum Clearance Programme and established the

Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board in 1971. The Board worked to replace slums with permanent multi-storied housing colonies, providing hygienic and better living environments for the poor.

### **Applied Nutrition Programme**

In Tamil Nadu, nearly one-third of the population suffered from malnutrition, with many going to bed hungry each night. Children were underweight and stunted, and women aged thirty-five looked twice their age. Malnutrition led to diseases such as kwashiorkor, marasmus, and vitamin deficiencies, causing high rates of child mortality. The most vulnerable groups were children under five, pregnant women, and nursing mothers.

The Applied Nutrition Programme (ANP), launched in 1966–67 with assistance from UNICEF and the Government of India, aimed to improve the nutritional status of these groups through education, food production, and feeding programmes. It sought to teach mothers about child diets, feeding practices, and basic childcare. Pre-school centres called *KuzhanthaigalKappagams* were opened for children aged two to five. With support from CARE (Cooperative American Relief Everywhere), food materials such as Corn Soya Meal and salad oil were provided for feeding 1.2 lakh beneficiaries annually. UNICEF and the State Government shared the financial responsibility for buildings, staff, and nutrition education.

### **Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)**

The ICDS Scheme, introduced in Tamil Nadu in 1975, provided a package of services including pre-school education, supplementary nutrition, health care, and nutrition education. It targeted children under six, pregnant women, and nursing mothers, especially in rural and slum areas. Each Anganwadi Centre served about 120 beneficiaries under a trained worker. The Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) component helped promote awareness on health, hygiene, and nutrition. The main goals were to reduce malnutrition, mortality, and school dropouts, and to improve maternal and child health through coordinated inter-departmental efforts.

### **Tamil Nadu Integrated Nutrition Project (TINP)**

The Tamil Nadu Integrated Nutrition Project (TINP) began in 1980 with World Bank assistance. It focused on children aged six to thirty-six months and pregnant and

lactating women. The project combined growth monitoring, supplementary feeding, immunization, and nutrition education through village-based centres. Severely malnourished children received food for 90 days, and mothers were taught proper feeding practices. The project aimed to reduce child malnutrition by 50%, infant mortality by 25%, and vitamin A deficiency and anaemia significantly among women and children.

#### Karunanidhi's Achievements

—Madras State was renamed as —Tamil Nadu.

Act to provide legal status to the Self-respect Marriages. Two language formula providing for Tamil and English. Surrender of Earned Leave and its encashment for Government Servants.

Nationalisation of Transport.

Transport Corporations established.

Electricity to all the villages.

Link roads to all the villages having a population of 1500.

Slum Clearance Board.

Drinking Water Supply and Drainage Board.

Free Eye camps Scheme.

Beggars Rehabilitation Scheme.

Abolition of Hand-pulled Rickshaws and free distribution of Cycle Rickshaws.

Free Concrete Houses for Scheduled Castes and Tribes. Act to provide conferment of ownership of house-sites

(Kudiyiruppu Act); Act fixing fair wages to farm labourers.

Police Commission – First in India.

Separate Ministry for Backward Classes and Scheduled Castes.

Constitution of the Backward Classes Commission and increasing the quantum of reservation for Backward Classes to 31 per cent from 25 per cent and for Scheduled Castes to 18 per cent from 16 per cent.

Free Education to all upto P.U.C..

May Day declared as a Holiday with wages. Birthday of —NabigalNayagam declared as a Holiday.

First Agricultural University at Coimbatore



Family Benefit Fund Scheme to Government Employees Confidential Reports  
on Government servants abolished. Free Housing Scheme to Fishermen.

—Karunai Illam in Temples for children. Salem Steel Plant.

Land Ceiling Act, fixing 15 standard acres as the ceiling.

Second Mine-Cut and Electricity Scheme at Neyveli.

Petroleum and Industrial Chemicals at Thoothukudi.

Small Industries Development Corporation (SIDCO).

SIPCOT Complexes.

### **M.G.Ramachandran**

M.G. Ramachandran: From Cinema to Politics

M.G. Ramachandran (MGR) was one of Tamil Nadu's most popular film actors. He began his political life as a Congress member but was later introduced to the Dravidian movement by his co-actor N.S. Krishnan, who also inspired him with the revolutionary ideas of Periyar E.V. Ramasamy. MGR met C.N. Annadurai in 1946 and joined the DMK in 1951. Under the leadership of Annadurai and M. Karunanidhi, the DMK effectively used cinema to spread its ideology, criticizing caste discrimination and meaningless rituals.

### **Propagator of Dravidian Ideology**

From 1954 onwards, MGR became the major propagator of the DMK's ideals through his films and public speeches. His immense popularity helped the party grow rapidly, and he formed a network of fans' associations across Tamil Nadu. Annadurai praised him for his campaign efforts, remarking that MGR's face alone could win votes for the DMK. However, some leaders, including Karunanidhi and Nedunchezhiyan, were uneasy about his growing influence. Though not given a party ticket in the 1957 and 1962 elections, MGR was nominated to the Madras Legislative Council in 1962. Despite being shot by actor M.R. Radha, he won the 1967 election from Parangimalai.

### **Split in the DMK and Rise of AIADMK**

After Annadurai's death, MGR supported Karunanidhi for Chief Minister but later accused his government of corruption. Expelled from the DMK, he founded the Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (ADMK) on 17 October 1972, later renamed

AIADMK in 1976. At its 1974 General Body Meeting, MGR was unanimously elected as General Secretary, and P.T. Saraswathi became Secretary of the Women's Wing.

### **Political Victory and Women Ministers**

The AIADMK gained ground with victories in the 1973 Dindigul and 1974 Coimbatore (West) by-elections. After the Emergency (1975–77) and the dismissal of Karunanidhi's ministry, MGR's AIADMK–Congress alliance won 35 Lok Sabha seats in 1977. In the same year, the AIADMK secured 126 out of 234 Assembly seats, forming the government. Among the elected members, only P.T. Saraswathi and Subbulakshmi Jegadeesan were women, both serving as Ministers in MGR's cabinet.

### **P.T. Saraswathi's Welfare Reforms**

As Minister for Social Welfare, P.T. Saraswathi focused on rural development and livestock health. She established veterinary hospitals in Ramanathapuram, Madurai, North Arcot, Salem, and Chengalpattu, and introduced Mobile Dispensaries for emergency animal care. She also developed sheep and goat rearing cooperative societies, set up vaccine centres, imported Jersey cows, and promoted artificial insemination to improve livestock breeds.

### **Subbulakshmi Jegadeesan and Handloom Development**

Subbulakshmi Jegadeesan, Minister for Handlooms, worked to improve the lives of weavers. MGR created a separate Department of Handlooms, launched housing, pension, and insurance schemes for workers, and offered rebates to increase handloom sales. By 1980, Tamil Nadu had over 13 lakh weavers and 1,052 cooperative societies. Co-Optex expanded production and exports, while the Textile Corporation revived closed mills and established new facilities.

### **Women in MGR's Later Ministries**



In the 1980 elections, five women, including Vijayalakshmi Palanichamy and Gomathi Seenivasan, were elected; both became Ministers in MGR's second cabinet. In the 1985 elections, eight women entered the Assembly, including R. Saroja, B. Valarmathi, and others, with Vijayalakshmi and Gomathi continuing as Ministers.

### **Achievements of the AIADMK Government under M.G. Ramachandran**

During M.G. Ramachandran's rule, the AIADMK government made several significant achievements in social welfare and development. The reservation for Backward Classes was increased from 31% to 50% on 1 February 1980, and a Second Backward Class Commission was formed under J.P. Ambashankar to address their issues. For the upliftment of the Adi Dravidar community, the Special Component Programme was implemented, and coaching centres were opened to help Scheduled Caste students prepare for Civil Service Examinations. A gold medal and a cash prize of ₹ 4,500 were awarded to inter-caste married couples. The Tribal Sub-Plan was introduced for the welfare of tribal populations, and Guidance Bureaus for Widows were established in Chennai, Thanjavur, Madurai, and Coimbatore. The Tamil Nadu Corporation for the Development of Women was founded in 1983. The Social Welfare Department also initiated schemes for the physically challenged.

Special nutrition programmes provided free nutritious meals to children throughout the year. The government also launched various health initiatives such as the Multi-Purpose Health Worker Scheme, Integrated Child Development Scheme, Family Planning Programme, and Periphery Hospital Scheme, which improved public health standards across the state.

### **Contributions of Gomathi Seenivasan**

Gomathi Seenivasan, elected from Valangaiman in 1980, served as Minister for Veterinary and later for Social Welfare. She established numerous veterinary hospitals and dispensaries, effectively controlling livestock diseases like "Blue Tongue." She also promoted 184 veterinary dispensaries and initiated mobile treatment facilities. Under her leadership, 11,183 women's organizations were formed to promote adult education, stitching, embroidery, and rural awareness. She improved refugee welfare by increasing allowances and providing essential supplies to Sri Lankan refugees. Her initiatives also supported widows through pensions and self-employment schemes.

**Role of T. Rasambal**

T. Rasambal, Congress MLA from Thalaivasal, actively debated on education, health, and social justice. She emphasized scientific spending on education, better facilities for schools, and teachers' welfare. She urged the government to provide mid-day meals during drought and to improve medical facilities in Salem district. She also condemned untouchability and criticized the government for inadequate budget allocation to Scheduled Castes and Tribes. Rasambal advocated for women teachers, better sanitation, and permanent employment for Balasevikas and Ayas.

**Contributions of V. Vijayalakshmi**

V. Vijayalakshmi, AIADMK MLA from Veerapandi, served as Minister in MGR's third ministry. She demanded the establishment of a scent factory in Salem, improvement of drinking water supply, and better healthcare facilities. She appreciated the DANIDA-funded health schemes and requested the creation of medical colleges in every district. As Minister for Khadi and Village Industries, she promoted palm industry development, established Khadi Emporiums, and encouraged rural employment, benefiting thousands of women workers.

**Role of B. Valarmathi**

B. Valarmathi, AIADMK MLA from Mylapore (1985), praised MGR's leadership and welfare measures. She supported the Sethusamudram Project, citing its economic and strategic importance. Valarmathi also urged the government to improve infrastructure in Mylapore, expand the Basin Bridge Power Station, and shift the Madras Central Prison to Pulal. She lauded the government's welfare schemes, including old-age pensions, free uniforms, and educational support.

**Role of D. Yasotha**

D. Yasotha, Congress MLA from Sriperumbudur, raised issues related to drought relief, water supply, and social welfare. She advocated for better hostel facilities for Scheduled Castes, improved bus services, and establishment of industrial estates for weavers. Yasotha also discussed healthcare issues in Thanjavur Medical College and urged better housing under the Slum Clearance Board. She highlighted the importance of public works as an investment in the welfare of the people.

During the Assembly debates on 15 February 1984, D. Yasotha appreciated the Tamil Nadu Government for drought relief and for ensuring water supply to Chennai once in two days. However, she criticized officials for favoritism in relief distribution and urged settlement of pending bills for small contractors. She welcomed the Krishna Drinking Water (Telugu Ganga) Project, which aimed to bring water from the Krishna River in Andhra Pradesh to Chennai, though she felt its implementation would take time. She also criticized rising prices of bus fares, milk, and electricity, and requested better maintenance of hospital facilities and appointments of rural doctors.

Yasotha appreciated Indira Gandhi's diplomatic handling of the Sri Lankan Tamil issue, commending India's decision to send an envoy instead of troops. She noted that in 1983, over 1.5 lakh Tamil refugees fled to India after attacks in Sri Lanka, and praised India's efforts under Parthasarathi to mediate peace between the Sri Lankan Government and Tamil leaders.

#### **D. Saroja: Focus on Women's Welfare**

D. Saroja, the first woman MLA representing Scheduled Tribes in Tamil Nadu (1980–1988), actively spoke on women's issues. In 1986, she questioned the government about women's hostels in Chennai. Minister Gomathi Seenivasan replied that two hostels were run by the Social Welfare Department and that grants and subsidies were provided to private institutions constructing women's hostels with Central and State support.

#### **A. S. Ponnammal: Rural Development and Welfare**

A. S. Ponnammal, MLA from Nilakottai and later Palani, actively raised issues such as roads, drinking water, rural employment, and education. She urged construction of irrigation canals, hospitals, and bridges and praised the government's loans and subsidies for farmers and cattle rearing. She requested better housing, school infrastructure, and free supply of books to Adi Dravidar students.

Ponnammal supported employment generation through cooperative societies and vocational training for women. She praised the establishment of Mother Teresa Women's University and sought its relocation to a more accessible area with women in leadership positions. She also advocated for pension revisions, old-age pensions, and the creation of

### **Social Wells for Irrigation.**

She was vocal about Scheduled Caste welfare, urging higher scholarships, more hostels, and strict action against misuse of caste certificates. She demanded free coaching for IAS/IPS aspirants and expansion of industrial training institutes. Ponnammal also pressed for free power supply for farmers, flood protection, eviction of illegal occupants, and more infrastructure for Dindigul district.

Under M.G.R.'s leadership, the AIADMK Government prioritized social welfare and women's empowerment. The reservation for Backward Classes was raised from 31% to 50% in 1980. Economic and social development programs were launched, including the Tamil Nadu Corporation for Women's Development (1983), which promoted 11,000 women's associations. The nutritious Noon Meal Scheme was implemented in 1982 to benefit school children.

The government promoted Tamil language through the Tamil Nadu Official Language Act (1976) and organized the Fifth World Tamil Conference in 1981. It provided free or concessional electricity to farmers, fertilizers, and cooperative loans. The AIADMK also focused on rural uplift through the Integrated Rural Development and Drought Relief Programmes and established the Tamil Nadu Co-operative Milk Producers Federation (1981).

In education, the 10 + 2 + 3 system was introduced (1978–1979), and several universities—such as Bharathiar, Bharathidasan, Tamil, Anna, Alagappa, and Mother Teresa Women's University—were established to expand higher education across the state.

### **Jayalalithaa's Entry into Politics**

Jayalalithaa joined the AIADMK in June 1982 and was appointed Propaganda Secretary in 1983 by M.G.R. She actively campaigned for the party and was elected to the Rajya Sabha in 1984. Her oratory and charisma quickly earned her mass appeal, positioning her as M.G.R.'s successor in Tamil Nadu politics.

Split in the AIADMK While M.G. Ramachandran was getting treatment in America he contested in the Andipatti Constituency and won in the General Election held in 1984. Jayalalitha campaigned for M.G.R. After his return from America, M.G.R again nominated Jayalalitha as Propaganda Secretary. He came to Madurai with his wife Janaki

and Jayalalitha by a flight to attend his fans conference held at Madurai on 13, 14 July 1986. M.G.R became sick in September 1986 and died on 24 December 1987.

Dr. J. Jayalalithaa, one of Tamil Nadu's most influential political leaders, served as Chief Minister of the state six times between 1991 and 2016. Affectionately known as “Amma” (Mother) and “Puratchi Thalaivi” (Revolutionary Woman Leader), these titles reflect the immense admiration she garnered for her innovative policies and transformative governance. Born as Jayaram Jayalalithaa on February 24, 1948, in Melukote, Pandavapura Taluk, Mandya District, then part of the Madras Presidency (now Karnataka), her early life was marked by significant challenges. Her father, Jayaram, a lawyer passed away when Jayalalithaa was only two years old. Following this loss, her mother, Vedavalli, moved to Bangalore in 1950 to support the family. Vedavalli later relocated to Madras and entered the film industry in 1953 under the screen name Sandhya. During her early years (1950–1958), Dr. J. Jayalalithaa lived in Mysore with her maternal grandparents and aunt, Padmavalli, while pursuing her primary education at Bishop Cotton Girls’ School in Bangalore, a prestigious institution. In 1958, she joined her mother in Madras and continued her studies at Sacred Heart Matriculation School, also known as Church Park Presentation Convent. Dr. J. Jayalalithaa excelled academically, earning the prestigious Gold State Award for achieving the highest marks in the 10th standard across Tamil Nadu. Her achievements also secured her a government scholarship for higher education, and she briefly enrolled at Stella Maris College, Chennai. However, familial pressures led her to discontinue her studies and pursue a career in film acting. Dr. J. Jayalalithaa rose to prominence in the Indian film industry during the mid-1960s, becoming a leading actress in Tamil, Telugu, and Kannada cinema. Initially reluctant to enter the profession, she acted in 140 films between 1961 and 1980. Known for her versatility and exceptional dancing skills, she was hailed as the "Queen of Tamil Cinema." Among her frequent costars was M. G. Ramachandran (M.G.R.), a legendary actor and political leader. In 1982, under M.G.R.'s guidance, Dr. J. Jayalalithaa entered politics by joining the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK), the party he founded while serving as Tamil Nadu's Chief Minister. Her political rise was rapid; she became the party’s propaganda secretary and was elected to the Rajya Sabha, India's upper house of Parliament. Following M.G.R.'s death in 1987, Dr. J. Jayalalithaa

proclaimed herself his political successor. Despite facing opposition from M.G.R.'s widow, V. N. Janaki Ramachandran, she emerged as the undisputed leader of the AIADMK. In 1989, she assumed the role of Leader of the Opposition in the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly, challenging the DMK-led government under M. Karunanidhi. Dr. J. Jayalalithaa's journey from a challenging childhood to becoming a revered political figure is a testament to her resilience, intellect, and commitment to public service. Her unique governance strategies and welfare schemes continue to leave an enduring legacy in Tamil Nadu. This article examines the leadership qualities of Dr. J. Jayalalithaa who served as the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu six times. It provides insights into her significant contributions to regional and national politics, highlighting her unique developmental initiatives that have shaped the progress of Tamil Nadu.



The more than one lakh people were attend the meeting for the Dr. J. Jayalalithaa. On that words the people of Tamil Nadu accept her as a political person. (Leading lady 2016). Dr. J. Jayalalithaa's entry into politics was marked by her close association with M.G. Ramachandran (MGR), who famously referred to her as someone closest to his heart and akin to being part of his own blood. Acting as MGR's representative, she was entrusted with the responsibility of reinforcing his political influence and preparing to lead in his absence. This strategy appeared well-received by the public, as evidenced by her growing popularity in various regions of Tamil Nadu. In Salem, her initial visit drew considerable attention, with the crowds significantly doubling during her second visit just seven months later. People gathered hours in advance to secure a place at the venue, demonstrating the increasing public admiration for her leadership. Similarly, in



Aruppukottai, her appearance caused a surge in attendance. Although she was scheduled to address the crowd for an hour, the event had to be cut short to less than 10 minutes due to safety concerns. Overcrowding led to power lines being stepped on, plunging the area into darkness and causing instances of fainting and a minor stampede. Reflecting on the incident, Dr. J. Jayalalithaa remarked that future meetings in the town would require significantly larger venues, highlighting her growing appeal and her acknowledgment of the massive public turnout. Following her induction into the AIADMK at the grand party conference in Cuddalore in June 1982, reports of her successful political meetings continued to pour in from across the state. Despite initial skepticism, particularly after her induction event was dismissed by some as mere spectacle, she consistently demonstrated her ability to connect with the masses. Transitioning seamlessly from a celebrated film star to an influential political figure, Dr. J. Jayalalithaa proved her command over her audience and firmly established herself in Tamil Nadu's political arena.(Jayalalitha n.d.). in 1983 the Dr. J. Jayalalithaa became the propaganda secretary in the Tirucendur Legislative Assembly. That time Dr. J. Jayalalithaa supported for the Party ADMK candidate R.Amirtharaj. That time the ADMK got win in the election that election. Her quotes that also confirms.

### **Leadership quality of Dr. J. Jayalalitha in Regional and National Politics**

The skills are came naturally and also it is developed due to hard work of the people that common people as the leader. As like Dr. J. Jayalalithaa is the drop her school due to help of her mother. But due to Dr. J. Jayalalithaa develop the personal skills by her hard work. Dr. J. Jayalalithaa was proficient in multiple languages, including Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Hindi, Malayalam, and English. She often engaged with Karnataka Chief Ministers in fluent Kannada. Reflecting on her linguistic skill, Basavaraj Bommai, former Irrigation Minister and later Chief Minister of Karnataka, remarked, "I was amazed by her command of Kannada and the ease with which she spoke it."(Rajendran 2016). She is widely known for her bold decisions, which often led to remarkable victories, proving the righteousness of her choices. This earned her the title of the "Iron Lady of the South." (V Prem Shanker 2015). In her first significant political victory, Dr. J. Jayalalithaa emerged as the state secretary of the AIADMK, showcasing her bold leadership. Following the death of M.G. Ramachandran (MGR), former Chief Minister

and leader of the AIADMK, in 1987, the party split into two factions-one led by Janaki Ramachandran, MGR's wife, and the other by J. Jayalalithaa. Initially, Janaki Ramachandran proved her majority to the Governor and assumed the role of Chief Minister. However, the central government subsequently imposed Governor's rule in Tamil Nadu. In the 1989 general election, Dr. J. Jayalalithaa contested under the symbol of a "cock," while the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), led by Dr. K. Karunanidhi, secured victory. Despite this, Dr. J. Jayalalithaa made history by becoming Tamil Nadu's first woman Leader of the Opposition. Janaki Ramachandran didn't get victory. but Dr. J. Jayalalithaa proved support of the people of her Subsequently, Janaki Ramachandran retired from politics, paving the way for Dr. J. Jayalalithaa to become the state secretary of the AIADMK, solidifying her position as a key political figure. (Nath 2023). This is the first time Dr. J. Jayalalithaa proved her leadership quality first time to the people. And in the 1991 Indian general election in Tamil Nadu witnessed polling for 39 parliamentary constituencies. The election resulted in a resounding victory for the Indian National Congress and its ally, the All-India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK), which secured all 39 seats in the state. In contrast, the opposition party, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), aligned with the National Front, faced a significant setback, failing to win a single seat. AIADMK under the head of Dr. J. Jayalalithaa. Won the both Lokshabha and the State legislative assembly. Under the Leadership of Dr. J. Jayalalithaa won both that. In 1998 lokshabha election AIADMK was Alliance with the BJP (Bharathiya Jantha Party) under the Vajpayee. That time also the she gives the support to the Vajpayee to become the Prime Minister.

Another significant issue that brought widespread attention to Dr. J. Jayalalithaa, compelling both regional and national political spheres to take notice, was the Katchatheevu dispute. Her strong stance on the matter highlighted its importance and underscored the broader political and socioeconomic implications of the issue. Katchatheevu, a small uninhabited island located in the Palk Strait, has long been a point of political contention between India and Sri Lanka, particularly influencing the political discourse in Tamil Nadu. Spanning approximately 285 acres, the island lies to the northeast of Rameswaram and was formally ceded to Sri Lanka in 1974 through a bilateral agreement aimed at resolving maritime boundary disputes. This decision has

remained a subject of persistent debate, particularly concerning issues of fishing rights and sovereignty. Tamil Nadu's fishermen, who assert traditional rights to fish in the waters surrounding Katchatheevu, have been significantly impacted, fueling broader discussions on the implications of the agreement for local livelihoods and regional geopolitics. (A bone of contention between DMK and AIADMK, Katchatheevu takes centre stage ahead of LS polls 2024). In the 2008 she put petition on supreme court. Retrieve the island of katchadeevu. To return back to India. And also, that time she speaks in the parliament the struggle of the Fishermen get fishes for their living hood. And in the 2011 the affidavit filed in the Supreme Court. (Standard 2024).

#### **Political achievements of Dr. J. Jayalalithaa in state Legislative assembly**

S. N	Terms	Election	Years	No of seat of Alliance party	No of Seats won by AIADMK Alone	Total Seats
1	1 <sup>st</sup> Term	State Legislative Election	1991-1996	61	164	225/234
2	2 <sup>nd</sup> Term		2001-2006	56	146	196/234
3	3 <sup>rd</sup> Term		2011-2015	53	150	203/234
4	4 <sup>th</sup> Term		2016	67	136	203/234

#### **Political achievements of Dr. J. Jayalalithaa in Lokshabha elections**

S.N.	Election	Seats won by AIADMK	Alliance	Key happenings
1	1991	37	INC	AIADMK, led by J. Jayalalithaa, formed an alliance with the Indian National Congress. The party won all 39 seats in Tamil Nadu, marking a landslide victory for the coalition in the state. The election followed the assassination of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.
2	1998	18	BJP	Jayalalithaa's AIADMK formed an alliance with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The alliance won 18 seats in Tamil Nadu, but the national political scene was marked by instability with the fall of the BJP-led government.
3	2014	37	No Alliance	In a major comeback, AIADMK won 37 out of 39 seats in Tamil Nadu. Jayalalithaa's party performed well, capitalizing on local popularity, particularly after her acquittal in the corruption case.

#### **Social welfare schemes by Dr. J. Jayalalithaa**

During her tenure as Chief Minister, Dr. J. Jayalalithaa implemented numerous social welfare initiatives encompassing diverse sectors such as education, affordable

essential commodities, women's empowerment, healthcare, poverty alleviation, law and order, infrastructure development, and the upliftment of marginalized communities. These measures aimed at fostering inclusive growth and enhancing the quality of life for all sections of society, particularly the underprivileged. The Amma Unravaged initiative, translating to "Mother Canteen," was (Chandra 2021) launched in 2013 with the objective of addressing food insecurity by providing highquality meals at highly subsidized prices. This program, implemented through municipal corporations, involves the establishment of canteens offering a variety of affordable South Indian dishes. Initially introduced in Chennai, the scheme has since been expanded to other cities across Tamil Nadu. The menu typically includes staple items such as idli, sambar rice, curd rice, and lemon rice, priced as low as ₹1 for an idli and ₹5 for a plate of sambar rice, ensuring accessibility to nutritious food for economically disadvantaged populations. (Chandra 2021). And also, the Amma brand initiatives were designed to provide essential commodities at affordable prices, catering to the needs of the economically disadvantaged. Amma Mineral Water offered bottled drinking water at just ₹10 per liter, ensuring access to safe drinking water at a low cost. Amma Salt provided high-quality iodized salt at subsidized rates, promoting health and nutrition among low-income households. Similarly, Amma Cement was introduced to support low-cost housing projects by offering cement at reduced prices. In the healthcare sector, Amma Pharmacies made medicines more affordable through government-run outlets, significantly improving access to essential healthcare for the underprivileged. These initiatives collectively addressed basic necessities, fostering social welfare and economic inclusion. A significant welfare initiative in the education sector was the introduction of English medium instruction in government schools during the period of Dr. J. Jayalalithaa 2012–2013 academic year. Under this scheme, many government schools in Tamil Nadu established separate English medium sections alongside existing Tamil medium sections. Currently, approximately 5,700 government schools across the state offer English medium classes, with around 6,000 teachers employed to provide instruction. This initiative aimed to enhance students' language proficiency and equip them with skills necessary for global opportunities. (Kaveri 2019). The Dr. J. Jayalalithaa government introduced several initiatives to promote education and reduce inequalities among

students. The Free Laptop Scheme provided laptops to school and college students, aiming to bridge the digital divide and enhance access to technology for underprivileged learners. With aim of developing digital skill 6,456 cr the government was spend for this scheme. (BS Reporter 2016). Additionally, School Kits were distributed, including free uniforms, textbooks, notebooks, and bicycles, to support students' educational needs and ensure equitable access to learning resources. These measures collectively sought to improve educational outcomes and empower students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Dr. J. Jayalalithaa implemented a range of welfare schemes to uplift and empower women in Tamil Nadu. The Cradle Baby Scheme, launched in 1992, provided a safe and anonymous way for parents to abandon newborns, aiming to combat female infanticide and improve the child sex ratio in the state. In 2011, the Thalikku Thangam Thittam (Gold for Marriage) initiative was introduced to support economically disadvantaged women by providing four grams of gold and cash assistance of up to ₹50,000 upon completing their education, enhancing their financial security and marriage prospects. The Amma Master Health Check-up Plan for Women promoted health awareness by offering comprehensive screenings for conditions such as breast cancer and diabetes. Similarly, the Amma Baby Care Kit Scheme, launched in 2015, provided essential baby care items free of cost to new mothers, easing the financial burden associated with childbirth. Furthermore, Dr. J. Jayalalithaa expanded the self-help group (SHG) movement, enabling over 6 lakh groups with approximately 92 lakh women members to access substantial loans, fostering women's entrepreneurship and financial independence. These initiatives collectively strengthened women's social, economic, and health outcomes in the state. (Sheikh 2016). In 1992, Tamil Nadu pioneered the establishment of All Women Police Stations (AWPS) under the leadership of the then Chief Minister, Dr. J. Jayalalithaa. The first AWPS was inaugurated in the Thousand Lights area of Chennai, marking a significant step towards ensuring women's safety and addressing gender-specific issues in policing. This initiative was subsequently expanded to all sub-divisional headquarters across the state. Currently, Tamil Nadu has 222 AWPS, reflecting the state's commitment to promoting gendersensitive law enforcement and enhancing the accessibility of justice for women. (Sriramv 2023). this makes the first incentives for women protection theirs levées. To alleviate poverty and support

economically disadvantaged families, the Dr. J. Jayalalithaa government introduced various welfare measures. Essential household items such as mixers, grinders, and fans were distributed free of cost to families living below the poverty line (BPL), aiming to improve their quality of life. (Amma Laptops - The many things Amma was: List of schemes implemented by Jayalalithaa. The Economic Times n.d.). Under the Green House Scheme, free housing units were constructed to provide secure and sustainable living conditions for the poor, addressing their basic need for shelter and contributing to poverty reduction. (Amma Laptops - The many things Amma was: List of schemes implemented by Jayalalithaa. The Economic Times n.d.). For the health Dr. J. Jayalalithaa brand scheme implemented which Amma Master Health checkup. Under the Amma Women Special Master Health Check-up Scheme, comprehensive health screenings are provided, including tests such as digital mammograms, Pap smear tests, vitamin D assessments, and thyroid evaluations, among others. Announcing the initiative in the Assembly, Dr. J. Jayalalithaa stated that ₹10 crore would be allocated to the Government General Hospital for procuring the necessary medical equipment to support the implementation of the scheme. (Standard 2015). The numerous welfare schemes introduced in Tamil Nadu under the leadership of Dr. J. Jayalalithaa are collectively referred to as “Amma Thittam” by the people of the state. These initiatives earned her the affectionate title “Amma,” meaning mother, symbolizing her nurturing role in improving the lives of the citizens.

### **Dr. J. Jayalalithaa accept as a Leader by Leadership definition**

A good leader embodies a blend of inherent qualities and acquired skills that empower them to guide, inspire, and influence others effectively. They possess the ability to articulate a clear vision, adapt to dynamic circumstances, foster motivation within their team, and uphold high ethical standards, ensuring both progress and integrity in their leadership approach. (12 Critical Leadership Qualities You’re Overlooking n.d.). The Dr. J. Jayalalithaa has proved that she as a Leadership quality according to the leadership quality theories. The Great Man Theory of Leadership posits that leaders are inherently born, not developed. According to this theory, certain individuals possess innate characteristics, such as charisma, intelligence, and decisiveness, which naturally predispose them to assume leadership roles. It emphasizes the idea of "heroic" leaders

who emerge during critical times of need, suggesting that these traits are intrinsic and cannot be cultivated or taught. (7 Leadership Theories for Career Growth n.d.). Check by this Great Man theory the Dr. J. Jayalalithaa have a charismatic in nature by her speech in political career. At her first meeting in cudalore rally she delivered wonderful charismatic speech first public meeting. That reflected in the Salem Public Meeting. Trait Theory suggests that effective leaders possess specific personality traits and characteristics that contribute to their success. Key attributes identified in this theory include emotional stability, strong motivational skills, effective communication abilities, and adaptability. While some individuals may naturally exhibit these traits, the theory also emphasizes that they can be developed and refined through experience and practice. (10 Key Leadership Theories for Effective Management 2020). According to Trait Theory in leadership, Dr. J. Jayalalithaa leadership qualities align with several key traits. Her legal approach to the Katchatheevu issue, pursued peacefully without resorting to violent protests, demonstrates her emotional stability. Moreover, whenever the AIADMK faced electoral setbacks, Dr. J. Jayalalithaa displayed remarkable motivational skills by encouraging and rallying her party members, ultimately leading them to secure a majority in subsequent elections. Her ability to communicate effectively in multiple languages and deliver powerful speeches at public gatherings further exemplifies her communication skills. Additionally, her adherence to democratic principles within the party and her ability to maintain trust among followers highlight her integrity and ethical standards. Finally, her strategic election campaigns, which led to significant electoral victories, reflect her intelligence and problem-solving abilities. Thus Dr. J. Jayalalithaa leadership qualities align with the traits outlined in the Trait Theory, demonstrating her effectiveness as a leader. In contrast to the belief that leadership qualities are innate, Behavioral Theory posits that leadership skills can be acquired and developed through observation and practice. This theory classifies leaders based on their behaviors into distinct styles, including task-oriented, people-oriented, participative, and dictatorial. It highlights the significance of self-awareness in improving a leader's ability to enhance team productivity, foster collaboration, and boost morale. By recognizing and refining their leadership behaviors, individuals can cultivate effective leadership abilities. (What Is Behavioral Leadership Theory? A Beginners Guide n.d.). Abolishing violence against

women, implementing women's special police stations, and providing high-quality education are significant challenges that Dr. J. Jayalalithaa successfully addressed, demonstrating her task-oriented leadership. Her ability to introduce initiatives such as distributing free notebooks and uniforms, and offering education in English at government schools, highlights her focus on achieving concrete objectives. Additionally, her awareness of people's struggles-such as hunger-led to the creation of low-cost Amma Unavagam, while recognizing the financial burden of healthcare, she established Amma Pharmacies to provide affordable medicines. These actions reflect her people-oriented leadership, focusing on addressing the needs of the public. According to Behavioral Theory Dr. J. Jayalalithaa exemplified effective leadership through both task-driven achievements and a deep concern for the welfare of the people, proving herself to be an exceptional leader.

**Self Assessment Questions**

1. What is meant by *Social Empowerment*?
2. State any one importance of women's education.
3. Mention one key issue related to women's health.
4. Who advocated Self-Respect and women's liberation in Tamil Nadu?
5. How did Periyar promote women's rights?
6. Name one contribution of Bharathiar towards women empowerment.
7. Mention one social message found in Bharathidasan's writings.
8. Explain briefly one step taken by Annadurai for social upliftment.
9. State one welfare measure introduced by M.G. Ramachandran for women.
10. Describe one women-centric scheme introduced by Jayalalithaa.



### Unit- III

Economic Empowerment – Participation of Women– Organised and Unorganised Sectors  
– Women Self-Help Groups – ICT and Women.

#### Objectives

- To understand the women's economic empowerment.
- To study women's participation in sectors.
- To the role of Women SHG in economic development.
- To learn how ICT supports women's empowerment.

#### Cause women's empowerment?

Gender inequality among poor people is always greater, both at home and abroad. As an example, although worldwide gender differences in gross primary and secondary registration have declined rapidly between 1991 and 2009, they remain more prevalent in poor countries (7% of primary registration, 13percent of secondary enrollment) compared to middle income countries (3% of primary registration, 2% of secondary registration) and rich countries (0 percentage points for primary, 1 percentage point for secondary). And there are continued differences in poorer and more isolated populations among children in countries (World Bank, 2011). In East Asia and Latin America, the participation of women in the labor market increased by 15% from 1971 to 1995, which is more rapid than that of men, and the gender pay gap has reduced. Women's life expectancy has risen over the last 50 years (World Bank 2011) by 20-25 years in developing countries, while male life expectancy has not improved to a much.

Will women's empowerment follow naturally as countries grow and thus no special measures are required to boost the status of women? Is the battle against poverty necessary and economic development conditions in developing countries sufficient? Recent research shows that economic development may also have a significant positive effect on gender equality by reducing poverty and increasing opportunity.

#### Relaxing the grip of poverty through economic development:

Also in countries with the highest preference for boys, it is not clear how much less treatment is systematically paid for girls than for boys in normal circumstances. Obtaining girls less than boys, for example, is clearly very difficult to observe, because

families that are watched can alter their behavior. Also, households may misreport the portions of boys and girls when they are asked to keep records as to how much each member absorbs during a given time period. Homes may eventually give boys and girls the same number, but girls may have different needs. Angus Deaton (1989, 1997) proposed a genius for indirectly determining whether girls are given less to eat than boys using household consumption data. He noticed that the household actually gets poorer when a child is born because one more person is to eat – one for a long time that remains unproductive. This suggests that adult family members must reduce their own consumption to fund new expenses. An indirect calculation of the "child's cost" can be made by observing how much domestic consumption of "adult goods," such as cigarettes, alcohol or adult clothes, drops when a child is born. If families spend less on girls than children, for instance, when girls are allowed to eat less than boys, adults are allowed to reduce their adult consumption in less numbers when they have a supplementary girl than when they have another boy. However, there is no proof that holidaymakers are reducing adult consumption less for a girl than for a young child either in the Côte d'Ivoire, where Deaton initially conducted analysis, or in Pakistan, where he repeated the analyzes (Deaton 1997). For example, in the vaccination rates the lack of obvious discrimination in daily life is also apparent. The disparity in vaccination between boys and girls is minimal or inexistent in India (according to the National Family Health surveys, girls have received 4.55 shots, and boys 4.79 shots). Rajasthan is one of the lowest female-to-male states in India and the lowest vaccination rate in India. However, the immunization rates of Banerjee et al. (2010) between boys and girls are not different: boys were on average 1.19 immunized, while girls 1.18 received immunizations.

### **Economic Development, fertility, and maternal mortality**

Women are more likely to be absent compared to men in childbearing years other than before birth and early childhood. This is not, of course, because of active discrimination but because women bring and give birth and it is risky in itself. This is not because of active discrimination. Maternal mortality is possibly the source of lower parental investment in children rather than specifically influencing the health of women (and not men), since if parents are expecting girls to die even more as young women than boys, they are more likely to invest in boys. The sudden drop in maternal death (based on

successful policy) in Sri Lanka has led to convergence in educational standards for boys and girls Jayachandran and Lleras-Muney (2009) find it obvious. It is estimated that an improvement in life expectancy per year contributes to 0.11 per year in girls' (relative to children) education. This provides two possibilities for economic growth, to increase women's relative well-being: it decreases their chances of killing each child, and it also reduces fertility in economic development. This is possible.

### **Giving women hope by expanding their opportunities**

It could lead to unequal treatment in the household by women having less chance of entering the labor market. Parents have lower ambitions than children for their daughters and young people have lower aspirations themselves. In West Bengal, for example, Beaman et al. (2011) have found that 86 percent of the parents wanted their daughters either a housewife or whatever their lawyers preferred for her where no woman had ever been the local chief (the corresponding fraction was below 1 percent for the boys). If women don't work outside the home, they may believe they don't have to be as strong and safe and that they don't need formal training. The public report on basic education (PROBE) conducted in India in interviews with parents in five northern states (The PROBE Team, 1999) found that up to 10percent of them thought it was not necessary for girls to obtain education—just 1percent thought this was the case for boys. Fifty-seven percent wanted their children to study "as far as possible; only 28% wanted their daughters to study the same thing. Many parents felt it was not required to educate girls because only girls are supposed to marry and care for their families. 32% of parents report they want adolescents to graduate from high school or college in the Beaman et al (2011) survey, but only 18% want that for their girls.

### **Freeing up women's time**

The way they are expected to spend time is a key source of inequality between women and men. The World Development Report 2012 was reviewed using data for 23 multinational usage countries in Berniell and Sanchez (2011) and 12 Countries added to increase the data set to represent poor countries. The pattern is clear and unsurprising: women do most of their housework and care at each income level and spend less time working for the market as a consequence. The gap is between 30% more of the time used for women's housework in Cambodia and 6 times more in Guinea, and 70% more of the

time spent on childcare in Sweden, and ten times more in Iraq. These differences affect the ability of women to participate in marketing, participate fully in their professional lives and so on. That is one reason why women in developing countries are more likely than not to be engaged in informal work (such as running a small business). They can run a shop from their home, for example, so that they can remember children simultaneously, rather than take on productive jobs. This reduces the chance of an autonomous income which clearly implies, as we can see below, its negotiating capacity in the household.

### **Economic Development and women's rights**

There is a strong link between economic growth and women's rights empirically, in areas as diverse as rights to property, access to land, access to bank loans, violence against women, abortion policies and so forth. The strong negative correlation of Doepke & Tertilt (2009) between the lack of rights and per capita GDP is 0.4 or higher across countries. The expansion of women's economic rights historically preceded their access to political rights in the United States and Europe (Doepke and Tertilt, 2009, Fernandez, 2009). Whilst the data cannot deduce causality, two paths of discussion suggest why economic growth could bring men to voluntarily surrender their women's economic rights. Dr. Doepke and Tertilt (2009) argue that men are willing to surrender certain rights to women to ensure that children are better educated when the importance of human capital in the economy increases (the argument requires that women care more of their child's human capital and that the negotiation of household decisions is important for the power of negotiations which we discuss below). The compromise now lies between their usefulness and their children's usefulness (children, grandchildren, and future generations). Fernandes (2009) argued that the father's interest as husbands (who would like to take all the rights) started to conflict with their interests as fathers, as fertility declined (who would like to protect their daughters against their future son-in-laws). The balance begins to decline towards the latter interest and women's economic rights increase with the growth of economy and a decline in fertility. Doepke and Tertilt offer historical accounts consistent with their theory and Fernandez offers suggestive evidence that states with a rapid decline in fertility are more likely to increase women's rights in the US. Their rights have been granted to women. There is still a lot more to be done empirically, and this is a very important field of research. These two documents,

however, provide convincing theory that economic growth can lead to a rise in the rights of women. Indeed, doepke and tertilt explicitly conclude, rather than pursue direct legislative changes for women's rights, that institutions like the World Bank which are concerned with the rights of women would be well-inspired to focus on programs conducive to economic development (such as education policies).

### **Participation of Women**

The Beijing Platform for Action is a call for action to realise women's human rights and to empower women economically, politically, and culturally (UN 1996). Among its 12 critical areas of concern, one finds, inter alia, women's poverty, educational attainment, reproductive health and rights, employment and economic resources, political participation, violence against women, armed conflict, and women and the media. Around the world, activists and advocates are lobbying governments, building consensus within civil society, and enlisting international support for the realisation of the Platform's call for women's empowerment. Unlike the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which establishes women's rights and government obligations, the Beijing Platform for Action is not a legally binding treaty. And yet, inasmuch as it has been signed by the great majority of countries and has helped to develop a global consensus on women's rights, it retains considerable moral authority and legitimacy. It continues to motivate activists around the world while also inspiring social science research and policy initiatives.

Institutional mechanisms for women constituted one of the 12 critical areas of concern, and a key objective identified was the development of gender-disaggregated data for planning, gender impact assessments, and gender budgeting. Consequently, new research programmes, policies, and instruments to measure aspects of women's lives were developed, along with new data bases and sources of statistical information. The latter included the celebrated UN report *The World's Women 1995: Trends and Statistics*; the UNDP's 1995 Human Development Report, which first introduced the Gender and Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM); and an updated CD-ROM version of the United Nations Women's Statistics and Indicators (WISTAT) database. The World Bank introduced its on-line GenderStats, which are gender profiles of countries with quantitative information. The UN's regional

commissions produced the same, though with a focus on women and men in their regions. Most recently, one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is to “promote gender equality and empower women”. Like the seven others, Goal has indicators meant to capture measurable areas of development that demonstrate progress in meeting the specified targets.

But even before the Beijing conference, feminist social scientists were keen on developing ways of conceptualising and measuring women’s legal status and social positions. They designed qualitative and quantitative measures for “the status of women” and “gender inequality”. These data were used for research purposes in fields such as women in development (WID), the sociology of gender, and gender and development (GAD), and for advocacy and lobbying by activists in women’s organisations. In this article, we turn the gender lens toward an examination of “gender equality”, or of “women’s empowerment”, which was the call from Beijing. We begin on a conceptual and definitional note, and then move on to discuss various frameworks of indicators that have been introduced by feminist scholars and by international organisations. Finally, we present our own framework. We discuss the limitations as well as the advantages of our indicators, and also examine sources of data and statistics, both national and international.

### **Concepts and definitions**

What do we mean by gender? In the social sciences, various concepts have been developed to explain structural or social inequalities based on group attributes or characteristics. Like “class” and “race”, the concept of “gender” refers to a structural or social relationship in which economic, political, and cultural resources and power are distributed unequally. Gender shares some of the properties of class and race in that it is based partly on a structural relationship in the context of social production and reproduction, and partly on biological characteristics. At the same time, like class and race, gender entails internal differentiation. That is, the social category “women” is divided by class and race (just as “workers” are divided by race and gender, and “people of colour” are divided by class and gender). The complexities of class, race, and gender tend to be glossed over in many analyses. As we shall see, aggregate measures of “women’s status” or of “gender inequality” cannot account for differences within the

female population (and the male population). It is important to bear this in mind, even while acknowledging that in no society are women completely equal to men (as in no society are workers equal to owners, or blacks equal to whites in a white-majority society).

The concept of gender was developed by feminist scholars, but international organisations have embraced it and adapted it to their own purposes. Researchers distinguish between sex as a biological attribute and gender as a sociocultural relationship. Gender refers to the meanings and roles assigned to women and men, and the different resources and opportunities available to women and men. It is recognised that in most societies, men and women differ in the activities they undertake, in access to and control of resources, and in participation in decisionmaking. International organisations, including UN agencies, agree that gender inequalities are a brake on development as well as an impediment to women's enjoyment of rights.

The goal, then, is gender equality, or – to use the call from the Beijing Conference – women's empowerment in all its dimensions. Since Beijing, various efforts have been made to conceptualise empowerment. Basing herself on the concept of human development, with its focus on choices and capabilities, Naila Kabeer (2001) defines empowerment as “a process of change during which those who have been denied the ability to make choices acquire such an ability”. She distinguishes between first order or strategic, and second-order life choices. The former include choice of livelihood, where to live, whether to marry, whom to marry, whether to have children, how many children to have, freedom of movement, and choice of friends. These are critical decisions for people that determine the type of life they live or would like to live. Second-order choices determine the quality of one's life. The choices that lead to empowerment are shaped by resources, agency, and achievements.

Our conceptualization is somewhat different though not incompatible. We define women's empowerment as a multi-dimensional process of civil, political, social, economic, and cultural participation and rights. We deliberately “frame” our gender indicators in this way because enhanced participation and rights in these domains underlie women's equal citizenship (Lister 1997, Moghadam 2003a). In addition, UNESCO's areas of competence are inspired by the major human rights instruments,

including the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Our approach, we believe, will help to give a gender-sensitive empirical content to the human rights frameworks. The advantage of our framework, and of the indicators that we have selected, is that it helps to measure, both qualitatively and quantitatively, women's enjoyment of those rights as well as their capacity for participation in key social domains such as education, employment, politics, and culture. We also feel that the framework has wide applicability and that it is comprehensive while also being manageable.

We conceptualize women's empowerment in terms of the achievement of basic capabilities, of legal rights, and of participation in key social, economic, and political domains. For groups that have been marginalised or unequal, empowerment comes about through legal reform and public policy changes, whether as a result of social movement mobilisations or statesponsored initiatives, along with longer-term advances and social changes through socioeconomic development.

Indicators describe general conditions and are usually based on statistical information on a quantifiable subject matter. Social indicators describe attributes of a population (such as those found in statistical yearbooks gleaned from census data or household surveys), while development indicators typically describe economic and social conditions for a country. Rightsbased indicators differ in that they usually measure compliance by governments with the treaties they have signed, as well as enjoyment of those rights by citizens (Green 2001, Chapman 2005). In contrast to indicators, "benchmarks" are time-bound goals or targets (such as those found in the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals), while "indices" are rating scales or scores based on expert knowledge and judgement (such as the indices developed and used by the Human Development Report). As mentioned above, most indicators are numerical, but some are not; an indicator may refer to information beyond statistics, such as whether or not a country has signed on to a particular set of international laws. International organisations now provide a wide array of sources of quantitative data for indicators, such as the World Bank's World Development Indicators, the ILO's labour statistics, the UNDP's Human Development Report, the country profiles of the UN regional commissions, the ICFTU's data base on labour rights, and the Inter-



Parliamentary Union's data base on political participation. Most of these data sets consist of statistical information, but some also provide qualitative information. (See Sources of Data at the end of this article for a complete compilation.) For any given year or country, indicators provide only a snapshot. But they also allow us to assess trends in development, in capabilities, or in rights.

In the human rights community, efforts are underway to give an empirical content to human rights, and in particular to develop indicators that will measure government obligations and citizen enjoyment of those rights (Frostell and Scheinin 2001, Green 2001). However, this field cannot be considered coherent or complete, as theoretical consensus has not been reached on some issues, certain confusion prevails, and it appears difficult to develop indicators on "cultural rights" (Chapman 2005). More progress is being made on developing indicators for "the right to education"

International law accords priority to civil and political rights, which are regarded as the "first generation" or "first dimension" of human rights. US-based institutes in particular, such as Freedom House, have long engaged in numerical and thematic reports on civil and political freedoms. Less work has been done to measure economic, social, and cultural rights, or the "second generation" of human rights. Both sets of rights, however, are important to women. We have included cultural indicators partly because of UNESCO's important activities in the cultural domain, and partly because of the ICESCR's well-founded attention to cultural rights. For example, in the 1990s efforts were made under the auspices of UNESCO and UNRISD (the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development) to develop cultural indicators on development. A number of publications were produced (UNRISD and UNESCO 1997a, 1997b, 1997c, 1997d), but further conceptual work was put on hold until the UNDP's 2004 Human Development Report, which focused on cultural diversity and cultural rights and called for the elaboration of appropriate indicators (UNDP 2004). More significantly, we recognise that women have been long excluded from cultural participation and decision-making. In some countries, issues of "cultural identity" have been politicised and sometimes translated into restrictive norms and codes for women (Moghadam 1994). In all societies, cultural policies and institutions influence gender norms, social identities, and women's rights. Thus measures of women's empowerment should include, in

principle, cultural indicators, even though we recognise that consensus on definitions and measurement will be difficult to attain.

Development indicators assess the state of economic and social development in a country. Human development indicators assess the status of people's capabilities. Human rights indicators show whether people are living in dignity and freedom, as well as state compliance. In our view, gender indicators, and especially the framework that we introduce here, combine elements of development, capabilities, and rights. They assess, broadly speaking, the social relations between women and men; the basic capabilities obtained by women; women's enjoyment of rights; and states' obligations to their citizens, especially to their women citizens. Gender indicators allow us to assess patterns and trends, and to determine stability and change in women's positions. Gender indicators describe general conditions with regard to women's development and rights that are ultimately held by individuals. Yet, in existing societies, and as mentioned at the start of this section, individuals are distinguished by the social groups in which they fall.

#### **From “the status of women” to “gender inequality”**

It has been said that women's empowerment is difficult to measure (Kabeer 2001), but a number of models exist. In the mid-1970s, the UN's Decade for Women was underway, the deliberations of the Commission on the Status of Women were becoming more prominent, the field of “women in development” (WID) was growing, and feminist scholars in the academy were producing research on “women's status”. This was the context in which sociologist Janet Z. Giele devised a six fold framework of dimensions of women's status to assess and compare the legal status and social positions of women in different societies. With some updating, it remains useful and relevant, and is remarkably consistent with the spirit of the Beijing Platform for Action, even though the framework lacks attention to international standards and laws.

**Political expression:** What rights do women possess, formally and otherwise? Can they own property in their own right? Can they form independent organisations? Can they express any dissatisfaction within their own political and social movements? How are they involved in the political process?

**Work and mobility:** How do women fare in the formal labour force? How mobile are they, how well are they paid, how are their jobs ranked, and what leisure do they get? What policies exist to enable women to balance work and family?

**Family:** formation, duration, and size: What is the age of marriage? Do women choose their own partners? Can they divorce them? What is the status of single women and widows? Do women have freedom of movement? Do family laws empower or disempower women?

**Education:** What access do women have, how much can they attain, and is the curriculum the same for them as for men? Are separate girls' schools adequately resourced?

**Health and sexual control:** What is women's mortality, to what particular illnesses and stresses (physical and mental) are they exposed, and what control do they have over their own fertility? What laws exist to prevent or punish violence against women?

**Cultural expression:** What images of women and their "place" are prevalent, and how far do these reflect or determine reality? What can women do in the cultural field?

Giele's framework has several advantages. It asks questions about women's status and conditions that may be applied across various types of economic, political, and cultural systems. It allows the researcher to specify and delineate changes and trends in women's social roles in the economy, the polity, and the cultural sphere, and to assess the strengths and weaknesses of women's positions and actions. The framework is amenable to both quantitative and qualitative assessment. Its questions draw attention to women as actors and agents, and not just "targets" of policies. It also includes the important variable "cultural expression".

As WID researchers embraced the concept of gender, the field transitioned into that of "gender and development" (GAD), and feminist social scientists began to study the ways that gender inequalities manifested themselves. In the 1990s, three GAD researchers noted that "In contrast to 'women's status', 'gender inequality' points to disparities in the distribution of women and men in the central arenas of social life" (Young et al. 1994: 55). They conceptualised gender inequality as "the departure from

parity in the representation of women and men in key dimensions of social life''. They then operationalised the gender inequality concept through a new set of social indicators of gender inequality, which they developed by using the WISTAT database. The indicators aimed to ''measure disparities in the distribution of women and men in socially valued positions''. Finally, they tested the newly created set of gender inequality indicators through cross-national analysis.

Young, Fort, and Danner's framework consisted of 21 social indicators of gender inequality, divided into two general groupings to reflect gender inequality within two spheres in five key dimensions of social life. The two main spheres are the human rights sphere and the social relations sphere. The human rights sphere encompasses (1) basic needs (sex ratio; infant mortality; births attended by health staff); and (2) civil rights (seats in legislative body). The social relations sphere comprises: (3) family formation (age difference in years at first marriage; total fertility rate; use of contraception); (4) education (illiteracy, age 15–24; achievement – no schooling, entered second level; enrolment, all ages – primary school, secondary school; teachers – primary school, secondary school); and (5) economic activity (labour force participation – age 15–24, all other ages; sector of economic activity, all ages—agriculture, industry, services)

In a subsequent article, published 4 years after the Beijing conference, the authors took note of the Platform's call for genderdisaggregated data to advance research on the situation of women and for purposes of policy formulation and implementation (Danner et al. 1999). The article discussed existing statistical resources and examined the issues surrounding them at different levels: conceptualisation, compilation, and application. Apart from its discussion of technical issues related to the collection and compilation of statistical data, the article noted the inability of existing statistical data to show social differentiations and diversities among women within nations, such as differences in social class, race, ethnicity, age, urban or rural residence. It is exactly these aspects, the authors wrote, that ''determine the differences in women's condition and in gender relations''.

How women fare is a central element of the UNDP's human development framework. Since 1995, the UNDP's Human Development Report, the Human Development Index (HDI) of which ranks countries according to such measures as life expectancy, per capita income, and literacy, has also ranked countries according to

gender measures. The Gender Development Index (GDI) corrects the HDI for gender inequalities, and it measures life expectancy, literacy, combined enrolments at the first, second, and tertiary levels, and earned income. The Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) is even more specific and ranks countries by women's access to political power and economic resources through measures such as the female share of parliamentary seats, women's share of managerial and administrative jobs, the female share of professional and technical workers, and women's GDP per capita, or share of earned income. The GDI and the GEM are complementary; the first is a composite index that corrects for the Human Development Index (HDI) by taking into account gender equality or inequality, while the GEM is a composite index measuring gender inequality in three basic dimensions of empowerment: economic participation and decision-making, political participation and decision-making, and power over economic resources.

The concept of human development and its constituent elements builds on Amartya Sen's conceptualization of "capabilities", or the components of a person's ability to follow a life that he/she values. Feminists have been largely receptive to the human development framework, but some have been critical (see, for example, Walby's discussion in this issue). We view the UNDP's measures and components as relevant and useful, with wide applicability, even though there are many gaps in coverage, especially for the developing countries. It is particularly gratifying to see an international data set with indicators on sexual assault and on gender, work burden, and time allocation. Our own criticism is that the indices serve a limited purpose, and could be flawed. An index is a kind of score, useful for ranking purposes, or "naming and shaming" (as with Freedom House's purported index of political freedom). But sometimes the ranking is counterintuitive – how, for example, can Tunisia be ranked below Saudi Arabia on the GDI? Or, for that matter, how is it that Saudi Arabia's GDI ranking is higher than that of Iran?

Young et al.'s observation about aggregate data and social grouping leads to another criticism. By focusing on similarities and differences between women and men (the social relations of gender), the indicators do not measure differences within the female population (differences based on class or race/ethnicity). The indicators in the Human Development Reports database – as in all data sets – are presented in the form of

aggregate figures, or averages. In principle the indicators could be used to measure differences among women across rural and urban settings, working class versus middle class, majority vs. minority ethnicity – if such surveys were done. Presumably, the national human development reports should be able to provide such disaggregated information.

### **MDG indicators: gender limitations**

The targets and indicators of the Millennium Development Goals are acclaimed as an international consensus on global development goals. Studies carried out within this framework show that a failure to meet the goal of gender equality in education leads to economic growth losses (Abu-Ghaida and Klasen 2003). And yet, the indicators for the MDGs do not contribute to the definition or measurement of women's empowerment. For example, the MDG indicators for Goal 1, eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, are not designed in a gender-sensitive way (UNIFEM 2002: 60). Nor are there specific targets and indicators for reproductive health, which in any case is subsumed under Goal 5 (maternal mortality). In fact, with respect to women's empowerment, the MDGs focus on achieving parity in education, which is Goal 3 (UNDP 2003: 22). The indicators of progress towards reducing gender disparities in education deal with literacy rates among young people; enrolment ratios at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels; share of women in wage employment in the non-agriculture sector; and the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments. This falls far short of the Beijing Platform for Action's 12 areas of critical concern, with their many objectives and indicators (ESCAP 2003). Under education alone, for example, there are six objectives and 17 indicators in the Platform. Feminists further argue that the MDGs also ignore issues at the heart of development, such as women's unpaid care work, conflict, human security, and reproductive and sexual rights (Painter 2004). Some object to the MDG linkage between gender and a growth-driven approach to development.

Achieving parity and progress in education is of course a valuable goal, for reasons both of development and human rights. But there has been a tendency to focus on primary education or basic education, whether on the part of the World Bank or of UNESCO. There are many reasons why the focus should be on increasing secondary school enrolments, especially among girls. These include an increase in the age of

marriage and fertility reduction, greater probability of gainful employment among women, and poverty reduction. Another limitation is that there is no indicator to measure the quality of education or of sex-segregated schools. These are points also made by Katarina Tomasevski, former UN rapporteur on the right to education. In criticising the common trend to focus on primary education, Tomasevski correctly argues that if children attend school only for 3 or 4 years, they face the risk of later sliding back into illiteracy. She also recognises that “girls are affected [by poverty] differently from boys, [and] rarely prioritised when educational resources are scarce” (Tomasevski 2004: 24). If the school is the most important institution for the socialisation of children, she adds, then segregated schooling creates fragmented societies. Certainly Tomasevski is correct in noting the importance of including the quality of education and especially the relative quality of sex-segregated schools as among the important indicators of the right to education.

### **On cultural indicators**

If efforts are underway in the human rights and development communities to operationalise cultural rights or cultural indicators of development, women’s cultural rights have yet to be theorised, let alone operationalised. Culture is difficult to measure because of its wide definition and its variability. We recognise the difficulty in defining, conceptualising, and measuring cultural rights, but we would argue that at a minimum, gender indicators should include the important area of women’s access to and participation in cultural institutions and decision-making. One UNESCO database, contained in the World Culture Report, included cultural indicators and some relevant genderdisaggregated data. They were, however, limited in scope.

What are “cultural rights”? References to the right to participate in cultural life and pursue cultural development appear in the Charter of the United Nations, the UNESCO Constitution, CEDAW, and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, among others (Chapman 2005). According to Symonides (2000: 182): “A step forward in the development of the concept of cultural rights was made in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights which, in article 15, provides that the States Parties to the present Covenant recognise the right of everyone to: (a) to take part in cultural life; (b) to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its

applications; and (c) to benefit from the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author. The steps include those necessary for the conservation, the development, and the diffusion of science and culture. The ICESCR also stipulates that the States Parties should respect the freedom indispensable for scientific research and creative activity, while also supporting the encouragement and development of international contacts and cooperation in the scientific and cultural fields.”

The website of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics ([www.uis.unesco.org](http://www.uis.unesco.org)), informs users of the Institute’s activities in four areas: (i) education; (ii) literacy; (iii) culture and communication; and (iv) science and technology. However, the website has very little qualitative discussion on gender indicators. In the area of culture and communication, the most recent statistics collected by UIS cover the period 1997–2000 and are in the following areas: press; libraries of institutions of tertiary education; national, other major non-specialised libraries and public libraries; book production; films and cinemas; museums and related institutions; and broadcasting. The UIS programme in the area of culture and communication has been under review, and as of February 2005 the new databank had not yet been posted. Moreover, the UIS has been re-launching its international surveys, including those on the press. A questionnaire on radio and television broadcasting contains seven questions, of which one is sexdisaggregated: number of broadcasting personnel for radio and for television. Again, as of February 2005, sex-disaggregated data on the media had not been posted on-line.

UNESCO’s cultural indicators have to do in part with access to and participation in ICTs and the media. During the December 2003 World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), the UIS co-organised a workshop entitled “Monitoring the Information Society: Data, Measurements and Methods”. The coorganisers produced a report entitled “Gender Issues in ICT Statistics and Indicators, with Particular Emphasis on Developing Countries”, which provides an overview of the gender-based digital divide and suggestions for new gender indicators. These include female/male differentials in use of (i) the Internet; (ii) radio; (iii) television; information about female/male employees in new employment opportunities in (iv) e-commerce; (v) communications business; (vi) telework; (vii) female/male participation in telecommunication and ICT decision making;



(viii) telecommunication and ICT policies that include or not gender issues; (ix) participation of women in science and technology education;<sup>12</sup> and (x) differences in the kinds of material on the Internet that men and women access. Finally, UNESCO's World Education Report (the last of which appeared in 2000) and the 2003/4 Global Monitoring Report contain data on distribution of students by field of study and female share in each field, including science.

### **Measuring women's empowerment:**

Participation and rights We now turn to our own framework, with its seven domains of women's capabilities, participation, and rights, and its 44 indicators (including nine on legal instruments) largely inspired by the call from Beijing. What we present are not development goals per se, such as the MDGs, but a framework that is consistent with development goals, especially those that measure social development or human development. Nor does our framework focus on assessing "government obligation" as with human rights indicators. Yet what is implicit in our framework is "the political will of a state or the fulfilment of the principle of non-discrimination" (Green 2001: 1079). Because our framework includes non-quantitative information, specifically, references to adoption of international women's rights instruments, it provides information on the willingness and capacity of governments with regard to women's rights. As such, our framework includes development, human development, and rights-based indicators, starting with basic indicators and moving to more complex ones. The framework measures women's empowerment across key domains and as such is an assessment of women's participation (referring to an active social condition), rights (referring to a formal, legal condition), and capabilities.

istical data, we present thematic indicators, consisting of international legal instruments for women's rights. These say something about government obligations and public policies for women. Included are indicators on the year of ratification, and whether there are reservations, of the following legal frames: the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (adopted; with or without reservations and interpretative statements); the ICESCR; the ICCPR; two UNESCO Conventions; and three ILO Conventions.

For each of our seven sets of indicators there could be a host of more specific ones. Participation and rights in education, for example, could include additional indicators such as (i) access to specialised training programmes (vocational, technical, and professional) at the secondary level and above, by sex; (ii) per cent of women/men graduating in the fields of law/ sciences/medicine; (iii) female/male completion rates at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels; (iv) per cent of female/male teachers at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels; (v) per cent of female to male school principals and university heads of departments. One could imagine many more indicators on women's economic participation and rights, as well.

Although our framework does not conform exactly to the 12 critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action, it is certainly compatible with the document's spirit and overall objectives. It also is consistent with the spirit and objectives of CEDAW.

### **Socio-demographic indicators**

While at first glance these provide basic population data, these indicators in fact suggest some necessary preconditions for women's participation and rights, such as average age at first marriage, adolescent marriage, per cent married, fertility, and sex ratio. A high proportion of married adolescent girls shows limited life options, while an imbalanced sex ratio (that is, a larger male population) is indicative of low female status. As such, this set of indicators may be regarded as referring to basic capabilities.

### **Bodily integrity and health**

Proceeding from the first set of indicators, this set reflects feminist concerns about women's control over their body, and ending violence against women. These have been critical issues in the international women's movement since at least the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, as well as the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo. These indicators refer to the protection of the individual woman's right to life, physical integrity, privacy, and dignity – or constituent elements of women's civil rights. With the indicators that we have chosen, we would want to see low figures for all but one – contraceptive prevalence rate.

## Literacy and educational attainment

In development circles and the human rights community, and among feminist researchers, literacy and educational attainment rates are considered a necessary condition for, respectively, economic development and growth, citizen rights, and women's life-options. Literacy and education are central to international agreements such as Education for All and the MDGs. However, many feminists are not satisfied with the achievement of primary education, given that low educational attainment for girls correlates with early marriage and childbearing, along with limited life options. For this reason we emphasise secondary school enrolments as well as mean years of schooling. Progress toward women's empowerment is achieved by high figures in these indicators.

### Gender indicators: measuring women's civil, political, socio-economic, and cultural participation and rights

Literacy and educational attainment			
	Islamic Republic of Iran	Democratic Republic of the Congo	Brazil
Youth literacy rates (% ages 15–24, female/male), 2000	91.3 f 96.2 m	74.9 f 88.4 m	96.7 f 94.0 m
Estimated adult literacy rates (% ages 15 and over, female/male), 2000	68.9 f 83.0 m	50.2 f 73.1 m	86.8 f 87.0 m
School life expectancy (expected number of years of formal schooling (female/male), 2000	n.a.	n.a.	13.6 f 13.1 m
Net secondary school enrolment (% female/male), 2000	n68 f 74 m (1995)	n9 f 15 m	74.0 f 68.7 m
Tertiary enrolment rates, gross enrolment ratio, (% female/male), 2000	9.5 f 10.3 m	n.a.	18.6 f 14.4 m

**Note:** n.a. indicates data not available.

**Source:** UNESCO EFA Global Monitoring Report 2003/4; except for n, which comes from World Bank's Gender Stats.

### Economic participation and rights

Many feminists regard this domain as necessary to women's autonomy and empowerment. In particular, access to salaried employment with benefits, especially paid maternity leave, is of special concern to women. Among other things, paid employment lessens a woman's economic dependence on male kin and the spouse, and it offers her an exit option in, for example, violent domestic circumstances. Research on the Middle East has shown that employed women tend to have fewer children (Moghadam 2003b: ch. 4),

and earned income by women invariably contributes to the household budget. We recognise that an increase in the labour force participation rate per se does not necessarily have positive connotations; it could be the result of rising economic pressures, inequalities, or poverty in a given place and time. We also are aware that the activity rate is a limited statistic because it undercounts household labour, the urban informal sector, and women's agricultural labour. This is why the other indicators in this set are important. The length of paid maternity leave, in particular, suggests an environment conducive to a woman worker's capacity to balance work and family life, and to receive valorised recognition for her reproductive labour.

**Gender indicators: measuring women's civil, political, socio-economic, and cultural participation and rights**

Economic participation and rights			
	Islamic Republic of Iran	Democratic Republic of the Congo	Brazil
Labor force participation rate (% female/male, ages 15 and above)	11 f 75 m, (1996)	62 f 85 m	54 f 81 m, (2001)
Female share of paid labor force %	12.6 (1996)	n.a.	42.6 (2001)
Unemployment rate (% female/male)	nn4.1 f 8.2 m , (2002)	n.a. n.l.	nnn11.9 f 7.5 m (2001)
Estimated earned income (PPP US\$, female/male), 2002	\$2,835 f \$9,946 m	\$467 f \$846 m	\$4,594 f \$10,879 m
Female professional and technical workers (as % of total)nnn	33.	n.a	62
Length, amount, and source of paid maternity leave, 2004	90 days 67% Social security	14 weeks 67% Employer	120 days 100% Social security

Notes: n.a. indicates data not available; n.l. indicates country not listed.

**Political participation and rights**

Enhancing women's participation in formal political structures has become a major area of feminist collective action and a key objective of women's organisations around the world. Many feminist scholars and activists have been calling for the establishment of gender-based quotas to enable women to be elected or appointed to political office, and these have been established in some countries. In future versions of this framework, an indicator on existence and type of political quota could be included. It should be noted, though, that international data sets do not take into account women's

participation in local or community politics, which is where women tend to be more active in many parts of the world, and where their presence often makes a marked difference. Whether at the local or national level, for women to attain empowerment, participation, and rights in the formal political sphere are key indicators.

**Gender indicators: measuring women’s civil, political, socio-economic, and cultural participation and rights**

<b>Political participation and rights</b>			
	Islamic Republic of Iran	Democratic Republic of the Congo	Brazil
Seats in parliament in Single or Lower chamber (% female), 2004	3 3	12 12	<b>9</b>

**Cultural participation and rights**

As has been discussed above, this is the most difficult arena to measure. Defining culture is hard enough. But how to measure women’s cultural participation, and rights? We are aware that our set of indicators may need refinement. We have been careful to avoid feminist concerns about “group rights” (usually understood as minority or ethnic rights) by conceptualising cultural participation and rights in terms of women’s rights to participate in, define, and enjoy cultural practices, institutions, and products. We have included some indicators on cultural expression, especially in the arts, as well as one referring to technology. We have included women-owned and controlled media (e.g., newspapers, magazines, publishing houses, radio programmes) because we feel that these could influence popular images and representations of women. And we include “number of women’s NGOs” because this is an obvious area of women’s participation, and because many women’s organisations are advocates for women’s empowerment.

Earlier we discussed the importance of paid maternity leave for women’s economic participation and rights, and for overall empowerment. Here we introduce paternity leave as a cultural indicator. We would argue that the presence of paternity leaves suggests cultural changes in gender relations and enhances women’s capacity to enjoy their civil, political, socio-economic, and cultural rights.

We are aware that such indicators are not readily available in the international data sets. For this last set of indicators, the quantitative information are best obtained from national sources, including statistical yearbooks or census summaries, the reports of various ministries, and even some women's studies departments and their websites.

**Gender indicators: measuring women's civil, political, socio-economic, and cultural participation and rights**

<b>Cultural participation and rights</b>			
	Islamic Republic of Iran	Democratic Republic of the Congo	Brazil
Access to computers, internet (% , female/male)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Print and electronic media (number of existing feminist resources)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Number of women's NGOs	43	n.a.	n.a.
Tertiary students in fine arts and humanities (as % of all tertiary students, total/female), 1994–1997	13% total 18% f	n.a.	9% total 12% f
Existence of paternity leaves (yes/no)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Museum staff (% female staff)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Ministry of Culture decision-making staff (% female)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

**Note:** n.a. indicates data not available.

**Sources:** World Culture Report 2000; Tehran University, Center for Women's Studies (data for Iran).

**Organised Sectors**

Organising women for collective action is imperative to bring about major changes in their lives. Individually, women cannot overcome powerlessness. This happens only when women come together as an organic unit, discover strength of commonality and bonds of solidarity and initiate joint action. They need to collectively organise for their self-image and therefore social image.

The role of women's organisation is no longer restricted to influencing state policies. It encompasses handling cultural struggle, confronting the power structure in tradition, religion, class and gender. The disadvantages facing women are manifold. It is realized that broad-based large scale movement of women with a strong base at the grass-roots would play a crucial role in organising women for their collective empowerment.

### **Why organise women?**

In a patriarchal society, the social system has an inherent bias against women. There are systematic and oppressive forces which maintain the subordinate status of women. In the society, the various forces that work against the poor are highly organised. The demands of the individual poor woman remains meaningless in such a set up. It becomes nearly impossible for a woman to break out of the prevalent gender system. To be empowered, it is imperative that women mobilize and organise themselves. When groups of women do this ?recess together, they reinforce each other and the strength of the collective has a great role. Together, they are able to identify their own priorities and the strategies they want to use to struggle for change, whether it is to struggle for resources or for changes in gender relations at home.

Empowerment has to be a process that addresses all sources and structures of power. The process has to work on both at individual and collective level. Women have to be organised and they have to be acknowledged as a political force. It involves equal participation in decision-making process, control over resources and mechanisms for sustaining these gains. In this context, Longwe's (1990) classification of the five levels of empowerment: welfare, access, conscientisation, participation and control, and the need to move from the level of welfare to control, is a useful one. As one moves towards higher levels of empowerment, there is bound to be resistance and conflict, as exclusive male privileges are threatened.

Development Alternatives for Women in a New Era (a network of feminist groups) known as DAWN and has advocated a strategy of 'empowerment through organization' that seeks for major structural changes at the policy level, and also raise basic survival needs as the priority development issue. It is difficult for one woman to bring lasting changes, "but if whole groups of women begin to demand change, it is much more difficult for society to reject them altogether".

Shramshakti (Report of the National Commission for Self-Employed Women) too recognizes the need to organise women to claim their right stating that: The National Commission has observed that the "lack of organisation in the informal sector is the root cause of the exploitation of women workers. Individually women are not in a position to fight against low and discriminatory wages and exploitative working conditions as they

lack bargaining power. Laws will also not be so flagrantly violated if workers are organized.

### **How to Organise**

Organising is a slow and a continuous process in enabling a group of people to perceive common interests and act collectively. The social activists and those working in the voluntary organisations, who are working with poor women, are organising them in some way or the other. The selection of an appropriate form of organisation in this context is critical.

Cooperation have often been suggested by policy-makers as an alternative to the private sector, primarily due to their own inability to enforce protective legislation in the informal sector. The rate of success of cooperatives in India however, is not very high, due to unequal power relationship in society, lack of worker's access to capital and resources, patriarchal domination, as also complex rules, bureaucratic procedures and controls imposed by the government department. This is one of the reasons why many NGOs in India prefer to use informal groups or society for organising women, as these provide the autonomy and flexibility that cooperatives often lack.

When we are trying to affect the income levels, we are organising women around work issues directly. Organising around work has both occupational and locational aspects. Occupational aspects involve dealing with the specific problems of each occupation separately and focussing on specific occupation, as the basis of organising people. Locational aspects involve dealing with the issues of particular geographical locations and focussing on the specific needs of that area as the basis of organising people. One has to take into account the variety of activities that poor women do to understand how can they be organised around work. Occupation related problems become issue for bringing them together.

Mere access to a productive resource is not enough to build a sustainable women's organisation, though it could definitely be an entry point. Access to information regarding policy, laws and regulations; access to technology, inputs, market, credit and training; access to support services are equally important. Such an approach would however require major policy changes.



## **Unorganised Sector**

According to National Sample Survey (1999-2000) 92.4% of the total workforce in India is employed in the unorganised sector. So far as the women's employment in this sector is concerned they constitute over 82.6% of the total female work force of the country.

In India only 18.1% of the female work force is employed in the organised sector and the remaining 81.9% is employed in the unorganised sector. Even in the urban areas almost 80% of the women workers are employed in the unorganised sectors like household industries, petty trades, services, buildings and construction activities. In the rural areas women predominantly work in agricultural sectors which are essentially unorganised in nature. Women's work participation in this sector is widely conditioned by several cultural considerations, localised norms, values and traditions which together form the basis of gender construction. The sexual divisions of labour within family, caste, and ethnicity based division of labour also condition the form and extent of women's work participation in the unorganised sector in general and in agriculture in particular.

In the unorganised sector women are mostly engaged in the manual activities. However, work participation in the outdoor manual activities are usually shunned by upper caste women as these are considered culturally 'demeaning' stigmatised and derogatory. You will find mostly rather invariably that the Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe and the Other Backward Class women are involved in the outdoor manual activities – in cultivation, construction, road clearing, sweeping, vegetable selling, domestic work etc. Thus the caste based division of labour, conventional values and norms to work, on-going processes of socialisation on the one hand, and the lack of proper education and training facilities for women on the other, contribute significantly for their work participation in the unorganised sector in India. You will find that, a vast chunk of illiterate, or semiliterate women from the Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe and the Other Backward Class background are pushed to work in the unorganised sector of the economy due to livelihood insecurity, lack of training and education and lack of availability of job in the organised sector. In the unorganised sector their employment is mostly characterised by (a) physical capacity to work, (b) lack of proper laws and regulations to protect the interest of workers, (c) lack of organisational strength of the

workers, (d) employment insecurity, (e) seasonal wage variation, (f) gender based wage discrimination and so on.

In the wake of globalisation and introduction of the structural adjustment programme there have been noticeable changes in the form of women's work participation in the unorganised sector of economy. The UN Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing 1995 observed that "in many regions of the world women's participation in the enumerated work in the formal and informal labour market has increased significantly and has changed during the past decades. While women continue to work in agriculture and fisheries, they are increasingly involved in micro, small and medium sized enterprises and in some areas have become more dominant in the expanding informal sector. However, due to difficult economic situation and lack of bargaining power, resulting from gender inequality, many women have been forced to accept low pay and poor working conditions and thus have often become preferred workers .... Women have been particularly affected by the economic situation and restructuring processes which have changed the nature of employment and in some cases have led to a loss of jobs, even for professional and skilled women. In addition many women have entered the informal sector owing to lack of other opportunities".

In India, it is important to mention that the scope of employment in the unorganised sector is expanding at a faster rate than that of the organised sector. According to the Planning Commission of India unorganised sector of employment is expanding with a labour force growth of 1.5% while the organised sector with a growth of less than one per cent. It has been primarily due to a sharp deduction in employment growth rate in the public sector. According to the Planning Commission growth of private sector jobs has accelerated after 1994 and has been much higher than public sector in recent years.

### **Types of Employment**

There are mainly two types of workers in the unorganised sector, viz. (i) the self-employed and (ii) the wage earners (casual labourers). The self employed are again employed in variety of activities viz., as cultivators and artisans etc. in rural areas; vendors, hawkers etc. in the urban areas. As wage earners they are also employed in variety of activities as agricultural labourers, plantation labourers in rural areas;

construction labourers, domestic servants etc. in urban areas. Let us explain some of these categories of workers.

### **Self Employment in Rural Areas Cultivators:**

India is still predominantly an agricultural country. A large section of women workers are engaged in agriculture as cultivators. However, over the last five decades there has been a gradual decline of the category of cultivators. Declining land-man ratio in the rural area, increase in the marginal sizes of landholding, insufficiency of small sizes of landholding to provide food security has pushed large section of female work force to opt for wage earning as the immediate source of livelihood security

As mentioned in the earlier section of this unit participating in outdoor manual agricultural activities has a cultural connotation. Only the Scheduled Caste, Schedule Tribes and the Other Backward Class women participate in the outdoor manual activities of sowing, transplanting, weeding, harvesting, threshing of grain, protecting of crops from birds and animals etc. However the post harvesting activities like processing, storing, cleaning, winnowing etc. which are mostly done inside the house are done by women of most of caste and ethnic groups. They, however, remain as unpaid household workers and mostly categorised as non-workers. It is important to take note of the fact that agricultural mechanisation has increased the burden of intra- household activities of women of landed households. However, their work contribution remain, largely invisible. In many areas of the country women for higher castes are now found to supervise agricultural activities as cultivators.

Percentage change in the Distribution of Female Workers in India 1961-2001

<b>Year</b>	<b>Cultivators</b>	<b>Agricultural Labourers</b>	<b>Industry and service</b>	<b>Total Female workers</b>
1961	55.7	23.9	20.4	100.00
1971	29.6	50.5	19.9	100.00
1981	33.2	46.2	20.6	100.00
1991	34.5	43.6	21.9	100.00
2001	32.5	39.4	27.6	100.00

Source: Census of India various series, 1961, 71, 81, 91, 2001.

clearly shows that the percentage of female cultivators has sharply declined in India from 55.7% in 1961 to 32.5% in 2001. It shows that the proportion of women working as owner, supervisor or employer in agriculture has declined. It has resulted in an increase in the category of agricultural labourers from 23.9% to 39.4% during the

same period. It clearly indicates a sharp decline in the economic status of women workers in the unorganised sector.

Besides self employment in agriculture women are also involved in the task of animal husbandry, poultry, piggery, fishing etc. as self-employed in the rural areas. At times these are undertaken along with agricultural activities as well. Though in the wake of modernisation and commercialisation of rural economy rural artisans are faced with a lot of difficulties, a section of women with specific caste and occupational backgrounds have remained self employed as weavers, potters, basket makers, leather workers etc. You should take note of the fact that self-employed are not an exclusive category. Rather many of the rural women combine self-employment with wage earning to augment the family income.

### **Self Employment in Urban Areas**

There are several categories of self-employed workers in the urban unorganised sector. Women from traditional artisan household are at time found with their traditional occupations engaged in the activities of potters, cobbler, iron smith etc. working as self-employed in the urban areas. Hawking and vending of vegetables, fruits, fish etc., have remained to be the key areas of women's self-employment in the urban areas. A large number of women are found to be employed in new type of activities like beauty parlours, dying, polishing, and assembling and processing of commercial items within the household.

### **Wage Labourers**

A large section of female workers work in the unorganised sector as wage earners or labourers. They have different manifestations in the rural and urban areas. In the rural areas they predominantly work as agricultural labourers. As shown in Table 3 there has been gradual increase in the proportion of agricultural labourers in the female work force from 23.9% in 1961 to 39.4% in 2001. This shows a trend towards casualisation of female work force in the rural areas. Again there has been absolute concentration of Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Class women in the category of agricultural labourers. Their high concentration in the category of agricultural labourers implicitly and explicitly reflect the extreme form of livelihood insecurity and poverty of these labour household. The plantation workers also more or less belong to this category.

In urban areas the construction labourers, maid servants are the predominant categories. Many a time type also work in various factories, offices as casual labour as sweepers, attendants etc.

### **Women Unorganised Labourers within the Organised Sector**

A good number of women workers work within the organised sector as casual, part-time or contract labourers. These workers are usually deprived of the several benefits like job security, pension, social security, maternity and child care etc. which are provided to the regular workers. At time they are also given a piece-meal activities in many of the small scale industries. They also work for years on casual and contract basis. The employer do not register their name as employees to retain the status of their enterprises as small-scale industries and thereby to get benefits of the small scale industries. Again as they are registered as regular employees they are deprived of the benefits which are given to the regular employees.

### **PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY WOMEN WORKERS IN UNORGANISED SECTOR**

Women workers in the unorganised sector encounter several problems which are distinctively different from the problems in other sector. In this section we shall be highlighting some of these problems:

#### **Low Wage**

In the unorganised sector Minimum Wage Act is not strictly implemented. The women workers are usually given a lower wage than the prescribed one. It is rampant both in the agricultural and non agricultural sector. Studies conducted in several parts of the country (see SinghaRoy 2004) show that women are invariably paid a low wage in agriculture. Most of the women labourers are not unaware about the Minimum Wage Act. Political parties mobilising women labourers at the grass-roots mostly tend to ignore this issue.

#### **Seasonal and Gender based Wage Variations**

As the Minimum Wage Act is not strictly implemented, wages of the women labourer usually vary in terms of peak and the lean seasons of agricultural and the construction activities. In the peak season they usually get relatively a higher wage than the lean season. Again in agriculture gender based wage differential is generally a rule

than an exception. Women labourers are usually paid half of wages of their male counterparts for doing the similar type and amount of activities. In most of the places they are to work from sun-rise to sunset to get the meagre wage.

### **Health Hazards**

In the unorganised sector women are to work in hazardous conditions. In agriculture they are to deal with pesticides and chemical fertilizers with their bare hand, naked eyes and nose. In the rice transplantation activities they are to stand and work in mud for hours without getting their legs and hands covered with shoes and gloves. Many of them become the victims of infectious diseases. In the handlooms, bidi making etc. activities they are to inhale in unhealthy atmosphere and many of them develop T.B. etc. diseases and respiratory problems. In the urban unorganised sector they are to work with hazardous equipments and unhealthy working conditions.

### **Working with Risk**

Many of women workers work in the mine or in the high raised constructions ignoring the concept of basic physical safety. In most of the construction sites they are to work even without a helmet. As they constitute the cheap pool of labour, contractors usually appoint them, in violation of the rule, to maximise the margin of their profit.

### **Illiteracy and Lack of Training**

Most of the women workers in their sector are either illiterate or semi-literate. They are devoid of educational and training facilities required for upward social or economic mobility. Training initiatives for alternative economic activities are either inadequate or seldom reach out for them. Employer never sends them for training or for gaining skill. In the event of introduction of new technology, they are mostly shunted out.

### **Stagnation and Poverty**

A large section of female workers both in the rural and urban areas are from the household who are below poverty lines. They stagnate in their given occupation for generation only to test regular employment uncertainty, poverty, ignorance, exploitation, health hazards and socio-cultural marginalisation. Since they are left with limited options, they are compelled to work in this sector at times with sub-human existence.

**Migration**

With the increasing quantum of unemployment and under employment in the rural areas an important section of rural labour force migrate to the urban areas in search of employment. According to Census 2001 the quantum of rural to urban migration has increased from 17% to 29% and the proportion of female migrating to the urban areas has increased from 67% to 87%. They invariably join the urban slums and the urban unorganised sector. Indeed the problem of urban slums are widely related to the problem of living conditions of the unorganised labour in urban areas. It also creates a situation of maladjustment and cultural isolation for the migrant workers in the unorganised sector.

The process of seasonal migration to the urban centres through middlemen has emerged to an important phenomenon. Many a time the middlemen claim more than 25% of the daily earning as their commission.

**Lack of Marketing of products**

Many of the women workers are from the artisan household. Usually they lack knowledge about the marketing of their product. Many a time middlemen exploit the situation and the true benefits do not reach out to them.

**Lack of Maternity or Child**

Care Facilities Women workers in the unorganised sector are deprived of all kinds of social securities, maternity and child care facilities. Even women with illness and advance pregnancy are found to work in all kinds of manual activities. Carrying small children in the work place is an universal phenomenon as child care facilities are seldom available for them. The contractors in most of the places do not provide child care, rest room, even toilet facilities for women workers in the construction site, even though these are mandatory as per labour laws.

**Lack of Organising**

Activities Women labour in the unorganised sector are rarely organised to fight for their rights as they are scattered and in many a places the law enforcing authorities take a causal attitude to their cause. There are also the problems of lack of awareness and initiatives on the part of the unorganised workers to fight for their just rights.

## **Sexual Harassment**

Women workers in this sector are highly vulnerable to sexual exploitation by their employers. Due to their poverty and job insecurity the pathetic situation of their sexual harassment remain mostly unreported. There is not proper mechanism or organisational initiative to deal with such situation.

## **Self-Help Group**

A group is not just a collection of people who come together for sometime e.g. passengers on a bus. A collectively is a group only if they work for a common purpose; there is a conscious membership; meet regularly; there is an identified leadership, take collective action; have rules and procedures and a common understanding.

The basic building block for widespread social change, is the strong women's group at the village level. However, a fundamental change in the system, to make it more democratic and egalitarian, will need the combined strength of strong women's groups united in federations or broad-based unions and organisation. The single village-level women's group is the "base", but for widespread fundamental change, women's groups will have to link together. In this context, the phenomena of self-help group and their inter linkages with the wider world would be interesting to discuss. There are several strategies of organising women viz., through cooperatives, Panchayat, Literacy Mission etc.

## **Organising Self-Help Groups**

The Self-Help Group (SHG) is an important mechanism of empowering women. By organising poor women into groups, they not only expand options available to them for their development but also provide them with opportunities to develop the confidence and skills requiring to exercise their choice and simultaneously bring about a change in the attitude of men towards women.

## **What is a Self-Help Group (SHG)?**

The SHGs are small informal associates formed with the objectives of enabling members to reap economic benefits and group responsibility. The benefits include availing small loans out of group savings and also access to formal credit facilities as well as pursuit of group enterprise activities. The contemporary origin of SHG is the Grameen Bank of Bangladesh, established for the poor in 1975.



### **Characteristics of SHG**

- Small size
- Identical interest social heritage /common occupation, homogeneity, affinity.
- Intimate knowledge of members, intrinsic strength, needs and problems.
- Flexible and responsive
- Democracy in operations
- Simple documentation
- Collective leadership, mutual discussions
- Group solidarity, self-help, awareness, social and economic empowerment

### **Advantages of SHGs**

Some of the tangible benefits of SHGs are given below:

1. Promotion of thrift and savings: Most SHG programmes insist on regular savings - generally a fixed small amount mostly by the members. Such compulsory savings lead towards gradual accumulation of bigger funds.
2. Improved loan recoveries: The peer pressure based on joint liability brings about a remarkable improvement in loan recoveries, leading to improved loan recycling and continued access to borrowing.
3. Cost efficiency, better access to institutional credit: The SHGs help rural poor in gaining better access to formal institutional credit.

Other resultant benefits, not directly related to credit, of the SHG approach are:

1. SHGs being people-centred organisations can take up various development activities in the areas of education, water supply, environmental, sanitation, road access, electric power availability and even telecommunication facilities and so on.
2. As most SHGs are for women members, they can help ensure gender equality and women's empowerment. The empowerment of women through self-help groups would lead to benefits not only for the women but also for the family and community as a whole through collective action for development. These groups, have a common perception of need and an impulse towards collective action.
3. SHGs can help implement income generation programmes by collectively addressing entrepreneurial problems such as providing of inputs, improving

production and marketing facilities and obtaining better terms through their collective bargaining strength etc.

Organising self-help groups has been a popular activity with NGO's since the 1980. In recent years, several other state and national level institutions have accepted the SHG concept as well. Many nationalised banks and commercial banks, for e.g., are willing to provide credit to SHGs.

### **Porkudi Self-Help Group**

In Porkudi, a village adjacent to Ichikottai, the pattern differs slightly. An SHG was initiated in June 1994. Initially 15 members contributed Rs. 101- per month and started saving. Within 6 months, membership rose to 24 and continued to increase day by day.

A village women. Mrs. Mangla Mary was given an SHG loan of Rs. 2,000/- for charcoal making. She invested the money and earned an income of Rs. 3,400/- and repaid the loan. Encouraged by her experience, the group decided to avail of a sheep loan for their beneficiaries from the Indian Bank Thenipatti-Pudupatti. Mrs. Mangala Mary was one of the beneficiaries. When the group approached the Indian Bank, Officials were impressed with their regular saving and lending systems. Following this, the sheep loans were released to the members. Mrs. Mangala Mary availed the loan and now is the owner of a sheep unit.

### **Process of Empowerment**

Women have acted in various ways-from continuing to stay oppressed to taking on attitudes of power they see around. By and large, they have negotiated rather than confronted; maintained relationship rather than reject them altogether. This is visible in their encounter with the community and now, increasingly in Panchayats. Their immediate environ, the home, is the last one for demonstrated change.

It is experienced that the process of shedding off "powerlessness" has emerged through organisational activities at various levels -the home, community and society. These are demonstrated more at a conceptual level. Often these are intertwined through continuous struggle for change in women's position at home, in the community and in the society as a whole.

The first stage of empowerment is visible when they can distance themselves from a given situation and recognise the structures of power. They learn to analyse the situation in which they are. The next stage in this process is when women experience the change of not only being able to understand the domination but resist it. Hence the courage to protest is experienced. And this is possible in the collectiveness and through organising efforts. In the third stage, a more mature stage, realisation emerges.

Panchayats have emerged as new area for women to exhibit the process of their empowerment. Where there are more than two or three women in the Panchayat and have the support of women from the outside, there is an attempt to use this newly acquired power for doing good to more than just oneself. Whereas in the public spheres of the community and Panchayat, visible actions-reflect changing empowerment, changes within the family power structure are the most difficult to achieve or observe. As women say "We confront men outside but is a no-win situation with our own family members at times." Further research needs to be done to understand how women are negotiating for more 'space' in decision-making at home and how actions in the family and outside interact in enhancing women's status.

### **ICT and Women**

By definition, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are a diverse set of technological tools and resources to create, disseminate, store, bring valueaddition and manage information. Traditional ICT tools such as television, radio and the telephone have proved their effectiveness in promoting development in marginalized areas. The emergence of computers, the Internet and wireless communications technology, along with powerful software for processing and integrating text, sound and video into electronic media, comprise modern ICTs. The spread of the global electronic network of computers, popularly referred to as the Internet, and wireless telephony has generated an unprecedented global flow of information, products, people, capital and ideas. It is the fastest-growing industry in the world and it is poised to become the largest in the world. The ICT revolution is having an impact on economic and social conditions around the world cutting across geographical locations and state of development of countries around the globe. ICTs are also proving to be a vital tool in helping to link new civil society networks around key issues, from global warming to women's empowerment.

Despite the vast opportunities for economic growth and social development offered by ICT, there is a negative aspect. ICT may further widen the gap between developed and developing countries, between the rich and the poor and between those who know how to make use of the new technologies and those who do not. The digital divide in access to ICT, between the developed and developing world, is the result of various factors including poverty, lack of resources, illiteracy and low levels of education. In many societies women are the most impoverished with the least access to resources and with little control over decisions that affect their lives. For this reason, women are on the wrong side of the digital divide, with limited access to and control over ICTs. This concern has led the United Nations and other development organizations the world over to work cooperatively with developing countries to build “digital opportunities” in order to foster sustainable human development and reduce poverty.

The focus of the present unit is to examine the issues of women in accessing and making use of ICTs for their advancement in society as a whole.

### **Gender Issues in ICT**

ICT is for everyone, and women have to be equal beneficiaries of the advantages offered by the technology, products and processes, which emerge from their use. Without a doubt, ICTs have opened up new opportunities for women to communicate, get, store and share information. The services provided by ICTs have allowed women greater access to information for their productive and reproductive tasks, as well as for organizing and expanding their local organizations, for networking and linkage building, locally and internationally.

While the potential of ICTs for stimulating economic growth and the socio-economic development and effective governance is well recognized, the benefits of ICTs have been unevenly distributed within and between countries. This uneven distribution is termed as ‘digital divide’. It refers to the differences in resources and capabilities to access and effectively utilize ICTs for development that exist within and between countries, regions, sectors and socio-economic categories.

While there is recognition of the potential of ICT as a tool for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women, grave inequality exist in terms of accessibility of ICTs based on gender identity. A very low number of women access and

use ICT compared to men. An emerging gender divide was identified in 1995 by the United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development (UNCSTD). The Commission identified significant gender differences in levels of access to, control of and advantages accruing from a wide range of technological developments.

Analysis of gender issues in ICTs builds on previous gender analysis of technology. History proved that technological developments are not value neutral. They are socially constructed and thus have differential impacts on men and women. Women's capacity to exploit the potential of the new ICT as tools for empowerment is constrained in different ways. Some of these constraints are linked to factors (such as technical infrastructure, connection costs, computer literacy, language skills etc.) that affect men and women alike; but due to the wide existence of discrimination that persists in society, the disadvantages are exacerbated for women. Thus besides technological infrastructure the socially constructed gender roles and relationships play a key role in determining the capacity of women and men to have access to ICTs on equal terms.

### **Women's Access to ICTS**

From the discussion in the preceding section, we could gather that access to ICT is typically divided along traditional lines of unequal distribution of benefits of development resulting in unequal access that has become known as the 'digital divide' or 'digital exclusion'. The digital divide reflects both old socio-economic and political divisions that are exacerbated by the introduction of new ICT, as well as new divisions created due to the nature of the new ICT. Women are at the deepest end of the digital divide has been the main message of gender advocates working in the field of ICT.

It is a hard truth that the majority of the poor are women and they experience vulnerability and powerlessness to a much higher degree than men. Equitable access to ICT technology and the autonomy to receive and produce the information relevant to their concerns and perspectives are therefore critical issues for women. Women's access to ICTs and control of them (or lack thereof) is dependent on many factors. Factors such as gender discrimination in jobs and education, social class, illiteracy and geographic location (urban or rural) influence women's access to ICTs or to any other sort of modern communication system. Let us see some of the main constraints that women have in terms of accessibility to ICTs.

The sophistication of any ICT infrastructure introduced into any environment becomes meaningless if women do not have the skills to operate the system and use it to their best advantage. **Infrastructural Constraints:** The potential of ICTs for women is highly dependent upon their levels of technical skill and education, and is the principal requirement for accessing knowledge. The Internet, the fastest growing category of contemporary ICTs, is linked to literacy. The Internet technology is foreign, with English being the predominant language, which becomes a handicap. Without basic literacy there is no access to more and higher education, much less to ICTs. The challenge of illiteracy must overcome before women can benefit from ICTs. Women have less time to learn because of heavy domestic chores and other sociocultural factors. Increased female enrolment at primary level will enhance female participation in higher education, which in turn enhances female participation in technological education. As a result more women could be benefited from the new avenues created by ICTs and hence become empowered.

Necessary interventions are carried out, especially by the government and the NGOs can lead to skill development and raising of education levels among women. It could be done through imparting of technical education on the use of ICT as a part of both formal and informal educational systems and initiating distant-learning and vocational courses on the same.

#### **Vocational Disadvantages:**

There is a definite urban bias in ICT access and use by women. Access to IT education and training is highly skewed towards urban centered, English-speaking masses with a comparatively higher socioeconomic status. Infrastructure is concentrated in urban areas. If choices of technologies are made that have an urban bias and high cost, few women would have access. Internet connectivity is available only within urban areas while the majority of women reside in rural areas. Simply by being in the majority in rural areas, women have a small chance of accessing new technologies.

#### **Economic Constraints:**

The new technology comes at a financial cost which hinders its penetration to the individual and sometimes even at the community level. The problem is even compounded with the fact that poverty and lack of economic power is borne more by women than men. They have little control over the household income and do not have the decision-

making power to invest in these technologies. Women are less likely than men to own radios and TV, or to access them when they want. Access to the Internet is through an Internet Service Provider, or through an Internet café, is expensive. Internet cafes charge for their services at market rates. High telephone charges inhibit users from going on-line. Further, there are associated physical and infrastructural requirements such as electricity, telephone lines, spare parts, and Internet gateways, etc., which are unevenly distributed and add to the cost of initiating knowledge networking.

**Structural Constraints:**

The access of women will be limited if the information centres are located in places that women may not be comfortable frequenting. Access for rural women, specifically, will depend critically on where the technologies are located. In order to facilitate access for women from various classes and sectors, ICTs will need to be located in places which women frequent and to which they have open and equal access, such as health centres, women's NGOs, women's employment centres and perhaps even places of worship. In this context, location also pertains to the practical, specific kind of information that women require as a result of the time constraints they face. Establishing telecommunication centres in local communities is also a potentially useful strategy, if gender obstacles to access to them by women are removed into account. Information production and distribution strategies will also be an important consideration in order to make the most of each point of access. They will need to be flexible, mixed media and multi-technology systems in order to reach the greatest number of women effectively.

**Social and Cultural Factors:**

Many women continue to be intimidated by the Internet and its technology, finding it more of an area best left to the men. This stems from social conditioning and the fact that many young women are not encouraged to take up science subjects in school (especially in rural areas) or feel that it would be an area in which they could not excel. This is an aspect of gender socialization. Similarly, limited awareness of the full range of opportunities afforded by ICT other than simple passive access to information; lack of understanding as to the ways in which ICT can be used actively to disseminate data, lobby, participate in and influence decision-making processes, coordinate community

activities and collaborate with other NGOs at local and regional levels are often cited as barriers facing women.

### **Benefits of ICTS for Women**

Women can benefit from ICT in myriad ways. Let us try to list some of them here.

**Influencing public opinion on gender equality:** Through ICT enabled information channels including radio, telephone, television and the Internet awareness of gender equality issues can be raised and enhanced.

**Increasing economic opportunities for women:-** Women have been limited from participation in many forms of economic life. ICTs help entrepreneurs reduce transaction costs and increase market coverage.

**ICTs for women's education:** ICTs can be used to provide women with useful information. Radio, television broadcasting, audio and video cassettes are used as supplements to print materials in traditional education. But now newer technologies such as audio and video conferencing, the Internet and e-mail are taking over.

**Encouraging women to know their rights and participate in decision-making:-** Women remain vastly under-represented in national and local assemblies. ICTs have a potential to empower women by enabling them to participate in public discussions.

**Engendering of knowledge networks** opens up avenues for women to freely articulate and share their experiences, concerns and knowledge with the possibilities of their further enrichment as the same pass through a gamut of network users. They are instrumental in helping women break from the stereotypical structures and narrow outlooks of the society and from the hegemony of males dominated societal structures. Other benefits include objective and targeted information flows, low communication costs, sharing of best practices and solutions, and opening up of alternate communication channels with women, hitherto unreached or under-serviced, and accomplish a deeper geographic penetration.

Through the use of convergence and hybrid technologies such as community emails, community radio broadcast, tele-centres, newsletters, videos, etc, women communities could overcome the constraints of seclusion, mobilise resources and support, reach out to new markets, and open up avenues for life-long learning.



ICTs open up a direct window for women to the outside world. Information now flows to them without distortion or any form of censoring, and they have access to the same information as their male counterpart. This leads to broadening of perspectives, building up of greater understanding of their current situation and causes of poverty, and initiation of interactive processes for information exchange. Further, such forms of networking open up alternate forms of communication to those offered by the conventional or the government controlled media sources, and therefore catalyses the empowerment process. For example, when a devastating cyclone hit the south-eastern shores of India in 1999 killing hundreds of people, the women folk were able to comprehend through the Internet that the scale of disaster was much higher because of the negligence and ill-preparedness of the State government. The opening up of alternate forms of communication with the external world made the women more informed and they were empowered enough to realise that their real causes of poverty were not natural disasters but ineffective state governance mechanisms. A link was therefore established by the women between bad governance and poverty - their first step to empowerment, as they were able to identify the causal loop to their poverty and the players involved.

New areas of employment such as tele-marketing, medical transcription etc. have also opened up tremendous job opportunities for women. These jobs are definitely underpaid and fall at the lower segment of ICT jobs; nevertheless, they are opening up avenues where none existed before. One of the most powerful applications of ICT in the domain of knowledge networking is electronic commerce. Electronic commerce refers not just to selling of products and services online but to the promotion of a new class of ICT-savvy women entrepreneurs in both rural and urban areas. Women over time have learnt the advantages offered by ICT and its potential in opening up windows to the outside world. This has put them in a greater control over the activities performed by them—laying the foundation of entrepreneurship development.

The unrestricted flow of information through ICT processes opens up avenues for men and women to view each other from a different perspective. The sharing of views between communities living in different geographical and cultural sphere will lead to broadening of views and changing of mindsets over time. It is a fact that horizontal level of communication has a greater impact than the vertical communication structures and

knowledge networking promotes horizontal flow of information. Men may learn more about the productive roles of women in the wider economy in different cultures and regions, and may become more willing to provide equal spaces to women. The removal of this stereotypic mindset would certainly be a big step towards the empowerment of women.

**Self Assessment Questions**

1. What is meant by *Economic Empowerment*?
2. State one benefit of women's participation in the workforce.
3. Mention one feature of the organised sector.
4. Identify one example of unorganised sector employment for women.
5. What is a Self-Help Group (SHG)?
6. How do SHGs support women's economic development?
7. State one role of ICT in empowering women.
8. Explain briefly how digital literacy helps women.
9. Mention one challenge faced by women in the unorganised sector.
10. Analyse how women's participation improves household economic stability.

## Unit- IV

Political Empowerment of Women in India – Women Leaders – Constitutional and Legal Provisions for Women Empowerment – Impact of Legislations.

### Objectives

- To understand the idea of political empowerment of women in India.
- To know the role of major women leaders.
- To study constitutional and legal provisions for women empowerment.
- To assess the impact of legislations on women's status.

### Political Participation

Political participation is related to 'Right to Vote', participation in decision making process, political activism, political consciousness, etc. Women in India participate in voting, run for public offices and political parties at lower levels. Political activism and voting are the strongest areas of women's political participation. To combat gender inequality in politics, the Government of India has reserved seats for women in local governments.

With gender-based violence ripping the country apart and appalling apathy becoming more and more evident across political class, it is argued that greater representation of women in Parliament will see an end to it. Even during the campaigning for the 2014 Lok Sabha Elections, most of the parties had vouched to bring in more reforms and make laws more 'women-friendly.' Although the present Lok Sabha has the largest number of women, India still has to be more accommodating to induct more women MPs so that issues concerning them get more prominence and are raised frequently in Parliament.

### Women Representation in General Elections In India

It was a record of sorts in 2009 when 59 women were elected to the lower house of Parliament. 59 women MPs out of 543, meant the Lok Sabha was represented by 11 per cent of women. That was the highest number of women MPs elected to the Parliament since Independence. Simultaneously, Rajya Sabha witnessed 10.6 per cent women's participation.

In the 16th Lok Sabha, 61 women leaders have made their way to the Parliament. This is the highest ever number of Lok Sabha seats won by women and constitutes 11.23 per cent of the total 543 Parliamentary seats.

Going back to the initial days after independence, it appears that the situation had been more than grim. The first Lok Sabha had only 4.4 per cent women members. The sixth Lok Sabha in 1977 witnessed the smallest proportion of women in Parliament at mere 3.5 per cent. Although the number of women MPs increased from 59 to 61 under the Modi government, it still remains far below the global average of 21.3 per cent

In a recent study conducted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), India is placed at 111th position in the list of 189 countries having women representatives in Parliament. Even the lesser developed neighbours of India such as Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal have around 20, 19 and 30 per cent women members in their respective parliaments.

Women turnout during India's 2014 parliamentary general elections was 65.63%, compared to 67.09% turnout for men. Their representation has increased from 22 seats in the 1952 election to 61 seats this year, a phenomenal increase of 36 percentage points. However, gender disparity remains skewed as nine out of ten parliamentarians in the Lok Sabha are men. In 1952, women constituted 4.4 percent of Lok Sabha members, and now account for around 11 percent, but it is still below the world average of 20 percent.

#### **Representation of Women in Lok Sabha 1952-2014**

Lok Sabha	Total no. of seats (Elections Held)	No. of Women Members who won	% of the Total
First (1952)	489	22	4.4
Second (1957)	494	27	5.4
third (1962)	494	34	6.7
Fourth (1967)	523	31	5.9
Fifth (1971)	521	22	4.2
Sixth (1977)	544	19	3.4
Seventh (1980)	544	28	5.1
Eighth (1984)	544	44	8.1
Ninth (1989)	529	28	5.3
Tenth (1991)	509	36	7.0
Eleventh (1996)	541	40	7.4
Twelfth (1998)	545	40	8.0
Thirteenth (1999)	543	48	8.8
Fourteenth (2004)	543	45	8.1
Fifteenth (2009)	543	59	10.9
Sixteenth (2014)	543	61	11.2

Source: Election Commission of India.

However, an analysis of the success rate of women candidates as compared to men reveals that it has been higher in the last three general elections. In 2014, the success rate of women was 9 percent as compared to men at 6 percent.

5380 candidates (out of 5432 candidates) have contested in the 2014 Lok Sabha Elections. Women make up a mere 7% (402) of the 5380 candidates. This is a drop from the 556 women candidates who contested in the last General Elections (2009), and the highest ever number of 599 in the 1991-92 General Elections. One third of the 402 women candidates in this year's elections are Independents. Amongst major political parties, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) seems to be serious about the cause of women representation – it has given tickets to the largest number of women candidates, 39. In contrast, the BJP has fielded 20 women candidates. AIADMK is the worst performer here, with a mere 4 women in contention. In contrast, Trinamool Congress has 12 women candidates and BSP has 16.

#### **Women Presence in the Rajya Sabha**

Year	Total Seats	No. of Women	% of Women
1952	219	16	7.3
1957	237	18	7.6
1962	238	18	7.6
1967	240	20	8.3
1971	243	17	7.0
1977	244	25	10.2
1980	244	24	9.8
1985	244	28	11.4
1990	245	38	15.5
1996	223	20	9.0
1998	223	19	8.6
2004	245	27	11.1
2009	245	22	8.97
2014	245	29	11.83
Average	238.21	22.92	9.62

The number of women contesting election has always been low, as may be seen from above table. The highest number of women contestants has been merely 636 in 2014, while the number of male contestants has always been in thousand, the highest being 13,353 in 1996. Yet it is encouraging to note that the percentage of winners among women has consistently been more than that of the men, notwithstanding the fact that more often than not, the losing seats are offered to women candidates by the respective political parties. For example, in 1996, only 3.8 per cent of male candidates won, in

comparison to 6.7 per cent of female candidates. Likewise, the percentage of winners was 11.2 per cent for men and 15.7 per cent for women in 1998, 12.3 per cent and 17.3 per cent in 1999, 6.44 per cent and 10.61 per cent in 2009 and 6.39 per cent and 9.74 per cent, respectively in 2014 (16<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha).

This scenario is also typical at the state level. There are only a few instances of women holding portfolios of finance, industry, etc., and are mainly relegated to what are considered 'women specific' departments. The source reveals that the highest percentage of women in the State Legislative Assemblies has been 10.8 per cent in 1957 in Madhya Pradesh. Haryana has had the highest average of women in the Assembly at 6.1 per cent and Manipur, the lowest at 0.3 per cent. The period average varies between a mere two per cent and six per cent. Significantly, there seems to be slight or no correlation between literacy and female representation. Kerala, with its high literacy rate, has a low state average of 3.6 per cent. Even Rajasthan and Bihar have higher averages at 4.7 per cent and 4.5 per cent respectively.

Year	Males	Females	Total	Percentage of males winning	Percentage of females winning
1952	1831	43	1874	26.05	51.16
1957	1473	45	1518	31.7	60.00
1962	1915	70	1985	24.0	50.00
1967	2303	67	2369	21.3	44.80
1971	2698	86	2784	18.5	24.40
1977	2369	70	2439	22.1	27.10
1980	4478	142	4620	11.5	19.7
1984	5406	164	5574	9.2	25.60
1989	5362	198	6160	8.5	13.60
1991	8374	325	8699	5.9	12.00
1996	13353	599	13952	3.5	6.70
1998	4476	274	4750	11.2	15.70
1999	3976	278	4254	12.3	17.30
2004	5080	355	5435	9.8	12.30
2009	2514	556	8070	6.44	10.61
2014	7527	636	8163	6.39	9.74

The representation of women in the Union Council of Ministers between 1985 and 2014 is shown in the data show that women have remained poorly represented in Council of Ministers.

Since Independence we had so far 15 women chief ministers and 23 women governors. Only one woman so far served as President of India but so far we had no woman as Vice-President and Chief Justice of India. Only one woman has got the

opportunity to serve as Chief Election Commissioner and one as Chairperson UPSC but none as CAO.

Women employment under Central Government has been found to the extent of 3.11 lakh, which is only 10.04 per cent of the total regular Central Government employment (as on 31st March, 2009). 8 The number of women candidates recommended for appointment on the basis of the results of the Civil Services Examination, 2007 was 143 as against 101 in the year 2006. However, since 2010 the representation of women through Civil Services Examination for the higher civil services is gradually increasing. Out of 269,036 candidates appeared in the Civil Services (Pre) Examination held on May 23, 2010, 204,716 were male and 64,320 were female. On the basis of the result of this examination 11036 male and 1453 female were declared qualified for taking the main examination. Finally, after the main examination 718 male and 203 female candidates (22.04%) were recommended for 2010 higher civil services posts including IAS and IPS.9 The trend is positive and in 2011 Civil Services Examination after the main examination 787 male and 212 female candidates (21.22%) were recommended for 2011 higher civil services posts including IAS and IPS. 10 The number of women candidates appeared, interviewed and recommended during 2010 and 2011.

#### **Representation of Women in The Union Council of Minister (1985-2014)**

Year	Number of Minister			Number of Women Minister		
	Cabinet Minister	Minister of State	Deputy Minister	Cabinet Minister	Minister of State	Deputy Minister
1985	15	25	0	1	3	0
1990	17	17	5	0	1	1
1995	12	37	3	1	4	1
1996	18	21	0	0	1	0
1997	20	24	0	0	5	0
1998	21	21	0	0	3	0
2001	30	7	35	3	2	4
2002	31	45	0	2	5	0
2004	28	38	0	1	6	0
2009	34	45	0	3	5	0
2014	23	23	0	6	1	0

\*First phase of Narendra Modi's Council of Ministers which took oath on May 26, 2014.

The representation of women at various levels in services, representative bodies and judiciary remain grossly inadequate even after 65 years of the working of the Constitution. Lack of adequate participation of women is not only depriving them of their

due share in income but also of the social benefits that come from women's enhanced status and independence (including the reduction of mortality and fertility rates).

Taking this whole question to its logical conclusion, the demand gathered momentum and the question of quotas came up again in 1995. This time the focus was on women in Parliament. Initially, most political parties agreed to introduce 33 per cent reservation for women in Parliament and State Legislatures and in order to attract women voters, the 1996 election manifestoes of almost all the political parties echoed this demand. But soon doubts surfaced. When the Bill addressing this issue was introduced in the Eleventh Lok Sabha in 1997, several parties and groups raised objections. The objections focused around two main issues: first, the issue of overlapping quotas for women in general and those for women of the lower castes; second, the issue of elitism. The Bill was first introduced by Dev Gowda led United Front Government. But persistent demands for a sub-quota for another backward classes and minorities resulted in its being referred to a Parliamentary Committee headed by Gita Mukherjee, which recommended its passage, rejecting the demand for sub-quotas, despite differences among members on the various issues involved. The demand for sub-quotas for OBCs and minorities is seen, again to be merely a way of stalling reservation for women; there are no instances of political parties having such quotas in their own cadres. The Bill has already been introduced five times, but is stalled each time. The ugly scenes witnessed in Parliament at the time seem to indicate a devaluation of the agenda of women's empowerment. Sex as the basis of reservations and the electoral strategies perceived to be behind the Bill, continues to be a contentious issue even among those strongly committed to the cause of women's empowerment.

However, the Rajya Sabha on March 9, 2010, took a 'historic and giant step' by voting (191 for and 1 against) to amend the Constitution, providing one-third reservation in Parliament and State Assemblies for women. Till today bill is not passed by the Lok Sabha and ratified by onehalf of the states before it comes into effect

Assuming that the Women's Reservation Bill gets signed into law, how will it work on the ground? If women gain control of one-third of the seats in the Lok Sabha and the State Legislative Assemblies, what will be its effect on their male counterparts? How will rotation of seats work in practice? Who decides which seat go to women?



First, the key features of the Bill: one-third of all seats on the Lok Sabha and the State Assemblies will be reserved for women. In the case of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, the reservation will work as a quota within quota - a-third of the seats currently reserved for the two category will be sub reserved for SC I ST women. Reservation of seats for women will be in rotation and will cease 15 years after the commencement of the Act. Seat allocation will be done in a manner determined by Parliament through enactment of a law.

Now the implications of the legislation: Since one-third of the seats will be reserved during each general election, each seat in the Lok Sabha and each seat in each of the Assembly will have one reserved and two free terms in the course of three elections. In a 15-year time limit, this will translate as each seat getting reserved for women just once - provided, of course, that governments complete their terms and elections are held once every five years. If there are six instead of three elections in this period, each seat will get reserved twice, after 15 years, each seat will have been reserved at least once, the idea being that women representatives should have reach and spread across the country.

### **Women Leaders**

Equal participation of men and women in politics is crucial for achieving sustainable development goal of United Nation by 2030. Women represent more than half of the world's population, but their representation in the parliament, political parties and other decision making bodies is very low. The Constitution of India promulgated in 1952 promised to secure social, economic and political justice and equal status and opportunity to all its citizens .So the point is where women hold half of the population and where both women and men are legally eligible for political office, women's participation in all areas of politics must be equal to that of men. But this is not the case in India and it indicates serious flaws in the political system.

### **National Parties**

Political Parties play a very important role in representative democracy. Political parties are the links between the people and the representative machinery of government. Political parties provide the necessary platform for the people with diverse cultural, religious, caste, community, socio- economic, political interests for promoting and protecting their interests. The important salient feature of the Indian party system is the

existence of various types of parties. The main categories of political parties in India are national and state or regional.<sup>70</sup> In a multi-party democracy, such as India the role of political parties in elections in mobilizing people opinion and also in governance process cannot be over emphasized.<sup>71</sup> Therefore, the backing of a political party for the success of a candidate in election is also imperative. The following table shows the seats allocated to women contestants in general election by the national political parties.

Reveals that the number of women candidates who contested the elections has increased and almost doubled from 355 in general elections held in 2004 to 668 in general elections of 2014. But the number of women candidates fielded by national parties, except for the Bharatiya Janata Party, has remained almost the same during this intervening period. Thus national parties have followed a discriminatory and gender exclusionist policy in allotment of seats to women in elections for Lok Sabha over the years and discouraged active participation in formal politics. The policy of exclusion of women in granting seats at the national and state level is not only being followed by national parties, but also by regional political parties that are in completion in various states of the country. The political decision to not allot seats to women by political parties at the national and state level electoral has been attributed to lack of "winnability" of women. However, an analysis of the success rates of women candidates in Indian general elections as compared to men reveals that it has been higher in the last three general elections.

The 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendments (1992) brought about significant changes in the political scenario of India with regard to women's reservation in political representation. One third of the seats for women in panchayats and in municipalities were reserved in these amendments. Women's Reservation bill that is 108th Amendment of the Constitution is a pending bill in India which proposes to reserve 33 per cent of all seats in the Lower House of Parliament of India, and in all state legislative assemblies for women. Women's Reservation Bill was passed in Rajya Sabha on March 9, 2010. But Lok Sabha could not clear the bill due to resistance of some regional parties on certain provisions of the bill.

There are various challenges that women are facing to enter in politics. Women's opportunities to hold leadership position are restricted by structural problems like

discriminatory party laws and institutions. Due to our social structure, women are less likely than men to possess the training, networks, and materials required to succeed as leaders. According to the 2011 UN General Assembly resolution on women's engagement in politics, Women remain considerably underrepresented in politics around the globe, mainly due to discriminatory laws, customs, attitudes, and gender stereotypes; other obstacles include low levels of education, inadequate access to healthcare, and the disproportionate impact of poverty on women. While many improvements have been made through women reservation in local governance, challenges persist. The participation of women in politics has actually declined since the days of the freedom movement, both in quality and quantity. Democratic India is based on the principles of equality and its constitution guarantees in article 14 equality before law and equal protection to all citizens. Article 15 restricts discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex and place of birth. Article 325 guarantees political equality and equal right to participation in political activities and article 326 guarantees right to vote. Women are not getting benefit from these constitutional provisions. The political climate in India is male oriented and is favourable to male participation. Women have been denied social, economic, civil and political right in many spheres. Thus there is huge gap between constitutional guarantees and the actual representation of women in the political system in India. Though the government has attempted to empower women politically by providing for one-third reservation for women in local bodies, they have not been able to guarantee a non discriminative or conducive environment for women to participate. However, this legislative intervention in higher political bodies i.e., state assemblies and parliament is absent. Thus it is necessary to examine the gender inequality in political participation and the reasons for the variation need to be studied.

### **Status of women political leadership in India**

The initiation of women involvement in politics has started during the Indian freedom movement But the post Independence era did not show any concrete effort to include women in politics. Involvement of women in politics after Independence was restricted by different social norms. Participation of women in the politics has started to decline after Independence. Their involvement in politics and electoral competition was confined to familial connections rather than based on own interest and motivations to

sincerely participate in politics. Even now, despite different constitutional provisions ensuring equality of gender, electoral participation of women especially in leadership position is very low. The necessity of proper representation of women in politics in India was considered seriously after the recommendation of the Committee (1976) on the Status of Women in India (CSWI). The CSWI report recommended that female participation in political institutions mainly at the grass-roots level must be increased through reservation at least 33% of seats for women. In 1988, the National Perspective Plan for Women again recommended 33% quota for women at local level government. After this the 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution in 1993 took place. This Act introduced 33% reservation of seats for women at panchayats and municipalities. In 1995 the question of reservations of seats in Parliament was raised. The proposed bill is yet to be passed by the Lok Sabha although it has been passed in the Rajya Sabha.

### **Women's Representation in Political Leadership Position**

Membership in Parliament is essential for participating in the government as a minister. Although women's participation in politics as voters in elections has increased significantly, the data on women's representation in both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha and in state legislature says that the women representation in politics has remained low. The number of women candidates and MPs varies across states in India. The following table1 presents the no of female MPs in Parliament in different years. Lack of position for women in these political institutions and decision making bodies has resulted inequalities and discrimination against women. In the first general election (1952) women were only 4.41%. In the next general election it reached to 5.4%. In the sixth Lok Sabha election (1977) women's representation was very low at 3.49%. In the ninth Lok Sabha election 1989, the number of women M.Ps drastically dropped to 5.22% from 8.09% in the previous Lok Sabha. The number of women M.Ps touches 9.02 % in 1999 election, in 2009, 10.9 % and in 2014 election, 11.41 %.

Women MLAs in different States of India Sources: Election Commission of India  
It is clear from the data that women's participation in the parliament (Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha) as well as in the state legislatures is very low. Women's participation in the state legislature is even lower than their participation in the parliament. Women's Representation in Local Politics In India grass root level governments are municipalities

or municipal corporations in urban areas and PRIs in rural areas. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 introduced new era for local bodies. One of the most important aspects of these amendments was the reservation of one-third of the total seats of local body elections for women. Studies have shown that the policy led to a remarkable increase in the political participation of women at the local level. Challenges faced by women leaders Women leaders in political sphere are facing many difficulties. Women's political representation is affected

S.N.	Name of the State	Year	Total no of seats	Women member	%
1	Andhra Pradesh	2009	294	34	11.56
2	Arunachal Pradesh	2009	60	2	3.33
3	Assam	2011	126	14	11.11
4	Bihar	2010	243	34	13.99
5	Delhi	2013	70	3	4.29
6	Goa	2012	40	1	2.50
7	Gujarat	2012	182	16	8.79
8	Haryana	2009	90	9	10.00
9	Himachal Pradesh	2012	68	3	4.41
10	Jammu & Kashmir	2009	87	3	3.45
11	Jharkhand	2009	81	8	9.88
12	Karnataka	2013	224	6	2.68
13	Kerala	2011	140	7	5.00
14	Madhya Pradesh	2013	230	30	13.04
15	Maharashtra	2009	288	11	3.82
16	Manipur	2012	60	3	5.00
17	Meghalaya	2013	60	4	6.67
18	Mizoram	2013	40	0	0.00
19	Nagaland	2013	60	0	0.00
20	Orissa	2009	147	7	4.76
21	Punjab	2012	117	14	11.97
22	Pondicherry	2011	30	0	0.00
23	Sikkim	2009	32	4	12.50
24	Tamil Nadu	2011	234	17	7.26
25	Tripura	2013	60	5	8.33
26	Uttarakhand	2012	70	5	7.14
27	Uttar Pradesh	2012	403	33	8.6
28	West Bengal	2011	294	34	11.56

Sources: Election Commission of India

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### **Women's Representation in Local Politics**

In India grass root level governments are municipalities or municipal corporations in urban areas and PRIs in rural areas. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act

of 1992 introduced new era for local bodies. One of the most important aspects of these amendments was the reservation of one-third of the total seats of local body elections for women. Studies have shown that the policy led to a remarkable increase in the political participation of women at the local level.

### **Challenges faced by women leaders**

Women leaders in political sphere are facing many difficulties. Women's political representation is affected by political obstacles. Absence of party supports is one of the main causes of women under-representation in political leadership position. Lack of financial support from party for female candidates, restricted access to political connections, more stringent norms for women and lack of availability to proper education systems, training for women's leadership and the pattern of the electoral system are causing great difficulties for female to enter and stay in political sphere. Moreover women are prevented from participating in politics for a variety of reasons like the present cultural value system, patriarchal society, where women are assumed to be less suitable in politics. Social structure of India forced women to stay in home and society believe that women's only duty is to manage home and take care of children. Another most significant barrier to women is illiteracy. They are unaware of their basic and political rights due to their lack of awareness. Poverty is also a significant barrier to women's political engagement. The rate of dropping out from school for girls is much higher than that of men. Women's thinking is shaped in such a way that they are ready to accept that they are in a lower class than males since this is the viewpoint of many in the society due to social and cultural standards. The caste system, or social class structure, is also a significant barrier. Because of their poverty, women from lower castes were unable to attend school. Many women were involved in low-paying jobs. In India, the majority of women do not have any land or property. They don't even get anything from their family assets. The poor health situation of women and limited access to health-care facilities is also a barrier to their participation. Daughters are not given the same feeding services as sons. The possibility of violence is also an obstacle to women's capacity to participate in politics. Women generally spend significantly more time than males for caring their homes and children.

## **Constitutional and Legal Provisions for Women Empowerment**

“You can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of its women.” This is a famous quote by Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru on women. The status of women depicts the social, economic and mental condition in a nation. Women have been regarded as a symbol of spirituality in our scriptures. Yet, they have been treated badly and unequally to men. Social evils such as dowry, sati-system, child marriage, and female infanticide were widely prevalent in the early ages. The spread of education and self-consciousness among women has led to their progress over the period. Now today women are empowered and gaining advancements and success in each and every field.

India is a country known for its rich beautiful culture and tradition. Women are given the place of goddess Lakshmi in the Indian culture. But by seeing the last few year crimes against women, there seems the safety and security of women are at stake. As we can literally observe that crimes against women occur every minute in India. There has been a decline in the women status from ancient to medieval period which is continued in such an advanced era. Each day a single woman, a girl child, a young girl, a mother and women from all walks of life are being assaulted, molested, and violated. The streets, public transport, public spaces, in particular, have become the territory of the hunters. There are certain common crimes against women are rape, dowry deaths, sexual harassment at home or workplace, kidnapping and abduction, cruelty by husband, relatives, assault on a woman, child and sex, trafficking, attack, child marriages and many more. Though the Constitution of India has given the equal rights of dignity, equality, and freedom from gender discrimination but in practical filed no one bothers to follow such law until and unless the people’s mindset towards a woman does not change.

Women empowerment refers to making women powerful to make them capable of deciding for themselves. Women have suffered a lot through the years at the hands of men. In earlier centuries, they were treated as almost nonexistent. As if all the rights belonged to men even something as basic as voting. As the times evolved, women realized their power. There on began the revolution for women empowerment. As women were not allowed to make decisions for them, women empowerment came in like a breath of fresh air. It made them aware of their rights and how they must make their own place in society rather than depending on a man. It recognized the fact that things cannot

simply work in someone's favor because of their gender. However, we still have a long way to go when we talk about the reasons why we need it.

### **Need for Women Empowerment**

Almost every country, no matter how progressive has a history of ill-treating women. In other words, women from all over the world have been rebellious to reach the status they have today. While the western countries are still making progress, third world countries like India still lack behind in Women Empowerment.

In India, women empowerment is needed more than ever. India is amongst the countries which are not safe for women. There are various reasons for this. Firstly, women in India are in danger of honor killings. Their family thinks its right to take their lives if they bring shame to the reputation of their legacy. Moreover, the education and freedom scenario is very regressive here. Women are not allowed to pursue higher education; they are married off early. The men are still dominating women in some regions like it's the woman's duty to work for him endlessly. They do not let them go out or have freedom of any kind. In addition, domestic violence is a major problem in India. The men beat up their wife and abuse them as they think women are their property. Moreover, because women are afraid to speak up. Similarly, the women who do actually work get paid less than their male counterparts. It is downright unfair to pay someone less for the same work because of their gender. Thus, we see how women empowerment is the need of the hour. We need to empower these women to speak up for themselves and never be a victim of injustice.

### **How to Empower Women?**

There are various ways in how one can empower women. The individuals and government must both come together to make it happen. Education for girls must be made compulsory. Women must be given equal opportunities in every field, irrespective of gender. Moreover, they must also be given equal pay. We can empower women by abolishing child marriage. Various programs must be held where they can be taught skills to fend for themselves in case they face financial crisis.

Most importantly, the shame of divorce and abuse must be thrown out of the window. Many women stay in abusive relationships because of the fear of society.



Parents must teach their daughters it is okay to come home divorced rather than in a coffin.

### **All you need to know the Rights of Women in India**

When we talk about the rights for women in India then we can take into consideration both the Constitutional Rights and Legal Rights. The constitutional rights are those which are incorporated in the various provisions of the constitution. The legal right refers to those which are incorporated in the various laws (Acts) of the Parliament and the State Legislatures. To be more specific, let's discuss the constitutional and other legal provisions related to women.

#### **Constitutional provisions**

Women empowerment is empowering the women to take their own decisions for their personal dependent. Empowering women is to make them independent in all aspects from mind, thought, rights, decisions, etc. by leaving all the social and family limitations. It is to bring equality in the society for both male and female in all areas. Women empowerment is very necessary to make the bright future of the family, society and country. Women's rights are an integral part of the concept of human dignity which are protected by different provisions of the Constitution of India.

Constitution is not to be construed as a mere law, but as the machinery by which laws are made. The Constitution is a living and organic thing which, of all instruments has the greatest claim to be constructed broadly and liberally. In India, the Constitution makers while drafting the Constitution were sensitive to the problems faced by women and made specific provisions relating to them. Our Constitution is the basic document of a country having a special legal holiness which sets the framework and the principal functions of the organs of the Government of a State. It also declares the principles governing the operation of these organs.

Our Constitution is one of the biggest Constitution in the world. Womens rights are an integral part of the concept of human dignity which are protected by different provisions of the Constitution of India. Our constitution makers adopted so many provisions for women empowerment. The Constitution of India not only grants equality to women but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women for neutralizing the cumulative socio economic, education and political

disadvantages faced by them. Fundamental Rights, among others, ensure equality before the law and equal protection of law; prohibits discrimination against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth, and guarantee equality of opportunity to all citizens in matters relating to employment. Articles 14, 15, 15(3), 16, 39(a), 39(b), 39(c) and 42 of the Constitution are of specific importance in this regard.

The Constitution of India contains various provisions, which provide for equal rights and opportunities for both men and women. The constitutional provisions for women empowerment under Indian constitution are –

### **Preamble**

The framers of the Indian Constitution were inspired by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and they saw to it that the essence and the Spirit of the Universal Declaration was incorporated in the Constitution. The inspiration is evident in the Preamble to the Constitution which declares: Equality of status and of opportunity Fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual. The Preamble contains the essence of the Constitution and reflects the ideals and aims of the people. The Preamble starts by saying that we, the people of India, give to ourselves the Constitution. The source of the Constitution is thus traced to the people, i.e. men and women of India, irrespective of caste, community, religion or sex. The makers of the Constitution were not satisfied with mere territorial unity and integrity. If the unity is to be lasting, it should be based on social, economic and political justice. Such justice should be equal for all. The Preamble contains the goal of equality of status and opportunity to all citizens. This particular goal has been incorporated to give equal rights to women and men in terms of status as well as opportunity.

### **Gender Justice and the Indian Constitution**

The elimination of gender-based discriminations is one of the fundamentals of the constitutional edifice of India. In fact, the constitution empowers the state to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favor of women for neutralizing the cumulative discriminations and deprecations' which women face.

Constitution of India has done a magnificent job in ensuring gender justice in the supreme law of the country. The preamble to the Constitution, inter alia, assures justice, social economic and political, equality of status and opportunity and dignity of the

individual. It recognizes women as a class by itself and permits enactment of laws and reservations favoring them. Several articles in our Constitution make express provision for affirmative action in favor of women. It prohibits all types of discrimination against women and lays a carpet for securing equal opportunity to women in all walks of life, including education, employment and participation.

The commitment to gender equality is well entrenched at the highest policy making level in the Constitution of India. A few important provisions for women are mentioned below in brief.

### **Fundamental rights**

Mostly fundamental right is the natural right. Part III of the Constitution consisting of Articles 12-35 is the heart of the Constitution. Human Rights which are the entitlement of every man, woman and child because they are human beings have been made enforceable as constitutional or fundamental rights in India.

The framers of the Constitution were conscious of the unequal treatment and discrimination meted out to the fairer sex from time immemorial and therefore included certain general as well as specific provisions for the upliftment of the status of women.

Art. 14 explain right to equality, Article 15 Prohibits discrimination against any citizen on the ground of sex and Article 15 (3) Empowers the state to make positive discrimination in favour of women and child, Article 16 Provides for equality of opportunity in matter of public employment, Art. 21 explain right to live with human dignity. Art. 23 explain right against exploitation.

Justice Bhagwati in *Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India*<sup>3</sup> said: “These fundamental rights represent the basic values cherished by the people of this country since the Vedic times and they are calculated to protect the dignity of the individual and create conditions in which every human being can develop his personality to the fullest extent.”

Article 14: Guarantees that the State shall not deny equality before the law and equal protection of the laws. Article: 14 explain - The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India.

Article 15: Prohibits discrimination against any citizen on the ground of sex and Article 15 (3) Empowers the state to make positive discrimination in favour of women

and child. Article 15: Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, cast, sex, or place of birth.

(1) The state shall not discrimination against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, cast, sex, or place of birth or any of them. (3) Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any special provision for women and children. Accordingly, Article 15(1) prohibits gender discrimination and Article 15(3) lifts that rigour and permits the State to positively discriminate in favour of women to make special provisions to ameliorate their social condition and provide political, economic and social justice. The State in the field of Criminal Law, Service Law, Labour Law, etc. has resorted to Article 15(3) and the Courts, too, have upheld the validity of these protective discriminatory provisions on the basis of constitutional mandate.

A Woman shall not be denied a job merely because she is a woman In its land mark judgment, the Apex Court in *Air India V. Nergesh Meerza* [4] has held that a woman shall not be denied employment merely on the ground that she is a woman as it amounts to violation of Article 14 of the Constitution. In the present case where in airhostesses of Indian Air Lines and Air India have challenged the service rules which state that:

Airhostesses shall not marry for the first four years of their joining, they will lose their jobs if they be become pregnant. They shall retire at the age of thirty-five years, unless managing director extends the term by ten years in his discretion.

The Supreme Court suggested that the first provision is legal, as it would help in promotion of the family planning programmes, and will increase the expenditure of airlines recruiting airhostesses on temporary or adhoc basis, but the second and third provisions to be declared as unethical, callous, cruel, detestable, abhorrent, unreasonable, and unconstitutional and an open insult to Indian womanhood. Thus, the above decision of the Apex Court has greatly elevated the status of working woman.

### **Denial of Seniority promotion on Ground of Sex**

Rules regarding seniority and promotion in the Indian Foreign service was challenged before the Apex Court in *Miss. C. B. Muthamma v. Union of India* [5]. Where it has been held that the Rules relating to seniority and promotion in Indian Foreign Service which make discrimination only on ground of sex is not only unconstitutional but

also a hangover of the masculine culture of hand cuffing the weaker sex. In the instant case a writ petition was filed before the Apex Court it was contended that she had been denied promotion to Grade I on the ground of Sex, which violated Article 15 of the Constitution of India, 1950. The Apex Court allowed the petition and held that Rule 8(2) of the Indian Foreign Service (Conduct and Discipline) Rules, 1961 which requires that an unmarried woman member should take permission of the Government before she marries. After marriage, she may be asked any time to resign if it is felt that her family life affects her efficiency as of right to be appointed to the service (I.F.S.) contravenes Article 15 of the Constitution. In view of the above decision, now these provisions have been deleted.

Article 16: “Provides for equality of opportunity in matter of public employment.”

There shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the state.

No citizens shall, on grounds only of religion, race, cast, sex, descent, place of birth, residence or any of them, be ineligible for, or discriminated against in respect of, any employment or office under the state.

The Constitution, therefore, provides equal opportunities for women implicitly as they are applicable to all persons irrespective of sex. However, the Courts realize that these Articles reflect only de jure equality to women. They have not been able to accelerate de facto equality to the extent the Constitution intended.

There is still a considerable gap between constitutional rights and their application in the day-to-day lives of most women. At the same time, it is true that women are working in jobs which were hitherto exclusively masculine domains. But there are still instances which exhibit lack of confidence their capability and efficiency. There remains a long and lingering suspicion regarding their capacities to meet the challenges of the job assigned.

### **Gender equality becomes elusive in the absence of right to live with dignity**

Article 21 Protection of life and personal liberty. “No person shall be deprive of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law. In Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan<sup>6</sup> the Supreme Court, in the absence of legislation in the field of sexual harassment of working women at their place of work, formulated guidelines for

their protection. The Court said: "Gender equality includes protection from sexual harassment and right to work with dignity which is a universally recognised basic human right. The common minimum requirement of this right has received global acceptance. In the absence of domestic law occupying the field, to formulate effective measures to check the evil of sexual harassment of working women at all workplaces, the contents of international conventions and norms are significant for the purpose of interpretation of the guarantee of gender equality, right to work with human dignity in articles 14, 15, 19(1)(g) and 21 of the Constitution and the safeguards against sexual harassment implicit therein and for the formulation of guidelines to achieve this purpose."

Article 23: Prohibits trafficking in human beings and forced labour; Article 23 of the Constitution specifically prohibits traffic in human beings. Trafficking in human beings has been prevalent in India for a long time in the form of prostitution and selling and purchasing of human beings.

**Art. 23 - Prohibition of traffic in human beings and forced labour**

- (1) Traffic in human beings and begar and other similar forms of forced labour are prohibited and any contravention of this provision shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law.
- (2) Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from imposing compulsory service for public purposes, and in imposing such service the State shall not make any discrimination on grounds only of religion, race, caste or class or any of them.

In *Gaurav Jain v. Union of India* [7], the condition of prostitutes in general and the plight of their children in particular was highlighted. The Court issued directions for a multi-pronged approach and mixing the children of prostitutes with other children instead of making separate provisions for them. The Supreme Court issued directions for the prevention of induction of women in various forms of prostitution. It said that women should be viewed more as victims of adverse socio-economic circumstances than offenders in our society.

**The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956 and the Indian Constitution:**

Article 23 of the Constitution provides the right against exploitation. This constitutional provision prohibits traffic in human beings. In this context traffic in human beings includes 'devadashi system'. The Apex Court in *Vishal Jeet v. Union of India*,

observed that trafficking in human beings has been prevalent in India for a long time in the form of selling and purchasing of human beings for prostitution for a price just like that of vegetables.

On the strength of Article 23(1) of the Constitution, the legislature has passed the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956 which aims at abolishing the practice of prostitution and other forms of trafficking including 'devadasi system'. The court further observed that this Act has been made in pursuance of the International Convention which signed the declaration at New York (USA) on 9th May 1950 for the prevention of immoral traffic. In the view of the above statutory position and circumstances, the Apex Court upheld the validity of the said Act.

Thus on the strength of the Constitutional powers the state is permitted to enact special laws exclusively for women and children, even the State may make preferential statute to promote development of the women in every walk of life.

### **Directive principles of state policy**

However Directive Principles of State Policy are not enforceable in any court of law. They are essential in the governance of the country and provide for the welfare of the people, including women. These provisions are contained in Part IV of the Constitution. Fundamental Rights furnish to individual rights while the Directive Principles of State Policy supply to social needs.

### **Article: 39 certain principles of policy to be followed by the state**

The State shall, in particular, direct its policy towards securing –

- a. That the citizen, men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means of livelihood;
- b. That there is equal pay for equal work for both men and women;
- c. that the health and strength of workers, men and women, and the tender age of children are not abused and that citizens are not forced by economic necessity to enter avocations unsuited to their age or strength;

Article 39(a) directs the State to direct its policy towards securing that citizens, men and women, equally have the right to an adequate means of livelihood.

Article 39(d) directs the State to secure equal pay for equal work for both men and women. The State in furtherance of this directive passed the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 to give effect to the provision.

Article 39(e) specifically directs the State not to abuse the health and strength of workers, men and women

Article: 42 - Provision for just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief. The State shall make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief.

Article 42 of the Constitution incorporates a very important provision for the benefit of women. It directs the State to make provisions for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief.

Article 44 directs the State to secure for citizens a Uniform Civil Code applicable throughout the territory of India. Its particular goal is towards the achievement of gender justice. Even though the State has not yet made any efforts to introduce a Uniform Civil Code in India, the judiciary has recognised the necessity of uniformity in the application of civil laws relating to marriage, succession, adoption, divorce, maintenance, etc. but as it is only a directive it cannot be enforced in a court of law.

However, one of the most dynamic members of the Assembly, Shri K.M. Munshi, expressed his opinion that: "if the personal law of inheritance, succession, etc. is considered as a part of religion, the equality of women can never be achieved."

The State to promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and to protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation (Article 46)

The State to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people (Article 47)

### **Fundamental Duties**

Parts IV-A which consist of only one Article 51-A was added to the constitution by the 42nd Amendment, 1976. This Article for the first time specifies a code of eleven fundamental duties for citizens.

Article 51-A (e) is related to women. It states that; "It shall be the duty of every citizen of India to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all



the people of India transcending religion, linguistic, regional or sectional diversities; to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women”.

[73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act reserved 1/3rd seats in Panchayat and Urban Local Bodies for women.]

Article: 243 D Reservation of seats. (73rd Amendment - w.e.f. 1-6-1993)

a. Seats shall be reserved for

b. The Scheduled Castes; and (b) the Scheduled Tribes.

In every Panchayat and the number of seats so reserved shall bear, as nearly as may be, the same proportion to the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in that Panchayat as the population of the Scheduled Castes in that Panchayat area or of the Scheduled Tribes in that Panchayat area bears to the total population of that area and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat.

(3) Not less than one-third of the total number of seats reserved under clause (1) shall be reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes or, as the case may be, the Scheduled Tribes.

(4) (3) Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat shall be reserved for women and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat.

(5) (4) The offices of the Chairpersons in the Panchayats at the village or any other level shall be reserved for the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and women in such manner as the Legislature of a State may, by law, provide:

Provided that the number of offices of Chairpersons reserved for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes in the Panchayats at each level in any State shall bear, as nearly as may be, the same proportion to the total number of such offices in the Panchayats at each level as the population of the Scheduled Castes in the State or of the Scheduled Tribes in the State bears to the total population of the State:

Provided further that not less than one-third of the total number of offices of Chairpersons in the Panchayats at each level shall be reserved for women:

Provided also that the number of offices reserved under this clause shall be allotted by rotation to different Panchayats at each level.

The reservation of seats under clauses (1) and (2) and the reservation of offices of Chairpersons (other than the reservation for women) under clause (4) shall cease to have effect on the expiration of the period specified in article 334. (6) Nothing in this Part shall prevent the Legislature of a State from making any provision for reservation of seats in any Panchayat or offices of Chairpersons in the Panchayats at any level in favour of backward class of citizens.

Article: 243 T Reservation of seats. (74<sup>th</sup> Amendment - w.e.f. 1-6-1993)

### **243T. Reservation of seats**

Seats shall be reserved for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes in every Municipality and the number of seats so reserved shall bear, as nearly as may be, the same proportion to the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in that Municipality as the population of the Scheduled Castes in the municipal area or of the Scheduled Tribes in the Municipal area bears to the total population of that area and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Municipality.

Not less than one-third of the total number of seats reserved under clause (1) shall be reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes or, as the case may be, the Scheduled Tribes.

Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Municipality shall be reserved for women and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Municipality.

The offices of Chairpersons in the Municipalities shall be reserved for the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and women in such manner as the Legislature of a State may, by law, provide.

The reservation of seats under clauses (1) and (2) and the reservation of offices of Chairpersons (other than the reservation for women) under clause (4) shall cease to have effect on the expiration of the period specified in article 334. (6) Nothing in this Part shall prevent the Legislature of a State from making any provision for reservation of seats in

any Municipality or offices of Chairpersons in the Municipalities in favour of backward class of citizens

Article: 243 G. - Powers, authority and responsibilities of Panchayats Read with Eleventh Schedule

G. Powers, authority and responsibilities of Panchayats Subject to the provisions of this Constitution, the Legislature of a State may, by law, endow the Panchayats with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as institutions of self-government and such law may contain provisions for the devolution of powers and responsibilities upon Panchayats at the appropriate level, subject to such conditions as may be specified therein, with respect to

(a) The preparation of plans for economic development and social justice; (b) The implementation of schemes for economic development and social justice as may be entrusted to them including those in relation to the matters listed in the Eleventh Schedule.

### **Legal Provisions**

To uphold the Constitutional mandate, the State has enacted various legislative measures intended to ensure equal rights, to counter social discrimination and various forms of violence and atrocities and to provide support services especially to working women. Although women may be victims of any of the crimes such as Murder, Robbery, Cheating etc, the crimes, which are directed specifically against women, are characterized as Crime against Women. These are broadly classified under two categories.

The Crimes Identified Under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) Rape (Sec. 376 IPC) Kidnapping & Abduction for different purposes (Sec. 363-373) Homicide for Dowry, Dowry Deaths or their attempts (Sec. 302/304-B IPC) Torture, both mental and physical (Sec. 498-A IPC) Molestation (Sec. 354 IPC) Sexual Harassment (Sec. 509 IPC) Importation of girls (up to 21 years of age) (ii) The Crimes identified under the Special Laws (SLL) Although all laws are not gender specific, the provisions of law affecting women significantly have been reviewed periodically and amendments carried out to keep pace with the emerging requirements. Some acts which have special provisions to safeguard to women and their interests are:

1. Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005) This Act protects women from any act/conduct/omission/commission that harms, injures or potential harm is to be considered as domestic violence. This is a comprehensive legislation to protect women in India from all forms of domestic violence by the husband or any of his relatives. It protects the women from physical, sexual, emotional, verbal, psychological, economic abuse.

2. The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1986 (PITA) has amended The Immoral Traffic (Suppression) Act, 1956 (SITA). This Act is the premier legislation only for prevention of trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation i.e. for the purpose of preventing and ultimately prohibiting prostitution for women and girls to criminalize sex work. In 2006, the Ministry of Women and Child Development proposed an amendment bill i.e. the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Amendment Bill, 2006 that has yet to be passed.

3. Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act (1986) prohibits indecent representation of women through advertisements or in publications, writings, paintings, figures or in any other manner.

4. Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act (1987) provides for the more effective prevention of the commission of practice of Sati or the voluntary or forced burning or burying alive of widows, and to prohibit glorification of this action through the observance of any ceremony.

5. Dowry Prohibition Act (1961) prohibits the giving or receiving of dowry at or before or any time after the marriage from women. Under the provisions of this Act demand of dowry either before marriage, during marriage and or after the marriage is an offence.

6. Maternity Benefit Act (1961) protects the employment of women during the time of her maternity and entitles her to a 'maternity benefit' and certain other benefits. The Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017 an amendment to the Maternity Benefit Act (1961) has been passed. The Act is applicable to contractual or consultant women employees, as well as to the women who are already on maternity leave at the time of enforcement of the Amendment Act.

7. Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act (1971) provides for the termination of certain pregnancies by registered medical practitioners on humanitarian and medical grounds.

8. The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act of 1971 are the safeguards of women from unnecessary and compulsory abortions.

9. Pre-conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act (1994) prohibits sex selection before or after conception and prevents the misuse of pre-natal diagnostic techniques for sex determination leading to female foeticide.

10. Equal Remuneration Act (1976) provides for payment of equal remuneration to both men and women workers for same work or work of a similar nature. It also prevents discrimination on the ground of sex, against women in recruitment and service conditions.

11. Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act (1986) protects the rights of Muslim women who have been divorced by or have obtained divorce from their husbands.

12. Hindu Succession Act (1956) recognizes the right of women to inherit parental property equally with men. Then there came the Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act 2005 granting daughters the right to inherit ancestral property along with their male relatives.

13. Minimum Wages Act (1948) does not allow discrimination between male and female workers or different minimum wages for them.

14. Mines Act (1952) and Factories Act (1948) prohibits the employment of women between 7 P.M. to 6 A.M. in mines and factories and provides for their safety and welfare. 15. The Sexual Harassment of Women at Work Place (Prevention and Protection) Act (2013) provides protection to women from sexual harassment at all workplaces both in public and private sector, whether organised or unorganized.

16. The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act, 2019: - The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill 2019 became an Act after being passed by the Parliament and subsequently receiving the President's assent. This Act, also commonly called as the 'Triple Talaq Bill', is one of the historic decisions

safeguarding Muslim Women's Fundamental Rights and shielding them against arbitrary religious practices. The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act, 2019 is an Act of the Parliament of India criminalising triple talaq. In August 2017 the Supreme Court of India declared triple talaq, which enables Muslim men to instantly divorce their wives, to be unconstitutional.

17. Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016 prohibits the engagement of children in all occupations and of adolescents in hazardous occupations and processes, where adolescents refer to those under 18 years and children to those under 14 years.

18. The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO Act) 2012 was formulated in order to effectively address sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children. It defines a child as any person below the age of 18 years and provides protection to all children under the age of 18 years from the offences of sexual assault, sexual harassment, and pornography.

19. Factories Act 1948 under this Act, a woman cannot be forced to work beyond 8 hours and prohibits employment of women except between 6 A.M. and 7 P.M.

20. The Child Marriage Restrain Act of 1976 this act raises the age for marriage of a girl to 18 years from 15 years and that of a boy to 21 years.

### **Self Assessment Questions**

1. What is meant by *political empowerment of women*?
2. State one constitutional right that supports women's political participation.
3. Name any one prominent woman political leader in India.
4. Mention one legal provision aimed at women's empowerment.
5. Explain how reservations in Panchayati Raj Institutions empower women.
6. Identify one legislation that protects women's rights.
7. How has the Women's Reservation Bill influenced political representation?
8. State one challenge faced by women in politics.
9. Describe the impact of education on women's political participation.
10. Analyse how legal reforms have improved women's status in Indian society.

## Unit- V

Women Education- Women Legislators-Developmental Schemes and Programmes for Women Empowerment – - Developmental Schemes for Women by Government of Tamil Nadu.

### Objectives

- To understand the importance of women's education.
- To know the role of women legislators in empowerment.
- To study major developmental schemes for women in India.
- To learn key Tamil Nadu government schemes for women's

Empowerment can be viewed as means of creating a social environment in which one can make decisions and make choices either individually or collectively for social transformation. The empowerment strengthens the innate ability by way of acquiring knowledge, power and experience (Hashemi Schuler and Riley, 1996). Empowerment is the process of enabling or authorizing individual to think, take action and control work in an autonomous way. It is the process by which one can gain control over one's destiny and the circumstances of one's lives. There are always a number of elements in the society which are deprived of their basic rights in every society, state and nation, but these elements lack in the awareness of their rights. If we enlist such elements from the society, then women would top this list. In fact, women are the most important factor of every society. Even though everybody is aware of this fact, but nobody is ready to accept this fact. As a result, the importance which used to be given to women is declining in today's society. As a consequence of this growing tendency of underestimating women such as to make them occupy a secondary position in society and to deprive them of their basic rights, the need for empowering women was felt. . Empowering women has become the focus of considerable discussion and attention all over the world. Today we enjoy the benefits of being citizens of a free nation, but we really need to think whether each of the citizens of our country is really free or enjoying freedom, in the true sense of the term. The inequalities between men and women and discrimination against women are an age-old issue all over the world. Thus women quest for equality with man is a universal phenomenon. Women should equal with men in matters of education, employment, inheritance, marriage, and politics etc. Their quest for equality has given birth to the

formation of many women's associations and launching of movements. The Constitution of our nation doesn't discriminate between men and women, but our society has deprived women of certain basic rights, which were bestowed upon them by our Constitution. Empowerment allows individuals to reach their full potential, to improve their political and social participation, and to believe in their own capabilities.

#### Importance of women education

“If you educate a man you educate an individual, however, if you educate a woman you educate a whole family. Women empowered means mother India empowered”. PT. JAWAHARLAL NEHRU. Women education in India plays a very important role in the overall development of the country. It not only helps in the development of half of the human resources, but in improving the quality of life at home and outside.<sup>1</sup> If it is said that education is the key to all problems, then it won't be improper. Thinkers have given a number of definitions of education but out of these definitions, the most important definition is that which was put forth by M. Phule. According to M. Phule, "Education is that which demonstrates the difference between what is good and what is evil". If we consider the above definition, we come to know that whatever revolutions that have taken place in our history, education is at the base of them. <sup>2</sup> Education means modification of behaviour in every aspect, such as mentality, outlook, attitude etc. Educated women not only tend to promote education of their girl children, but also can provide better guidance to all their children. Moreover educated women can also help in the reduction of infant mortality rate and growth of the population. Obstacles: Gender discrimination still persists in India and lot more needs to be done in the field of women's education in India. The gap in the male-female literacy rate is just a simple indicator. While the male literary rate is more than 82.14% and the female literacy rate is just 65.46%. (b). the women were consider only house wife and better to be live in the house.

#### **Women empowerment through education**

Women empowerment is the pivotal part in any society, state or country. It is a woman who plays a dominant role in the basic life of a child. Women are an important section of our society. Education as means of empowerment of women can bring about a positive attitudinal change. It is therefore, crucial for the socioeconomic and political



progress of India. The Constitution of India empowers the state to adopt affirmative measures for prompting ways and means to empower women. Education significantly makes difference in the lives of women.<sup>3</sup> Women Empowerment is a global issue and discussion on women political right are at the fore front of many formal and informal campaigns worldwide. The concept of women empowerment was introduced at the international women conference at NAROI in 1985. Education is milestone of women empowerment because it enables them to responds to the challenges, to confront their traditional role and change their life. So we can't neglect the importance of education in reference to women empowerment. To see the development in women education India is supposed to upcoming super power of the world in recent years. The increasing change in women education, the empowerment of women has been recognised as the central issue in determining the status of women.<sup>4</sup> for becoming super power we have mostly to concentrate upon the women's education. By which it will force on women's empowerment. As per united national development fund for women (UNIFEM) the term women's empowerment means:

- Acquiring knowledge and understanding of gender relations and the ways in which these relations may be changed.
- Developing a sense of self-worth, a belief in one's ability to secure desired changes and the right to control one's life.
- Gaining the ability to generate choices exercise bargaining power.
- Developing the ability to organize and influence the direction of social change, to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally.

Thus, empowerment means a psychological sense of personal control or influence and a concern with actual social influence, political power and legal rights. It is a multi level construct referring to individuals, organizations and community. It is an international, ongoing process centred in the local community, involving mutual respect, critical reflection, caring and group participation, through which people lacking an equal share of valued resources gain greater access to the control over this resources.

Let's see the difference in the literacy rate between men and women in given table are as under

### Literacy rate in India

Year	Persons	Males	Females
1901	5.3	9.8	0.7
1911	5.9	10.6	1.1
1921	7.2	12.2	1.8
1931	9.5	15.6	2.9
1941	16.1	24.9	7.3
1961	16.7	24.9	7.3
1981	36.2	46.9	24.8
1991	52.1	63.9	39.2
2001	62.38	76.0	54.0
2011	74	82.1	65.46

On observing the above table, we come to know that at no point could the literacy rate of women match that of men. As a result, even after 65 years of independence, women occupy a secondary position in our social hierarchy. Inspire of being aware of her position, women can't transform the situation due to lack of education. Therefore, women's empowerment can't be effected unless we persuade the importance of women's education.

Importance of Women participation Women's participation may be used both for support by an agency and as a control device by the law-makers. Participation may be direct or indirect, formal or informal; it may be political, social or administrative in nature. Women's participation in Panchayat Raj institutions may take many forms. It refers to all those activities which show the women's involvement in the processes and administration, that is, participation in policy formulation and programme planning, implementation and evaluation of policies and programmes meant for development target groups.<sup>7</sup> Indian women have been associated with politics since the pre-independence period. They were part of the freedom movement both as volunteers and leaders. On independence, Article 15 of the Indian Constitution guaranteed equality to women under the law. Though the Indian Constitution guarantees equal rights to all citizens, women are still marginally represented in the Indian political arena. The fact is that in the hands of women are having lack of power at the centre and state level. It is sad state of af India's population has only 10 per cent representation in the Lok Sabha. In the current Rajya Sabha, there are 21 women out of a total of 233 MPs, which amounts to only nine per cent which is even lower than that in the Lok Sabha. At the societal level male dominance in Parliament, bureaucracy, judiciary, Army, police all point towards gender inequality, notwithstanding the fact that it is often argued that women's political

leadership would bring about a more cooperative and less conflict-prone world. Lack of political and economic powers add to the subservient and unequal position of women.<sup>8</sup> After Independence, in spite of having our own constitution, India was not able to achieve morals like fairness, equality and social justice. The condition of women didn't improve even having a woman prime minister for few numbers of years. Women's representation in politics all over the world began to assume importance from mid 1970s when United Nations (UN) declared 1975 as the 'International Women's Year'. This was followed by the UN's decade for Women from 1976-1985 and the theme was "Equality, Development and Peace". Women's participation in politics remained quite inconsequential in India even today but some sort of improvement took place by the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendment acts which gave boost to the status of women at the political level by giving opportunity to women in the process of decision-making. The 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Amendments (1993) to the constitution of India have provided for reservation of seats in the local bodies of panchayats and Municipalities for women, laying a strong foundation for their participation in decision making at the local level.

### **Educational equality**

Another area in which women's equality has shown a major improvement as a result of adult literacy programs is the area of enrolment of boys and girls in schools. As a result of higher participation of women in literacy campaigns, the gender gap in literacy levels is gradually getting reduced. Even more significant is the fact that disparity in enrolment of boys and girls in neo-literate households is much lowered compared to the non-literate householders. The world has achieved equality in primary education between girls and boys. But few countries have achieved that target at all levels of education. The political participation of women keeps increasing. In January 2014, in 46 countries more than 30% of members of parliament in at least one chamber were women. In many countries, gender inequality persists and women continue to face discrimination in access to education, work and economic assets, and participation in government. Women and girls face barriers and disadvantages in every sector in which we work. Around the world 62 million girls are not in school. Globally, 1 in 3 women will experience gender-based violence in her lifetime. In the developing world, 1 in 7 girls is married before her 15th birthday, with some child brides as young as 8 or 9. Each year more than 287,000

women, 99 percent of them in developing countries, die from pregnancy and childbirth-related complications. While women make up more than 40 percent of the agriculture labour force only 3 to 20 percent are landholders. In Africa, women owned enterprises make up as little as 10 percent of all businesses. In South Asia, that number is only 3 percent. And despite representing half the global population, women compromise less than 20 percent of the world's legislators. Putting women and girls on equal footing with men and boys have the power to transform every sector in which we work. The gender equality and women's empowerment isn't a part of development but at the core of development. To get rid of this we have to make some educational awareness programmes on gender equality and women empowerment for cementing our commitment to supporting women and girls.

### **Women Legislators**

#### **Demographics of Women in State Legislatures**

Across the country, 1,663 women served in state legislatures in March 2001. The number of women holding office in state legislatures has grown over the past decade, although the overall increase was not as dramatic during the 1990s as it had been during the previous two decades. In 1988, there were 1,176 women in state legislatures, accounting for 15.8% of all legislators. The percent of women legislators climbed to 20.6% in 1995 and reached 22.5% in 2000 before declining slightly to 22.4% in 2001. The upper chambers of state legislatures, in particular, now include significantly more women than a decade ago. Between 1988 and 2001, the number of women state senators almost doubled from 230 to 396. In 2001, women make up almost as large a proportion of state senators (20.0%) as they do of state representatives (23.2%).

#### **Personal Characteristics of Women State Legislators**

Women legislators have even stronger credentials in 2001 than in 1988. For example, women legislators are better educated than those who held office in the late 1980s. Fifty-three percent of women legislators in 2001 have attended graduate or professional school, compared with 43% in 1988. Women (34%) are less likely than men (66%) to hold another job while serving in the state legislature. Nevertheless, 94% of women legislators in 2001 have at some time worked in a job outside of public office, a modest increase from the 90% recorded in 1988. There has been a slight shift toward

historically male jobs among women legislators. As Table 1 shows, women legislators in 2001 are more likely to have been self-employed or business owners and less likely to have worked in clerical or secretarial jobs than was true for women legislators in 1988.

Nevertheless, as Table 1 shows, women legislators continue in 2001, as they did in 1988, to come disproportionately from traditional women's fields, such as elementary or secondary education or nursing, and are still much less likely than their male colleagues to be attorneys or farmers. Notwithstanding the increased number of women attending law schools, women legislators are about as likely to be attorneys in 2001 as they were in 1988.

There is a widespread perception that more young women are running for office nowadays; yet women legislators are older on average than they were in 1988. Significantly more women legislators in 2001 (74%) than in 1988 (58%) are 50 years of age or older

The women are also older than the men. Only about a quarter (24%) of the women legislators are under the age of 50, in contrast to 39% of male legislators.

Just as the average age of women legislators has increased over the past decade, so too has the average age at which woman legislators entered the state house or state senate. On average, a woman serving as a state senator in 2001 started in her current position at age 50, up slightly from an average age of 48 in 1988. Similarly the average age of entry for women state representatives has increased from 45 to 49 since 1988. Men remain significantly more likely than women to begin serving at a relatively young age. About three in 10 male state senators (28%) and state representatives (30%) entered their current positions when they were under 40 years of age. This compares with only 11% of women state senators and 14% of women state representatives.

### **Changes in the Personal Characteristics of women Legislators Since 1988**

Age	2021		1998
	% Women	% Men	% Women
Under 50	24	39	40
<b>60-64</b>	56	41	48
65 or older	18	19	10
Education			
High school graduate or less	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>
Some college	17	13	21
College graduate	24	29	28
Graduate/professional school	53	50	43

<b>Employment</b>			
Total worked outside the home	<b>94</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>90</b>
School teacher/administrator	22	7	22
Self-employed/own business	11	14	7
Attorney	10	19	8
Nurse/healthcare professional	8	1	6
Clerical/secretary	3	*	10
Farmer	1	1	1

As was true in 1988, women in 2001 still seem to delay their political careers because of family responsibilities. In addition to the fact that women legislators are older than the men with whom they serve, they are far less likely to have young children. Only 17% of women legislators, compared with 36% of men, have children under age 18. Similarly, only 2% of women legislators, compared with 13% of men, have children less than six years of age. Clearly, combining parenting with a political career is still more difficult for women than for men.

Women legislators are far less likely than their male colleagues to be married (69% vs. 87%), a difference that has not changed since 1988.

In general, the religious preferences of women legislators today are similar to those of their male colleagues and to those of women who served in 1988. A majority of women legislators are Protestant (62%) and a sizable minority are Catholic (22%). The most striking gender difference is that fewer women (14%) than men (20%) are evangelical or “born-again” Christians. Women legislators are also notably less likely (16%) than men (28%) to identify themselves as “Christian conservatives.”

In addition to being older and better educated, women legislators in 2001 are also a more racially and ethnically diverse group. According to the most recent information compiled by CAWP, women of color now account for 16.0% of all women legislators, up from 10.9% in 1988.

### **Political Characteristics of Women State Legislators**

Despite some changes in the demographics of women legislators over the past decade, women legislators in 2001 are similar politically to the women who served in the late 1980s.

Data collected by CAWP show that the party affiliation of women legislators has changed very little over the years. In 2001, Democratic women in state legislatures

outnumber Republican women by a margin of 1,007 to 645 (61% to 39%). In 1988, Democrats outnumbered Republicans by a similar margin (58% to 41%). The party affiliation of women lawmakers varies only slightly by chamber.

When asked to describe their political ideology, Democratic women (40%) are more likely than Democratic men (23%) to describe themselves as liberals. Almost half of Democratic women (49%) call themselves moderates while only a few (11%) say they are conservatives. These proportions are similar to those found for women state legislators in 1988.

In contrast to Democratic women who are more liberal than Democratic male legislators, Republican women legislators closely resemble Republican men in their political ideology. Fifty-six percent of Republican women, compared with 64% of Republican men, describe themselves as conservatives. A more modest 39% of Republican women legislators identify as moderates, and very few (1%) call themselves liberals. The 56% of Republican women in 2001 who self-identify as conservatives represents a substantial increase over the 43% who described themselves as conservatives in 1988.

Women legislators (43%) are much more likely than men in legislatures (17%) to self-identify as “feminists.” This gender difference is apparent within both parties, although Democratic women (57%) are considerably more likely than Republican women (15%) to identify with the feminist label. Women legislators are as likely to identify with the feminist label in 2001 as they were in 1988, although identification with the feminist label has declined among Republican women legislators (from 27% in 1988 to 15% in 2001).

### **Connections to Women Inside and Outside the Legislature**

Relationships with other women legislators and the organized women’s community are important sources of political support for women lawmakers. Women of both parties are more likely than men to get campaign help from women’s organizations outside the legislature. Most women legislators are members of at least one women’s organization outside the legislature, and many work collectively with other women within their legislatures on issues that are of particular interest to women.

### **Support For Women Candidates For Public Office**

Women legislators in 2001 are as likely as women legislators in 1988 to be supported by women's organizations, and they are more likely than their male colleagues to get campaign support from women's groups. Altogether, 65% of women legislators, compared with 45% of men, say they were supported by at least one women's organization during their last election. As Table 2 shows, more women than men report receiving support from the National Organization for Women (NOW), the Women's Political Caucus (WPC), and other women's organizations.

Women legislators of both parties are more likely than men of either party to be supported by women's organizations. Fifty-three percent of Republican women say they received support from a women's organization in the last election. Although this figure is lower than that for Democratic women (71%), it is much higher than the proportion of Republican men (41%) and slightly higher than the proportion of Democratic men (49%) who report that they received support from a women's group.

### **Support From Women's Organizations In Last Election**

	Percent Women %	Received Support Men %
Did you receive support from...? National Organization for Women	25	14
Women's Political Caucus	26	11
Any other women's organizations	56	36

As might be expected, women who describe themselves as liberals, feminists, and Democrats are more likely than other legislators to say they were supported by women's organizations. For example, 48% of women legislators who describe themselves as liberals, compared with 23% of moderates and 5% of conservatives, report that they received support from NOW in the last election. Similarly, 36% of Democratic women, but only 6% of Republican women, say they received support from the Women's Political Caucus in the last election.

### **Membership in Women's Organizations Outside the Legislature**

Women legislators show a strong connection to women's organizations outside the legislature in 2001, just as they did in 1988. However, membership in specific groups has changed somewhat since 1988. Altogether, 73% of women legislators are members of at least one of the eight women's organizations asked about in the survey, and the typical



woman legislator is a member of two of these groups. More women legislators in 2001 than in 1988 are members of the Women's Political Caucus (WPC) and the National Organization for Women (NOW). However, notably fewer are members of the League of Women Voters (LVW), the American Association of University Women (AAUW), and Business and Professional Women (BPW)

### **Membership in Women's Organizations**

	Percent Yes, 2001	a Member 1988
Women's Political Caucus (WPC)	34	29
National Organization for Women (NOW)	26	22
A feminist group other than NOW or WPC	21	24
League of Women Voters (LVV)	29	40
Business and Professional Women (BPW)	18	30
American Association of University Women (AAUW)	13	21
A sorority	19	N/A
A conservative women's group which is unaffiliated with either political party	7	N/A

In 1988, women legislators who belonged to women's organizations were more likely than other women legislators to have worked on legislation aimed at helping women. The same is true in 2001. The more memberships women legislators have in women's organizations, the more likely they are to say that in the most recent session they worked on a bill intended to help women in particular.

Women who belong to three or more women's organizations are especially likely to distinguish themselves from those who have few or no memberships in such groups. These legislators with strong ties to the organized women's community are more likely than other women lawmakers to feel strongly that women legislators have a special responsibility to represent women's concerns within the legislature (61% vs. 36%), to say that the increased number of women in their legislature has made it easier for women legislators to work together (62% vs. 44%), and to try to attend meetings of their legislature's women's caucus (58% vs. 35%). Perhaps those legislators who care most about working on legislation to benefit women are more likely than other women to join women's organizations, or perhaps legislators' ties to women's organizations strengthen their commitment to work with and for women. In either case, a strong connection exists between memberships in women's groups and women legislators' commitment to working on behalf of women within the legislature.

### **Affiliations with Women Inside the Legislature**

As they did in 1988, women legislators in 2001 report strong connections to women inside as well as outside the legislature. Fifty-four percent of women report that there is a formal women's caucus open to women legislators of both parties in their house of the legislature, about the same proportion that reported having a formal women's caucus in 1988 (51%). Among those legislators who say that there is no formal women's caucus in their legislature, 41% report that women in their legislature nevertheless met together informally during the current session on a bipartisan basis, and 45% say they met together on a partisan basis, to discuss legislation that affected women.

According to the reports of women legislators, formal women's caucuses seem to be more active in 2001 than they were in 1988. In 1988, 31% of women who reported serving in a legislature with a formal women's caucus said that the caucus met "many times" during the current session; that proportion increased to 47% in 2001.

Large proportions of women legislators participate in the formal and informal meetings of women legislators that take place in their legislatures. Of the women legislators who report that the women in their legislatures meet either formally through caucuses or informally on a bipartisan or partisan basis, an overwhelming 82% say they attended at least some of these meetings.

Similarly, a large majority (87%) of women legislators agree with the statement that "women legislators are often very helpful to me in building support for bills I think are important." Nearly half (49%) of women legislators report that the increase in the number of women serving in their legislatures in recent years has made it easier for women legislators to work together.

The commitment of women legislators to acting on behalf of women does seem to be enhanced when they are involved with formal women's caucuses or when they attend informal policy-oriented meetings of women within their legislatures. As was true in 1988, women who meet with other women in their legislatures—whether formally through a women's caucus or informally on a bipartisan or partisan basis—are somewhat more likely (64%) than those who do not (57%) to report working on a bill aimed at helping women.

## **Public Policy Attitudes of State Legislators**

Women and men in state legislatures have different attitudes on many, although not all, public policy issues. In general, women are more likely than men to express liberal or feminist attitudes. Specifically, women are more likely than men to favor harsher penalties for hate crimes (72% vs. 58%), to support legally recognized civil unions for gay and lesbian couples (54% vs. 25%), and to favor allowing minors to obtain legal abortions without parental consent (53% vs. 29%). Women lawmakers are also more likely than their male counterparts to oppose overturning *Roe versus Wade* (77% vs. 60%), to disapprove of government-funded school vouchers (72% vs. 55%), to oppose the death penalty (56% vs. 34%), and to disapprove of a constitutional amendment to permit prayer in public schools (56% vs. 41%). A majority of women and men in legislatures oppose racial preferences in job hiring and school admissions (50% vs. 73%) and a ban on handguns (57% vs. 86%), with fewer women opposed than men.

This gender gap in views on policy issues is evident in both political parties. Democratic women legislators are more likely than Democratic men to support liberal and feminist policy positions. Similarly, on several issues, Republican women express less conservative attitudes than Republican men. Democratic women legislators in particular have more liberal and feminist attitudes than their male counterparts on most policy issues, as Table 1 shows. By large margins, more Democratic women than Democratic men approve of a ban on possession of handguns, favor legally recognized civil unions for gay and lesbian couples, support allowing minors to obtain legal abortions without parental consent, and favor racial preferences in job hiring and school admissions. In addition, Democratic women are more likely than their male counterparts to oppose the death penalty, to disapprove of overturning *Roe versus Wade*, and to oppose a constitutional amendment to permit prayer in public schools. Similar differences between Democratic women and men were also evident in 1988.

Similarly, Republican women legislators in 2001 express less conservative policy attitudes on several issues than Republican men. As Table 1 shows, fewer Republican women than men support the death penalty or school vouchers. In addition, while overwhelming majorities of both Republican woman and men take conservative positions on racial preferences in job hiring and school admissions (83% vs. 91%) and legally

recognized civil unions for gay and lesbian couples (78% vs. 85%), the Republican women are somewhat less conservative than the men.

Compared with Republican women legislators in 1988, Republican women legislators in 2001 are somewhat more conservative in their views. In 1988, Republican women legislators expressed views on policy issues similar to those of Democratic men, whose attitudes were more liberal than policy attitudes of Republican men. In contrast, in 2001, Republican women's policy attitudes are more conservative across all issues than those of Democratic men

### **Policy Opinions of Legislators by Gender and Party Identification**

	Percent Who Agree/Favor			
	Democrats		Republican	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Do you strongly agree, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly? Minors should be able to obtain a legal abortion without parental consent	72	45	18	17
I would like to see the United States Supreme Court overturn the Roe versus Wade decision which made abortion legal during the first three months of pregnancy	6	15	42	49
The death penalty should be an option as a punishment for those who commit murder	27	41	66	78
If left alone, except for essential regulations, the private sector can find ways to solve our economic problems	33	35	87	89
Would you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose this proposal? A law that would provide harsher penalties for hate crimes	88	83	45	40
A law that would allow gay and lesbian couples to legally form civil unions, giving them some of the legal rights of married couples	74	45	15	11
A law giving parents government-funded school vouchers to pay for tuition at the public, private or religious school of their choice	7	9	55	65
A constitutional amendment to permit prayer in the public schools	23	36	70	66
A law which would allow your state to give preferences in job hiring and school admission on the basis of race	58	43	9	6
A law banning the possession of handguns except by the police and other authorized persons	54	25	10	3

### **Perceptions of Women Lawmakers' Impact on Legislation**

As was true in 1988, women lawmakers in 2001 believe the increased presence of women in the legislature is having a major impact on the way lawmakers think about legislation and the types of bills that are passed, and most of their male colleagues agree. More than three-quarters of women and men in legislatures say the increased presence of women has made a difference in the extent to which legislators consider how legislation will affect women as a group as well as in the number of bills passed dealing specifically

with the problems faced by women. Seventy-four percent of women and 65% of male legislators also believe the increased number of women has had an impact on expenditure priorities for the state.

Large majorities of both women and men in legislatures think that as the numbers of women legislators have grown, legislatures have been more likely to consider how legislation will affect women as a group. The women lawmakers are somewhat more likely than men to think the increased number of women has made a lot of difference (40% vs. 33%). Similarly, women are more likely than men to believe that the increased presence of women has made a lot of difference in the number of bills passed that deal specifically with women (38% vs. 29%) and in expenditure priorities for the state (30% vs. 21%). Similar gender differences on these questions existed in 1988.

### **Legislation to Help Women**

Even more so than in 1988, women legislators in 2001 believe they have a special responsibility to represent women's interests in the legislative process. Most women legislators continue to take this responsibility seriously, reporting that they have worked on a bill in the most recent legislative session intended, at least in part, to help women in particular. As was true in 1988, those most likely to feel a special responsibility to represent women are Democrats, liberals, and self-identified feminists. Nevertheless, women legislators of both parties and all ideologies tend to feel this special responsibility and are much more likely than their male counterparts to say they have been involved with legislation targeted at helping women.

The proportion of women lawmakers who agree that "women legislators have a special responsibility to represent women's concerns within the legislature" has increased significantly from 74% in 1988 to 85% in 2001. While men less often than women agree with this statement, male legislators increasingly appreciate the fact that their female colleagues shoulder an additional representational responsibility. Fifty-five percent of male legislators in 2001 endorse the statement that women legislators have a special responsibility to represent women's concerns, up from 45% in 1988.

Among certain subgroups of women lawmakers, agreement that women legislators have a special responsibility to represent women's concerns is almost universal. These subgroups include self-described feminists (96%), liberals (97%),

Democrats (93%), and women of color (93%). Nevertheless, a sizable majority of non-feminists (76%), white women (83%), moderates (90%), and Republicans (69%) also feel a special responsibility to represent women's concerns in the legislature.

When it comes to legislation to help women, women legislators do more than talk; they also act. About two-thirds of women legislators, compared with only about four in 10 men, report that they worked on legislation where the bill itself or specific provisions of the bill were intended to benefit women. These gender differences are very similar to those found in 1988. Similarly, about one in six women legislators in 2001 reports that a bill designed to help women was her top legislative priority during the most recent session of the legislature, about the same proportion as in 1988.

In both parties, more women than men actively promote legislation to help women, and Republican women are more likely than Democratic men to work on such legislation. Proportionately more Democratic women (66%) than Democratic men (48%) report having worked on a bill to help women during the current legislative session. Similarly, more Republican women (58%) than Republican men (35%) have worked on such legislation. Most striking, as was true in 1988, Republican women (58%) are more likely than Democratic men (48%) to have worked on legislation to help women. Among men and women who call themselves feminists, in the most recent legislative session, 53% of male legislators, compared with 69% of female legislators, have worked on legislation they view as designed to help women.

### **Impact on the Legislative Process**

Women lawmakers believe their presence in the legislature has a significant impact on the governmental process, especially in providing access to the legislature for segments of the public that have traditionally been disadvantaged in American society. A majority of male legislators also acknowledge that women have made a difference in the legislative process, although fewer men than women share this view. In addition, most women lawmakers believe they work harder than men; despite their effort, many also believe that women are not accorded equal influence in the legislature. In contrast, male lawmakers generally perceive women as having equal status with men in the legislature.

## **Women's Impact on Ways of Conducting Business**

Large majorities of women legislators, as well as majorities of men believe that the increased presence of women serving in their legislature has made a difference in how lawmakers conduct themselves on the floor of the legislature, in the extent to which the legislature is sympathetic to the concerns of racial and ethnic groups, and in the extent to which the economically disadvantaged have access to the legislature.

A majority of women legislators and a sizable minority of men agree that women have had an impact in making the work of the legislature more public. Similarly, a large majority of the women (67%) and a substantial minority of men (31%) agree with the statement, "The men in my legislature socialize a lot more with lobbyists than the women do."

These findings parallel those for women and men who served in the state legislatures in 1988. In 1988, as in 2001, majorities of women and somewhat smaller majorities or sizable minorities of men believed that the increased presence of women had made a difference in the conduct of legislators on the floor, the access of the economically disadvantaged to the legislature, and the extent to which legislative business is conducted in public. In 1988 a majority of women and a sizable minority of men also believed that men socialize with lobbyists more than women do.

## **The Working Environment for Women Legislators**

A large majority of women legislators (74%) believe that women in their legislatures work harder than their male colleagues. However, only about a quarter of the men (28%) agree. A similar gender gap in perceptions about whether women work harder was also apparent among legislators in 1988.

Women and men in legislatures also disagree, although to a lesser extent, about how equitably women legislators are treated by their male colleagues. As Table 6 shows, majorities of women, as well as men, agree that the leaders in their legislatures are as likely to consult with the women as the men in making important decisions. Similarly, majorities of both genders believe that the men in their legislature are supportive of having more women in leadership positions. Nevertheless, substantially more women than men think that women are less likely to be consulted on important decisions and supported for leadership positions.

### Experiences of Women in the Legislature

	Women %	Men %
The women in my legislature work harder than the men		
Agree	74	28
Disagree	20	60
The leaders in my legislature are as likely to consult with the women in the legislature as the men when making important decisions		
Agree	58	79
Disagree	40	17
Most men in my legislature are supportive of moving women into leadership positions		
Agree	56	80
Disagree	42	15

### Developmental Schemes and Programmes for Women Empowerment

We are going to deliberate on the policies and programmes introduced for empowering women. The transition to the concept of ‘empowerment’ from the idea of ‘welfare’ and then to ‘development’ explains that women’s diverse roles are being recognized. To go back to history, it is interesting to note that in preindependent India, though provisions related to health and education were demanded from the State yet, these social welfare programmes were the concern of voluntary agencies. There was hardly any nation-wide programme to provide such welfare services. After Independence, the State realized its role in strengthening welfare services provided by voluntary agencies. This led to the formulation of Central Social Welfare Board in 1953 which was to provide welfare services to women, children and other deprived sections of society. This Board sought to improve welfare programmes, introduce them in remote areas and assist the voluntary agencies (CSWI 1974). We have moved far ahead from those times when the programmes emphasized acquisition of knowledge and skills to become better mothers and housewives to the present times when the focus is on making women conscious of their own rights.

### Constitutional Safeguards and Legislation for Women

The Constitution upholding the principles of equality, justice, liberty and social justice for the citizens of India is the basis of formulation for laws. The fundamental rights, which if violated, a citizen can move to the High court or the Supreme Court. The directive principles though not justifiable are to be kept in view by the State while formulating policies and programmes. Both safeguard Indian women and empower them to play their roles effectively in society, polity and economy.



Highlights important legislation enacted to empower women. The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005 was notified on the 26th of October 2006. This law, for the first time, recognizes a woman's right to a violence-free home. In doing so, this law provides a comprehensive definition of domestic violence, recognizes a woman's right to reside in the shared household, provides for reliefs that she is entitled to in cases of violation and lays down a mechanism to facilitate her access to justice and other support services. This law is a first step towards bringing women's human rights into the home.

The Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005 came into force from 9th September, 2005. This Act removes gender discriminatory provisions in the Hindu Succession Act, 1956 to give equal rights to daughters as provided to sons in ancestral property. The property here includes agricultural land also (Joshi 2008: 8). The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 came into force on 2nd February 2006 in 200 districts and is due to be extended to the whole of rural India within five years. The objective of the act is to enhance livelihood security in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. It is an important initiative for sustainable development of an agricultural economy. Through the process of providing employment on works that address causes of chronic poverty such as drought, deforestation and soil erosion, the Act seeks to strengthen the natural resource base of rural livelihood and create durable assets in rural areas. The salient feature of the Act is that at least one-third beneficiaries shall be women who have registered and requested work under the scheme. Work site facilities such as crèches, drinking water, shade have to be provided (NREGA 2008). The Immoral Traffic Prevention Act is being amended to make the law enforcement machinery strict in punishing the traffickers and save girls likely to be forced into prostitution.

### **Women and Plans**

India was one of the first countries to highlight women's issues in development planning, according to Devaki Jain (2007). She states that women's development received attention from the 1960s onwards, especially in the 1970s, after the first UN International Women's Year 1975 and a UN World Conference on Women in Mexico in

1975. Since then continuous forward movement has led to the inclusion of women in whatever measure it exists today. The history of growth of India's political economy and women's role in the development process are special. Political economy is preferable to development because "development happens through political negotiations, political restructuring and politically guided institutions, then only economics can grow with justice".

The emergence of Gandhi in the freedom struggle added an interesting dimension to the history of India's political economy. His ideas for revival of India like nonviolence and his own simple living caught the attention of women in large numbers. The notable faces like Dr. Sarojini Naidu, Kamala Devi and the ones not so visible like Chameli Devi along with many other women actively participated in the freedom struggle. Even before this, women of the reformist families had begun to question and challenge the prevailing customs that subordinated women in society. Swarnakumari Devi started the Sakhi Samaj in Bengal in 1882, Pandita Ramabai the Arya Samaj in 1882 and Bharat Sri Mahamandal 1910, Sarla Devi Chaudharani began the first all India women's organization. Such women initiated the process of women's development much before international organizations began. The social reform movements that began to challenge the divisions in society on the basis of caste, class and religion also had women's participation. This was due to the efforts of reformers like Periyar, E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker, Jyotibai Phule, Babasaheb Ambedkar, Narayan Guru among others. Women questioned the spaces created and dominated by men.

Later on, after independence in 1939 a sub-committee on women called Women's Role in Planned Economy (WRPE) was established as part of the body called the National Planning Committee to decide the future course of planning in India. The sub-committee dealt with issues like the position of women in the planned economy constituting the family, employment, education also analyzing the social customs that inhibit women from contributing to the economy. Rani Lakshmibai Rajwade, the chairperson of the committee and other famous women of that time included civil rights, economic rights, property rights, education, marriage and also other concerns such as widowhood, prostitution etc. In spite of that, the first five year plan (1951-55) did not include most of these concerns. It did set up the Central Social Welfare Board in 1953

spearheaded by Dura Bai Deshmukh to encourage welfare work through voluntary organizations, charitable trusts etc. The Second Plan promoted the mahila mandals or women's clubs to begin work at the grassroots level. The focus was on intensive agricultural development. It felt the need to organize women as workers and realized the need to counter the social prejudices they face. This plan stated that women should be protected from hazardous work, be given maternity benefits and crèche facilities for children (National Population Policy 1988). The Third, Fourth and Interim Plans (1961-1974) promoted women's education, pre-natal and child health care services, supplementary feeding for children, nursing and expectant mothers (Jain 2007). The Third plan specifically highlighted female education as a welfare strategy which continued in the Fourth Plan (1969-74). The Report of the National Committee on Women's Education (1959) had a strong effect on the Third Plan. Rural welfare services, condensed courses of education for adult women, Bal Sevika training and child care programmes received foremost attention. Along with these measures, subsequent plans continued incentives like free textbooks and scholarships for girls. In the Fourth plan, the expenditure on family planning was increased to reduce birth rate through mass education.

During the period 1951 to 1975 women remained invisible both as citizens and as leaders since the welfarist strategy towards women continued. With International Women's Year and UN Decade for Women, women in India gained focus. Two important documents were written at this time- 'Towards Equality: Report of the Committee on Status of women In India' and a volume on 'Indian Women' which was discussed at the UN World Conference in Mexico. A bureau was started to deal with women's issues and now it is referred to as Ministry of Women and Development. The Fifth Plan (1974-78) adopted a development-centred approach rather than a welfarist one for women thus bringing a significant change. This was an outcome of the 'Committee on Status of Women Report 1974' which highlighted the unfavourable impact of the development process on women (Das and Mishra 2006: 25). This plan wanted to achieve equality of educational opportunity to fulfill the aim of social justice and to enhance the quality of education. It encouraged enrolment and retention in schools in backward regions and amongst the deprived sections of community. It also realized that low

enrolment of girls was the result of lack of women teachers among other reasons. Therefore, scholarships were given to girls to finish their education and become teachers (NPP 1988). The Integrated Child Development Services Scheme was started at an all India level in 1977. It looked after health and nutrition of pregnant mothers and nursing mothers belonging to socio-economically vulnerable groups, though it was meant for children (NPP 1988:102). Soon, the National Plan of Action (1976) was drawn which identified areas of education, health, employment, nutrition, legislation, social welfare and family planning to conduct action programmes for women and through this intervention to improve their status.

The next two decades 1981-2001 and four plans saw gender issues being highlighted in the form of a chapter. The Sixth Plan (1980-85) acknowledged women's development as a distinct economic issue. With regard to health care for women, both sixth and seventh plans focused on expanding physical infrastructure, increasing trained health workforce, strengthening control over communicable and other diseases and focusing on maternal and child health care (NPP 1988). Through a multi-disciplinary approach, the sixth plan emphasized health, education and employment for women. Until the sixth five year plan, women's role was understood to be a social and welfare issue. The Seventh Plan (1985-90) tried to get women into the centre of national development. It showed concern for equity and empowerment of women. The emphasis was on 'inculcating confidence among women, generating awareness about their rights and privileges and training them for economic activity and employment' (NPP 1988). The Women's Component Plan was outlined this time by designing a system to recognize and monitor schemes that benefitted women directly (Das and Mishra 2006: 25). The Eighth Plan (1992- 97) witnessed a shift from development to empowerment. In the sectors of education, health and employment there was a focus on women. The outlay for women arose from Rs. 4 crore in the first plan to Rs 2,000 crore in this plan. The Ninth Plan (1997-2002) focused on attaining empowerment of women. It also brought convergence of the ongoing services in both women-specific and womenrelated sectors. The Centre and the States followed the approach of Women's Component Plan (WCP) to ensure that at least 30 percent of funds/benefits from all development sectors reach women. The Tenth Plan (2002-2007) consists of definite strategies, policies and programmes for

empowering women as agents of social change. The National Policy on Empowerment of Women 2001 shaped the Tenth Plan. This plan has a sector-related three-fold strategy- social empowerment, economic empowerment and gender justice (Chattopadhyay 2006: 30; Jain 2007: 75). Incorporating gender conscious planning, this plan envisioned “immediate tying up these two effective concepts of WCP and Gender Budgeting to play a complementary role to each other, and thus ensure both preventive and post facto action in enabling women to receive their rightful share from all women-related general development sectors”. Along with the Women’s Component Plan, Gender Budgeting which is a much broader approach of making gender responsive budgets and public policies was adopted. Gender budgeting is not about a separate budget for women, but a process whereby budget-related allocations, policies and their implementation are analyzed using a gender lens. It was introduced by Finance Ministry in the Union Budget 2005 to ensure equitable allocation of resources.

Jain argues that mere inclusion of a chapter on ‘Women and Development’ enlisting goals to be achieved by various departments and ministries is an inadequate way of including women. She says that:

Women’s Gyana, their knowing and the body of knowledge they have released, which challenges most facts, most classificatory systems, including the measuring of the GNP, and the dichotomies of home and work place etc have to be forged into alternative development theories, underpinnings of planning development, designing the political economy rather than knit the gender thread into an already designed fabric.

Jain (2007) states that the planning process should recognize the presence of women in all ways-be it in the logic behind plan goals; women’s status in agriculture and tiny sectors; address basic needs of water, health, food and also the effect of privatization policy etc. Basically, to put together women’s experiences of development in the chapters discussing various sectors like defense, science and technology and so on. This kind of linking up between women and development will shift the women out of the basket of women’s chapter changing the policy to a large extent giving voices to many women. In order to realize this in the Eleventh Plan (2007-2012), the government constituted a committee of feminist economists to ascertain gender-sensitive allocation of public

resources to achieve the goals of gender equality and inclusive growth. The committee suggested how schemes across sectors need to weave gender into the planning process.

### **Policies for Development and Empowerment of Women**

In this section, we will discuss the policies made for development and empowerment of women in India. Policy directions emerge from the Committee on the Status of Women in India 1974, National Policy on Education 1986, National Perspective Plan 1988-2000, Shramshakti Report 1988 and National Policy on Empowerment of Women 2001.

The Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India 1974 is a radical document considering the times in which it was formulated. The Committee made various recommendations with regard to the socio-cultural aspects. It suggested changes to be brought about in social attitudes and institutions through a planned process and concerted effort. There was a need to mobilize public opinion and create awareness on issues like dowry, polygamy, conspicuous expenditure on weddings, child marriages, and lead a campaign on legal rights of women. For this the Government would need to collaborate with the voluntary organizations working on women's issues.

On Women and Law, the committee recommended such marriage laws that provide equal footing to women. This was to be done by eradicating polygamy in Muslim Law, enforcing provision against bigamy under Hindu Marriage Act, restraint of child marriage which is still prevalent in rural areas and to provide the right to repudiate marriage on attaining majority to be made available to minor girls from all communities whether marriage was consummated or not. It states the importance of registering marriages, establishment of family courts to resolve matrimonial matters in a conciliatory manner, adopting a Uniform Civil Code (Article 44) valuing secularism, science and modernization since the continuity of personal laws causes inequality between women and men, among others.

In the economic sphere The Committee said that women are to be involved in national development. This requires extension of Maternity Benefits Act 1961 to other arenas of the economy, provision of crèches for working women, equalization of wages and its incorporation in the Minimum Wages Act, training programmes for women in industries to avoid their retrenchment, part-time employment for them, national

employment service to assist women by providing them requisite information, provision of special leave without pay up to five years to enable women to take care of the family, setting up of women's wings in trade unions to highlight women's problems.

The Committee emphasized equality of educational opportunities. It recommended that co-education should be followed; common curricula should be followed for both girls and boys. It recommended three years of pre-school education for all children through balwadis in rural areas and urban slums; universalization of elementary education for children in the age-group of six to fourteen years; introduction of sex education middle school onwards; free secondary education for girls; gender equality to be woven in the curriculum, along with others. The gender gap in literacy can be reduced by involving the community in creating awareness among women.

In order to ensure women's participation in the political system of the country, the Committee suggests reservation of seats in municipalities for women as an interim measure, political parties to adopt a definite policy with regard to the percentage of women they would sponsor for elections to Parliament and state assemblies and inclusion of women in all important commissions formed to discuss socio-economic issues. The committee recommends a separate budget for maternity and child health care services, campaigns for family planning to also bring about a change in notions on fertility where women are blamed for the sex of the child, changes in the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act providing women control over their lives, along with other provisions. It suggests that in place of focusing on curative services, preventive and promotive health care should receive attention.

The National Policy on Education 1986 emphasizes on the need to equalize educational opportunities by removing disparities that exist in society. Under the section 'Education for Women's Equality' the policy observes that "education will be used as an agent of basic change in the status of woman...The National Education system will play a positive, interventionist role in the empowerment of women" (1986: 6). This will be done through curricula, teacher training and active participation of the educational institutions. It also promotes women's studies and also encourages educational institutions to initiate programmes for women's development. Women's literacy will be encouraged and any hurdles in obstructing their access and retention in elementary education will be

identified and tackled. Moreover, gender stereotyping in vocational and professional courses will be eliminated giving way to woman's participation in modern occupations.

The National Perspective Plan for Women 1988-2000 perceives women in a holistic manner and assesses the effect of development plans and programmes on women. It aims at economic development and integration of women into the mainstream economy and equity and social justice for all women. The plan suggests measures to be adopted in the fields of agriculture, employment and training, supportive services (fuel, fodder, water, crèche, and housing), education, health and family welfare so that women could reach a level comparable to men by 2000. In agriculture and allied services, women-related development dimensions need to be discussed and women should be provided productive resources. The plan states that new avenues of employment have to be made available for women, improving their present working environment, employment and productivity potential, enabling them to become an 'articulate and conscious workforce', thus assuming the status and recognition of a worker. The supportive services provided to women would help them focus on work, at the same time reducing the daily drudgery they have to undergo. Issues of fuel, fodder and water are directly of concern to women so they should be included in the programmes designed on these aspects. The Plan envisages involving community members in girls' education and making them realize its importance for strengthening women's role in society and for socioeconomic development of the nation. The National Literacy Mission should also involve women's organizations. Health is an important indicator of well-being for women's development. The Plan recommended that the amniocentesis tests be banned. There is a need to encourage parents to have female children. Health services should cater to women's health problems.

The Plan recognizes that the women's movement has struggled to get equal legislation. In spite of the constitution and various laws, equality has not been extended to women in society. Still, there is a greater incidence of violence against women in various forms. Thus, a multi-pronged group is required that monitors drafting of legislation, judicial decisions and such matters at Centre and State level. It is important to generate legal literacy among women so that they are able to exercise their political rights. Media and Communication play an important role in changing attitudes towards women and



their support has to be sought in this regard. Voluntary action can also improve the status of women, particularly in rural areas. It can enable women to become self-reliant and act as a catalyst in organizing them for collective action. Such agencies can be involved in the Government-run employment and support services for women.

Shramshakti: Report of the National Commission on Self-Employed Women and Women in the Informal Sector 1988 was set up to study in a comprehensive manner the working and living state of poor women. It includes unprotected labour, those who are self-employed, engaged in wage labour, paid or unpaid, and contract labour. Though women contribute to family and national economy, their work gets no recognition. Thus, “women worker” should be defined in a broad manner to include work, whether paid or unpaid, which she does within the household or outside as a worker or on her own account. It suggests that a multi-pronged approach that is flexible, integrated and area-specific should be adopted by planners. The ongoing exploitation and uneven control of resources cause women to survive in extreme poverty and destitution. Lack of knowledge, skills and resources makes them feel powerless. The existing development schemes do not overtly discriminate against women. Yet at the same time they do not also empower them. This feeling of powerlessness is the outcome of the subordinate status accorded to women in implementation of the policies which then makes men chief beneficiaries in any development project. Moreover, certain vested interests keep women subordinated to get cheap and docile labour. In such a situation, the commission recommends introduction of new packages and programmes that assist the poor and vulnerable women. The areas of employment need to be enlarged for women. Working conditions have to be improved, drudgery could be reduced and they be provided with social security. The Commission advocates adoption of a holistic and integrated approach.

The National Policy for Empowerment of Women 2001 states that the judicial legal system will be sensitized towards women’s needs. Old laws will be changed and new ones be made stringent to ensure punishment to offenders in accordance with the offence. Personal laws related to marriage, divorce, maintenance and guardianship will be changed to ensure equality for women. Alongside at the political level, women will be made partners in the decision-making and powersharing process.

This policy realizes the need to mainstream gender perspectives in the development process. Women can act as catalysts, participants and recipients. For this, women's issues and concerns need emphasis in all plans, policies, laws and programmes of action. The strengthening of women's role in social, economic spheres and through institutional mechanisms would lead to empowerment.

### **Programmes for Women**

The Ministry of Women and Child Development has launched many programmes for women in the field of education, health, employment so as to enable them to become self-reliant. Some of the major programmes are discussed in this sector.

### **Mahila Samakhya**

Mahila Samakhya has taken the shape of women's movement changing the lives of women in 14000 villages in 60 districts of nine states namely Karnataka, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Bihar, Assam, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh and Uttaranchal says K.K. Khullar (2007). It started in response to the National Policy on Education 1986 and its Programme of Action in 1992. Now, along with women's non-formal education it centres on health issues, human rights and governance where its objective is to create a gender-just society by empowering women. This scheme has also encourages women in other states to struggle for issues close to their lives e.g. in Haryana women protested alcoholism, in Himachal Pradesh they stood against polygamy and in Tamil Nadu they resisted the practice of devdasis. Dowry, violence against women, infanticide, foetus death, child labour are issues of ongoing struggle. Didi Banks (Sister's Banks), Kishori Sanghas, Jago Behan (Arise, Sister) are auxiliaries of the Mahila Samakhya programme. This programme has empowered women through education enabling them to assert their rights, becoming visible in family and community and also demanding accountability from the government bodies. Based on Gandhian philosophy, it believes in principles of volunteerism, community participation, decentralization and mass mobilization.

The nodal units of Mahila Samakhya are the Mahila Sanghas which run schools, dispensaries, markets, banks and also participate in Panchayati Raj Institutions. Hers, Sakhis or Sahyoginis work as catalysts facilitating formation and functioning of the Sanghas. They usually work in around ten villages to organize women. The Nari Adalats,

started by Gujarat initially have been adopted by all the Mahila Samakhya States to organize collective action against violence. These are also spaces available for discussion to women. Kishori Sanghas engage adolescent girls and create awareness on health issues and natural resources. These Sanghas train girls to play active roles in communities. In Bihar and Jharkhand, the graduates of Mahila Shikshan Kendras mobilize the community to get children back to school, especially girls. They act as role models, also ensuring universalization of elementary education for girls.

### **Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP)**

This Programme was launched in 1987 to provide updated skills and new knowledge to poor and asset-less women in the traditional sectors such as agriculture, animal husbandry, dairying, fisheries, handlooms, handicrafts, khadi and village industries, sericulture, social forestry and wasteland development for enhancing their productivity and income generation. This would enhance and broaden their employment opportunities, including self-employment and development of entrepreneurial skills. A comprehensive package of services, such as health care, elementary education, crèche facilities, market linkages etc. are provided besides access to credit.

During the Ninth Plan period, about 255635 women beneficiaries were covered under 66 projects implemented in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Kerala, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Nagaland, Orissa, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, Uttaranchal and West Bengal. The Tenth Plan period has provided training to 215651 women beneficiaries under the scheme.

### **Hostels for Working Women**

The scheme of assistance for construction or expansion of hostel buildings for working women with day care centres for children is in implementation since 1972- 73. Under this scheme, financial assistance is provided to non-governmental organizations, cooperative bodies and other agencies engaged in the field of women's social welfare, women's education, etc., for construction of buildings for Working Women's Hostels. It envisages provision of safe and affordable hostel accommodation to working women (single working women, women working at places away from their home-towns, widows, divorcees, separated women etc.) and women being trained for employment and girl

students. Trainees are permitted to stay for a period of one year and girl students for a period of five years, but with the conditions that first preference would be given to working women. It is also stipulated in the scheme that the category of women who are being trained for employment and girl students should not exceed 30% of the capacity of the hostel.

Till now (upto 2007) only 876 hostels have been sanctioned throughout the country. Since the demand for Working Women Hostels is on the increase due to increasing number of women in employment, a Committee was set up to revamp the scheme so as to make it more viable.

### **Swadhar: A Scheme for Women in Difficult Circumstances**

This scheme was launched by the Ministry during the year 2001-2002 for the benefit of women in difficult circumstances with the following objectives: to provide primary need of shelter, food, clothing and care to the marginalized women/girls living in difficult circumstances; to provide emotional support and counselling to such women; to rehabilitate them socially and economically through education, awareness, skill up-gradation and personality development through behavioural training etc; to arrange for specific clinical, legal and other support for women/ girls in need of those interventions by linking and networking with other organizations in both Government and Non-Government Sectors on case-to-case basis; to provide help-line or other facilities to such women in distress; and to provide such other services as will be required for support and rehabilitation of such women in distress. The target group comprises of widows deserted by their families, women prisoners released from jail and without family support, women survivors of natural disasters, trafficked women/ girls rescued, women victims of terrorist/ extremist violence, mentally challenged women, women with HIV/AIDS and similarly placed women in difficult circumstances. The implementing agencies are the Social Welfare/Women and Child Welfare Department of State Governments, Women's Development Corporation, Urban Local Bodies and reputed Public/ Private Trusts or Voluntary Organizations. In 2008, a total of 208 Swadhar Shelter Homes and 210 Women Helplines are functional across the country.

### **Prevention of Trafficking of Women and Children for Commercial Sexual Exploitation**

Trafficking in human beings is an organized crime violating all basic human rights. India has emerged as a source, transit and destination country. It is estimated that there are three million sex workers in India, of which 40 percent constitute children, as young as 10 years old. Most often these victims are trafficked through means like duping, luring, fake marriages, abducting, kidnapping and manipulating social and economic vulnerabilities and sold to brothels where they are continuously subjected to abuse, violence and exploitation by perpetrators of the crime.

The main legislation “Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956” lays down provisions for providing stringent punishment to the perpetrators of such crime. In addition, the Indian Penal Code also provides provisions for crimes related to trafficking. India is also signatory to various International and regional Conventions such as UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (with its protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons especially women and children), SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking of Women and Children in Prostitution, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and Convention on the Rights of the Child.

### **Scheme for Relief and Rehabilitation of Victims of Rape**

The Scheme for Relief and Rehabilitation of Victims of Rape, 2005 provides for constitution of Criminal Injuries Relief and Rehabilitation Board at each and every district to award compensation to rape victims; and District Monitoring Committees to provide shelter, protection, legal and medical aid and other rehabilitative measures for the victims. The Scheme has been included in the Report of the Working Group on Empowerment of Women for the Eleventh Plan. An amount of Rs.1 crore in the year 2007-08 has been allocated for the new scheme.

### **Swawlamban**

Swawlamban scheme, previously known as NORAD (Norwegian Agency for International Development) / Women’s Economic Programme, was started in 1982- 83 with the objective of providing training and skills to the poor and needy women and women from weaker sections of the society such as Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, etc. to facilitate them in obtaining employment or selfemployment on a sustained basis. There are 36 traditional and non-traditional trades for which assistance is provided

under the scheme. The State Women's Development Corporations (WDCs) are the nodal agencies for implementation of the scheme mostly through voluntary organizations in the States.

### **Developmental Schemes for Women by Government of Tamil Nadu**

In most parts of Tamil Nadu, women occupied a very low status in medieval and early modern society. Lack of educational facilities, child marriages, prohibition of widow remarriages, prevalence of Devadasi system, etc. were some of the social factors responsible for the low status and misery of women who were reduced to the position of glorified slaves but industrialisation and urbanisation in the state made significant development in the areas of women's empowerment and social development. In Tamil Nadu, women were engaged more in agriculture than in manufacturing or service sector. In the manufacturing sector, women worked as beedi workers and as manual labour for cotton textiles, fish, and food processing and match industry. A few were involved in the manufacturing of electronic and electrical goods.

In a traditionally conservative society like Tamil Nadu, risk-aversion was common. Women were further a step behind the average man, having to contend with gender barriers in financial institutions, discouragement in families, lower levels of education and confidence. The position of rural women in the state has remarkably changed with the formation of SHGs, which started on an experimental basis in 1989 in the rural areas. It helped poor rural women to enter the entrepreneurial world and it also helped them to develop self-confidence, communication, independence, mobility, management and technical skill. Assisted by some NGOs and with a little government support, this movement gained momentum and developed into strong local institution. They have provided legitimate avenues for social mobilisation with access to inputs, such as training, banking services, government services, etc. Most of them in the informal sector are now running micro enterprises or home-based production units such as basket making, mat weaving, beedi making, lace making and the production of agarbathi, candles, garments, telephone mats, handicrafts, paper dice, ink, soaps, washing powder, snacks, fruit juices, pickles, jams, squash, vattal, and other household items etc.

### **The Tamil Nadu Corporation for Development of Women Ltd**

The Corporation was set up on 9th December 1983 under the Companies Act, 1956 to focus on empowerment of women to encourage entrepreneurship among women, to identify trade and industries suitable for women, to undertake marketing activities for products manufactured by women and encourage women to form SHGs through giving training and extending credit facilities.

### **Women Entrepreneurship Promotional Association (WEPA)**

WEPA functioning in Chennai is an association of women entrepreneurs, providing training to women in various fields. The association also conducts exhibitions for the members and assists in marketing of the products of members.

### **Schemes for Women Entrepreneurship in Tamil Nadu**

Indira Mahila Yojana (IMY) is a scheme aims at organizing women at grass root level to facilitate their participation in decision - making and their empowerment. The scheme was launched in 1995 on pilot basis in 200 blocks over a strategy to coordinate and integrated components of sectoral programmes and facilitates their convergence to empower women.

### **Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV)**

The Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) initiative, launched in 2004 as part of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, aims to improve educational access for girls from disadvantaged communities in India. These residential schools serve girls aged 10-14 years, offering lodging, meals, and high-quality education in rural and disadvantaged regions. The KGBV initiative seeks to enhance school enrollment, bolster retention rates, and empower girls via extensive academic and vocational training. KGBVs, financed by the central government and administered by state authorities, have achieved notable progress in advancing gender equality and educational accessibility. Nonetheless, obstacles such as infrastructural constraints and socio-cultural impediments persist in affecting the efficacy of the program.

### **Chief Minister's Girl Child Protection Scheme**

The Girl Child Protection Scheme is a premier initiative of the Tamil Nadu government, inaugurated in 1992. It offers financial support to families with one or two

daughters, with the objective of preventing female infanticide and fostering gender equality. The program comprises two elements:

The scheme aims to:

- Promote the enrollment and retention of female students in educational institutions, ensuring their education extends to at least the intermediate level.
- Encourage girls to marry solely after reaching the age of 18.
- Encourage parents to embrace the family planning standard of having two female offspring.
- Safeguard the rights of the female child and facilitate her social and financial empowerment.
- Enhance the family's role in elevating the status of the girl kid.

### **Single Girl Child Component**

This component provides a fixed deposit of Rs. 50,000 to the family of a sole female child. The deposit matures upon her reaching 18 years of age and becoming eligible for marriage. She is permitted to withdraw the sum along with accrued interest for her educational or matrimonial expenditures. To access this benefit, the family must meet several criteria, including registering her birth, ensuring her immunization, enrolling her in school, and refraining from marrying her before the age of 18.

### **Two Girl Children Component**

This component provides a fixed deposit of Rs. 25,000 to the households of two female children. The savings mature upon reaching 18 years of age and becoming eligible for marriage. They may withdraw the funds, inclusive of interest, for educational or matrimonial expenditures. To access this benefit, families must meet specific criteria, including registering births, ensuring immunization, enrolling in school, undergoing sterilization, and refraining from marrying before the age of 18.

### **Chief Minister's Girl Child Education Scheme**

The Chief Minister's Girl Child Education Scheme is an initiative of the Tamil Nadu government that commenced in 2011. The program offers incentives to girls who complete their 10th and 12th grades, promoting their pursuit of further education. The program comprises two elements:



### **Class 10<sup>th</sup> Incentive**

This program provides a monetary reward of Rs. 3,000 to girls who achieve at least 60% marks in their class 10 examinations. The incentive is deposited into a bank account under the girl's name and may be withdrawn upon her completion of class 12. To qualify for this benefit, the girl must come from a family with an annual income below Rs. 50,000 and must have attended a government or government-aided school.

### **Class 12<sup>th</sup> Incentive**

This component pays Rs. 5,000 to ladies who complete class 12th with 60%. After enrolling in a degree or diploma program at a recognized institution, the girl can withdraw the incentive from her bank account. To receive this benefit, the girl must have attended a government or government aided school and come from a family earning less than Rs. 50,000.

Girls are motivated to finish secondary and higher secondary school and study more thanks to the Chief Minister's Girl Child Education Scheme. The strategy has also reduced dropouts and boosted girls' exam performance. The Directorate of Government Examinations, Tamil Nadu reported that ladies passed class 10th and 12th exams more than boys in 2020-21.

### **Chief Minister's Ujjawala Scheme**

The Tamil Nadu government launched the Chief Minister's Ujjawala Scheme in 2015. The scheme supports trafficked and sexually exploited women and girls with rehabilitation, counseling, legal aid, and vocational training. The scheme has four parts:

We strive to combat trafficking and sexual exploitation of women and girls by raising awareness, sensitizing stakeholders, boosting community vigilance, and offering alternative livelihood opportunities.

- The Rescue component conducts raids, rescue operations, and medical exams to rescue women and girls from trafficking and sexual exploitation.

- Rehabilitating rescued women and girls from trafficking and sexual exploitation involves giving shelter, food, clothing, counseling, legal aid, and health care.

- This component strives to reintegrate women and girls who have been rehabilitated from trafficking and sexual exploitation by offering vocational training, education, employment, and social assistance.

- Trafficking and sexual exploitation victims' rights and dignity have been protected by the Chief Minister's Ujjawala Scheme.

This initiative has also given them a dignified and productive living. The Tamil Nadu Department of Social Welfare reports that the project has helped over 2,000 women and girls.

### **Vocational and Skill Development Programmes**

The major focus of the Tamil Nadu Corporation for Development of Women has been to provide support to economically disadvantaged women. The Corporation is funding entrepreneurial programmes, which is opened to all potential women entrepreneurs, preferably first generation. The programme was commenced in 1998-99, which is conducted by the Industry and Commerce at Chennai and Madurai.

### **Mahalir Thittam**

Mahalir Thittam a participatory, people centred and process oriented project, was started in 1997-98 which is directed towards empowerment of women and capacity building of poor women in rural areas through SHGs. It covers the entire state of Tamil Nadu. Currently the coverage extends to rural areas of all the 30 districts of Tamil Nadu. It is an unusual long term partnership between three agencies, the state government, non-governmental organizations and banks (including NABARD) and other financial institutions.

It provides inexpensive and timely credit to SHGs, training for the development of communication skill and entrepreneurship development training. It facilitates to participate in exhibitions, collective negotiation bargaining, emergence of structures like marketing unions and dissemination of information about markets.

### **Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP)**

The Programme of STEP was launched in 1987. It aims to upgrade the skills of poor and assetless women to mobilise, conscientise and provide employment to them on a sustainable basis in the traditional sectors of agriculture, small animal husbandry, dairying, fisheries, handlooms, handicrafts, khadi and village industries and sericulture, social forestry and waste land development. The Government of Tamil Nadu has stressed the need to augment resource for such programmes. Women entrepreneurs particularly, the first generation women entrepreneurs, face many constraints particularly paucity of

margin money assistance to start their ventures by getting finance from the financial institutions. To overcome the difficulties experienced by these entrepreneurs, the government has sanctioned a sum of Rs. 30 lakhs to give the first generation women entrepreneurs a subsidy of 10 per cent margin money support to the project cost support to the project cost subject to a ceiling of Rs. 50,000/-.

### **Anna Marumalarchi Thittam**

Government of Tamil Nadu has implemented Anna Marumalarchi Thittam for the promotion of agro based food processing and other related industries in rural areas to generate rural employment and thereby improve the rural economy. The projects which have commenced production includes food products like mango pulp, fruit pulp, edible oil refining, chips and agro based projects like modern rice mill using polisher and colour sorter etc. The other projects include cold storages, manufacturing of eco-friendly products of coir such as coir pit block, herbal products like aloe vera gel, herbal medicines, eucalyptus oil, export oriented aqua-culture items like shrimp, fresh water prawns, floriculture products like flower concentrates from jasmine, export oriented horticulture products like cut flowers, etc.,

In order to enthuse the potential investors in the district to take up industrial venture in agro based and food processing sector in rural areas, the government has ordered a special entrepreneurship development programme through reputed training institutions like Central Food Training and Research Institute, Mysore, Tamil Nadu Agriculture University, Coimbatore, National Institute of Small Industries Extension Training, Hyderabad.

### **The Tamil Nadu Women in Agriculture Project (TANWA)**

The Tamil Nadu Women in Agriculture Project (TANWA) assisted by the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) is introduced in Tamil Nadu in 1986 for involving the women in the agricultural activities through package of services rendered to them. The first phase of the project covered two districts namely Tirunelveli and Sivagangai over a period of seven years ending 1993. The scheme was extended to all the districts except Chennai. The prime objectives of the project are to expose the farm women to a package of 10-12 skills relevant to them in crop production and related activities and to enable them to choose and adopt relevant agricultural practices; to spread

agricultural knowledge and skills from TANWA trainees to non-trained fellow farm women and to improve the access to existing agricultural extension services for women belonging to small and marginal holdings.

### **Pudhu Vaazhvu Project**

This Project, aided by the World Bank was launched in the state in November 2005 as “Pudhu Vaazhvu”. The Pudhu Vaazhvu Project (PVP) which was subsequently named as “Vazhndhu Kaattuvom” in 2006, has now been restored back to its original name of “Pudhu Vaazhvu”. The project is being implemented in 16 Districts with a total outlay of Rs.717 crores, benefitting 5.8 lakh households for a period up to September 2014. Now, with additional financing, the Project has expanded its operations to 10 more additional Districts for a period of 3 years till September 2014 with an outlay of Rs.950 crores benefitting 3.8 lakh target poor households. The Project is designed on Community Driven Development (CDD) approach to empower the poorest of poor through promotion of strong Community- Based Organizations (CBOs), thereby creating a strong voice for rural poor.

### **Sivagami Ammaiyar Ninaivu Girl Child Protection Scheme:**

The girl child protection scheme was introduced in April 1992. This scheme was renamed in the year 2006 as Sivagami Ammaiyar Ninaivu Girl Child Protection Scheme in fond memory of the mother of the great leader K. Kamaraj. The objective of this scheme is to prevent female infanticide, discourage preference for male child and to promote family planning. This scheme also ensures equal opportunity in education for girl children on par with male children. Under this scheme, an amount of Rs.22200/- is deposited in Tamil Nadu Power Finance and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited by Government in the name of the girl child, if there is only one girl child in the family with no other child in the family and when either of the parents has undergone sterilization before the age of 35 years. A monthly payment of Rs.150/- is released to the child from the interest accrued from the deposit, from the fifth year of the deposit and upto twenty year of deposit to take care of the education of the girl child. On the twenty year of the deposit, the deposit amount with interest will be released to the girl to enable her to pursue higher education or to defray the marriage expenses. In case of families with two girl children and no male child, an initial deposit of Rs.15200/- is made with

Tamil Nadu Power Finance and Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd., for each of the girl children by the Government. A monthly payment of Rs.150/- is released to the children from the interest accrued from the deposit, from the fifth year of the deposit and upto twelfth year of deposit to take care of the education of the girl children. Each girl child will be given the amount deposited with accrued interest on the twenty year of deposit. This will enable them to pursue their higher studies or to defray their marriage expenses. A sum of Rs.75.00 crores has been allotted in the Budget Estimate for the year 2008-2009 to benefit 49,300 girl children under this scheme.

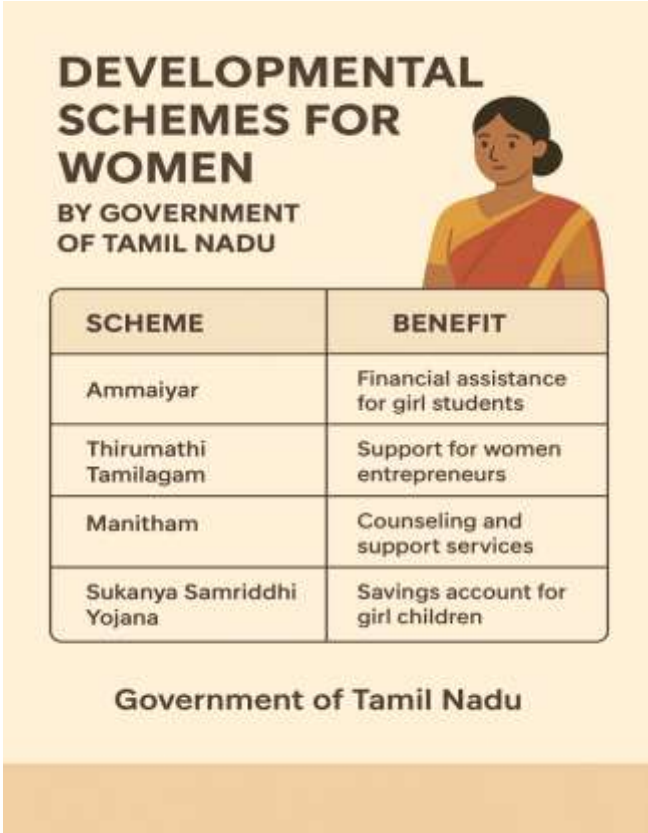
### **Cradle Baby Scheme**

The Cradle Baby Scheme was launched in Salem in the year 1992 by the Government of Tamil Nadu with the aim of eradicating female infanticide. This Scheme was later extended during 2001 to Madurai, Theni, Dindigul and Dharmapuri, as these Districts were also found to be prone to this evil practice of female infanticide. Reception centre were started in the above Districts with sufficient staff and infrastructure facilities including telephone, life saving medicines, life saving medical equipment, refrigerator and incubator. Cradles are also placed in the District Social Welfare Offices, District Collectorates, Government Hospitals, Orphanages, Railway Stations, Bus Stands, Primary Health Centre and Sub Health Centre to receive the deserted or abandoned babies.

### **National Commission for Women**

The National Commission for Women was constituted on 31st January 1992 in pursuance of the National Commission for Women Act, 1990. The tenure of the first commission expired on 30 January 1995 and the second commission took over on 20 July 1995. This commission's main areas of activities include review of the constitutional and legal safeguards for women, recommend remedial measures, undertake studies and investigations, promotional and educational research, participate and advise in the planning process and generally advise the government on all matters of policy affecting and welfare and development of women in Tamilnadu. The National Commission for Women provided a platform for realizing the aspiration of millions of Indian women and enabled them to participate on an equal footing in the developmental process of the country. NCW and women of Puthugramam village in Kanyakumari District had an

interaction session in April 2001.<sup>12</sup> The programme was to generate awareness among Dalit women about the legal and constitutional provisions and opportunities available with the Governmental and Non- Governmental Organizations to serve and safeguard them from the onslaught of male chauvinism and gender intolerance.



**DEVELOPMENTAL SCHEMES FOR WOMEN**  
BY GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU

SCHEME	BENEFIT
Ammaiyar	Financial assistance for girl students
Thirumathi Tamilagam	Support for women entrepreneurs
Manitham	Counseling and support services
Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana	Savings account for girl children

Government of Tamil Nadu

### **Tamil Nadu State Commission for Women**

To safe guard the welfare of women and issues relating to the status of women and to make recommendations to the Government for suitable action, the Government has constituted the State Commission for women on 19.03.1993. The Government has decided to constitute the Commission statutorily and to give more powers to the Commission. Accordingly, Tamil Nadu State Commission for Women Act, 2008 has been enacted. This Act has been notified in the Government Gazette on 27- 05-2008 and came in to force on 30-17-2018.

### **Service Homes**

In the Rural areas of Tamil Nadu many girls discontinue their school studies and get married and some of them are deserted from their families due to family problems,

some even lose their husbands due to various reasons. Some do not get married due to poor circumstances. To provide education and employment opportunities to such women, and to improve their economic conditions, the Department of Social Welfare runs Service Homes at many places in the District. These Service Homes provide accommodation, food, education (upto Higher Secondary School) and vocational training to the inmates at free of cost. Besides, the women inmates are allowed to keep their children with them and educational facilities are also provided to these children. Secondary Grade Teachers Training course was restarted during 2017-18. Forty Ex-inmates of Service Homes and Government orphanages are benefited through this Teachers Training Course. A sum of Rs. 37.48 Lakh has been provided in the budget estimate for the year 2008-2009 for this scheme. A sum of Rs. 426.40 Lakh has been provided in the budget estimate for the year 2017-2018 for this scheme.

#### **Moovalur Ramamirtham Ammaiyar Ninaivu Thirumana Nidhi Uthavi Thittam**

M. R. Ammaiyar was an eminent social reformer in Tamil Nadu in the middle of the 20th Century. She was an active member of the Dravida Kazhagam. Under the scheme, at the time of marriage an amount of Rs. 20,000 is given as assistance to girls belonging to poor families (of families below poverty line). The bride must have appeared for 10th std. examination. In case of Scheduled Tribe, the bride should have studied up to 5th standard. Annual income should not exceed Rs. 12,000. The Bride should have completed 18 years of age. Only one daughter in a family is eligible to avail this scheme. This scheme was introduced by the Government of Tamil Nadu in the year 1989 and was implemented whenever DMK was in power in the State

#### **Vazhndu Kattuvom Project**

Vazhndhu Kaatuvom Project is an empowerment and poverty alleviation project implemented by the rural development and Panchayat Raj Department of Government of Tamil Nadu with World Bank assistance. This project was launched in November 2005, effective implementation has commenced only from August 2006. The main objective of the project is to include the poorest of poor in the SHG formation, making them self sufficient and sustainable, providing financial resources and linkages for enhancing their livelihoods and thereby generating an increase of their income. The project is implemented over a 6 year period at an outlay of Rs.717 Crores. The project covers 2509

village panchayats in 70 Backward Blocks in 16 Districts. During 2017-18, Rs. 132.84 crore has been provided and for 2018-19 Rs. 131.14 crore is proposed for the implementation of the activities viz., formation of Self Help Groups and Federations.

During 2018-19, 581 Self Help Groups and 599 Economic Activity Groups (EAG) will be formed. Women's Indian Association is the mother of all other women's organizations in Tamil Nadu. The working condition of the women's organizations proves that they are working, earning money and doing some help for the economic development for women. The history of Women's Indian Association shows that hundreds of women received social and political training only through it. 90% of the elite women all over India were trained only by this women organization. These organizations have now restricted their activities only to social welfare of women and children. In short, the roles played by women's organization are not as effective as they were before independence. In Kanyakumari District the Social Welfare and Nutritious Meal Programme Department has been fulfilling its responsibilities to the entire satisfaction of women, children, adolescent girls, pregnant mothers, transgenders, destitutes and older persons under the dynamic leadership of the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu.

#### **E.V.R. Maniamaiyar Memorial Widow Daughter's Marriage Assistance Scheme**

In order to help poor mothers who are widows by providing financial assistance for the marriage of their daughters, under the scheme, an amount of Rs. 20,000 is provided at the time of marriage. Widows whose income does not exceed Rs.24, 000 in a year is eligible to receive marriage assistance. Daughter should have completed 18 years of age and only one daughter of the widow is eligible to receive assistance under the scheme.

#### **Anjugam Ammaiyar Ninaivu Kalappu Thirumana Nidhi Udhavi Thittam**

In order to promote untouchability in the community by way of promoting inter-caste marriages, the Tamil Nadu Government has announced this scheme. In the case of marriage between an SC or ST with the bride or bride groom of another community of different strata, an amount of Rs. 20,000 is provided as incentive. Application for sanction of incentive should be submitted within 2 years of marriage. During the year 2017-18, 265 persons benefitted from the scheme in Tamilnadu. Now the scheme renamed as Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy Ninaivu Inter-caste Marriage Assistance Scheme.



**Dr. Dharmambal Ammaiyar Ninaivu Widow Remarriage Assistance Scheme**

This plan provides financial support of Rs.15,000 via ECS, Rs.10,000 in the form of a National Savings Certificate, and an 8-gram 22-carat gold coin. No income ceiling or educational degree is required to profit from this plan. Degree and certificate recipients get 50,000, of which 30,000 is disbursed by ECS and 20,000 is provided as a National Savings Certificate, accompanied by an 8-gram 22- carat gold coin.

**Annai Therasa Ninaivu Marriage Assistance Scheme**

For Orphan Girls No income ceiling or educational degree is required to profit from this plan. Under this program, participants receive financial support of Rs. 25,000 along with an 8-gram 22- carat gold coin, while graduates are awarded Rs. 50,000 along with an 8-gram gold coin.

**Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy Ninaivu Inter-Caste Marriage Assistance Scheme**

The bride should have finished 10th grade. This initiative provides Rs.25,000 in cash assistance, Rs.15,000 through ECS and Rs.10,000 through a National Saving Certificate and an 8-gram 22-carat gold coin. Degree/diploma holders receive Rs.50,000, Rs.30,000 from ECS, Rs.20,000 from National Saving Certificate, and an 8-gram 22-carat gold coin. No income or educational requirement is set.

**Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy Maternity Benefit Scheme (MRMBS)**

The Tamilnadu Maternity Benefit Scheme was created in 1987 to lower IMR and MMR. Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy administered Rs.200/- to pregnant mothers from 03.06.1989 (G.O(Ms) No.516, Backward Classes Welfare, Nutritious Meal Programme and Social Welfare Department, dated:31.05.1989).

The National Maternity Benefit Scheme became the Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy Scheme. Under the scheme, poor pregnant women received Rs.1000/month for 6 months from 7th month pregnancy (3 months before and 3 months after delivery) subject to the conditions in G.O(Ms) No.184 dated 11.09.2006. The Hon'ble Chief Minister increased it to Rs.12,000 per beneficiary on 01.06.2011. On 20.02.2017, G.O(Ms) No.40 increased this to Rs.18,000 per beneficiary. The 02.04.2018 G.O (Ms) No.118 outlines the Rs.18,000 disbursement parameters. The Indian government introduced Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana, a 60:40 Central-State split for qualified pregnant and nursing mothers with their first child. The government would administer the Pradhan Matru

Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) scheme in collaboration with the Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy Maternity Benefit Scheme (State scheme) for qualified prime moms.

### **Tamil Nadu Widows & Destitute Women Welfare Board**

To address the myriad challenges encountered by widows, women abandoned by their spouses, marginalized women, destitute women, and spinsters in Tamil Nadu, and to enhance their livelihoods through education, health, employment, the establishment of specialized self-help groups, and the provision of vocational training, the "Widows and Destitute Women Welfare Board" was established on September 2, 2022, to ensure their safety and dignity within society. The Widows and Destitute Women Welfare Board operates with 10 official members and 14 non-official members, chaired by the Minister of Social Welfare and Women Empowerment Department.

### **Family Counseling Centre**

Victims of domestic violence, including women, children, and family members, receive counseling, referrals, and rehabilitative services from relevant departments, facilitated by two qualified counselors at each of the five family counseling centers operated by Non-Governmental Organizations in the districts of Chennai, Thiruvallur, Villupuram, Theni, and Sivagangai, with financial support from the State.

### **Nirbhaya Fund**

The prevalence of heinous crimes such as rapes, murders, and acid attacks in India makes women feel unsafe. The aftermath of the Nirbhaya tragedy led to the development of a Rs.1000 crore corpus fund by the Indian government to protect women from abuse. The Indian government has allocated Rs.2919 crore under the Nirbhaya Fund to create safe cities, which might serve as a model for the country. The Indian government has selected eight cities, including Chennai, Delhi, Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Kolkata, Hyderabad, and Lucknow, for safe city development. The goal is to ensure women feel comfortable in public spaces. The fund aims to establish a GPS-equipped ambulance network for speedy response. This cash may eventually be used to provide panic buttons on mobile phones for emergency calls by women. An upcoming forensic science facility in Chandigarh aims to identify and punish perpetrators who commit crimes against women. We will implement more deterrent measures, such as educating and equipping police to effectively combat violence against women. Plans

include installing cameras in strategic locations and implementing video surveillance. The decision has been made to deploy face recognition analytics and tracking to identify criminals. States like Delhi have launched police patrol vans to discourage crime. The government plans to develop Police Didi programs with female officers. Police will closely monitor criminals and prevent crimes under this program. Police will enhance security in public transportation facilities. We will use Nirbhaya Fund to create help-desk services for women who have experienced violence. The decision has been made to open all police facilities to combat violence against women. The government is considering 24/7 vigilance and patrolling of cities and metropolitan areas. Tamil Nadu boosts government job reservation for women from 30% to 40%.

### **Establishment of University for Women**

In 1984, the Tamil Nadu government founded Mother Teresa Women's University to empower women holistically through education. The motto of the university is 'Towards Equal Status'. The university aims to monitor women's education across the state, establish research facilities, fulfill social duties, and provide consulting services.

#### **Self Assessment Questions**

1. What is the purpose of women's education?
2. Name one barrier to women's education.
3. Who are women legislators?
4. Name one contribution of women legislators.
5. What is women empowerment?
6. Name one national scheme for women empowerment.
7. What is the aim of Self-Help Groups (SHGs)?
8. Name one Tamil Nadu scheme for girl children.
9. Name one employment scheme for women in Tamil Nadu.
10. Which scheme in Tamil Nadu supports women's safety and protection?

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### Recommended Books

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