

An Analytical Study of Women Empowerment in the Light of their Social Status, Political Participation and Attainment of Education- A Myth or Reality

Dr. Jayanta Baruah¹

Abstract

Since time immemorial women have been deprived of their fundamental rights and liberty. Resulting they are still remain backward. It has been realised that ignoring women participation in politics our democratic government cannot be successful. Hence, women empowerment must get top priority in contemporary time. The Government of India is taking some positive steps for women empowerment. So question arises about women empowerment whether it is myth or reality? In this paper the author will try to examine the status of women in society, attainment of Education, especially higher education and their participation in politics to examine their level of empowerment.

Key Words: Empowerment, Discrimination, Participation, Responsibilities.

I. Introduction

Antrobus rightly states that empowerment is a process that enables a powerless woman to develop autonomy, self-control and confidence with a group of women and men in a situation of oppressive social condition.² Thus, empowerment is a support to help women to accomplish equal opportunity with men or to reduce the gap between men and women. Women play a very strategic role in the development of society in particular and development of economy in general. Women also play multiple roles in the society. Though the nature has given the genetic power of reproduction to women, the socio-economic status of women is so poor and in most of the society they live a pathetic life. It is realised that by ignoring the importance of women a society cannot enjoy the fruits of development. So, it becomes necessary to aware women community about their rights and responsibilities which will finally

¹Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, THB College, Jamugurihat, Sonitpur, Assam, India.

encourage them to take equal and active part in the society and in politics with their male counterpart i.e., women empowerment in its real sense.

II. Methodology

Historical and analytical approach is used in this research paper. To make our research a success we have collected data from various secondary sources. Different official documents, relevant published and unpublished works, Journals, News Papers and all other information and web sites were used from different sources.

III. Hypothesis

The main hypothesis of the study is to find out the actual position of women in the society and their political involvement. The author will try to find out the reality of empowerment of women in the male dominated society and will make an analysis whether “Women Empowerment” is myth or reality.

IV. Understanding Women Empowerment

The word women empowerment is one which is widely and commonly used in society. It is an active, multi- dimensional process which encompasses several multi reinforcing components that begin with and supported by economic independence. In the words of Lucy Lazo empowerment is a process of acquiring, providing, bestowing the resources and the means or enabling the access to a control over such means and resources.³ Mrs. VibhaParthasarthi, Chairman, National Commission for Women, in her inaugural speech of the women’s 7th Political Empowerment Day celebration on April 24th and 25th 2000 at Delhi defined empowerment, after all, is not position or status. Empowerment is that which gives a person opportunity, to work and we all are in search of this opportunity. We want to be empowered, we all are in search of this opportunity, and it may be Political, Economic or Social.⁴

Thus, the above discussion has cleared that the empowerment is probably the totality of the following or similar capabilities:

² Rhoda Reddock, *Peggy Antrobus*, Vol.37, ResearchGate, p.1365-1377, 2006.

³Carolyn Medel-Anonuevo, *Women, Education and Empowerment: Pathways Towards Autonomy*, UNESCO Institute for Education, Hamsberg, p.8, 1996.

⁴Dr.MaramiGoswami, Babita Das, *Emancipating Women*, p.52-69, First Edition, 2016.

- ❖ Self decision making power.
- ❖ Having access to information and resources for taking proper decision.
- ❖ Ability to exercise assertiveness in collective decision making.
- ❖ Having positive thinking on the ability to make change.
- ❖ Ability to learn skills for improving one's personal or group power.
- ❖ Ability to change others' perceptions by democratic means.
- ❖ Involving in the growth process and changes that is never ending and self-initiated and
- ❖ Increasing one's positive self-image and overcoming stigma.

The contribution of women community of India towards all spheres is praise worthy at present and their contribution was also seen during the freedom movement of India. When crisis arises they come forward to save their mother land with their male counter parts. Their sacrifices cannot be forgotten. But it is a matter of great resentment that even after 73rd years of India's independence they still remain a marginalised in every field. They are always underestimated by the male dominated society of India. The patriarchal society of India deprives the community in every concern such as social, political, economic and education etc. Though the constitution of India provides Right to Equality to establish Social, Economic and Political Justice among every citizen but in reality there is a big disparity among men and women in Indian society. Since 1980's the Government of India has shown increasing concern for women's issues through a variety of legislation promoting the education and political participation of women.⁵ International organizations like the World Bank and United Nations have focused on women's issues especially the empowerment of poor women in rural areas. The late 1980s and early 1990s, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have also taken on an increased role in the area of women's empowerment.⁶ It is worth mentioning that women comprises 48% of the India's population, comprise 11% workers with 26% work participation.⁷

⁵Dr.BiplabTripathy, SubhechyaRaha, Comparative Study of Women Empowerment in India,p.52, First Edition, 2020.

⁶RAMESH CHANDRA MISHRA, WOMEN IN INDIA: TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY, p.128, (First Edition, 2006).

⁷ Aditi Rahato, *Promoting Female Participation in Urban India's Labour Force*, Observation Research Foundation, 2020.

The intensity of exploitation and subjugation varies from society to society. But there is no such society which has eliminated the exploitation and subjugation. The patriarchal system has confined the women to specific areas such as kitchen and the bed room and fixed gender roles like bearing and rearing children, cooking and cleaning. In most of the time woman is viewed as property and not a human being. Her like or dislike is neglected. It is to be noted that the Government of India declared 2001 as the Year of Women's Empowerment. The National Policy for the empowerment of women was passed in 2001. But still the desired goal has not been achieved.

V. Social Status of Women

The worth of civilisation of a society can be evaluated from the position that it gives to women. India's ancient culture is honoured as the greatest culture as Indian women enjoyed a prestigious position at that time. Famous ancient Indian philosopher Manu said long ago, 'where women are honoured there reside the gods'. It has been written in Ancient Hindu scriptures that no religious rites can be performed with perfection by a man without the participation of his wife. Her participation is essential to any religious rites. On the occasion of various important festivals married men along with their wives were allowed to perform sacred rites. Hence, wives are regarded 'Ardhangani' (betterhalf). They were given important and equal position with men in society. It is important to note that according to the Cultural History of India women were described or equated with the status of 'DEVI' in the religious texts of Hindus in ancient India. But in real practice they were enjoyed lower position in the society as compare to man. No rights were enjoyed by women in ancient India. The position of women deteriorated more in the later period under Muslim influence. They were compelled to keep themselves within the four walls of their houses with a long *borkha*(veil) on their faces. During British rule social reformer like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Eswar Chandra Vidyasagar raise their voice against the injustices and pressurized the British administration to enact laws to eradicate social evils like *Satti*, *Child Marriage and Dowry*. Mahatma Gandhi's contribution would be worth remembering towards the upliftment of women in the society. Gandhiji appealed and encouraged women to come out of their homes and to participate in the freedom movement of India. Responding to his clarion call women came

out from their houses in huge numbers and participated in all stages of freedom movement in India with men.⁸

In post- Independence period, statesmen of our nation were interested to give women equal status with men. The reason behind this noble thinking was that most our statesmen were educated with western education and philosophy and the realization of the contribution made by our women community in the freedom movement of India. Hence they were interested to give equal rights to women. But it was too difficult to change the position of women from a utter degradation to a position of equality in a very short period. Though it was a challenging task of uplift the status of women, many legislations pertaining to women were enacted in post- independence period. Laws enacted in this time mainly related to marriage, divorce, inheritance of property and employment. Though the legislations and many other actions that had been taken by the social reformers to uplift the status of women in India but still much has to be done for the cause of the upliftment of status of women in India.

Some of the positive steps that has been taken by the governments of post-independence era which put men and women on equal footings from the point of view of legislative measures are age of marriage without parents' consent has been increased to 21 for boys and 18 for girls, monogamy along with facility of judicial separation, nullity and divorce (even on mutual consent), inheritance (equal share in paternal property), and adoption, widow remarriage and sati abolition etc. However, due a numbers of reasons social legislations have not been very effective in India. The best example in this context can be cited that most of the women are not aware of the measures adopted by the state for their upliftment. Again, if aware they do not want to use these because of the old social values that are still persisting in the society. So, these old traditions and values of the society inhibit them to take any revolutionary steps.

It is pertinent to mention here that Legal or legislative sanctions alone cannot bring any substantial change in the downtrodden position of women unless there is a marked change in the attitude and consciousness of men and women both. The high rate of illiteracy of Indians can be cited as one of the great hindrances in this regard. According to 2001 and 2011 Census, 45.84 per cent and 34 per

⁸Dr.SubhangiRathi, *Role of Mahatma Gandhi in Women's political Participation*, Bombay Sarvodaya Mandal and Gandhi Research Foundation website.

cent women in India are illiterate. Even literate women also do not exercise their right of equality wherever it is required.

Thus in theory, the status of women has been raised in the eyes of law, but practically they are still far from equal to men in every sphere of life. Therefore, in their real life they continue to suffer discrimination, harassment, humiliation and exploitation in and outside home.

The authority of a family in Indian society and the power to govern the home still rests in the hands of the father - male head of the household. The authoritative father model is still continuing in most of the middle and lower class families. Leaving aside a few, in the so-called modern families women have not become equal partners to men even if they are well-educated or more educated as compared to men.

It is a matter of great concern that the violence against women begins at home. Women have to play multifarious roles in their life. They have to play the role of daughters, sisters, mothers and finally the mother -in -law. The role played by women in society is invaluable in all the times but they are considered as hurdle in every society in the world when it comes to extension of political, legal, and economic rights to them. It has already been mentioned that home is the place where violence against women begins and manifestations of violence include physical aggression, such as blows of varying intensity, burns, attempted hanging, sexual abuse and rape, psychological violence through insults, humiliation, coercion, blackmail, economic or emotional threats, and control over speech and actions. In extreme, but not unknown cases, result is the death.⁹ Such kinds of violence take place in a man-woman relationship within the family, state and society. There are various reasons; some are hidden also for domestic aggression towards women and girls. Social and Cultural factors are interlinked with the development and propagation of these violent behavior. With different socialization process that men and women undergo, men take up stereotyped gender roles of domination and control, whereas women take up that of submission, dependence and respect for authority. A girl child always grows up with a constant sense of being weak and in need of protection- physical,

⁹ Violence Against women (Definition and Scope of the Problem), World Health Organisation, 1997.

social or economic. This helplessness has led to her exploitation at almost every stage of life.

The report of 2011 census has revealed an improvement sex ratio between men and women which has shown 940 women to 1000 men as compared to the previous report of 2001 census. The sex ratio of men and women in 2001 census showed 933 women to 1000 men.¹⁰ However, India still has one of the lowest sex ratios in the world with approximately 35 million women "missing". The north-western states of Punjab, Rajasthan and Haryana of India are the states where the highest number women missing at birth. Research has reflected a dismal picture that 12 percent of this gap is found at birth which is increased to 25 percent in childhood. Some of the main causes of this missing number are sex-selective abortion and possible neglect of young girls during infancy indicating a high preference for male children rather than female children.¹¹ This preference for boys is also highlighted the gender gap in the literacy rate in the 2011 census which shows that 82% of males and 65% of females are literate. The difference of 17% indicates that most of the Indian parents still give preference educating their sons over daughters while allocating family resources.¹² Nevertheless, it is commendable improvement over previous census data where the gap was 27% (1981), 25% (1991), and 22% (2001). It is worth mentioning that much of the violence against Indian women is in the form of domestic violence, dowry deaths, acid attacks, honor killings, rape, abduction, and cruelty by husbands and in-laws. One of the main challenges is dowry – a practice of the bride's family giving gifts of cash and kind to the groom and his family. In dowry cases the groom's family mistreats the bride if such demands are not met. To stop this unsocial evil the Indian government has enacted the Dowry Prohibition Act and the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act and cruelty under Sec 498A of the Indian Penal Code. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) report of 2012, dowry deaths – or murders of women by the groom or in-laws because of unmet high dowry

¹⁰ Antara Bhattacharayya, Sushil Kumar Halder, *Socio-Economic Development and Child Sex Ratio in India: Revisiting the Debate using Spatial data Regression*, Springer, 2019.

¹¹ Shireen J Jejeebhoy, et.al, *Gender-Biased Sex Selection in India and Interventions to Counter the Practice*, Population Council, 2015.

¹² Tanushree Chandra, *Literacy Rate in India: The Gender and Age Dimensions*, Observer Research Foundation, 2019.

expectations – constituted 3.4% of all crimes against women. It is very shameful to mention that in India on average 22 women were killed per day due to non-fulfilment of the dowry demands by their families. The NCRB report indicates that an Indian woman is most unsafe in her marital home. The report has also shown that out of 43.6% of all crimes against women being "cruelty" inflicted by her husband and relatives. These percentages do not include crime such as marital rape, as India does not recognize marital rape as an offence. The total 24,923 rape incidences occurred in India in 2012, 98% of the offenders were known to the victim, which is higher than the global average of approximately 90%. These situations in Indian societies may also mean that children – boys and girls – grow up in a situation where they see violence against women at their home.

It is to be noted that crimes against women in India is still continuing with huge numbers till today. Reports of NCRB published in the year 2016 highlights that majority of cases under crimes against women were reported under 'Cruelty by Husband or His Relatives' 29.2% followed by 'Assault on Women with Intent to Outrage her Modesty' 25.0%. 'Kidnapping& Abduction of Women' 22.2% which is followed by 'Rape' 11.8%. A highest 33.0% (13,803 out of 41,761 cases) of total cases of crimes against women held at Delhi followed by Mumbai 12.3% (5,128 cases) during 2016. Delhi reported the highest crime rate 182.1 percent compared to the national average rate of 77.2 percent.

VI. Status of Women in North-East India

Crimes against women are also increasing tremendously in the North-Eastern states of India. The statistics released by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) highlights the fact that crime against women has risen sharply in the Northeast, with Tripura recording the highest rate 37 per cent against the national crime rate of 18.9 percent in 2011. Assam stood second in the country with a crime rate of 36.9 per cent. Nagaland had the lowest rate of crime against women in the north-eastern region with a negligible 1.9 per cent. The NCRB registered only 38 cases of crime against women in 2011 in Nagaland. Out of the 2, 28,650 incidents of crimes against women in the country, Assam registered a total 11, 503 incidents according to the report of NCRB. Statistics of Assam Police reveal that 5,745 cases of cruelty by husband and

their relatives on women and 2,011 cases of rape were registered.¹³ Reports of Assam State Women Commission (ASWC) focused that crime against women has always been exist in the state, but because of higher awareness, more women are reporting the atrocities now. It is a welcome sign that the rate of crimes against women has not risen abnormally in the recent past. Earlier, women used to keep their lip tight and did not report about the crimes to police. However, due to awareness among the women community, women are now coming forward and filing cases in police stations.

The situation is very worst in Tripura, which earned the notoriety of recording the highest crime rate against women. People of the state are demanding to take stern action to stop this ugly trend, and urged the government to dispense of such cases with fast-track courts. It is a matter of great concern that in terms of conviction of the accused Tripura achieved a target of 11 percent only which is far below the national average of 40.7 per cent.¹⁴

The report published by NCRB in the year 2016 has shown that crimes against women in the North eastern states are rising sharply. It has been observed that in the NCRB report 'Assault on women to outrage her modesty' gets the top rank and Assam registered highest 3378 cases followed by Tripura 214, Arunachal Pradesh 109, Mizoram 71, Nagaland 68, Manipur 65, Sikkim 34 and Nagaland 14. Again, cases registered against 'Rape' were second highest and Assam registered 1779 cases followed by Tripura 207, Meghalaya 190, Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim registered 92 each cases, Manipur 55, Nagaland 26 and Mizoram 23. As like that of the above mentioned cases of violation against women, 677 cases of 'Sexual Harassment' were registered in Assam followed by Tripura 52, Mizoram 44, Meghalaya 20, Manipur 15, Sikkim 08, Nagaland 06 and Arunachal Pradesh registered a total 04 cases.¹⁵

It can be said that rising of crimes against women in the North Eastern States of India is continuing. According to a report by Thomson Reuters, India is the

¹³Pranjal Baruah, Naresh Mitra, *Women Not Safe in NE, as per NCRB*, Times of India, 2012.

¹⁴Dr. Sayed Ahammed, Dr. Adidur Rahman, *A Study of Women's Rights Violation and the Role of Media with Special Reference to N.E. states*, Vol: 5(10A), SCHOLAR JOURNAL OF ARTS, HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES, p.1360-1365, 2017.

¹⁵*Crime in India, Statistics*, Vol.1, Ministry of Home Affairs, 2019.

"fourth most dangerous country" in the world for women.¹⁶ India was also noted as the worst country for women among the G20 countries, however, this report has faced criticism for its inaccuracy.

VII. Women and Education

Women Empowerment is a global issue and political rights of women has become a major topic of discussion formal and informal worldwide. The concept 'Women Empowerment' was first introduced at the International Women Conference at Nairobi in 1985. Education can be regarded as the milestone for women empowerment, prosperity, development and welfare. Inequality and vulnerability against women is continuing in all sectors and women oppressed in all spheres of their life. Women of our society need to be empowered to live a decent life. To fight against the socially constructed gender biases, women have to raise their voice against the system that requires more strength. So the strength will be acquired by women through empowerment and empowerment will come through the attainment of education. Education is the key factor of women empowerment because it enables them to respond to the challenges, to confront their traditional role and change their life. India is going to be a super power in the next couple of years. This can turn into reality only when women of this nation are empowered in its real sense. It is a matter of great concern that India poised the largest number of illiterates in the world at present. Literacy rate in India have risen sharply from 18.3% in 1951 to 74.04% in 2011. According to a report of National Sample Survey 2013-14, enrolment of women in education have also risen from 7% to 100.6 % in primary level and 90.3% in secondary level and 96.9% in higher Secondary level. The percentage of enrollment in higher education is only 23.5% in 2015-16.¹⁷ Despite the importance of women education, unfortunately only 65.46% of women are literate while literacy rate of man are 82.14%, which is too high. But in comparison to India some of the countries achieved commendable success in making their female 100 percent literate. For example we can cite the name of some countries like Andorra 100%, Luxembourg 100%, Norway 100% etc.

¹⁶ *Fact box: Which are the World's top most dangerous countries for Women?* Thomson Reuters Foundation, 2018.

¹⁷ Press Information Bureau, Govt. of India, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, 2019.

Russia, UK, USA, Japan also achieved great success in making women literate. It is worth mentioning that to make cent percent literate their citizens a good numbers of countries of the world spent a remarkable amount of GDP. Russia spent 4.9%, Canada 6.6%, Japan 5%, Israel 7.5% and USA 7% GDP for the upliftment of education in their countries. It is very unfortunate that the Kothari Commission in 1964 advised the government of India to spend 6% GDP in education. But data shows that India still spend 3.48% of GDP in 2017-18 for the upliftment of education which can also be regarded as one of the factor of legging behind of education sector.¹⁸It can specially be mentioned here that the draft of the National Education Policy-2019 again advised the government of India to spend 6% GDP in education.

The percentage of participation of women in education was increased to 6 percent in 1947. It is worth mentioning that for centuries higher education for women has been neglected. The negligence of higher education of women was rightly felt in India which was clearly visible in the suggestions given by the University Education Commission in 1947. In the recommendation of the commission it was mentioned that present education is entirely irrelevant to the life of women. It is not only a waste but often a definite disability (Report of the University Education Commission, Government of India, 1948-49, Vol.(i), chapter XII).

In post - Independence period the female literacy rate was increased to 8.9%. The Governments of India have been trying their best in the field of women education since Independence. In 1958, the government of India appointed a National Committee for the education of women. The government of India accepted most of the recommendations of the committee for the upliftment of women education in India. It is praise worthy that since independence there had been a gradual growth in the number of women students' enrolment in higher education. In the pre- independence period the women enrolment was less than 10 per cent of the total enrolment. But in the academic year 2010-11 women enrolment increased up to 41.5 percent. Representing the enrolment of girls, the report of UGC published under the guidance of Prof. VedPrakash , Chairman of UGC, states that in 1950 the figure was 43, 000 and in 2001 it stood at 33, 06, 000 while in 2010-11 it reached 70, 49, 000. Though the enrolment of women

¹⁸ Anurag Behar, *Thrift in Education?* Mint, 2016.

in higher education in India is continuously increasing but still the percentage of their participation is not so encouraging. Among the states of India Goa takes the pride for being the first position in women enrolment in higher education with 59 percent and Bihar in the last position with 30 percent. It is worth mentioning that the recently submitted draft of National Policy of Education-2019 considers all possible measures to make Indian education system a vibrant one. It is a welcoming decision that The New Education Policy of India suggests for 100 percent enrolment by 2035.¹⁹

It has also been observing that women are going to outnumber men in education in coming days. A report of All India Survey of Higher Education, MHRD, highlights the facts. The enrollment of women in higher education from 2011-12 to 2017-18 show an increasing trend. The total number of males enrollment increased by 30.3 lakh, 18.7 percent, in six years, while the number of women enrollment increased by 44.3 lakh, a whopping 34 percent rise. The compound annual growth rate (CAGR) for total enrollment is 3.87 percent, with males at 2.9 percent and females at 5 percent. The percentage of women rose from 44.6 percent in 2011-12 to 47.6 percent in 2017-18. More women are pursuing higher education now than ever before.²⁰ The table given below will highlight the facts.

Table 1: Year-wise enrollment in higher education in India (data from AISHE, MHRD)

| Year | 2011-12 | 2013-14 | 2015-16 | 2017-18 |
|--------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Total | 2,91,84,331 | 3,23,36,234 | 3,45,84,781 | 3,66,42,378 |
| Male | 1,61,73,473 | 1,74,95,394 | 1,85,94,723 | 1,92,04,675 |
| Female | 1,30,10,858 | 1,48,40,840 | 1,59,90,058 | 1,74,37,703 |
| % of female | 44.58 | 44.90 | 46.23 | 47.59 |

¹⁹Tushar KantiGhara, *Status of Indian Women in Higher Education*, Vol. 7, No.14, JOURNAL OF EDUCATION AND PRACTICE, p.58-64, (2016).

²⁰ Independence Day 2019: Improving Women's Higher Education is the Key to India becoming a \$ 10 T Economy, Dailyhaunt, 2019.

Realizing the fact it is predicted that by the year 2030 the number of women pursuing higher education might soon outnumbered men. The year 2024-25 could see normalization between genders, and 2029-30 could see as much as 53 percent enrolment of women, a paradigm shift. In a number of countries around the world have undergone this change. According to official statistics of United States of America, 56 percent of undergraduates are women. India is also following the same trend.

The total Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) between the age of 18-23 is steadily increasing from 20.8 in 2011-12 to 25.8 in 2017-18 (Table 2). Male enrollment increased from GER of 22.1 to 26.3, a 19 percent increase. Female enrollment rose even faster, with a GER under 20 to 25.4, a significant jump of 30 percent. The GER between genders is normalizing.

Table 2: Gross Enrollment Ratio in higher education in India (data from AISHE, MHRD)

| Year | 2011-12 | 2013-14 | 2015-16 | 2017-18 |
|----------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| All Categories | 20.8 | 23 | 24.5 | 25.8 |
| Male | 22.1 | 23.9 | 25.4 | 26.3 |
| Female | 19.4 | 22 | 23.5 | 25.4 |

VIII. Participation of Women in Politics

Within the framework of a democratic polity the Government of India has been trying its level best for the all-round development of the women community. The Governments of India have aimed at women's advancement in different spheres by enacting laws, adopting developmental plans and programmes and policies. It was observed that from the Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-78) onwards a marked shift in the approach to women's issues from welfare to development was noticed in India. In recent years, the empowerment of women has been recognized as the central issue in determining the status of women. To safeguard the rights and legal entitlements of women in India, The National Commission of Women was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1990. The 73rd and 74th Amendments (1993) to the constitution of India have provided for reservation of seats in the local bodies of Panchayats and Municipalities for women, laying a

strong foundation for their participation in decision making or policy formation at the grass-root level. Though they have been given 50 percent reservation in the Panchayati Raj Institutions in most of the states of India but still the bill is pending through which an effort was made to reserve 33 percent of seats for women in the Central as well as State legislatures. It clearly reflects the intension our leaders and political parties that they are not willing to give equal representation to women. It has also been observed that Political parties in India are also depriving women by not giving party candidature equally with men. Table-1 shows the actual facts.

Table-3: Representation of Women in Lok Sabha(1952-2019)

| Lok Sabha | Total Nos of Seats(Election held) | No. of Women members who won | % |
|------------------|--|-------------------------------------|----------|
| First(1952) | 489 | 22 | 4.4 |
| Second(1957) | 494 | 27 | 5.4 |
| Third(1962) | 494 | 34 | 6.7 |
| Fourth(1967) | 523 | 31 | 5.9 |
| Fifth(1971) | 521 | 22 | 4.2 |
| Sixth(1977) | 544 | 19 | 3.4 |
| Seventh(1980) | 544 | 28 | 5.1 |
| Eight(1984) | 544 | 44 | 8.1 |
| Ninth(1989) | 529 | 28 | 5.3 |
| Tenth(1991) | 509 | 36 | 7.0 |
| Eleventh(1996) | 541 | 40* | 7.4 |
| Twelfth(1998) | 545 | 44* | 8.0 |
| Thirteenth(1999) | 543 | 48* | 8.8 |
| Fourteenth(2004) | 543 | 45* | 8.1 |
| Fifteenth(2009) | 543 | 59 | 10.9 |

| | | | |
|-------------------|-----|----|------|
| Sixteenth(2014) | 543 | 61 | 11.2 |
| Seventeenth(2019) | 542 | 78 | 14.3 |

*Including one nominated member. Source: Election Commission of India.

Though we are talking frequently about women empowerment but some of the facts of Indian election scenario will show us the reality that practically much has not been done for achieving the goal yet. It is worth mentioning that out of the 545 constituencies of Lok Sabha 264 constituencies never elected women MP since 1962-2019. Only 279 constituencies elect atleast one women MP since 1962. It is interesting that till today only 617 women MP have been elected to Lok Sabha. Data in the table given above has clearly reflected that India has considered representation to women only a negligible 14.3 percent in LokShabha in the recently concluded election in 2019. It is praise worthy that country like Rwanda stood first in the list in the world giving their women 61.3 percent (49/80) representation in the Legislature. Cuba is in the second position with 53.2 percent (322/605) and Bolivia is in the third position with 53.1 percent(69/130). It is pertinent to mention that USA has considered 23.6 percent (102/435), UK has given 32 percent (208/650) and our neighbouring China has considered 24.9 percent (742/2975) representation to women in the law making body.²¹

Participation of women in the Assam Legislative Assembly is not also very encouraging. The table given below reflects the fact.

Table-4:Percentage of Elected Women in Assam legislative Assembly since 1952

| Sl. no | Year | Total number of elected representative | Number of elected Women representative | Percentage % |
|--------|------|--|--|--------------|
| 1 | 1952 | 94 | 2 | 2.13 |

²¹ Kennedy Elliott, *Rwanda's legislature is Majority Female. Here's how it happened.*National Geography, 2019.

| | | | | |
|----|------|-----|----|-------|
| 2 | 1957 | 96 | 5 | 5.21 |
| 3 | 1962 | 105 | 4 | 3.81 |
| 4 | 1967 | 126 | 6 | 4.76 |
| 5 | 1972 | 114 | 8 | 7.02 |
| 6 | 1978 | 126 | 1 | 0.79 |
| 7 | 1983 | 126 | 2 | 1.59 |
| 8 | 1985 | 126 | 4 | 3.17 |
| 9 | 1991 | 126 | 5 | 3.97 |
| 10 | 1996 | 126 | 6 | 4.76 |
| 11 | 2001 | 126 | 10 | 7.94 |
| 12 | 2006 | 126 | 13 | 10.32 |
| 13 | 2011 | 126 | 15 | 11.90 |
| 14 | 2016 | 126 | 8 | 6.35 |

Source: Election Commission of India.

IX. Findings

Some of the important findings of our study are as follows:

1. Women should be given equal respect and status in society with men. In normal time the situation remains peaceful but in matters of decision making a huge percent of women have to keep their lip tight in the families and also in the society. They should also be given the right to take part in decision making with men in their family as well as in the society. Finally gender gap and gender bias which are continuing in Indian society should be finished forever.
2. Government should take stern action against the violators of women rights. Though a number of legislations have been enacted but violation against women still continues in every state in India. Government of India in the centre as well as in the states should make arrangements of fast track courts to dispense the cases in a very short period.
3. Education is the means which can turn our dream of women empowerment into reality. Though the tireless effort of the government, the percentage of literacy rate of women still remains at 65.46 percent after India completes 73rd years of its Independence. So it becomes sacred duty of every Indian to make every possible help to achieve 100

percent literacy rate of women. In this regard the MHRD and Education departments of the states should also monitor the GER and also dropout rates of females constantly.

4. Women should be given equal share in politics with men. Though talking much on women empowerment by our political leaders and political parties but it has been observed that they are not at all interested to give equal share to women in politics. It is very interesting to mention that politicians welcomed the decision of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment through which women were provided 33% reservation (which later on increased to 50%) in Panchayats in most of the states in India. But they are not interested to pass the Women Reservation Bill (108th Amendment) Bill which seeks to reserve seats for women in Parliament and State Legislatures still pending since 2008. The most negligible 14.3% (78 out of 542) of women participation in Seventeenth Lok Sabha held in 2019 shows the real picture of women empowerment in India.
5. Finally, women should economically be empowered. This is the need of the hour. It can be said that poverty or economic dependence of women can be the causes of exploitation of women in all forms.

X. Conclusion

There is no denying the fact that women in India have made a considerable progress in the last seventy years but yet they have to struggle against many handicaps and social evils in the male dominated society. Women's equality in terms of education, employment, and power is still an individual rather than a universal achievement. The majority of our women are still content to accept an inferior status. This is by and large due to the fact that, although legally women have equal rights with men, but the male dominated society has not yet been prepared to give them equal position in society. Hence it is imperative to change our mind set regarding our traditional views on women then only empowerment of women will become a reality.