PREFACE

India is a country of heterogeneous culture. The position of women in society is still influenced by social and cultural factors like traditions and customs, religion, caste, class and income strata. All these factors are influenced determinants of social perception of women. The progress of a country can be judge by the states of its women as she occupies a significant place in the family in particularly and society in general.

The Central theme of the thesis entitled, “Women’s Empowerment in India Since 1952”. Empowerment of women is seen as a key avenue to reduce the imbalance between the twin genders, which are found in nearly all stage. Empowerment involves greater control over the circumstances of their lives.

The whole plan of the study is divided into five chapters, each under specific theme being dealt with some what in detail.

The First Chapter deals with position and role of women under the various phases like Vedic, Anicent, Gupta and Mughal periods and also examined the role of women in Indian National Movement. It gives ample opportunity for women’s participation in social and political activities. It presents vivid activities of few eminent Indian political leaders in pre-independence period. A glimpse at history of our freedom struggle shows that they were on par with men even in politics. These women laid the foundation for women’s struggle for empowerment in 20th Century.

The Second Chapter examines status of women in Indian Constitution. Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles of the State Policy not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the state to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women have been discussed in this chapter. The Indian Government has passed various Acts to safeguard Constitutional rights...
of women and improve their socio-economic status are discussed in this chapter.


The Third Chapter analyses changing pattern of women in the context of socio-economic scenario. The importance of education, health and nutrition is discussed in this chapter as it is the most powerful tools for socio-economic empowerment of women. The Government of India has launched several programmes and policies for promoting empowerment and development of women under Five Year Plan. The Governmental and Non Governmental Organizations are also taking positive initiative for the improvement of women in various sphere of life. Female work participation rate, Report of Committee on the Status of Women in India, National Perspective Plan for Women are highlighted in this chapter.

The Fourth Chapter traces women’s representation in Parliament and State Legislative Assemblies and changing patterns of women’s leadership and their role in decision making process. The main focus of this study is to show the level of representation of women in Parliament, State Legislative Assemblies and also in local bodies. The participation of women in the local bodies is considered essential not only for
ensuring their political participation in the democratic process but also for realizing the developmental goals for women. It also covers the recommendations of various committees as regards to women's participation in Panchayati Raj Institutions. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts giving impetus to women's development have also been analyzed.

The Fifth Chapter gives a brief summary of the study and contains the major finding of the study and tries to look for the future trends. An over view of the changing position and role of women in politics and also an overall assessment on the extent of their participation in the local bodies after 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts.

**Objectives of this Study:**

The present study is a modest attempt towards women's empowerment and address the changing role of women in political process in India. Main objectives of this present study are as follows:

1. To study the actual position of women's representation in the Parliament, Legislative Assemblies and also in the local bodies, and their role in participatory decision making process.

2. To examine the role of women in political and social movements launched in the various part of the country.

3. To analyze various Constitutional Provisions, Acts and judicial mandate relating to women.

4. To present a concrete picture of employment status of women in India.

5. To study the policies and programme of Government under the Five Year Plans for the empowerment of women.

6. To examine women's participation in the electoral politics at the national and state levels and also study the participation of women in Panchayats and Municipalities in the wake of 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts.
7. To highlight the efforts and administrative support of Governmental and Non-Governmental Organizations to make the position of women better in the society and in which manner and to what extent.

8. To suggest various measures for encourages women to enter and to enable them to play an effective role in the decision making process.

Hypothesis:

Hypothesis is usually considered as the principal instrument in research. Keeping these destinations in mind the following hypothesis has been tested by research study.

1. Women form political family background, better economic status, joint families, better educated, married and middle of the ages are more likely to contest elections and their percentage of participation is more in comparison to deprived classes of women.

2. Women's education is a significant factor in determining women's empowerment. Higher level of literacy among women is likely to exhibit higher degree of participation and representation in the decision making.

3. The processes of modernization change the character of political behaviour of women. They gradually realized their strength and attempt to gain for themselves a share in the process of decision-making by participation in more and more political activities.

4. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments Acts to the Indian Constitution have served as a major break through towards ensuring women's equal access and increased participation in political power structures. These Amendments are a milestone in the way of women assuming leadership in decision making. The impact of these Amendments cannot be denied in changing the socio economic life of the women
Methodology:

The present study on women empowerment was an exploratory study. In carrying out this search, both primary as well as secondary sources of data have been used to conduct the intensive study. The primary sources include the officials documents like Government Reports of Election Commission, Parliamentary and Assembly Debates, Women Census and Reports of the Indian National Congress Committee. These sources provided useful statistical information throughout in various Parliament and Assembly Election. Besides these primary sources, several secondary sources are also consulting for this study. Secondary sources are particularly useful in examining the theoretical aspects of this study. The study will however, also takes help from books and articles and journals written by experts on the topical theme, for better understanding of the situation. Thus, all the materials collected would be subjected to critical scrutiny the analytical framework.

Findings:

India has an elaborated system of laws to protect the rights of women which have been enacted form time to time to remove gender discrimination and protect women’s rights.

It is the fact that representation of women in the Lok Sabha has not crossed 10 percent. In the Lok Sabha there were only 22 women constituting 4.4 percent of the House. It increased marginally over the years except in the Sixth Lok Sabha when the House had only 19 women member. In the Thirteen Lok Sabha there were 49 women members, however in the Fourteen Lok Sabha, again the strength of women members has come down to 44. Similarly in the case of Rajya Sabha the percentage of women members has never crossed 12 percent.

73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts is a landmark in the history of women’s development as it is a revolutionary step towards women’s participation in decision-making and in political process of the country at least at the grass-root level and Municipalities. Currently, almost
one million women occupy positions as members and chairpersons in three-tier structure introduced by this Constitutional Amendment Act. At present there are 6,81258 women elected to Gram Panchayats, 37,109 women to Panchayats Samities at Intermediate Level and 3,153 women to Panchayats at District Level.

We have found that changes are more vivid in the structure of the expectations. It is hoped that with the spread of education, women will participate more and more in political activities. Women in themselves should develop a favourable attitude towards politics. They should spare time and should come out their homes to take part in political activities. Above all, there is also a need to replace the traditional value system, which is based upon inequality of sexes, and in which women play a subordinate role.

The dream of empowering women can only come true when each and every section of society will be free from gender bias and this advocate empowerment of women. Women should be encouraged to use their expertise of effect positive changes in the society. To empower the women, there is need to adopt an integrated approach towards upliftment It is necessary to raise the economic and social status of women so that they may be brought into the main stream of national development.

If present trends continue, it will give more importance to women empowerment. A day will come in near future when Indian women will enjoy real power in the field of politics which will lead to socio-economic empowerment of women. Women will also get their representation in Parliament and Legislative Assemblies. They will be elected as member of Parliament as well as member in the Legislatures.