

Chapter-VI

NEHRUVIAN LEADERSHIP AND THE WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA

“In the many other departments of life, fresh avenues should be opened out to them, so that in this vast complex of India, men and women should advance together to the great goals that we have set ourselves.”

Jawaharlal Nehru¹

Empowerment of women broadly signifies the process of giving more power to women and making them more self-reliant and independent, and free from male dominance. Empowerment is an active and multidimensional process which enables women to realize their full identity and powers in all spheres of life.² It could also be understood as the process of providing equal rights, opportunities, responsibilities and power positions to women so that they are able to play a role at par with men in society.³ The issue of women empowerment has become a popular area of discussion and study today, and it is being studied from various dimensions. The status of a woman can be improved and her empowerment can be achieved through various means like giving opportunities to them for education, employment and through participation in the decision making process of the country. Women’s contribution to the development of human society since the beginning of civilization is a well known fact and this shows that women were and are also equally capable like men in contributing towards the progress and development of society and nation. Jawaharlal Nehru had also pointed out that “throughout history and in the modern times as well, there have been women who

have earned a name for themselves by their work and spirit of service.”⁴ Traces of women empowerment is therefore noticeable in every phase of human history. Hence it is very important to empower women both in their personal lives and as members of society for the progress, development and enlightenment of the society.

However since the position and status of women in India as a whole, was not satisfactory, therefore the question of improving the status of woman had been taken up by the social reformers in the nineteenth century who carried on a relentless struggle to emancipate women from the age old bondage of social evils which had greatly undermined their position in the society. Social feminists argued that “women could bring a special knowledge of the household and family matters to forums where public policy was debated and formulated. This ideology fitted well with Gandhi’s view of women and the nationalist’s desire to bring women into the freedom movement.”⁵ So the emergence of Gandhi saw the new phase of women emancipation movement where women were called upon to leave their domestic household and come forward to participate shoulder to shoulder with their menfolk in the non-violent freedom movement. The participation of women in the freedom struggle movement constitutes one of the most remarkable facets of the Indian national movement.⁶ Gandhi was of the opinion that “women’s involvement would both uplift women and help solve India’s problems. As women worked for swaraj (self-government), their problems would disappear.”⁷ At Gandhi’s call, huge number of women actively participated in the national movement which showed that women also did not lag behind men in their fight against the British. At one instance when Sarojini Naidu was asked to lead the raid at Dharasana, and there were reservations from other Congress leaders about the inability

of her to take up the task because of the dangers that involved of she being a woman, Sarojini is said to have retorted by saying “the time had come when women must share equally the sufferings and sacrifice of their men comrades in the struggle for the liberation of their country.”⁸ Therefore “woman had thrown themselves whole-heartedly into the fight for political independence and had shown their finer capabilities and strength to suffer the tortures and privations of public life. Their participation in politics paved the way for their complete emancipation from traditional bondage.”⁹ So liberation from British rule and freedom from the oppressive social evils which had afflicted the women’s position for long became the twin goals of the struggle for women emancipation. Women emancipation issue was therefore clearly highlighted in the country’s freedom struggle. Apart from Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru was also very vocal about equality of sexes and their emancipation. Nehru emphasized upon women’s education and economic independence for the overall emancipation of women.

But today, women question is not just confined to the status and position of women in the society or their fight for equality with men in different aspects of human life leading to their emancipation. As Nehru aptly said, “every age has been an age of transition”¹⁰, so also the question of women issue has become more broad and wide ranging with its epicenter of discourse now shifting to the issue of women empowerment. Therefore now, one can see the shift in focus of studies from woman emancipation to woman empowerment which has become a popular theme. Giving more power to women would empower them and make them self reliant and they would contribute to the building of the society and nation. Women empowerment has therefore become the slogan of the day.

It is a well known fact that Jawaharlal Nehru was truly a great leader with a remarkable dynamic and charismatic personality and the contribution he made towards the development and upliftment of women of India is no doubt a well known fact. Nehru, being a man of action, not only always emphasized on the equality of men and women in all aspects of life, but also worked tirelessly towards achieving that goal. For him women's education which would lead to their empowerment was essential towards the developing of the nation and future. He had great faith and admiration for the Indian women and he was confident that a nation's progress depended on the women, for women are the ones who can mould and built the society and country. He believed that real and rapid progress in India would only come when the womenfolk would get really moving and rid themselves of everything that suppressed them and kept them back. His objective had always been a society based on equal rights and opportunities, and it was his utter devotion to his ideal that endeared him to millions of people not only in this country but all over the world.¹¹

This chapter would attempt to look into how far under Nehruvian leadership, women of India were empowered or their empowerment took place. It would try to see what efforts Nehru made or the initiative he took to give a better position and platform to the women of India so that they could be empowered in all fields of life and also contribute towards the building of a nation. Nehru always exhorted women to come forward in the task of nation building which meant a call for empowerment. In this chapter under Nehruvian leadership women progress and empowerment would be looked from two aspects, one concerning women empowerment of his women family members and the other would look into empowerment of women in general. In this

context, it may be mentioned that Nehru's attitude towards his mother Swarup Rani, played a vital role towards the development of his approach towards the women question. Being brought up in a mixed environment of old Hindu tradition of his mother and broad, westernized and cosmopolitan outlook of his father, Nehru developed a queer mixture of both. Though he did not believe in religion like his father who considered it to be a "womanish affair", yet Nehru did not ignore and underestimate the traditional values and religious practices observed by his mother. He had great respect and admiration for his uneducated and traditional mother, and while he was in England for seven years, he always looked upon and respected her love and concern towards him. Even when at times his mother used to pour out her grievances and fears in her letters to him, Nehru always responded to his mother with kindness and tact, but never rebuked or hurt her. This itself shows that a person who had high respect for his mother, would naturally respect every women and this was reflected in his dealings with his sisters, wife, daughter and women comrades and women in general.

Empowerment of women family members

Like every typical Indian family where the birth of a son is regarded to be a blessing from God and the son is treated with great love, affection, care, Nehru too who was the only son, meant everything to his parents. His youngest sister Krishna Nehru narrates enviously in her autobiography when Nehru came back from England after finishing his studies, how the whole house hustled and bustled with festivity, joy and eagerness for his arrival. She writes:

“Mama was wearing one of her prettiest saris, and so were the other ladies. The servants were in clean, long white saris, and so were the other ladies. The servants were in clean, long white shirts and baggy trousers, and some of them even wore the fitted white coats and turbans they used for formal dinners..... Almost exactly on time there was a great clatter of hooves and everybody poured out of the house to welcome Jawahar home..... Father in his superbly cut white breeches and polished boots on a big bay horse, roaring with happy laughter, and beside him a a slim, handsome young man..... he slipped out of the saddle throwing the reins to a groom, and ran lightly to hug my mother, lifting her right off the ground,”¹²

Such was the exclusive and aristocratic treatment of the only son in the family. But a liberal and broad-minded Nehru, was not a kind of person who took up this exclusive treatment for himself denying to his sisters their rights and privileges. His broad attitude towards every aspect of life had broadened his horizon towards his perception and treatment of women. He looked upon his women family members and relatives with great respect and honour and gave them every rights and privileges equal to that of a man. In fact empowerment of women could be seen first in Nehru’s family itself. By and large Nehru, never made any distinction with his women family members and, his only daughter Indira Gandhi, was brought up like a son and trained by Nehru in such a way that she reflected the image of Nehru himself.

Nehru’s younger sister Vijayalakshmi Pandit shared a very strong relation with her brother. Though Nehru’s father, Motilal Nehru was a champion of women’s rights, but to his own daughter he did not provide any formal education. He only provided opportunities for education at home under the able guidance of governesses and series of tutors. Therefore Vijaya Lakshmi always regretted of having missed the opportunity of going to school and college. Such had been the fate of Nehru’s sister. However, this lack of formal education did not serve as a barrier to the political activities of Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit and she rose and shined in her career contributing immensely to the

welfare of the country. Nehru also played an instrumental role in empowering his sister in her political career by entrusting her with duties and responsibilities especially with regard to foreign affairs where she had to represent the country on various occasions. This showed Nehru's faith and confidence in his sister's capability in steering India foreign relations in the required direction. It can be seen on various occasions how under Nehru's able guidance and leadership she got the opportunity to lead many delegations to foreign countries and play a leading role in projecting India to the outside world.

After her husband Ranjit Pandit's death, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, in order to keep away from the grief of her husband's death, engaged herself in working in the famine stricken areas of Bengal in 1943, after which she got an opportunity to go to America on a lecture tour to speak about actual conditions in India. Vijaya Lakshmi by her forceful and powerful oratory, was successful in drawing attention of the Americans to the situation of India and the aspirations of the Indians for freedom for which she received warm enthusiasm and publicity from them. Nehru was then lodged in the Ahmadnagar Fort and whatever news Nehru could follow of his sister's activities in the US was through the brief accounts which appeared occasionally in the press and some of the letters Vijaya Lakshmi wrote to him. Nehru, being a very well learned intellectual, rationalist and an internationalist was a far-sighted leader and he tried to mould Vijaya Lakshmi in the same line by explaining to her the importance of international conferences and how her participation would enrich her world horizon and also help her to place India on a better position. Therefore the letters he replied to his sister were sort of encouragement and guidance to help her understand the world affairs

better, and be able to play an effective role in successfully presenting India to the outside world. In one of the letters, trying to clear the misconception of Vijaya Lakshmi that “these conferences do not decide anything important or solve any of the world problems”¹³, he tried to make her understand that the conferences would provide her a platform to meet earnest and intelligent people representing various viewpoints, and discussing current problems with them and trying to understand what they are aiming at, would help her to develop a wider and more tolerant outlook. Therefore he tried to convince her that, in this way her going to these international conferences would help her to develop a wider outlook and look at India’s problems in the context of other problems.¹⁴

Another letter which he wrote to her on 20th March 1945 reveals his sense of pride in his sister’s achievements where he wrote:

“I am glad you feel you are doing well in America. It is evident from such accounts as we have received that you have been creating a good impression. That does not surprise me in the least for I was sure of it. Everywhere personality counts for more than other qualities and you have plenty of that rather undefinable substance.”¹⁵

Encouraging his sister Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit further on her lecture tour to the US, he wrote:

“It is necessary for our people to go abroad, to learn from and understand others and thus to help in breaking down the barriers of the mind which separates different peoples. So we must travel and observe and make friends everywhere and thereby grow in stature ourselves.....I do not see any particular reason why you should hurry back to India in the near future. So carry on where you are.....”¹⁶

Nehru while at Bareilly Central Prison, even though he received fragmentary accounts of his sister’s wanderings in the US, expressed with happiness and pride to Vijaya Lakshmi’s daughters who were then studying in Wellesley in U.S, at the success

and achievements of their mother wherever she went and that she had developed into a 'forceful and moving speaker'.¹⁷

Jawaharlal Nehru involved his sister Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit in all political matters and under his able guidance and leadership, she was able to make a distinct mark in all spheres of her political life. In Aug 1945, when the Government of India announced there would be a general election the following year, Nehru as he had been in correspondence with his sister in New York since his release from prison, wrote to her to come home immediately to take part in the elections, which would be held in January 1946. She came back immediately to be with her brother and was also able win the elections unopposed like many other Congress candidates and given charge of her former portfolios.

As Minister of Local Self-Government, when Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit had been working hard for the the Gaon Panchayat Bill¹⁸ to bring self-government to every village in Uttar Pradesh, at that point of time she was recalled to Delhi by Nehru through Sir Girija Shankar Bajpai from the Ministry of External Affairs to lead a strong delegation to the U.N. This again shows Nehru's strong faith and confidence in his sister's ability to lead and represent the country to the U.N. as the head of the delegation.

Under Nehru's leadership, India was entering into a new phase of international relations with the various countries of the world. He was wise enough to empower his sister Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit to lead the first delegation to the U.N and under his leadership and guidance she was able to project India's problems to the world in a very

befitting manner which won the support and applause of many countries. Vijaya Lakshmi describes in her autobiography how they were briefed by Nehru before leaving for the U.N . She writes:

“He reminded us that we were inheritors of the high traditions of Mahatma Gandhi and that this tradition was an ethical and moral one..... He reminded us of India’s total acceptance of the U.N. Charter and her determination to work with other member nations to make it a reality..... He told us that in order to function effectively we had to keep ourselves acquainted with what was going on in the world, to stay clear of rival power blocs, and try to ease the tension that such blocs generated. This, then, was our brief on that first occasion.”¹⁹

Guided by Nehru’s advice, Vijaya Lakshmi effectively highlighted in the UN session the case India brought against South Africa. She protested against the denial of human rights to Indians in that country and the Asiatic Land Tenure Act and Indian Representation Act, otherwise known as the Ghetto Act²⁰, which challenged the dignity and self-respect of the Indians. Nayantara Sahgal, daughter of Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, who had accompanied her mother to the UN session witnessed and narrated Vijaya Lakshmi’s handling of the issue in the UN in her book *Prison and Chocolate Cake*. She mentions how majority of nations rose to support her mother in condemning the treatment of Indians in South Africa.

“In the debate that followed, the nations rallied to India’s defence. Poland asserted that the case was parallel of the way the Nazis had treated the Poles. China said that the Asiatic Land Tenure Act was a measure of discrimination not only against Indians, but against all Asians. These and other nations not directly involved in the issue had no parallel difficulties of their own and nothing at stake, yet gave their support as a matter of principle, as the only right and honourable attitude possible in the circumstances.”²¹

During the debate, both Vijaya Lakshmi and Field Marshal Smuts spoke calmly and with restraint. But, Heaton Nicols, Law Minister of South Africa poured heat into the discussion by accusing India of treating her own Harijans (untouchables) badly than

the Indians in South Africa. He further went on to tell that that “South Africa was upholding a Christian civilization in a dark continent inhabited by polygamous races.”²²

However Vijaya Lakshmi delighted the House by retorting to the remarks of Heaton Nichols by saying, “I was not aware that polygamy, whether sanctioned by law or otherwise, was confined to the East. As for a Christian civilization, I continued, were Jesus Christ himself to visit South Africa, he would be treated as a “prohibited Immigrant”.”²³

In the last phase of debate, which was exciting for the General Assembly as a whole, when the final voting was to take place on December 7, Vijaya Lakshmi said:

“I ask no favors for India...no concession for the Indian population of South Africa. I ask for the verdict of this Assembly on a proven violation of the Charter, on an issue which has led to acute dispute between two member states; on an issue which is not confined to India or South Africa, and finally on an issue the decision of which must make or mar the loyalty and confidence which the common people of the world have placed on us. Mine is an appeal to a conscience, the conscience of the world, which this Assembly is.”²⁴

The resolution was passed by two thirds majority and it was an Asian victory. In an excited and proud mood Vijaya Lakshmi told the press that “We are grateful to our Asian and African friends through whose help this victory has been possible-it is shared by us all.”²⁵ But as Field Marshall Smuts had foreseen and remarked to Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit that she had won a hollow victory, which came out to be true later when the Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act became apartheid.

However, inspite of this failure, it can be seen that Vijaya Lakshmi’s astute handling of the situation and her speech in the Assembly stirred many people there and back home. Nehru had emphatically empowered his sister to lead such a high delegation

to UN and under his leadership she did prove that woman were equal with man in terms of discharging efficiently various kinds of duties. Nehru had chosen Vijaya Lakshmi for the UN not on account of she being his sister, but because he had observed her while she had been in the U.S.A on lecture tours, that she had grown in mind, in outlook, in self-assurance and her capacities had greatly developed in the favourable atmosphere there. So therefore, Nehru's confidence in Vijaya Lakshmi's capability in handling the intricate matter in the U.N. was assured and accordingly he empowered a woman to take up the prestigious job.

Nehru's motivating attitude towards his sister Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit perhaps boosted her morale and ability to further carry on with her diplomatic missions and other political activities successfully. Nehru as an elder brother and as a leader and Prime Minister of the country, had a direct bearing on Vijaya Lakshmi and under his able leadership, she confidently and efficiently discharged her duties for which Nehru always acknowledged her. On the lecture to America, Nehru wrote to her sister on 24th July, 1945 while he was holidaying in Kashmir:

"You know that your work in the States has been very greatly appreciated here by all kinds of people. You have done a splendid job, as perhaps no one else could have done in the circumstances. The immediate consequences of what you have done may not be obvious but I am sure that the remoter consequences will be considerable."²⁶

The words of Nehru did come out true as Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit stated for herself, "It is also correct to say that my American experience paved the way for the later role I played on the international stage as leader of the Indian delegation to the United Nations and as an Ambassador of India abroad."²⁷ Similarly, she was also chosen by Nehru for an ambassadorship to Washington, but since Maulana Azad had been keen

on appointment of Asaf Ali, Nehru decided to send her to Moscow. Though she had doubts about assuming such a responsible role, especially at the time when the eyes of the world was on newly independent India, it again showed Nehru's faith and confidence in the capability of his sister to lead India's first mission abroad and help him in the special task of creation of future of the newly born nation.

It could also be seen that Nehru never made any distinction with his sisters and treated them at par with him which can be truly reflected in his dealing with his father's property. Nehru did not consider himself to be the sole proprietor of his father's property. He considered his mother and sister Krishna as equal co-partners in the share of their father's property. Therefore, in one of the letters written to Krishna Nehru on 21.02.31, fully empowering Krishna Nehru to take care of their father's property he wrote:

"Technically, in law, I suppose, I am the heir of his property. But my own inclination is against inheriting property or at any rate living on inherited property or at any rate living on inherited or unearthened increment..... However, I can only consider myself as a joint sharer in father's property, the other sharers being mother and you. I am not including Nan as she stands in no need of money. I would like you, therefore, to consider yourself as an equal sharer with mother and me of father's property. Indeed, mother and you are the real sharers. I am a trustee for the family property."²⁸

Ranjit Pandit, husband of Vijaya Lakshmi had died without leaving a will for his wife and daughters. According to Ranjit's father's will the joint property could only descend to male issues of Pratap²⁹ and Ranjit. So Ranjit's share of the property went to the son's of Pratap, younger brother of Ranjit Pandit and Vijaya Lakshmi and her three daughters were devoid of everything, except a bit of Ranjit's personal property. For that also, Vijaya Lakshmi had to go through all the hassles of legal formalities. This was the

Hindu law which existed those days as Vijaya Lakshmi herself wrote, “As the widow of a man who died intestate and was a member of a joint Hindu family, and because I had no ‘offspring’ meaning son, I was not entitled to any part of the joint immovable property.”³⁰ Nehru had been very distressed at the ordeal which his sister had to go through and in one of the letters he wrote to Indira he said, “Just because Ranjit was careless about making a will, full advantage is sought to be taken of a strict interpretation of the law—a pound of flesh business.”³¹ Having seen the plight of his sister and many other Hindu women under the existing Hindu law then, Nehru carried on a relentless struggle to ensure that Hindu women also get a share of their father’s or husband’s property. Ultimately after independence, after several hurdles, he was able to get the Hindu Code Bill passed. One of the clause of the Bill related to Hindu Succession Act (1955), which now gave women equal rights of inheritance to the ancestral property.

Empowerment of his only daughter Indira Nehru began right from her childhood days. Indira spent most of her formative years in loneliness and seclusion as her parents and other family members were often in jail due to the political struggle in the country. But Nehru treated his daughter like a son, with utmost care and affection and gave her lessons about history, about the ways and philosophy of life through the incessant letters which he wrote from prison. It was in a way a kind of training to Indira to become independent, outgoing and empowering her to be a strong-willed, determined woman, who would one day follow his footsteps and lead the country as he did. After Kamala Nehru’s death in 1936, Nehru left his eighteen year old daughter behind in Europe as he believed that European education “would give her the strength and the independence of

mind which were necessary in order to play a role in public life in India.”³² Had Nehru been parochial and a male chauvinist, perhaps the upbringing of Indira would have been different and perhaps she would not have been able to achieve the heights of glorious leadership as she did later on. But Nehru a broad-minded person had a dream to make Indira a prominent figure in the public life of the country and wanted her to play an active role in the building of India, which can be seen in one of the letters which he wrote to her:

“Many years ago I used to dream that when you grow up, you also would play a brave part in what is called public life in India, to shoulder this heavy burden, to help in putting brick upon brick in the building of the India of our dreams. And I wanted you to train and fit yourself in body and mind for this engrossing task.”³³

Evidently, it shows that Nehru was training his daughter mentally, uplifting her spirits to empower her to play a leading role in the nation building process and paving the way to making her a leader of the country in the future. Nehru, therefore acted as a guide, a philosopher a mentor to his daughter and played a key role in her mental and emotional make-up, and though being a daughter treated her like his son and the empowerment of Indira was visible in many aspects of her political and social life of India. Right since her childhood, Indira had been exposed by her father to various environment. He often took her to meet eminent personalities of the world along with him. Though Indira was young then, but still she would listen to the conversations and discussions with great zeal and interest. He wanted his daughter to be educated, well read, well travelled, well exposed which would help her to train her mind in the wider understanding of life and the meaning of life and events that was essential for any big work. Nehru’s broad-mindedness, eclecticism was clearly visible in his upbringing of

his daughter which in the long way empowered her to reach the heights of glory which Nehru had dreamt for her.

However, decision to get married with Feroze Gandhi while Nehru was in Dehra Dun jail had dashed to the grounds to some extent Nehru's dream he had for his daughter. In a letter which he wrote to Indira, he poured out his innermost feelings on the question of her marriage and the innumerable dreams and plans he had for her after her studies:

"I have thought about you and your life and future ever since you were a child. I have made innumerable plans about you; I have thought again and again how to help in making you a person who can face life and its problems serenely and with confidence; who can make good in any department of activity that you might take up..... What I was most interested in was your bodily and mental development, keeping pace and harmony with your emotional development and thus creating and building up what is called an integrated human being. Once that is achieved or partly achieved it does not much matter what one does or who one marries, for one's choice comes out of a well-regulated and ordered scheme of the body, mind and emotions.

I had hoped that after your formal education at a university was completed, you might supplement it by some travel in various countries..... I wanted you to go to Russia to see things there for yourself. This background of mental training and intellectual experience and knowledge would just be the foundation on which you would build your future life and growth.

Then with this background of mental training and wider culture I expected you to return to India and discover the fascinating thing that is India, in this task I wanted to help you personally and I expected you to help me somewhat also. There are very few persons in India, I think who could give effective help not only in public life but almost for any activity, other than technical, better than I could. Hundreds and thousands of young men and girls have wanted to serve with me as secretaries or in some way to get this training. I have never encouraged anyone and have shouldered my burdens alone for I had always imagined you to occupy that niche. Till you come, that niche had better be left empty. No one else could take your place"³⁴

So Nehru though he wanted Indira to marry and lead her own life, but before that he had wanted to give Indira some kind of training which would help her to stand in good stead in later life. Due to Indira's stubborn insistence and obduracy to get married with Feroze Gandhi, Nehru had to finally yield and marriage between Indira and Feroze

was finally solemnized in March 1942. Two months after her marriage to Feroze, she actively took part in the Quit India Movement, and this marked her appearance in the political affairs of the country which paved her road to leadership. She had her first experience of jail going which she vividly narrates in her autobiography *My Truth*, and this brought her to the limelight of the national struggle. Nehru's influence on her political thinking and his desire to see her grow to be a leader was being gradually fulfilled.

In the later phase of life, it could be seen that marital discords between Feroze and Indira surfaced which made Indira align more towards her father. Though her marriage was affected, yet on the other hand she managed to make a distinct mark in public life as her father had dreamt of it and had trained her accordingly. By and large, it can be seen that Indira was sufficiently empowered enough to play a remarkable role in the Congress party and in the affairs of the country. Nehru was in fact training and inculcating in Indira the leadership virtues which would thoroughly empower her to be a leader and a great statesman.

With India's independence, in August 1947, Indira was drawn into a new journey of life. She became involved in a new and wide ranging field of activities, which grew considerably with the years. Apart from acting as a hostess to Nehru in Teen Murti House, the official residence of the Prime Minister, she actively participated in many meetings, accompanied her father to foreign trips which widely broadened her network and gave her valuable insights and wide experience of politics, men and world affairs. Under her efficient direction and supervision, the Nehru household was

managed with thrift and discipline. In Teen Murti, Indira became involved in the politics of government that she was able to develop a keen political insight in a short period of time and was able to carve a place for herself in the political power structure. Michael Brecher described her as ‘the Mrs Woodrow Wilson of India’.

It may be also pointed out that, though Nehru had a great hand in moulding and nurturing the life of Indira and had played a great role in making her an independent and empowered woman, but Indira made her image as a leader in Indian politics by her own dint and merit and not owing to her position as the daughter of Prime Minister. When Indira was made President of the Indian National Congress in 1959, there were rumours that he had been grooming her for the post. In one of the interview, Nehru strongly denied the fact by saying:

“I am certainly not grooming her for anything of the sort. That does not mean she should not be called to occupy any position of responsibility after me. It is well known that I did not groom her or help her in any way to become the Congress President, but she did, and I am told by people who do not like me or my policies that she made a very good President. Sometimes she chose a line of her own against my way of thinking, which was the right thing to do, but what I point out is the fact that I did not choose her or groom her for that high post, probably the highest post in the country. The people chose her. The Congress did so.... In fact, for sometime I was mentally opposed to the idea, but she was chosen and we worked more like normal political colleagues than a father-daughter combination. We agreed on some things. We differed on others. Indira has a strong independent mind of her own, as she should have”³⁵

The broad upbringing of Indira by Nehru and the sense of adventure, fearlessness, a live curiosity and an insightful mind inculcated in Indira by him truly led to her empowerment and Indira became an embodiment of her father’s hopes and aspirations.

Empowerment of women in general

A person with such broad and rational outlook, whose attitude towards his women family members were marked by a high sense of respect and dignity, the same attitude was reflected in Nehru's outlook and treatment towards other women in general too. Nehru not only stood for the empowerment of his women family members, but also for the empowerment of the women of India. Nehru had high regard for Indian womanhood and he greatly appreciated and admired the role played by women by standing shoulder to shoulder with men in the fight for India's freedom which symbolized that the women had "shamed many a person who called himself a man, and they proclaimed to the world that the women of India have arisen from their long slumber and would not be denied their rights."³⁶ This also signified to Nehru that women were already on the path to empowerment. Moreover, Nehru was of the opinion that if women took full part in the struggle for political freedom then "they will reach a stage inevitably in the country, which would make it terribly difficult for their menfolk to be obstructive as before. They would gain a position in the public life of the country from which it would not be possible to remove them."³⁷ Therefore Nehru's broad views of human relationship, his attitude towards women which had been moulded especially by his mother and wife, played a key role in his attempt to empower the women of India.

In order to make women aware of their rights and encourage them to feel that they were not inferior to men at any level, Nehru was always seen highlighting in his speeches and writings the significant role women could play in all spheres of human life

and contribute to the building of a society and nation. This would ultimately lead to their emancipation and help them to empower themselves. Later on through his policies as the leader of the biggest democracy in Asia, he had endeavoured to carve out the new identity of women as full-blooded human beings.³⁸ Women in general were also greatly fascinated and charmed by Nehru's leadership and an extraordinary relationship had evolved and grown over the years between women and Nehru- a relationship which was based on profound faith and confidence in each other.

As Nehru always exhorted women to make themselves self-reliant and empower themselves so that they could compete with men in all fields of life, in one of the demands raised by Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddi, President of women's organization, on the issue that women should take part in the various political and other bodies and committees, in the country, Nehru said in a meeting in Madras on October 6, 1936, that

“So far as Congress is concerned I should very much like, I would welcome, more and more women occupying prominent positions in committees and boards and its executives. So far as the Congress constitution is concerned, it not only welcomes but encourages women to come in. There are not very many women at the present moment occupying seats of authority in the Congress Party..... If the women ask and are really keen about it and push ahead, you are bound to get it because there is a strong body of public opinion behind you. Men would also welcome this. I hope your push will have such strength that it will become very difficult for men to refuse your demands.”³⁹

However Nehru also took steps to put his ideals into practice. He not just spoke for the empowerment of women but also took initiative to empower them which was evident on many occasions. One instance which proved that he really worked towards giving women a place of dignity in the society was evident in one of the item drafted in the election manifesto in 1936 which related to the welfare of the women which read as follows:

“The Congress has already declared that it stands for the removal of all sex disabilities, whether legal or social, in any sphere of public activity. It has expressed itself in favour of maternity benefits and the protection of women workers. The women of India have already taken a leading part in the freedom struggle, and the Congress looks forward to their sharing, in an equal measure with the men of India, the privileges and the obligations of citizens of a free India.”⁴⁰

Jawaharlal Nehru became Prime Minister after India’s independence on Aug 15, 1947. The tasks that lay before Nehru to build up and reconstruct a new India were full of challenges. But Nehru dealt with all the problems with great tact and alacrity and was able to build a new image of India and one aspect of its problem related to giving a rightful and dignified place to women in the society. Nehru had been seen right from his early years giving high regard to women and during pre-independence period, Nehru was seen exhorting women to come forward and fight against the legal disabilities which had bound them and emphasized on the economic emancipation of women as a pre-condition for their empowerment. Naturally after independence, one of the main aspects of Nehru’ policy was dedicated for the cause of women and their empowerment and he did not hesitate to give women their rightful place in the society, and treated them as co-partners along with men in every aspect of life. At the stroke of midnight on 14 August 1947, after Jawaharlal Nehru made his famous speech about India having tryst with destiny in the Constituent Assembly, then on behalf of women of India, Hansa Mehta and other women members presented the tricolor flag with the emblem of the Ashoka Chakra to the President of the Constituent Assembly, Dr Rajendra Prasad. Renuka Ray commenting on the occasion wrote, “it was in the fitness of things that Indian women who had courageously fought side by side with men in the freedom struggle were represented in this symbolic way.”⁴¹

According to Padmini Sengupta, “One of the miracles of free India is the perfect trust given to the woman, which has considerably raised her status and removed the inferiority complex which has pursued her since the tenth century.”⁴² In her article, “Our own Times,” included in Tara Ali Baig (ed), *Women Of India*, Hannah Sen remarked that “it was only when India gained her political freedom and emerged as an Independent Sovereign Republic that women truly came into their own as equal partners with men.”⁴³ That under Nehru’s leadership, progress of women was visible can be made out from the reference of Bimla Luthra, who acknowledging Nehru for the improvement of the status of women of India stated :

“Having been a teacher now for over thirty years, I have watched two generations of girls grow up and pass out of college. When I see the difference between their life and ours when we were their age, I realize what a great debt we owe to Nehru. From the days when we could not stir out of the house unescorted-our heads covered with a veil and our eyes glued to the road-to the present when girls move about freely, self-assured and confident, women have come a long way. The comparative ease with which we have travelled thus far is a tribute to Nehru’s vision.”⁴⁴

Nehru’s constant effort at championing the cause of women and the sincere feeling that women must work side by side with man endowed women with confidence and prepared them for the important new role they were to play in a new India conceived by Nehru. First thing Nehru did without any hesitation for women after independence, was the involvement of women in the important task of framing the Constitution of India. This showed the keen interest he took “that women should be equal partners with men in this heavy responsibility and share in making provisions which would ensure an equitable treatment and an honoured place in the new emergent India.”⁴⁵ Aruna Asaf Ali also echoing on the same line wrote:

“After the declaration of independence in 1947, women in India did not sink back into the sheltered precincts of their hearths and homes. Several distinguished women were elected to the Constituent Assembly and took an active and intelligent part in the framing of the Constitution of free India. Sarojini Naidu, Hansa Mehta, Durgabai Deshmukh, Renuka Ray, Purnima Banerjee are some of the names that occur to me of women who suffered imprisonment and were also competent to belong to the fraternity of the makers of India’s first Constitution.”⁴⁶

Incidentally prior to independence, Nehru had already taken up the cause of women when in 1931 under his behest the Karachi session passed a resolution on Fundamental rights, which clearly declared, “there should be no disqualification on the ground of sex in exercise of any public function.”⁴⁷ According to Nehru this signified for the women “the recognition of their equal status and civic rights which women of England had to carry on with great bitterness for generations before they succeeded.”⁴⁸ This made it clear that he laid special emphasis on the rights of women and their empowerment. Since then Nehru took such active interest for the empowerment of women that Hansa Mehta, who was also one of the member of the Fundamental Rights Committee remarked, “because he was the architect of modern India and in modern India he wanted women to play an important role.”⁴⁹

Apparently Nehru had sowed the seeds of women empowerment prior to independence itself and women were already heading towards their own empowerment. For instance, in the 1937 elections to the provinces, where the Congress formed the government, 56 women had entered the legislatures and the majority of women who won the seats were Congress candidates. They were given prominent positions in the government. Anusuyabai Kale was appointed Deputy Speaker in the Central Province, Rukmini Lakshmi pati became Minister in the Madras Cabinet and Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, sister of Jawaharlal Nehru was made as Minister of Local Self-Government and

Public Health in the United Provinces. Again in 1938 a National Planning Committee had been set up under the Chairmanship of Jawaharlal Nehru and one of the Sub-Committee was charged with examining the role of woman in the planned economy of India. Rani Lakshmi Rajwade was the President and Mridula Sarabhai, the Secretary of the Committee. On the basis of the Karachi Congress of 1931, it resolved that:

“In a planned society, women’s place shall be equal to that of man; equal status, equal opportunities and equal responsibilities were to be the guiding principles to regulate the status of woman in the society. Second, women were not to be excluded from any sphere of work merely on the ground of her sex. Third, marriage was not to be a pre-condition to the enjoyment of full and equal civic status, of social and economic rights by women. Fourth, the state was to consider the individual as the basic social unit and plan accordingly.”⁵⁰

Apart from this, the sub-committee also made other revolutionary recommendations, which touched almost every aspect of woman’s life, like women should have right to vote, to represent, and to hold public office, on same terms as man, legalization on abortion for population control, enactment of Civil Marriage Act so as to enable any two persons above the age of majority to be married without any declaration in regard to religion. It also recommended that monogamy should be the law of the land, right of divorce was to be recognized. Co-education was to be promoted and the teaching staff was to include both men and women and equal pay for equal work should be granted. The sub-committee also recommended a uniform civil code to all citizens of India though some Muslim members of the committee wanted this code to be optional. The status and role Nehru accorded to the women of India in the planned economy reflected his liberal ideas and his vision of India as a strong developed nation, and it could be seen that almost all these recommendations made by the sub-committee was given due importance by Nehru and most of the proposals were enacted and

implemented during his Prime Ministership which truly reflected his humanist spirit for the cause and empowerment of women of India.

So, the Constitution which was framed in 1949 underlined provision for granting equality to women by laying down that the state shall not deny to any person equality before law (Article 14) and shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds of class, caste, religion or sex (Article 15). Article 16 provided that there shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State. The Directive Principles of State Policy provided for free and compulsory education for all children till the age of fourteen, equal right of men and women to an adequate means of livelihood, equal pay for equal work for both men and women. Though the Directive Principles are non-justiciable, yet it led to the establishment of a just, equal and humane society. Thus Nehru a practical statesman did strive hard to give women its rightful place in the society which would lead towards their empowerment and whatever provision relating to women equality as enshrined in the Constitution, was given due importance by him

On one occasion Amrit Kaur had drawn the attention of Nehru to the Home Ministry's government notification about emergency recruitment scheme, published on 12 June 1948, which stated: "Women are not eligible for appointment to the Indian Administrative Service and Indian Police Service"⁵¹. Nehru in a letter dated 15 June 1948 acknowledged Amrit Kaur for the information and wrote that he himself was "personally in favour of the bar being removed and women being allowed to join the home service."⁵² Previously also, Nehru had issued orders that women could join the

Foreign Service. “On 17th July 1948, the Government notified that women were eligible for I.A.S. and I.P.S. and the last date for submission of applications under the emergency recruitment scheme was extended from 5 July to 1 August 1948.”⁵³ This shows the importance Nehru gave to women empowerment and it was due to his initiative and bold effort that women could now appear for the Civil Service exams and compete at par with men.

“No aspect of women’s capacity to rise to full stature as human being came out more clearly than in politics”⁵⁴ Since Nehru was of the view that the major path to women’s empowerment was political participation and that increased decision making power would lead to women’s empowerment, so he did not want women to lag behind men in the politics of the country and wanted women to contest elections and participate fully in the decision making process of the country. The adult franchise, granted to women by Article 326 of the Constitution of India, did much to remove sex discrimination and brought them at par with men.⁵⁵ In many of the elections manifestos, speeches, he made it a point that in every part of the Legislatures, women were well represented.⁵⁶

In an election manifesto prepared by Nehru in 1951, highlighting the significant role women ought to play he wrote:

“The women of India in the past, and especially in the struggle for the country’s freedom have played a notable part and distinguished themselves in many ways. They suffer, however, from a number of social and other disabilities. It is important that these disabilities should be removed so that they may take their full part in the economic and social progress of the country and make their special contribution to the life of the family and the community. In particular, they have to be intimately connected with all activities of social welfare and social education. Women are more responsible even than men for the next generation, and unless they are enabled to participate fully in all national activities, the progress of the nation suffers. The Congress is

therefore of opinion that every effort should be made to open out opportunities of service for them in the legislatures and in social activities.”⁵⁷

Again writing on the choice of candidate to the Chairman, Election Committees on 19th September 1951, he made a point on women also wherein he stated:

“I have often laid stress on women being made our candidates. I am told that suitable women candidates are rare. I am surprised to learn this, and I am inclined to think that this is a man-made reason. We must remember that there will be large numbers of women voters who would normally prefer a woman candidate. In any event, we should try to put up women candidate. I would suggest as a rough measure, that a woman might be set up from each district.”⁵⁸

Evidently as women had fought shoulder to shoulder with men in the country’s freedom struggle, so consequently the advent of independence and the promulgation of the Constitution in 1950, brought women at par with men and they were given equal rights to participate in the political and decision making process of the country. “For the first time in history India adopted universal adult suffrage which placed women politically on a par with men and ended the 50 years old struggle for equal political rights.”⁵⁹ The constitutional guarantee of providing equality to women, thus played an instrumental role in making women conscious of their political rights and certainly ensured their full participation in the shaping and sharing of power, and post independent period witnessed emergence of significant number of women legislators, Parliamentarians and women occupying high and dignified posts in the country and abroad. Aruna Asaf Ali also remarked, “.....in every successive election to Parliament, State Legislatures, municipalities and panchayats women have played an active part by campaigning for progressive candidate and in many instances succeeding in getting elected.”⁶⁰ Though the number of women who took an active part in politics

and holding high offices was not very high, but their capability and competence in political and administrative matters has been well recognized.

As Tara Ali Baig stated: “When the first general elections were held in 1952, masses of women took advantage of their new status and exercised their vote with discretion and enthusiasm, fully justifying their country’s faith.”⁶¹ The First General Elections of 1952 saw both men and women come forward in huge number to exercise their vote and “millions of women also went to polls. It was without doubt the biggest electorate in human history.”⁶² Not only this, during this election it was seen, that women did not lag behind and they campaigned vigorously their huge constituencies like their male counterparts. So “the first General Election of independent India proved the tremendous interest women showed in the democratic method of electing their leaders.”⁶³ Men were outnumbered by women in many polling booths. Women entered the polling booths with babies in their arms.⁶⁴ The enthusiasm showed by women for elections led Lakshmi Menon to remark: “To the ignorant, it was a great occasion having a religious significance. In many places women took off their shoes as they would when they entered a place of worship and cast their ballot papers in great reverence.”⁶⁵ Incidentally many women also contested against other women in the elections. Both in the 1952 and 1957 elections from New Delhi the chief candidates for the Lok Sabha were two women, Sucheta Kripalini and Manmohini Sahgal, although the latter withdrew her nomination in the last elections. In the First General Elections twenty-three women were elected to the Lok Sabha and nineteen were nominated. In both the Houses women proved their worth by being able to adept themselves in parliamentary procedures which led them to contribute not only in the field of social

legislation, which was always the chief concern of the legislators, but in a wide range of issues from defence to finance.⁶⁶ For instance Violet Alva, Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Home Affairs actively participated in the debates on defence. Renu Chakravarty who was skilled in trade union matters often spoke powerfully on the subject in the House. Dr. Seeta Parmanand looked into all aspects of vital social legislation, particularly the controversial Inheritance Bill. Jaishri Raiji and Uma Nehru were involved with reforms and expansion of co-operative movement. The subject of unemployment and cottage industries were taken up by Indira Mayadeo. Tarkeshwari Sinha was adept in the field of finance and commerce and worked with great zeal. During this elections, three women came into prominence as parliamentarians.⁶⁷ Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, the first Cabinet Minister got the Health portfolio, Margatham Chandrasekhar became the Deputy Minister and was also one of the Congress Party Secretary. Lakshmi Menon, however, was made a Parliamentary Secretary for the first five years of Parliament's life and subsequently remained as Deputy Minister for External Affairs under Jawaharlal Nehru who was also Foreign Minister, till 1967.⁶⁸

Since women were to assume the new role of governing the country and successful functioning of the democracy, initiative was also taken to impart training to women in Parliamentary techniques. Indira Gandhi, who then headed the women's wing of the Indian National Congress took the lead to organize legislator's seminars. Lakshmi Menon, the Deputy Minister of External Affairs and one who was well known for her work at the United Nations Commission on Status of Women, and Sucheta Kripalini greatly assisted in organizing these seminars which were also addressed by Jawaharlal Nehru.⁶⁹ In the 1957 elections 27 women were elected to the Lok Sabha

and 23 in the Upper House. The new prominent women faces in the Parliament included Renuka Ray, Violet Alva, Parvati Krishnan.

Apart from this women also made significant presence in the State Legislatures and ministries too. Dr, Sushila Nayar became the Health Minister in the Delhi State and Speaker in the Delhi State Assembly successively. Renuka Ray who was Minister of Rehabilitation in the Government of West Bengal, was given the arduous charge of handling the refugees from East Pakistan. In Assam, Usha Borthakar was made the Deputy Minister of Social Welfare, Rural Development and Maternity and Child Welfare. Bihar which was considered to be a “backward province” had 32 women legislators in the State Assembly and two Deputy Ministers. Similarly many other states too had fair number of women legislators and ministers.

Tara Ali Baig, while giving an account of the performance of women in the 1962 elections wrote:

“In the elections of 1962, many more women than before, 34, were elected to the House of the People, the highest number so far, with 12 in the Upper House. Dr. Soundaram Ramachandran became Deputy Minister of Education, Maragatham Chandrasekhar, Deputy Minister, Home and Tarakeshwari Sinha, Finance. Ministers of State for this period were Lakshmi Menon, External Affairs and Dr. Sushila Nayar, Health.”⁷⁰

Apart from this, there were women who held other top level posts. Sarojini Naidu became Governor of Uttar Pradesh from August 1947 till her death on February 20th, 1949. Padmaja Naidu also remained Governor of West Bengal for nine years. In Bombay, Vijayalakshmi Pandit was Governor for five years. Sucheta Kripalaini remained the Chief Minister of a vast, complex state of Uttar Pradesh from 1964 to

1967. In 1952, Violet Alva served as Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha, the first and the only woman to have held that post.⁷¹ Again in 1957, Nehru brought Violet Alva as Deputy Home Minister into his Ministry.⁷²

Rameshwari Nehru, one of the members of Nehru's extended family also held important position during Nehru's Premiership and she was also able to raise the prestige of India at the international level. She led a 12 member delegation to participate in the World Conference for Relaxation of International Tension held in June 1954 at Stockholm. Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlew, President of the All India Peace Council was so inspired by her address to the plenary session that he said to her, "Bravo! You swayed over the whole conference." She was President of the Indian Association for Afro-Asian Solidarity movement. She guided the movement with distinction till her last. She had left a rich legacy of solidarity with all oppressed people. It was due to her guidance that there still exists in India and several other countries united peace and solidarity organization.

It has already been mentioned earlier, Vijayalakshmi Pandit also served in various capacities representing India abroad. She was India's first Ambassador to Moscow and Washington and also became High Commissioner in London She was also made leader of the Indian delegation to the United Nations.

Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, the Health Minister under Nehru's Cabinet also proved the worth of her position. Appreciating the wonderful work done by Amrit Kaur as Health Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru paying tribute remarked: "It has fallen to her lot to undertake this great task, and I should like to pay my tribute to her for the worthy

manner in which she has discharged it and laid strong foundations for future progress. We have to build upon them.”⁷³ Rajkumari Amrit Kaur had also been sent as one of the delegates from India to attend the Conference of UNESCO in 1946 and she made such a remarkable impression at the Conference that she was elected its Vice President on the second day itself. Apart from this she also represented India in other international organizations like All-Asian Women’s Conference, the Red Cross and the World Health Organization. She was also awarded the Rene Sand Memorial Award for her illustrious contribution to social service to the people of India and the world and she was in fact the first person from an Asian country to have been selected for this award in the 32 years of the history of International Conference of Social Work.

Hannah Sen had been elected as Vice-President on the fifth session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women and also represented India at various international conferences of non-governmental organizations and UNESCO. Hansa Mehta represented India on many delegations abroad: Human Rights Commission UN, 1947-52; Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference 1948; and Deputy Leader of the Indian Delegation to the UNESCO Conference Paris 1958 and 1960.

Acknowledging Jawaharlal Nehru for the remarkable progress and achievements made by the women of India abroad Renuka Ray remarked, “The Western World was taken by surprise when they found women one after another taking their place assuredly in the U.N. and other international bodies. It was Panditji (Nehru) who was behind this effort throughout.”⁷⁴

Indira Gandhi also proved the worth of her womanhood and her father's dream of guiding the destiny of the country for which he had moulded and trained her, when she became the first woman Prime Minister of the country. Thus the reflection of women empowerment in the years following independence was clearly visible as India produced woman Prime Minister, women ambassadors and delegates and representatives to international bodies, women governors, women chief ministers, Cabinet Ministers and legislators who played a notable role in shaping the history of the nation.

Since the freedom struggle against the colonial rulers had been fought beyond politics to cultural colonialism, so after independence Jawaharlal Nehru believed that India's self-respect lay in reclaiming literary, artistic, and cultural traditions. So he tried to build new India on the foundations of the old. Following this, he gave patronage to arts and in this respect, Nehru got immense support from Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya. Since she was interested in the cultural revival of the country and had been thinking in that direction for a long time prior to independence, she got fillip to her cause when Nehru after independence empowered her to take up the task of promoting and encouraging the culture of the country. In 1952, Kamaladevi was appointed Chairman of the All- India Handicrafts Board, and Pupul Jayakar, Chairman of the Handlooms Board. When the Government Central Cottage Industries Emporium (CCIE) in Delhi was running at a loss, Nehru is said to have directed the ministry to hand over the Cottage Industries Emporium to Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya. This truly showed his spirit of confidence in empowering a woman who would be able to cope up with the loss which the government suffered. With strong political support from Nehru,

Kamaladevi was able to bring handicrafts into the national economic orbit and launching a purposeful development of crafts to enable them to assume their rightful place in the economic life of the country. At the inauguration of the World Crafts Council in 1964 in New York, she had been the key speaker and was elected its Vice-President. She also received the Magasaysay Foundation Award and the Watmull Award, for her pioneering work in upgrading Indian crafts and improving the socio-economic status of the artisans.⁷⁵

Apart from this, in 1953 she was also appointed Vice- Chairman of the Sangeet Natak Akademi. Under her direction, the Sangeet Natak Akademi worked for the regeneration of the folk-performing arts from every part of the country. The very first National Music Festival held on 31 March 1954 bore the stamp of her vision because, for the first time, classical music emerged from its isolation to meet folk music whose inclusion represented the peculiar genius of India.⁷⁶ The Sangeet Natak Akademi strived to create national consciousness about Indian artistic traditions. It was also due to the efforts of Kamaladevi, that the National School of Drama came into existence in April 1959.

By and large, it can be seen that the regeneration of Indian artistic and cultural traditions by Kamaladevi Chattopadhaya was a reflection of the outcome of empowerment of woman in the Nehruvian era.

Jawaharlal Nehru believed that once women worked for their own upliftment and empowered themselves, they could play an important role in the building of the society and the country. He was of the opinion that without them, the country cannot

make a rapid progress. He was often found stating that “the state of the progress of the country can be known by the condition of its women because they are the makers of the people of the country.”⁷⁷ He wanted more number of women to be represented in Parliament. He wanted women to come up in great numbers for constructive work under the Five Year Plan, Community Projects and National Extension Service. He showed his greatest confidence in the women when he said that “the Government alone cannot accomplish the task without the full cooperation of the people and the women particularly.”⁷⁸

Hindu Code Bill and Empowerment of Hindu Women

As it has been mentioned above, the Constitution of free India recognized the equal status of women with men, ruling out discrimination and it was the new legal enactments which gave reality to the principle of equality. As Kamaladevi Chattopadhaya remarked, “The women stood expectantly on the threshold of a new life.”⁷⁹ In this context it is imperative to discuss here the Hindu Code Bill which was the most revolutionary measure undertaken by Nehruvian government to empower the Hindu women of India.

Before independence the law governing the Hindus and Muslims was Hindu and Muslim law respectively. Since Nehru did not want to invite wrath from the Muslims, his Bill did not touch to reform the Muslim law. Only measures were taken to codify the Hindu law related to women. Even within the Hindu law there were two major schools- Mitakshara and Dayabhaga which governed the Hindu and apart from that there were a number of sub-schools and different customs with diverse application in different parts

of the country. So therefore before independence, Hindu law was in an utterly confused state. This had a direct bearing on the position of women in the Hindu society. As Nehru had anticipated earlier when the Fundamental Rights resolution was passed in Karachi session 1931 on providing equal status to women, he had remarked. “Many of them who silently voted for the Karachi resolution might not have meant what the resolution laid down. They might have had mental reservations. The question was bound to arise again”⁸⁰ It did turn out to be true, in the case of the Hindu Bill as it had to undergo various hurdles and face stiff opposition from the members of the Constituent Assembly before it could be passed not in its original form but in a truncated form.

The Hindu Code Committee which was set up in 1941 under the chairmanship of B.N. Rau after examining the responses received from different quarters, prepared its report. It suggested that instead of piecemeal legislation a complete code should be prepared which should retain the distinctive character of Hindu Law while introducing particular changes.⁸¹ The Committee met again in 1944 under B.N. Rau, and it prepared a Draft Code dealing specifically with Succession, Maintenance, Marriage and Divorce, Minority and Guardianship and Adoption. This came to be known as Hindu Code Bill. Not only this, the Draft Code was also translated into twelve regional languages and given a great deal of publicity. The report was finally submitted in 1947 and it was the intention of the government to introduce that the Code become law by 1948. However the plan could not be carried out as desired since the legislators became busy with the drafting of the Constitution. Again in 1948, under Nehru’s Premiership, the draft report was submitted to the Select Committee under the Chairmanship of the Law Minister, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. He introduced certain changes in the draft bill relating to equal

property rights for women, abolition of customary law, and specification of grounds for divorce.

Paradoxically, when the Bill was reintroduced in the Constituent Assembly on April 1948 with the major changes, it could be seen that the same members of the Assembly, which had just accepted the principles of equality and removal of discrimination based on sexes in the new Constitution, opposed tooth and nail the Hindu Code Bill. The Bill was debated extensively during 1948-1951. It may also be noted here that when the Hindu Code Bill was debated, Renuka Ray, who was one of the members of the Constituent Assembly (1949-1951) played a leading role in articulating the position of the women's movement on Hindu law reform. She argued that the equal rights promised by the Constitution were meaningless without equal inheritance rights. But as the discussion on the Bill could not be completed due to lack of time and the session ended, therefore the Bill lapsed and it remained in hibernation for three years until 1952, when Nehru came out victorious in the 1952 elections and this provided him with an opportunity to implement his vision of empowering the Hindu women of India. Therefore the Hindu Code Bill was taken out of the shelves and debated during 1953-56 and the five Acts that were enacted in the chronological order were: Special Marriage Act (1954), Hindu Marriage Act (1955), Hindu Succession Act (1955), Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act (1956), and Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act (1956). The last important measure, enacted during Nehru's lifetime, was the Dowry Restraint Act (1961). The series of laws greatly improved the status of Hindu women who constitute the great majority of the women of India.⁸²

The Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 was possibly the most important part of the Acts passed in favour of women's rights between 1954 and 1961 which "brought about a truly revolutionary change"⁸³. The Act brought to an end of marriage being a one-sided sacrament and men were also now bound by monogamy. It also provided for the first time provision for divorce. One could sought for divorce on the grounds of adultery, desertion, cruelty, insanity or incurable disease. So far only the husband had the right of taking second wife, if he found his previous marriage to be less than satisfactory, but now the legislation provided relief to the wife as she could end the marriage if the marriage proving unhappy. Therefore the Hindu wife remained no longer a slave to her husband and got full equal rights.

The Special Marriage Act 1954 permitted people of different faiths to marry, without either party having to renounce his or her religion. Divorce by mutual consent is also incorporated in this Act. This was a secular step taken by Nehru in a secular democratic country like India and brought about a remarkable force of national integration.

The Hindu Succession Act which came into force from June 1956 gave the daughter, mother and the widow full share of succession to the property of the deceased Hindu male. Till this Act, only sons had the right to inherit father's property. But now with this Act, women not only have the right to own their property, but also have the right to sell, mortgage, or give away the property if they so wish. This was indeed a landmark measure passed by Nehru as it raised the position of the Hindu women at par with men.

By the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956 the wife was entitled to claim maintenance from the husband in case of divorce. The Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act gave rights to the father to be the natural guardian of a child and it also gave mother guardianship rights if the father neglected the child.

Expressing satisfaction over the passage of the Bills, Nehru said at the celebration of the birth centenary of Karve in Bombay on 18 April 1958:

“..... I should like to say that the laws which have been passed in regard to women have given me a sense of achievement. I look upon these laws as measures which had long been due, and which would liberate the women of India and give them freedom to grow. I am now convinced that if the opportunity is given to them to grow, the women of this country can render great service to this country and to the world.”⁸⁴

All these Acts bestowed several legal rights to women and created the base for women's empowerment in India which had been Nehru's desire for a long time. Though the passage of this legislation was fraught with difficulty and whatever be its limitation, the fruits it yielded has definitely empowered the Hindu women of yesterday and today in many respects, which is indeed a matter of pride for them. Therefore, it can be seen by and large the Constitution and the ensuing legislation has definitely paved the way for the woman of India to emerge as a responsible person able to participate in all aspects of national life.

Development of Education and Empowerment of women under Nehruvian Leadership

India is the largest democracy in the world where the womenfolk constitute almost half of the population. As the Indian Constitution granted equality to all Indian women without discrimination, it ensured the emancipation of women. But in order to

achieve empowerment of women, education is an important tool, because it enables women to play an important role in the development process of the country. Nehru rightly said, “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.” Therefore after independence the development and expansion of women’s education in the country became the main thrust and pre-occupation of new India. As education is a milestone of women empowerment and an educated woman can contribute in the overall development of the country, therefore under Nehruvian government, various National Education Policies were formulated to provide education to all Indian women, and in this way empower women, and consequently the country has also made rapid progress in education. When compared to the progress of women’s education in the pre-independence period, however, the development of women’s education in the post-independence period has been phenomenal.⁸⁵

After independence, the first Commission which was set up to enquire into education was the University Commission headed by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan in 1948-49. Underlining the supreme importance of women’s education, the Commission observed that: “There cannot be an educated people without educated women. If general education had to be limited to men and women, that opportunity should be given to women for then it would surely be passed on to the next generation.”⁸⁶ The Commission further remarked that:

“General education for interesting and intelligent living and for citizenship in large part can be same for men and women.....Women should share with men the life and thought and interests of the times. They are fitted to carry the same academic work as men, with no less thoroughness and quality. The distribution of general ability among women is approximately the same as

amongmen.⁸⁷

The Report suggested that a girl should learn to cope with all types of problems she might have to face after marriage and it suggested that certain courses like home economics, nursing, teaching and fine arts should be prescribed in colleges and universities.⁸⁸ The Commission also recommended that there should be no curtailment in educational opportunities for women, but rather a great increase and that women teachers should be paid the same salaries as men teachers for equal work.⁸⁹

Since the promotion of the welfare of Indian women was one of the focus of the First Five Year Plan spanning the period 1951-56, so therefore providing education facilities to women was one of its prime concern. In the post-independence period, the country made very rapid progress in education and there were rise in the enrolment of women in colleges and universities and also a notable growth in the number of educational centers for adult women. During 1951-52 there were 23600 recognized and 650 unrecognized institutions for women in India.⁹⁰ The total number of girl's schools for general education was 19361 in 1955-56 as against 16720 in 1950-51. The number of arts and science colleges for girls rose from 69 in 1951 to 104 in 1956. The enrolment of girls in institutions for general education rose from 6.13 millions to 8.94 millions during the Plan period. Enrolment of girls in professional colleges rose from 4668 in 1950-51 to 9218 in 1955-56. The S.N.D.T. Women's University, Bombay the only Women's University exclusively for women founded in 1917 was given statutory recognition during Nehru's time in 1951. It received grants from both central government as well as state governments.

The Second Five Year Plan (1956-61) also emphasized on providing larger opportunities for girl's and women's education. In fact the Second Five Year Plan adopted the recommendations of Secondary Education Commission of 1952-53 as its basis. The Secondary Education Commission was the second important report of the post-independence period appointed under the Chairmanship of Dr. A. Lakshmanswami Mudaliar to examine the prevailing system of secondary education in India and suggested measures for its reorganization and improvement. The Commission felt that there was no need to deal with women's education separately and every type of education open to men should be open to women.

The Commission made the following recommendations:

“23. While no distinction need be made between education imparted to boys and girls, special facilities imparted to boys and girls, special facilities for the study of home science should be made available in all girl's schools and in co-educational or mixed schools.

24. Efforts should be made by State Governments to open separate schools for girls whenever there is demand for them.

25. Definite conditions should be laid down in regard to coeducational or mixed schools to satisfy the special needs of girl students and members of the teaching staff.”⁹¹

As a result, the total enrolment of girls in primary schools rose from 7.64 millions in 1955-56 to 11.4 million in 1960-61. The number of total women primary school teachers also increased. There was a marked increase in the number of high schools and higher secondary schools for girls during 1960-61 and the total enrolment of girls rose from 317,000 in 1955-56 to 540,690 in 1960-61.⁹²

During this period, a National Committee under the Chairmanship of Durgabai Deshmukh was set up in 1958 to enquire into the special problems of girl's and

women's education. The members of the Committee and its Chairman undertook many tours to study the problems of women education in general and made valuable suggestions and recommendations "The Committee recognized that women's education should be regarded as a major and special problem and a 'bold and determined effort should be made to face its difficulties and magnitudes and to close the existing gap between education of men and women in a short a time as possible'."93 It recommended giving of more funds for girl's primary education, that a National Council for the Education of Girls and women be set up, creation of a separate unit in the Ministry of Education to deal with problems of girl's education. The Committee also sought the co-operation of the government, non-official organizations, local bodies, voluntary organizations, teacher's organizations and members of the public in the promotion of women's education at all stages. It also suggested appointment of women teachers, separate schools for girls at the higher secondary level, provisions of hostel facilities and provisions of free books, writing materials and uniforms.

As recommended by the Deshmukh Committee, a National Council on Women's Education was set up by the Government of India in 1959 to advise the government on the problem of girls's and women's education at all levels and stages. State Councils were also established in different states. The Council made certain proposal at its first and second meetings held during 1959-60. Some of these were included in the Third Five Year Plan (1961-1966). Although the recommendations of the Council was to regard the special problem for increasing the enrolment of girls as a centrally-sponsored scheme, it was decided that it should be located in the state sector. The state governments were requested to give special emphasis to the education of girls

in the general program for 1962-63, to increase the number of women teachers and also to indicate separately the additional number of women teachers to be appointed each year of the Plan period. The Ministry of Scientific Research and Cultural Affairs finalized the details of the scheme of polytechnics for girls. Four polytechnics had been established by 1961.

In a speech, while laying the foundation stone of the Janakidevi Mahavidyalaya, on 30 March, Jawaharlal Nehru said:

“The biggest revolution, however, will come in this country through education, because it gives a new focus to thinking and many things come out of it. Education is only coming up very fast in our country; in that process it must be remembered that women’s education can bring about more revolutionary changes and its spread will bring very far-reaching results, because its effect will be felt in every home and will thus go to the very roots of society.”⁹⁴

The Third Five Year Plan was aimed mainly at accelerating the efforts to improve education and to bring every home within its influence. The most important of all the provisions in the Third Year Plan, was the special emphasis given to the education of girls. The aim was to reduce substantially the existing disparity in the level of educational development of boys and girls.⁹⁵ During the Third Year Plan a steady rate of expansion continued in women’s education. It is estimated that the target of bringing 9.84 million more girls of six to fourteen age group to school may have exceeded by the end of the Plan. Greater demand was made for facilities at the middle schools, and high and higher secondary schools. At the college and university stage similar extensions had taken place.. The programmes for the improvement of education at all stage were implemented as regards science education, the provision of qualified teachers, equipment and library facilities. The number of scholarships and fellowships

had been increased.⁹⁶ In view of the importance of educating public opinion on the need and importance of girls's education, a film on girl's education entitled 'Who Seek the Light' was produced by the Films Division, sponsored by the Ministry of Education.⁹⁷

In one of the inaugural speech at a two day seminar of the All-India Women's Conference, Nehru concluded by saying:

"Today there is comparatively no opposition to the education of girls. The problem is one of opportunities and facilities.... But wherever opportunities have been given, girls have done fairly well in colleges and universities. The education of girls has, however, to be related to the various professions."⁹⁸

A short note may be added in this connection with the efforts undertaken under Nehru's leadership for the empowerment of women through the Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB). The government made sincere efforts to empower women in socio-economic and politico-cultural aspects which would lead to a welfare oriented state and a prosperous nation.⁹⁹ In this respect, various welfare measures intended for empowerment of women have been implemented since the First Five Year Plan. The Central Social Welfare Board had been set up on August, 1953 under the First Five Year Plan with Dr. Durgabai Deshmukh, veteran social worker, parliamentarian and member of the Planning Commission, as Chairman of the Board. Several programmes were initiated by the Board for delivering welfare services through voluntary sector, broadly relating to welfare services for women and children. Maternity and infant health centre, literacy or social education among women, community crèches for the care of working mother's children, women's club, social education for women were some of the examples of the activities. Arts and crafts for women which would help supplement family incomes were part of women's welfare programmes. Today Central Social

Welfare Board is the pioneering national level organization in the field of development and empowerment of women in the country

Therefore it can be seen that Nehru wanted to empower women through the medium of education for which intensive efforts were made during his Prime Ministership to really boost up women's education in India in every respect. Though some lacunae were visible in the various steps taken to improve and expand women's education in the country, yet the remarkable progress women made in the educational sphere clearly showed that women under Nehru's leadership were truly empowered. The Central Social Welfare Board, which was an outcome of his vision for the holistic development of all sections of the community especially women and children, also did commendable job for promoting the welfare and well being of the women which played an important role in their empowerment.

Nehru's positive and broad-minded attitude towards women was truly an important factor in pushing forward various legislations, development plans and policies for improving the status of women which would lead to their empowerment. Nehru as he always stood for equality of both men and women, strived hard to give women the best of opportunities in all spheres of life in order to empower them so that, they could be an asset to the nation and contribute in all ways for the development of the society and the nation.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

¹ Madhavan K. Palat (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru* (Henceforth *SWJN*) Second Series Vol.45, Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, New Delhi, 2012, p.312.

² M.G. Chitkara, *Women and Social Transformation*, A.P.H. Publishing Corporation, New Delhi, 2001, p.154.

³ S.N. Shankar Rao, *Sociology Principles of Sociology with An Introduction to Social Thought*, S. Chand & Company Ltd., New Delhi, 2006 (Reprint), p. 844.

⁴ Mushirul Hasan (ed.), *SWJN*, Second Series, Vol.36, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2005,p.120.

⁵ Geraldine Forbes, *Women in Modern India* (Henceforth *WMI*), Cambridge University Press, New Delhi, 1998, p.242.

⁶ Pratibha Jain, *Reflections on Women: Selections from Nehru's Writings and Speeches*, Kumar & Company, Jaipur, 1989, p. 4.

⁷ Geraldine Forbes, *Women in Colonial India: Essays on Politics, Medicine and Historiography*, Chronicle Books, New Delhi, 2005, p.44.

⁸ Cited in Geraldine Forbes, *WMI*, p.49.

⁹ Pratima Asthana, *Women's Movement in India*, Vikas Publishing House, Delhi, 1974, p.147.

¹⁰ *SWJN*, Second Series, Vol.15, p. 219.

¹¹ Verinder Grover & Ranjana Arora, *Aruna Asaf Ali: A Biography of her Visions and Ideas*, Deep & Deep Publications, New Delhi, 1998, p.204.

¹² Krishna Hutheesing & Alden Hatch, *We Nehrus*, Holt Rinehart Winston, New York, p. 2.

¹³ Nayantara Sahgal, *Nehru's Letters to his Sister: Before Freedom 1909-1947*, Lotus Collection, New Delhi, 2004, p.359. Letter from Jawaharlal Nehru to Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, 27 February, 1945

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.360.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 367.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 368.

¹⁷ Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, *Scope of Happiness: A Personal Memoir*, Widenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1979, p. 194.

¹⁸ For details see *Ibid.*, pp.204-205.

-
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 208-209.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 209.
- ²¹ Nayantara Sahgal, *Prison and Chocolate Cake*, HarperCollins, Noida, (Second Impression), 2014, p. 187.
- ²² Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, *op.cit.*, p. 210.
- ²³ *Ibid.*
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 211
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 392
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 197
- ²⁸ Krishna Nehru Hutheesing (ed.), *Nehru's Letters to his Sister*, Faber and Faber, London, 1963, p.20.
- ²⁹ Ranjit Pandit's younger brother. After Ranjit death all the property passed on to Pratap since Ranjit did not have a son.
- ³⁰ Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, *op.cit.*, p. 178
- ³¹ S.Gopal, *SWJN*, Vol.13, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1980, p. 414.
- ³² Pupul Jayakar, *Indira Gandhi: A Biography*, Penguin Group, Gurgaon, 2014, pp-83-84.
- ³³ Sonia Gandhi, *Two Alone, Two Together. Letters between Indira Gandhi & Jawaharlal Nehru, 1922-1964*, Penguin Book, New Delhi, 2005, p.216.
- ³⁴ *SWJN*, Vol.11, p. 642
- ³⁵ Krishna Hutheesing, *Dear to Behold: An Intimate Potrait of Indira Gandhi*, The Macmillan Company, London, 1969, pp.148-149.
- ³⁶ *SWJN*, Vol. 6, p.220. Speech at Prayag Mahila Vidyapeeth on 20 January, 1934.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 481.
- ³⁸ Kamlesh Mohan, *Towards Gender History: Images, Identities and Roles of North Indian Women*, Aakar Books, New Delhi, 2007, p.218.
- ³⁹ *SWJN*, Vol. 7, p. 483.

-
- ⁴⁰ Uma Iyengar, *The Oxford India: Nehru*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2007, p.234. Drafted by Jawaharlal Nehru, 22 August 1936.
- ⁴¹ Renuka Ray, *My Reminiscences*, Mandira Sen for Stree, Kolkata, 2005, p.125.
- ⁴² Padmini Sengupta., *The Story of Women of India*, Indian Book Company, New Delhi, 1974, p.224
- ⁴³ ‘Our Own Times’ an article by Hannah Sen in Tara Ali Baig (ed.), *Women of India*, Publications Division, Delhi, 1958, p.32.
- ⁴⁴ ‘Nehru and the Place of Women in Indian Society’, an article by Bimla Luthra in B.R. Nanda (ed.) *Indian Women: From Purdah to Modernity*, Radiant Publisher, New Delhi 1976 (Reprint) 1990, p.1.
- ⁴⁵ Vinod Tagra, *Jawaharal Nehru And the Status of Women in India: An Analytical Study*, Reliance Publishing House, New Delhi, 2006, p. 219.
- ⁴⁶ Verinder Grover & Ranjana Arora, *op.cit.*, p.65.
- ⁴⁷ *SWJN*, Vol.7, p.313.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 314.
- ⁴⁹ Cited in Vinod Tagra, *op.cit.* p. 219.
- ⁵⁰ See the Report of the Sub-Committee of the National Planning Committee. K.T. Shah (preface), *Woman’s Role in Planned Economy*, Bombay, 1947, pp. 225-231
- ⁵¹ *SWJN*, Second Series, Vol.6, p. 430.
- ⁵² *Ibid.*
- ⁵³ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁴ Tara Ali Baig, *India’s Women Power (Henceforth India’s Women)*, S Chand &Co (Pvt) Ltd, New Delhi, 1976, p. 212.
- ⁵⁵ Cited in Vinod Tagra, *op.cit.*, p. 225
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 221.
- ⁵⁷ Uma Iyengar, *op.cit.*, pp. 254-255. Election manifesto, prepared by Jawaharlal Nehru and presented at the session of the AICC, Bangalore, on 13 July 1951 and adopted on 14 July.
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 257-258.
- ⁵⁹ Cited in Vinod Tagra, *op.cit.*, p. 225

-
- ⁶⁰ Verinder Grover & Ranjana Arora, *op.cit.*, p.65.
- ⁶¹ Tara Ali Baig, *op.cit.*, p. 37.
- ⁶² Tara Ali Baig., *India's Women*, p. 220.
- ⁶³ Padmini Sengupta., *op.cit.*, p.224.
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁵ Cited in Uma Shankar Jha & Premlata Pujari, *Indian Women Today: Tradition, Modernity and Challenge*, Vol.1, Kanishka Publishers, New Delhi, 1996, p.228.
- ⁶⁶ 'In Political Life', an article by Frank Moraes in Tara Ali Baig (ed.), *Women of India*, Publications Division, Government of India, 1958, p. 100.
- ⁶⁷ 'Voluntary Social Service', an article by Freda Bedi in *Ibid.*, p. 221
- ⁶⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 223-224.
- ⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 227
- ⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 223.
- ⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 226
- ⁷³ Verinder Grover & Ranjana Arora, *op.cit.*, p.398.
- ⁷⁴ Cited in Vinod Tagra, *op.cit.*, p. 233.
- ⁷⁵ Reena Nanda, *Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya: A Biography*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2002, pp.126-146.
- ⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 139.
- ⁷⁷ *SWJN*, Second Series, Vol. 24, p. 361.
- ⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 362.
- ⁷⁹ Kamaladevi Papers, File No.32.
- ⁸⁰ *SWJN*, Vol. 7, pp.314-15.
- ⁸¹ Reba Som, *Jawaharlal Nehru and the Hindu Code: A Victory of Symbol over Substance?*, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol.28, No.1, 1994, p. 170. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/312925>.

-
- ⁸² Aruna Asaf Ali, *The Resurgence of Indian Women*, Radiant Publishers, New Delhi, 1991, p. 164.
- ⁸³ *Ibid.*, p.166
- ⁸⁴ *Jawaharlal Nehru Speeches:1957-1963*, Vol. 4, Publication Divisions. New Delhi, pp.424-25.
- ⁸⁵ *Status of Women in India, A Synopsis of the Report of the National Committee on the Status of Women (1971-74)*, Allied Publisher, New Delhi, 1975, p.89
- ⁸⁶ *The Report of the University Education Commission: 1948-49*, Vol.1, Delhi, 1950, p. 343.
- ⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.344.
- ⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 347-48
- ⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p.352
- ⁹⁰ Raj Pruthi and Bela Rani Sharma, *Education and Modernisation of Women in India*, Anmol Publications, New Delhi,1995, p.134
- ⁹¹ *Report of the Secondary Education Commission: 1952-53*, Delhi, 1958,p. 53.
- ⁹² Raj Pruthi and Bela Rani Sharma, *op.cit.*, p.174.
- ⁹³ Bharati Ray & Aparna Basu, *From Independence Towards Freedom: Indian Women since 1947*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1999, p.139.
- ⁹⁴ Cited in Vinod Tagra, *op.cit.*, p. 282
- ⁹⁵ Raj Pruthi and Bela Rani Sharma, *op.cit.*, p.190.
- ⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 201.
- ⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 207.
- ⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 291
- ⁹⁹ http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/9845/16/16_chapter%206.pdf viewed on 03/05/2016