Empowerment refers to increasing the economic, political, social, educational, gender or spiritual strength of an entity. Empowerment focuses on mobilizing the self for the poor and needy. The subject of empowerment of women has becoming a contentious issue all over the world including India since last few decades. Inequalities between men and women and discrimination against women have also been age-old issues all over the world. 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 ability by way of acquiring knowledge, power and experience. Empowerment is the process of enabling or authorizing individuals to think, take action and control work in an autonomous way.

Empowerment in a psychological sense means the social influence, political power and legal rights for the individual. It is a multi level construct referring to individuals, organizations and community. It is 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. It is not merely a feel of greater self-confidence but also an internal transformation of one’s consciousness enables one to overcome external barriers to accessing resources or changing traditional ideology.

**Social Issues**

The culture and tradition of India is considered as old and great all over the world where people used to worship various female goddesses, saints, poets. India is the biggest democracy in the world. However, women backwardness is also noticeable in the Indian society because of the social issues, problems and restrictions against women. Women from middle class suffer more than the higher class family. Women in the Indian Society generally face problems of sex discrimination, high percentage of illiteracy, female infanticide, dowry system etc.

In Indian Society it is a big curse for the women to taking birth as a women, as they face lots of social issues and problems all through their life which is considered as the big struggle for them. From beginning of their life they face various issues. Female infanticide is the most common practice of killing girl child in their mother’s womb in Indian Society. Women are
considered as burden for their parents in their childhood life and after marriage for their husbands. Another common thing or problem which women are faced from their birth is sex discrimination till their death. Illiteracy, engaged in household work, child rearing, rape, sexual harassment at workplace are some major issues for the women in India. Women are not getting proper food, they are suffering from malnutrition and disease in rural area.

There are various issues and problems which women generally face in the society in India. Earlier women were facing lot of problems because of male dominated patriarchal society system, practice of old traditional believes, etc. Women were only responsible to the traditional roles like child bearing and child rearing. Selective abortion and female infanticide, is a common practice for the women in India from the earlier time.

**Sexual Harassments:** It is the form of sexual exploitation of a girl child at home, streets, public places, transport, offices etc. by the family members, neighbours, friends or relatives.

Dowry and Bride burning it is another problem faced by the women of lower or middle class family generally after the marriage. In 2005 around 6787 dowry death cases was registered in India according to the Indian National Crime Bureau Reports.²
Disparity in Education: The level of education of women is less than man still in the modern age. Female illiteracy is higher in the rural areas where over 63% or more women remain unlettered. Education is the most important tool of empowerment of women as it can bring about a positive attitudinal change. It is therefore crucial for the socio-economic and political progress of India. Education significantly makes difference in the lives of women.

Domestic Violence: It is like widespread disease that affects almost 70% women of India. According to the Ministry of Women and Child Development it is caused by the husband, relative or other family member. Girls have no proper rights like boys in the society.

Child Marriage: Early marriage of the girls by their parents is highly practiced in the rural areas of India.

Inadequate Nutrition: Inadequate nutrition in the childhood affects girls belonging to the lower middle class or poor families.

Women are considered as inferior to men so they are not allowed to join military services. They are not allowed to take part in social activities.

Widows are considered as the worthless in the Indian Society. They are treated very poorly and forced them to take the instruction of the other family member at home, and bound them to wear white saree. They are not
allowed to take part any auspicious work. In early times, women were facing problems like child marriage, sati pratha, parda pratha, restriction to widow marriage, widows exploitation, devdasi system etc. Gradually these old practices from the society have disappeared but there are some other issues emerging in recent times. Women are continuously facing many problems even after having self-confidence, individuality, self-respect, personality, capacity, talent and efficiency more than men. They are facing many problems in their daily life even after they are given equal rights and opportunities like men by the Constitution of India. These are some of the problems modern women are still facing.

**Violence against Women:** Women are getting affected by the various violence almost every day which is disrupting the society. This is because the crimes are increasing day by day in the society according to the report of Crime Record Bureau of the Central Home Ministry. They even faced violence inside their house or outside the family etc.

**Gender Discrimination:** Women are considered as weaker section of the society than men and given less importance. Girls children are become real victims of the discrimination. Due to the patriarchal family system in India the discrimination of work between men and women in the areas like
nutrition, education, health care reducing of female population, job, public life, etc.

**Problems of Female Education:** Women education percentage is low in India especially in the rural areas because they are discouraged for higher education like professional and technical education.

**Socio-Economic Issues**

**Problems related to Unemployment:** Women are getting more problem in searching for suitable job. They become more liable to the exploitation and harassment in the work areas. Women who are uneducated have more fear to divorce and desertion by their husbands at any stage of life. They are bound to live their life with the fear of divorce because of economic reasons.

**Poverty:** It is a condition in which a household is not able to fulfill its basic needs for survival i.e. food, clothing and shelter. Since independence poverty is a wide spread condition in India. It is a serious issue for the country it needs to be taken into account that although the economy has shown some progress in last two decades. The growth rates are higher in Gujarat and Delhi as compared to Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Half of the
population doesn’t have proper shelter and sanitation system at home in villages, do not have secondary school and lack of proper roads.

**Starvation:** Starvation is a condition characterized by the deficiency in calorie energy intake and is a serious form of malnutrition which leads to death if not taken care about. Starving can take place in a country due to many reasons like war, famine, the discrimination between the rich and the poor. The Supreme Court has issued orders over the government to take measures like mid-day meal schemes and the provision of health care schemes for pregnant women.

**Child Labour:** Child labour means generally the employment of children in any work with or without payment. It not only happens in India but is also a global phenomenon. Over population, illiteracy, poverty, debt trap are some of the common cause’s which are instrumental in this issue.

Multinational companies also recruit children in garment industries for more work and less pay which is absolutely unethical. Abolition of child trafficking, elimination of poverty, true and compulsory education and basic standards of living can reduce the problem to a great extent. The World-Bank and the International Monetary Fund can help in eradicating poverty by providing loan to the developing countries.
Though several Governmental and non-governmental bodies are working towards improving the existing situation in the social fields but the results are not very encouraging. Government and NGOs have taken but the practice is continuing. This is because this is the patriarchy system of our country which considers male as the superior authority and women as subordinate to them.

Though there have been several positive changes in the society such as girls going to school in vast majority and their employment ratio is also increasing, illiteracy as a whole is decreasing and conditions of SC/STs are also improving etc. but situation is far from satisfactory. And without changing the mind set and beliefs of the people it is very difficult task to change the society. For this purpose educating people about various social problems and try to changing their way of thinking is the best way to forward, but as far as social developments are concerned it is still one of the lowest ranked countries of the world Indian’s Human Development Index (HDI) rank for 2013 is 135 out of 187 countries of the world. In fact many societies of the world have their social issues like India. In India there are different religious beliefs that adds to the socio cultural varieties of the country. India’s social problems are also rooted in the religious practices and
beliefs of it people. These social problems have developed over a long period of times and are still continuing in one form or other.

Women empowerment is very necessary to make the bright future of the family, society or country. Women need fresh and more capable environment so that they can take their own right decisions in every area whether for themselves, family, society or country. Women empowerment is an essential tool to achieve the goals of development.

The most famous saying used by the Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru is “To awaken the people, it is the women who must be awakened. Once she moves, the family moves, the village moves, the nation moves.” It should be promoted from the child hood in each and every family. Women need to be strong physically, mentally and socially. Better education can be initiated from childhood. The upliftment of women in the society needs healthy family to bring a holistic development of the nation. Still in many backward areas, there is a trend of early marriage and child birth because of the poverty, insecurity and illiteracy of the parents. In order to empower women various steps have been taken by the government to prevent violence, social separation, gender discrimination and abuse against women. Gender inequality is the main social issue in India, in which women are getting back in male dominated country. Women in all means should be the utmost
priority of the nation. Inequalities between men and women in the society generate lots of problems which become a big obstruction in the way to success of Nation.

**Economic Issues**

The economic empowerment refers to programmes aiming directly raising people’s income. Women’s economic empowerment that is, their capacity to bring about economic change for themselves, as it is increasingly observed that the most important contributing factor to achieving equality between women and men. But economically strengthening women—who are half the world’s workforce – is not only a means by which to spur economic growth, but also a matter of advancing women’s human rights. To increase their economic opportunities, women need access to more and better jobs, a business climate the supports them in starting and doing business, a financial sector that gives them financial support to their needs and greater livelihood security in times of food and fuel crisis. Women’s economic empowerment is a prerequisite for sustainable development, pro-poor growth and the achievement of all the MDGs.⁹

Investing in women’s economic empowerment sets a direct path towards gender equality, poverty eradication and inclusive economic
growth. Women make enormous contributions to economics whether in businesses, on farms, as entrepreneurs or employees, or by doing unpaid care work at home.

Many international commitments support women’s economic empowerment\textsuperscript{10} like the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and a series of International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions on gender equality. UN supports women’s economic empowerment and with the growing body of evidence that shows that gender equality significantly contributes to advancing economics and sustainable development.

Gender discrimination means that women often end up in insecure, low-wage jobs, and constitute a small minority of those in senior positions. It curtails access to economic assets such as land and loans. It limits participation in shaping economic and social policies, because women perform the bulk of household work, they often have little time left to pursue economic opportunities.

In all economic empowerment programmes, UN reaches out to women most in need, often by engaging with grass-roots and civil society organizations and marginalized groups that include rural women domestic workers some migrants and low-skilled women. The aims are higher
incomes, better access to and control over resources, and greater security, including protection from violence. As such the women and girls have restricted mobility, access to education, access to health facilities and lower-decision making power.

The impact of the patriarchal structure can be seen in rural and urban India, although women’s empowerment in rural India is less visible than in urban areas. This is of particular concern, since much of India is rural despite the high rate of urbanization and expansion in urban settings, face inequality at much higher rates and in all spheres of life. Urban educated women enjoy better access to economic opportunities, health and education and experience less domestic violence. Women of both urban and rural who have some level of education have higher decision-making power in the household and the community. Furthermore, the level of women’s education also has a direct implication on maternal mortality rates nutrition and health indicators among children. The most notable ones are education level, caste and class divisions. Women from lower castes (backward and tribal communities) are particularly vulnerable to maternal mortality and infant mortality. They are often unable to access health and educational services, lack decision-making power, and face higher levels of violence.
Upper class and educated women have better access to health, education and economic opportunities where as lower class, less educated women in urban settings enjoy these rights very less. Due to rapid urbanization and lack of economic opportunities in other parts of the country, some cities are also come under the slum-areas. Slums are informal sprawls and most of the time the area is not getting basic services such as clean water, sanitation health facilities. That is because slum dwellers mostly work in unorganized and informal sectors.  

India is one of the world’s fastest growing economics, with women mainly from the middle class increasingly entering the workforce. Urban centres like Delhi and Bangalore have seen an influx of young women from semi-urban and rural parts of the country, living alone and redefining themselves. However, the story of economic empowerment for women is not a singular narrative; rather it is located in a complex set of caste, class, religious and ethnic identities.

The Global Gender Gap Report by the World Economic Forum in 2009 ranked India 114th out of 134 countries for inequality between men and women in the economy, politics, health, and education. On equal economic opportunities and women’s participation in the labour force, India ranked 127 and 122 respectively. The number of women in the work force varies
greatly from state to state i.e. 21% in Delhi, 23% in Punjab, 65% in Manipur, 71% in Chhattisgarh, 76% in Arunachal Pradesh. The diversity of women’s economic opportunities between states is due to the cultural, religious and ethnic diversity of each state. Northern states like Delhi and Punjab lag far behind on gender equality measures, including the alarming sex ratio between male and female due to preference and sex-selective abortion, low female literacy rate and high rates of gender based violence.

In rural India women’s economic opportunity remain restricted by social, cultural and religious barriers. Most notably inheritance laws embedded in Hindu and Shariat civil codes continue to marginalize women in the household and the larger community. Rural women particularly of lower caste and class, have the lowest literacy rates, and therefore do not have the capacity to negotiate pay or contracts and most often engage in the unorganized sector, self-employment or in small-scale industry. Self-help-group (SHGs) are a widely practiced model for social and economic mobility by NGOs and the government. SHGs provide women with the opportunity to manage loans and savings that can be used by the members for varying needs. SHGs also are used to promote social change among the members and the community at large. Members of SHGs also have used their experience in local institutions (Panchyat Khap).
Rural low caste and tribal women also make up 70% of domestic workers in India, India is growing economy has allowed for many upper and middle-class women to enter the workforce and while poor rural women have little access to education and training, there is a high demand for domestic workers in urban hubs.

Domestic workers are mostly illiterate, with little or no negotiating power for wage equity and are highly vulnerable to exploitation and sexual and physical arouse. There is a movement at the policy level to organize domestic workers and to create laws to regulate minimum wage, working hours and other measures such as life and health insurance.

Women are also visible in the construction sector in India and are taken their wages daily base system. Women construction workers are mostly poor and illiterate and have little negotiating power. They earn less than men, in the world India has one of the highest percentages women those who occupy managerial positions are under 3%. Most women work in low administrative positions and many women are migrated from rural to urban area for doing their job in industries or various places, now a days more and more women are entering the IT and other technical sectors. The movement aims to locate women’s rights within the larger human rights framework, and by doing so moves away from looking at women’s issues only within
the framework of violence against women and reproductive rights.\textsuperscript{17} Women’s economic, social, cultural, rights (ESCR) attempts to look of the broader issues facing women namely poverty, housing, unemployment, education, water, food security, trade etc. By empowering women economically and socially ESCR provides for a broader discourse on rights that moves women’s rights from a victim centered approach to one that cuts across other human rights issues.

Economic development reduces poverty, it increases the ability-distinct from will of households to withstand crises and the government ability to ensure their poorest citizens against sickness and hunger.\textsuperscript{18}

There are many ways to define women’s empowerment, but it can be defined in terms of the process of change through which women expand their ability to make strategic choices about their lives and to perform on equal terms with men in bringing about desired result to changes in the society in which they live. It is widely recognized that empowerment is a multidimensional process, encompassing changes in the political, social and economic spheres of life and that these different dimensions of empowerment are closely interrelated so that significant changes is one dimension is likely to generate changes in others.
Women economic empowerment relates to the capacity of women’s strategic choice and agency in the spheres of life and that these different dimensions of empowerment changes in other spheres of their lives. There are a number of arguments as to why a focus on women’s economic empowerment is important. First of all, gender inequalities in the division of labour between paid and unpaid work, women are not being paid at home for their household work. In society the women have subordinate status in society. They always depend along with their children on their male provision.

The economic empowerment of women is thus a matter of human rights and social justice. The economic empowerment of women is also critical for human development. There is now a well established body of evidence to suggest that women’s economic empowerment, their access to and control over valued resources, for the well being of the family, including their own and their children’s well-being. It increases the chances that they will seek family planning and reproductive health services, insure the certain contexts, reduce gender inequalities in household resources allocation. The economic employment of women thus contributes to the development of human capital and human capabilities, including their own.
The economic empowerment of women matters for poverty reduction. This is not surprising, if women have lower levels of education and skills if they face discrimination in their markets for the sale of their goods, services and wages, labour as well as in their access to assets, technology and financial services, their efforts to earn a living for themselves and their dependents are likely to be rewarded more unfavourable than those of men with equivalent characteristics. Women are jointly doing the outside services with male they are prevent the crisis and are able to declining the poverty line. Investing in women’s economic resources helps poor household to weather crisis and increases their changes of moving out of poverty.

Finally the women’s economic empowerment is essential if they are to participate in, contribute to and benefit from growth process on terms which recognize the value of their contributions, respect their dignity and make it possible for them to negotiate a satisfactory distribution of the benefits of growth. It is possible to improve women’s access to land, to jobs, to credit and so on in the ways which are dreaming and exploitative and do little changes their subordinate status within the home. In India Mobile crèches is a voluntary organization that has been in existence since 1969 to meet the child care needs of women workers in the construction industry.
SEWA\textsuperscript{19} has also been exploring different approaches to the provision of child care support to women in the informal economy who make up its membership (Kabeer, 2008).\textsuperscript{20} One example of its efforts in this field is Shaishav, its village-based crèche programme which provide comprehensive child care services to children ages 0-3 among rural women workers in Gujarat.

For the upliftment of the society, some economic activities are well-designed to provide financial services to the poor-people, to tie themselves over a crisis to respond to investment opportunities, to ensure themselves against old age, sickness and to pay lump-sum money to their social and religious festivals. For lending programmes Micro-credit\textsuperscript{21} programme has been launched. Micro-credit programmes have expanded since 1980s.

There is a strong case for redistributive forms of social protection which are not tied to employment status and which would help to reduce the gap between “good” and “bad” jobs in the economy. The ILO suggested that such a social floor support old age pensions, child benefits, disability benefits, basic health support. This estimates indicates that such a package would cost a modest percentage of the GDP of most developing countries (4-10\% if it included health support and between 2-5\% if it did not).\textsuperscript{22}
It may be reduce poverty level. The importance of livelihoods in the lives of poor women and men come together in collective action. Trade union have not always come in the forefront of struggles around the rights of vulnerable workers, particular women. Some organize around specific occupational categories such as waste picker, janitors, migrant workers and so-on-organised struggle for economic rights.

The support for women’s participation in networks, unions, business associations, market networks should be consisted something that cuts across all interventions to empowerment women.

Economic activities are related to production distribution, exchange and consumption of goods and services to provide equally to men and women in the society.

The primary aim of the economic activity is the production of goods and services with a view to make them available to the consumer.

Profession is an occupation carried on by professional people like Doctors, Lawyers, Engineers etc.

Employment is a type of occupation under which one person provides his services, physical or mental to someone else in return for which he/she gets salary or wage. The person who employees is called employer and the person who is employed is called employer or worker.
Business is an economic activity concerned with production and distribution of goods and services with the aim to earn profit. It includes all those activities which are directly or indirectly concerned with the production, purchase and sale of goods and services. So the production, marketing, advertising, warehousing, insurance, banking etc. are all business activities. The ministries of the Government of India have come up with various schemes from time to time. These schemes could be either central and the state. A Central Sector Scheme launched in 1986-87 to help the poor and asset less women and provide employment on sustainable basis by mobilizing them in viable co-operative groups, strengthening marketing linkages, support services and access to credit. Since inception, around 250 projects have been provided financial assistance under the scheme. The ten traditional sectors like agriculture, animal husbandry, dairying, fisheries, hand looms, handicrafts, khadi and village industries, sericulture, waste land development and social forestry. Kishori Shakti Yojna replaced Nutrition Programme for Adolescent Girls (NPAG) was approved by the Government on 16/08/2010.23

Economic Empowerment of women is to be achieved through the formation and promotion of SHGs as to enable women to have access to micro credit and micro finance. Programmes like National Rural Livelihood
Mission of Sayam Sidha, Rashtriya Mahila Kosh. Financial institutions like NSCFDC\textsuperscript{24}/NBCFDC\textsuperscript{25}/NSKFDC\textsuperscript{26} and nationalized banks is co-ordinated well and delivery of credit is timely.

**New Employment-Oriented Economic Schemes\textsuperscript{27}**

The Union Government lead by Shri Narendra Modi has become quite famous for launching a number of social welfare schemes throughout the country within a short span of time.

**Digital India:** Digital India Programme launched in August 2014 to change the face of India digitally and electronically. This would digitally empowered nation and economy. This programme which started in 2014 and it would complete by 2019.

**Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojna:** On his first speech of Independence Day in year 2014. Prime Minister announced the famous yojna and ensures a bank account for every Indian. After this 15 million saving accounts were opened across the length and breadth of the country and all public sectors banks participating in it.

Make in India would also ensure that there are sufficient job opportunities for the youth who are struggling to get a decent job.
In Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojna each M.P. would take out some part of their funds for the development of their constituencies. Through physical and institutional infrastructure the village of the country can reach up to their empowerment as a whole.

**Atal Pension Yojna:** Low cost benefits have been the core guiding principles of Narendra Modi lead Central Government in almost all the schemes they are launching. Atal Pension Yojna ensures old age pension to those who are not covered under any other pension or social security scheme.

**Awas Yojna:** Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna is a primarily a welfare housing scheme launched by the central government under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi it ensures by the year 2022 the intention is to provide housing to all the citizen specially those are poor.

**Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojna:** Anyone who is within the age group of 18 years to 50 years can get enrolled for PMJBY, provided all have a functional saving bank account. Within the scheme, the policy holder would have to pay as a premium is Rs. 330 per year and they would be covered with a life insurance of Rs. 2 lakhs.
**Suraksha Bima Yojna:** By this scheme the subscriber is required to just pay Rs. 12 per year and enjoy a carefree insured life of upto Rs. 2 lakhs, if there is any accidental death partial or permanent disabilities.

**Sukanya Samriddhi Yojna:** It is one of the most promising and relevant schemes to empower girl child financially. According to the scheme the girl child below 10 years can open a saving account and their parents can operate it till they attain an age of 21 years. After that they can use it for their daughters higher studies or marriage.

There are many more schemes launched by the Union Government like:

- LPG subsidy
- Modi’s Smart City Yojna
- School Nursery Yojna
- Gold Monetization Scheme
- Stand up India Loan Scheme
- One Rank One Pension OROP
- 7\(^{th}\) Pay Commission
Political Issues

The term political participation has a very wide meaning.\textsuperscript{28} It is not only related to “Right to Vote”, but simultaneously relates to 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 remove the gender inequalities in politics, the Indian Government has instituted reservations for seats in local government.

Women turnout during India’s 2014 parliamentary general elections was 65.63\% compared to 67.09\% turnout for men.\textsuperscript{29} India ranks 20\textsuperscript{th} from the bottom in terms of representation of women in parliament. Women have held the post of the president and the Prime Minister in India, as well as chief ministers of various states. Indian voters have elected women to numerous state legislative assemblies and national parliament for many decades.

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

Women were substantially involved in the Indian Independence movement in the early 20th century and got independence from Britain. Independence brought gender equality in the form of constitutional rights but historically women’s political participation has remained low.

Women’s organizations in India first began to emerge in the early 1900s, and later in the 1970s after a period of limited activity from the 1950s to 1970s. One of the earliest women’s organizations, Bharat Stree Mahamandal formed in 1910, and focused on helping women escape oppression from men. In 1927, the All India Women’s Conference (AIWC) was formed to advocate for women’s education and was helpful in the passage of the Hindu Code of Bills between 1952 and 1960. Women were also active in the freedom movement in protesting British colonial rule over Indian holding protests and public meetings in support of Independence.

In 1950s, universal suffrage granted voting rights to all women. This is enshrined in Article 326 in our constitution. India is a parliamentary system with two houses, Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. Rates of participating among women in 1962 were 46.63% for Lok Sabha elections and rose to
high in 1984 of 58.60%. Male turnout during the same period was 63.31% in 1962 and 68.18% in 1984.

The gap between men and women voters has narrowed with a difference of 16.7% in 1962 to 4.4% in 2009. Voter turnout for national elections in the past 50 years has remained the same with turnout ranging between 50% and 60%. State elections have seen a growing trend in women’s participation, and in some cases women’s turnout is exceeding male turnout. Increased participation is occurring in both rich and poor states of India. The sex ratio of voters has improved from 715 female voters for every 1,000 male voters as the comparison in the year 1960s 883 female voters in 2000s. The Election Commission of India sought to increase voter turnout has including door-to-door voter registration and voter photo Id will be issued to increase voter turnout.

Women’s equality in power sharing and active participation in decision making, including decision making in political process at all levels will ensure the achievement of goal of women empowerment. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts reserved the one-third of seats in all local elected bodies for women as a sign of political empowerment. Over a million women has actively entered political life in India through the Panchayat Raj institution.\textsuperscript{31}
There are many elected women representatives at the village council level. There are many elected women representatives at the village council level. The percentage of women in various levels of political activities in India have been risen considerably, however women are still under represented in governance and decision-making process. Their power is restricted, as it the men who yield all the authority. Their decisions are often over-ruled by the government machinery. It is crucial to train and give real power to these women leaders so that they can bring the change in their villages regarding women. In recent years there have been explicit moves to increase women’s political participation at top level. However the women’s reservation bill is a sad story as it is repeatedly being scuttled in the parliament.

Participation of women, who constitute 50% of our total population, in politics and public life is very much negligible in India. Less number of women are present in positions like state and central cabinet, minister, governors, speakers, secretaries and legal advisers to the governments, ambassadors to other countries, IPS, IAS, IFS officers, judges in courts, mayors of big cities, office bearers of all India parties etc.

No political party of India has given position to women in accordance with their number in the total population. In some areas seats are reserved
for women as we find in Gram Panchayat, Jilla Panchayat, University Senate etc. Even in these areas women have not constituted themselves into a “Pressure group”. Hence, in our political life, we have caste-lobbies, minority lobby, linguistic lobbies, capitalist lobbies, etc. but we do not have “Women lobby” to bring pressure on the government. Some of the factors for low participation of women in public affairs are discussed below.

1. **Increasing Violence and Terrorism in Politics**

   Political corruption, criminalization of politics, erosion of political values, disappearance of political decency, instability, lawlessness, terrorism and confusion have been increasing in our public life since 1980s. This state of confused political situation has discouraged women from taking active role in politics.

2. **Minimum Representation of Women in Lok-Sabha**

   The representation of women in Lok Sabha has been very poor since 1962 elections. For ex: there were only 33% elected women members in the third Lok Sabha (out of 494 members) after the 1962 elections. In the 6th Lok Sabha out of 544 elected members there were only 19 women members and their percentage was only 3.4. In the 10th Lok Sabha (1991 elections) there were 39 elected women members and their percentage was 7.4.
In the 1996 Elections for the 11th Lok Sabha though the total number of women voters increased to 28.24 crores (47%) only 477 women candidates as against 14,250 men candidates contested for 543 seats. (In the 1991 elections for the 10th Lok Sabha 325 women candidates contested as against 8,374 men candidates for 521 seats). These figures tell us that only a small number of women are interested in political life.

In 1999 General Elections for the 13th Lok Sabha also women’s participation was the poorest one. Though political parties were speaking in terms of 33% reservation for women in legislative bodies including the parliament, no political parties had given tickets to women is more than 10%. In some parties the percentage of women candidates was not even 2 to 3.\textsuperscript{33}

*Poor Participation of Women in the Party – Politics*

Not only in the legislative bodies but even within the framework of the political parties also the participation of women is very poor. Political parties are still male-dominated and unwilling to give sufficient representation of women.

The movement for women’s suffrage began in the early 1990s in response to a national movement suffrage. Previously there was no
capability or right the Indians to vote either men or women during the British rule before 1947. After Indian Independence the Indian Constitution in 1950 officially granted women and men suffrage. Provincial legislatures had granted women the right to vote. Madras was the first to grant women’s suffrage in 1921.

India has a federal form of government, with developed powers. The electorate votes to elect a national parliament as well as state assemblies. In 2012, India had a minimum percentage of 10.9% women elected representatives in the national parliament.

According to World Economic Forum’s annual global gender gap index studies India has ranked in the top 20 countries worldwide for many years, with 9th best in 2013, this score reflecting more women participated in Indian politics than Denmark, Switzerland, Germany, France and United Kingdom.

To remedy low participation of women electors, India in 1994 established quotas in constitutional amendments (73rd & 74th) to reserve 33% of seats in local governments for women.

The Women’s Reservation Bill34 (108 amendment) has been introduced in the national parliament to reserve 33% of Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha seats for women. The bill yet to be passed by Lok Sabha. The
discussion of women’s reservations began in the 1920s and continued into the 1930s until a compromise was reached with Britain to allow women in urban areas to vote.

The women’s reservations were again introduced in 1974 by the United Nations Commission on the status of Women in India, but India did not fully establish quotas in local government until 1994. Local governing bodies in India are called Panchayati Raj institutions and one-third of seats and leadership positions are reserved for women. States such as Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Maharashtra, Orissa, Jharkhand, Tripura and Uttarakhand have increased reservation to 50%. The National Government has also proposed to raise the level of women’s reservations in PRIs to 50%. After the establishment of women’s reservations, political participation went from 4.5 to 25-40% among women, and many women got the opportunity to serve as leaders in local government. In Orissa an Indian state, they had 28,069 elected women in 1992 and 28,595 elected women in 1997.

The issue of training has become an increasing concern with preparing women for the role of leadership. In Tamil Nadu women have lack of education and training to understand the procedures in Panchayats.
Family also plays a significant role in women’s participation in government. Family can be barrier or support system for female elected officials in terms of connections. Family connections can help women seek elected positions at both the national and local government level. There has been concern over the role of women as proxies for male family members, but women may still have important effects on policy decisions.

Drinking water and road improvements are issues that are frequently raised by female elected officials. Women are likely to bring welfare issues such as violence against women, childcare, maternal health to consideration.

India has a multi-party system with 24 registered parties at the national level. Women involvement in Political Parities is tied to the increasing demand for equal rights. In 2009, the INC nominated a woman to become first speaker of Lok Sabha and they also supported the election of Pratibha-Patil India’s first female President. Some political parties have encouraged greater representation of women by developing women’s leadership programmes, financial assistance for women candidates and implementing a 33% reservation for women in party leadership positions.

Women support was observed on by issues such as the “Uniform Civil Code”, to extend equal rights to women and men regardless of religion.
Women’s participation in political parties remained low in 1990s it was 10.12%\(^3\)\(^6\) Indian women have also taken the initiative to form their own political parties and in 2007 the United Women Front Party was created, and demanded to increasing the reservation of seats for women in Parliament to 50%.

Women only govern India’s four political parties, From 1970s, 4.3% of candidates and 70% of electoral races had no women candidates at all. In 2013, it has been reported of the members of parliament 11% were women in Lok Sabha and 10.6% in Rajyasabha.

Gender inequality leading to deprivation of power among women continuous to be a political reality in India today. Women are excluded from decision-making at every step of the ladder, starting from the household to the top layer of policy making. Indian constitution attempts to remove gender inequalities based on sex and class and allotted fundamental rights for all citizens.

Comparison with the international level the level of women’s participation in political decision making in India is very low.

One of the key challenges faced by Indian women a lack of education which is a obstacle to their political involvement. This gap can be fulfilled by providing quality of education to women in the country.
Once women are appropriately educated they can be aware about their rights and privileges as mentioned in the constitution. The issue of gender based violence and provision of safety and security of women should also be addressed on a priority basis to promote gender equality in the social and political arenas. Although the Government of India has initiated the National Mission of Empowerment of women in 2014 with the broad objective of gender empowerment, the progress of this project is not reach up to the mark. It is thus imperative to strengthen its functioning and implementation. In addition, there is need for capacity building of prospective women leaders by imparting leadership training to the female members of political parties. Some women are entering into the political field with the support from their family (through their parents, husband relatives). Some of them are entering into the political field by their own capacity and talent.

High levels of political participation is one of the major tools in the political empowerment usually associated with democracy which is beneficial both to the individual and to the society.

Reservation is the need of the hour to attain political empowerment in India. Right from 1996, the women of India have been waiting for the clearance of the “Women’s Reservation Bill” that would give them one third reservation in Parliament and the State Legislatures.
The Bill was introduced several times since then but it is in the hand of men folk who dominated parliament and the state Legislatures with a more than ninety percent majority.

The role of women in the sphere of decision-making has so far been insignificant to have any kind of multiplier effect. Their members in formal decision-making bodies have not increased many times. Statistical report shows that there has been only a marginal increase in the last few decades in the number of women candidates fielded during the elections.

The number of women parliaments has never exceeded 15% of all seats. At the state level their percentage is also very low.

Women have been treated by the political parties as per their interest and gains. This is the result of less number of women candidates playing an active role in the field of politics during elections. Even the few women who are elected are sided by the other political members and often they are allotted soft portfolios, such as welfare, education etc. In both cases women are lack access and control over apex bodies where decisions and policies are formulated.

The Indian constitution guarantees to all women the fundamental right to equality and equal voting rights and political participating to both men and women. According to Preamble, the Indian Constitution is firmly
grounded in the principles of liberty, fraternity, equality and justice and contains a number of provisions for the empowerment of women.

Voting is a tool of political equality and it mobilizes women but voting by itself does not result in the desired end of equality. Therefore, the increase in electoral participation of women their representation in the formal political structures has must be changed.

The value of women’s representation in governance and decision making process depends in the diversity of experiences women will bring to governance. Comprehensive representation would be obtained if women constituting half the population find a proportionate number of seats in Government. The spirit of the womenhood has be explored and developed so that it can be serve the purpose of the country.
References


An Article by Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) www.sewa.org/services_child_care.asp.


NSCFDC = National Scheduled Caste Finance and Development Corporation. It is an institution under Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India for financing, facilitating and mobilizing funds for the economic empowerment living below double the poverty line – http://www.nsfdc.nic.in/


NSKFDC = National Safai Karmacharis Finance and Development Corporation. It was set up on 24th January 1997 undertaking under the Ministry of Social
Justice and Empowerment. It is playing a vital role in the elimination of manual scavenging. Apart from it, it operates various loan and non-loan based schemes for the upliftment of target groups. For more information, visit [http://www.nskfdc.nic.in/](http://www.nskfdc.nic.in/).

- [www.pradhanmantriyojna.co.in](http://www.pradhanmantriyojna.co.in)
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/women%27s_political_participation_in_India](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/women%27s_political_participation_in_India)
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All_India_Women%27s_conference](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All_India_Women%27s_conference)
- ibid.
- [https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/women%27s_political_participation_in_India](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/women%27s_political_participation_in_India)
- [https://factly.in/women-mps-in-lok-sabha-how-have-the-numbers-changed/](https://factly.in/women-mps-in-lok-sabha-how-have-the-numbers-changed)
- [https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/women%27s_Reservation_Bill](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/women%27s_Reservation_Bill)