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**ENTITLEMENT, ENDOWMENT AND EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN**


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**Abstract:** India, a nation which is traditional in nature portrayed women as housewives and were not allowed to work outside. Gradually, the trend has changed and they have come out. Even then, the work done or services rendered by women have not been recognized. In 2011, 80 Percent of urban women were literate compared to 59 Percent of rural women. Men dominate the numbers of those enrolled in higher educational degrees. For women's economic participation, India ranked 124<sup>th</sup>, and for women's educational opportunity it ranked 12<sup>th</sup>. In the next ten years, with both younger people and women entering the workforce, India expects to add an additional 110 million people to its labour force.

In June 2014, India was ranked 116 out of 189 countries ranked in descending order for percentage of women in Parliaments. In the Panchayat Raj system, a new bill has been proposed that gives at least 50 Percentage of seats to women, rising from a previous quota of 33 Percentage. As in many other countries, working women of all segments of Indian society faces various forms of discrimination including sexual harassment. In 2013, India passed the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act to provide protection against sexual harassment in the workplace. It is better that this is embraced earlier rather than later, for our own good.

Social exclusion and discrimination in labour markets still continues to be widespread and of significant extent as evidence presented earlier shows, partly due to poor effectiveness of the existing measures and partly because of the absence of any affirmative action in the private sector where most of the Indian workers are employed. If poverty were not a concern, then the girl child will be able to follow her dreams without concerns of sexual exploitation, domestic abuse and any education or work. The health and safety concerns of women are paramount for the wellbeing of a country, and are an important factor in gauging the empowerment of women in a country. As said by Swami Vivekananda **"Arise awake and stop not until the goal is reached"**. **Thus our country should thus be capitulated into the horizon of empowerment of women and reveal in its glory.** We have a long way to go, but we will get there someday. We shall overcome.

**Key Words:** Empowerment, Endowment, Entitlement, Gender discrimination, Sexual Harassment, Social exclusion

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**Introduction:** Empowerment of women is essential to harness the women labour in the main stream of economic development. It gives women the power to retain income and use it at her discretion. Financial self-reliance of women both in the house hold and in the external environment lead to empowerment of women in other spheres. Women are playing bigger and bigger role in economic field: as workers, consumers, entrepreneurs, managers and investors In fact, almost everywhere, including India, more women are employed, though their share is still very low. Manufacturing work, traditionally a male preserve, has declined, while jobs in services have expanded, reducing the demand for manual labour and putting the sexes on equal footing. We can now see women in almost every field: architecture, lawyers, financial services, engineering, medical and IT jobs. They have also entered service occupations such as a nurse, a beautician, a sales worker, a waitress, etc. They are increasingly and gradually seen marching into domains which were previously reserved for males (police, driver's army, pilots, chartered accountants, commandos). In spite of their increasing number in every field, women still remain perhaps the world's most underutilized resources.

Many are still excluded from paid work and many do not make best use of their skills. **"A woman is the full circle. Within her is the power to create, nurture and transform."**

**Need Of An Hour To Empower Women:** Inequalities between men and women and discrimination against women have also been age-old issues all over the world. Thus, women's quest for equality with man is a universal phenomenon. What exists for men is demanded by women? They have demanded equality with men in matters of education, employment, inheritance, marriage, politics and recently in the field of religion also to serve as cleric (in Hinduism and Islam). Women want to have for themselves the same strategies of change which men folk have had over the centuries such as equal pay for equal work. Their quest for equality has given birth to the formation of many women's associations and launching of movements.

There has been considerable increase in the size of women employment in both in public and private sectors in the country. The economic importance attached to their labour was very marginal. This notion of women has marginal labour or reserve labour force has lead to short of balancing force in

the family or national economy. Hence an attempt is made in this study to analyse the entitlement, endowment and women empowerment in India

**Entitlement And Women Empowerment:** The position and status of women all over the world has risen incredibly in the 20th century. We find that it has been very low in 18th and 19th centuries in India and elsewhere when they were treated like 'objects' that can be bought and sold. For a long time women in India remained within the four walls of their household. Their dependence on men folk was total. A long struggle going back over a century has brought women the property rights, voting rights, an equality in civil rights before the law in matters of marriage and employment (in India women had not to struggle for voting rights as we find in other countries). In addition to the above rights, in India, the customs of purdha (veil system), female infanticide, child marriage, sati system (self-immolation by the women with their husbands), dowry system and the state of permanent widowhood were either totally removed or checked to an appreciable extent after independence through legislative measures. Two Acts have also been enacted to emancipate women in India. These are: Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 and the Compulsory Registration of Marriage Act, 2006. The Domestic Violence Act recognizes that abuse be physical as well as mental. Anything that makes a woman feel inferior and takes away her self-respect is abuse. Compulsory Registration of Marriage Act can be beneficial in preventing the abuse of institution of marriage and hindering social justice especially in relation to women. It would help the innumerable women in the country who get abandoned by their husbands and have no means of proving their marital status. It would also help check child marriages, bigamy and polygamy, enable women to seek maintenance and custody of their children and widows can claim inheritance rights. The Act is applicable on all women irrespective of caste, creed or religion. It would truly empower Indian women to exercise their rights. To what extent legislative measures have been able to raise the status of women in India? Are women now feel empowered in the sense that they are being equally treated by men in all spheres of life and are able to express one's true feminine urges and energies? These are the

important questions to be investigated with regard to women's empowerment in India

In traditional marriages the relationships were hierarchical and authoritarian. The modern conjugal relationships are based on freedom and desire rather than convention. People's attitudes about marriage are also changing. Educated women now feel that there is more to life than marriage. They can get most of the things they want (income, status, identity) without marriage, while they find it harder to find a suitable accomplished mate. This is why their marriage is delayed. With increasing literacy among women in India, their entry into many types of work, formerly the preserve of men, women can now look upon the bearing and raising of their children not as a life's work in itself but as an episode. If women have started taking men's work, it could be said that men have taken over women's.

Identity of woman is generally defined by her role within the family. She is identified as a daughter, daughter-in-law, mother, mother-in-law, wife, etc., and not as a person. She has no independent connections, friends and relatives outside her family. Her only friends, relatives and connections are those of the men folk of the family, becoming her kith and kin and friends by implication and not by voluntary choice. She has thus a subordinate status in the family. However, there are various degrees of woman's identity, depending upon caste and class background of her family. Is a woman a person? A woman bows down to her husband's desires even if she is unwilling to do so. She does not have 'gender justice' or equality with man. Whenever a woman has expressed her identity as a person, she has been put to a lot of hardship. Dowry harassment and bride-burning have sprung up as violence against women. The institutions of joint family and hyper gamy need a reorientation. The joint family home, for example, is a place where the daughter-in-law is treated as an 'outsider' and a 'servant' of the family. She becomes an object of scolding and ridicule for everyone in the family. Hyper gamy demands the marriage of a girl within the framework of caste endogamy and clan exogamy with a boy belonging to a family of higher status. Due to hyper gamy and the higher value attached to the boy among the Hindus, dowry has virtually become a price for a boy.

**TABLE- 1**  
**CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN**

Sl No.	Crime Head	Year 2006	Year 2007	Year 2008	Year 2009	Year 2010	Year 2011	Year 2012	Percentage Variation in 2012 over 2011
1	Rape (Sec. 376 IPC)	19,348	20,737	21,467	21,397	22,172	24,206	24,923	3.0
2	Kidnapping & Abduction (Sec. 363 to 373 IPC)	17,414	20,416	22,939	25,741	29,795	35,565	38,262	7.6
3	Dowry Death (Sec 302/304 IPC)	7,618	8,093	8,172	8,383	8,391	8,618	8,233	-4.5
4	Torture (Sec. 498-A IPC)	63,128	75,930	81,344	89,546	94,041	99,135	1,06,527	7.5
5	Molestation (Sec. 354 IPC)	36,617	38,734	40,413	38,711	40,613	42,968	45,351	5.5
6	Sexual Harassment (Sec. 509 IPC)	9,966	10,950	12,214	11,009	9,961	8,570	9,173	7.0
7	Importation of Girls (Sec. 366-B IPC)	67	61	67	48	36	80	59	-26.3
8	Sati Prevention Act, 1987	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	-100.0
9	Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956	4,541	3,568	2,659	2,474	2,499	2,435	2,563	5.3
10	Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986	1,562	1,200	1,025	845	895	453	141	-68.9
11	Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961	4,504	5,623	5,555	5,650	5,182	6,619	9,038	36.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,64,765</b>	<b>1,85,312</b>	<b>1,95,856</b>	<b>2,03,804</b>	<b>2,13,585</b>	<b>2,28,650</b>	<b>2,44,270</b>	<b>6.8</b>

Crime against women has gone up in the recent years. Rape, kidnapping and abduction, homicide for dowry and dowry deaths, torture, molestation, sexual harassment, importation of girls (eve-teasing), etc., have become a frequent feature despite the legal provisions such as Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956; Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961; The Child Marriage Restraint (Amendment) Act, 1979; Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986; and Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987. At times even the upper sections of society, including political personalities, are found violating these legal enactments.

According to the National Crime Research Bureau (NCR), in 2005, there were 1, 55,553 incidents of crime' against women. Andhra Pradesh reported 13.4 per cent to total incidents of crime against women, and Uttar Pradesh had 9.6 per cent crimes of total crime, next to Andhra Pradesh. Between 2001 and

2005, the increase in crime against women was by 8.2 per cent. And there are a lot more non-cognizable crimes and the ones which remain unreported and unrecorded. Maximum cases of rape in 2005 were reported from Madhya Pradesh. The bureau mentions that incest rape has gone up manifold in the recent years. A large number of rape victims were below 15 years of age, and in many cases family members, close relatives, friends and neighbours were involved in such a serious crime. The highest cases of dowry deaths were reported from Bihar and Madhya Pradesh.

Due to abject poverty, women are exploited as domestic helps and wives whose incomes are usurped by the man of the house. According to police estimates, a shocking 300,000 women and girls have been trafficked for exploitative sex work from Andhra Pradesh; of these just 3,000 have been rescued so far. The state is relatively prosperous, ranking fourth in

terms of per capita GDP in India, but it is also home to some of the poorest people in the country. If poverty were not a concern, then the girl child will be able to follow her dreams without concerns of sexual exploitation, domestic abuse and any education or work. The health and safety concerns of women are paramount for the wellbeing of a country, and are an important factor in gauging the empowerment of women in a country.

**Endowment And Women Empowerment:** Women's education got a fillip after the country got independence in 1947 and the government has taken various measures to provide education to all Indian women. As a result women's literacy has in fact been higher than of male literacy rate. While in 1991 only 39.2 Percentage of Indian women were literate, by the

end of 2001, 54 Percentage female were literate. The growth of female literacy rate is 14.87 Percentage as compared to 11.72 Percentage of that of male literacy rate. Moreover, educated women can also help in the reduction of mortality rate and growth of the population. Thus, Women's education in India plays a very important role in the overall development of the country.

Female participation from 1991 to 2011 has increased from 22.3 percent to 26.07 percent. In case of rural female literacy it has also increased from 26.8 percent to 31.0 percent and has decreased to 23.04 percent. In urban areas the female literacy shows on increasing trend from 9.2 percent to 14.5 percent from 1991 to 2011.

TABLE - 2

## LITERACY RATE IN INDIA

Year	Person	Males	Females
1991	52.1	63.9	39.2
2001	65.38	76.0	54.0
2011	74.04	82.14	65.46

**Source:** Census of India (2011)

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 literacy rate is more than 76 Percentage according to the 2001 Census; the female literacy rate is just 54 Percentage.

The growth has almost increased nine times from 7.3 percent in 1951 to 65 percent in 2011. From this analysis one can infer that still the female literacy rate (only half of the female population are literates) is wadding behind male literacy rate (three fourth of the male population are literates). The rate of school drop outs is also found to be comparatively higher in case of women. This higher rate of illiteracy of women is undoubtedly attributing for women dependence on men and to play a subordinate role. Education is an important necessity in the lives of citizens. The main reasons of females never attending school is expensive cost of education and not interested in studies. Moreover, education is not considered necessary and required for household work. In terms of sheer numbers, women's presence in the employment has increased dramatically, from 30.3 million in 1970 to 72.7 million during 2006-2010. We find that women made up 37.97 percent of the labor force in 1970 compared to 47.21 percent between 2006 and 2010. Women have also made significant gains in certain occupations. 1970 Census data showed very little participation from women as

accountants, police officers, lawyers and judges, physicians and surgeons, and pharmacists. However, the 2006-2010 data shows women making gains, including a strong presence as accountants. However, there are aspects of the workforce where growth has slowed. The Bureau reports that the largest gain in women's participation in the workforce happened between 1970 and 1980 and has since slowed down, averaging an increase of only 0.4 percentage points between 2000 and 2006-2010.

Female labour force participation rate show a steep fall from 29.4 percent in 2004/05 to 23 percent in 2009/10. Between the period 2004/05 and 2009/10, there has been a decline in female employment annually at the rate of 1.72 percent. In the epoch of socio-economic development and demographic changes taking place in the country, the firm believes that the female labour force participation will increase rather having declining trend. The workforce participation rate of females in rural sector was 26.1 in 2009- 10 (NSS 64th Round) while that for males was 54.7.

In Urban sector, it was 13.8 for females and 54.3 for males. A total of 20.4% women were employed in the organized sector in 2010 with 17.9% working in the public sector and 24.5% in the private. The unemployment rate for women of all ages was 7.0 for women and 3.1 for men in urban areas in 2009-10. Of the total job seekers registered with employed exchanges, women constituted 32.5% in 2009. The

discriminatory treatment can be seen in the participation of women and their earnings. On an average, monthly earnings of a female worker were 72 per cent of those of a male worker performing 67 per cent of world's working hours, but earning only 10 per cent of world's income.

**TABLE- 3**  
**WORK PARTICIPATION RATES BY GENDER (1991 -2011)**

Census	T/R/U	Female	Male	Persons
1991	Total	22.3	51.6	37.5
	Rural	26.8	52.6	40.1
	Urban	9.2	48.9	30.2
2001	Total	25.7	51.9	39.3
	Rural	31.0	52.4	42.0
	Urban	11.6	50.9	32.2
2011	Total	26.07	54.70	40.76
	Rural	23.04	49.18	36.11
	Urban	14.51	50.99	32.99

Source: 10<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan

India is the first country where, since independence, women have the right to vote to elect representatives for the National Parliament as well as State Assemblies. In the current Lok Sabha (as on 27th January 2010), there are 59 (10.8Percentage) women Members out of 545. As on 27th January 2010, there are 21 women Members (9.0Percentage) out of 234 in the Rajya Sabha (Upper House).

**TABLE - 4**  
**PROPORTION OF SEATS HELD BY WOMEN IN NATIONAL PARLIAMENT**

Reference year	LokSabha	RajyaSabha	Total	Share Percentage
1991	-	-	77 of 789	9.7
1999	52 of 544	-	-	9.6
2004	54 of 544	28 of 250	73 of 794	9.2
2007	47 of 544	25 of 250	72 of 794	9.1
2009	59 of 545	21 of 234	80 of 779	10.3

Overall percentage of lady parliamentarians stands at 10.3Percentage. The proportion of women in the total employment shows an increasing trend. It was 10.28Percentage in 2006 against 9.68Percentage in 2004 and 7.53Percentage in 2001. Central Government Ministries with highest share of women employees in 2006 were Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (13.48Percentage), Ministry of Defence (10.56Percentage) and Ministry of Railways (7.11Percentage).

**SUGGESTIONS** :Efforts need to be made to reduce the difference in income groups Existence of social exclusion and discrimination in the labour market is quite well established in a large number of studies. It has also been convincingly argued that these processes tend to reduce economic efficiency in so far as they prevent hiring of the best, adversely affect economic growth, and, of course, lead to perpetuation of inequality and of poverty among discriminated group. The case for introducing measures to combat them is thus obvious. Such measures consist of two elements: one that aim at capacity enhancement of the excluded groups so as to reduce their disadvantage vis-à-vis other groups and the second, to positively discriminate in their favour

by giving them preferential treatment in hiring. Both these approaches have been adopted in India in the form of preferential and promotive measures in education and reservation in public sector jobs. Social exclusion and discrimination in labour markets still continues to be widespread and of significant extent as evidence presented earlier shows, partly due to poor effectiveness of the existing measures and partly because of the absence of any affirmative action in the private sector where most of the Indian workers are employed. While discrimination is quite significant, a major part of the exclusion is accounted for by endowment that is education, skills and experience of a worker. It is, therefore, necessary, in the first instance, that effective measures to improve the endowment of the workers belonging to the disadvantaged social groups are undertaken. These measures may include not only a support for education and skill formation, but also steps towards alleviation of their poverty. Their access both to education, training and health facilities and to sources of livelihoods needs to improve. For, while quite often, availability of institutions and facility is not found sufficient, enabling people to avail of them



is also equally important, in so far as their existing economic and social handicaps prevent their use.

It is, however, observed that endowment again is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for benefitting from participation in the labour market and accessing jobs befitting one's qualifications. The fact that rates of return on education are significantly lower for. In the process, equality of opportunity is denied. The discriminatory process can extend beyond access to information to processes of selection in which attributes which have little relevance for the performance of the job, but tend to favour candidates with better social and economic endowment (e.g. facility with spoken English!), are emphasized.

The second necessary condition to reduce exclusion and discrimination, therefore, is to ensure equality of opportunity in access to information and use of non-discriminatory methods and criteria in selection. Finally, it is also observed that ensuring capacity enhancement and equality of opportunity also does not necessarily lead to a non-discriminatory and non-exclusionary treatment in the labour markets as employers often have a 'taste' for discrimination. To the extent, such discrimination is found to be

systematic and significant; the necessary measures lie in the spheres of affirmative action, and more specifically in the form of positive discrimination. Such action in the form of quota and reservation in jobs in the public sector has been practiced with significant positive results in India for several decades now and the private sector may have to consider its adoption in broader social context as part of its social responsibility towards the disadvantage sections of society.

**Conclusion:** It is only now that globalization, liberalization and other socio-economic forces have given some respite to a large proportion of the population. However, there are still quite a few areas where women empowerment in India is largely lacking. To truly understand what women empowerment is, there needs to be a sea-change in the mind-set of the people in the country. Not just the women themselves, but the men have to wake up to a world that is moving towards equality and equity. It is better that this is embraced earlier rather than later, for our own good. Thus our country should be capitulated into the horizon of empowerment of women and reveal in its glory.

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