

Chapter 1

Introduction

'That country & that nation which did not respect women have never become great nor will ever be in the future.' Swami Vivekananda

Politics is essentially an art of acquiring and exercising power – the power to effectively influence the decision making processes and policies, to reverse the existing situations wherever they are disadvantageous and to bring about the necessary social changes. A participation in this exercise of power is very much a necessity, particularly for the disadvantaged group, for instance, the women. But then politics is also about power relations. Every social arrangement is it in the public, professional sphere or in the private space of domestic sphere, is an instance of power relationship. Thereby, whether it is the family, religion, caste or public institutions, they are all political institutions their mutual interaction thus becomes a political relationship and hence involves a modicum of power.

Women constitute half of the world population, perform nearly two thirds of its work hours, receive one tenth of the world's income, and own less than one hundredth of the world's property. (United Nations Report, 1980)

Throughout the world women have usually fewer rights and a lower status than men. The traditional role of a wife and a mother dominates and most women's life center on their households. Hence, the women, the world over, are still demanding for equality & justice because of the widespread discrimination they face in all walks of life.

It is this aspect which needs to be closely examined because the future of society in terms of its direction and pace is dependent on this question. Accordingly, many programmes and policies have been drafted with some awareness for their marginalized position.

Today gender analysts must pay special attention to the wide-ranging frameworks regarding the perspective, approach and strategies advocated at different forums for understanding & combating women's unfavorable placement in the society if we have to get rid of gender discrimination (Dagar Rainuka, 1998)

In a critical juncture of present human history, the ethnic warfare, nuclear war and the clashes of civilization, Women have become the victim of rape, murder and inequality in all spheres of life. Rather than culture, the concept of women's right is deeply rooted in history but women's history has been deliberately ignored over the centuries to keep women subordinate in patriarchal society. Women share half of the population of every country in the world but still they are not equally represented in politics all over the world. They are just a "blip on the male political landscape."(Reynolds 1999, p.547)

Women are not present to add a range of female experiences to gender “neutral” policies, they are absent from posts to sponsor special concerns legislations effectively, we seldom see them in leading positions and they continue to lack models who challenge our assumptions about gender and leadership. All of these combine into greatly diminished influence, potential and tenuous access to important avenues of social power. In a circular manner, the absences of women as political leaders contribute to the continued absence of women as political leaders. (Durest – Lahti & Vestegen, 1995, pp. 221)

Politically, adult women have not yet achieved the right to vote in all countries. Women are under represented in national decision-making bodies, including legislative & economic bodies & most of the agencies of law & justice. The worldwide average percentage of women in national parliaments is only 16%.

Substantive Equality

Formally equality of Indian women is explicitly in the Constitution of India and within Indian law. However, notwithstanding formal guarantee of equality given by Indian law, women in this country continue to be characterized by ongoing substantive inequality and discrimination and the wide gap between the formal guarantees of gender equality enshrined in the Constitution of India.

The popular term called ‘equality’ started and dominated since the time of western political theorists like, Plato & Aristotle who

defined equality as 'treating likes alike' which was later refined by the American Constitution and subsequently by the Indian as 'those (who are) similarly situated be treated similarly. In other words, equality was equated with sameness or if you are the same, then you should not be treated differently. (Tussman, Joseph & Jacobus Tebrock, 'The Equal Protection of the Laws' 37 Calif. Rev. 341 (1949) Hargopal Reddy, 'Equality doctrine and the Indian Constitution 45 Andhra Law Times 57, 58 (1982) 'All persons are to be treated alike, except where circumstances require different treatment.'

Martha Minnow, while exploring the difference/connection between equality & sameness observed that, 'the problem with this concept of equality is that it makes the recognition of difference a threat to the premise behind equality.

If to be equal, you must be the same, then to be different is to be unequal (Martha Minow, 'Learning to live with the Dilemma of Difference: Bilingual & special Education' 48 law & Contemporary Problems 157, 207, 1985)

The focus of substantive equality approach is only on equal treatment under the law, but on actual impact of the law. (Maureen Maloney, 'An Analysis of Direct Taxes in India: A Feminist Perspective' 30: 4 Journal of the Indian Law Institute 397(1988). Such inequality results from provisions which though seemingly natural in their application in reality results in discrimination of women while conferring the notion of formal equality.

The main objective of substantive equality approach is the elimination of substantive inequality of disadvantaged groups in society. It is directed at eliminating individual, institutional and systemic discrimination against disadvantaged groups which effectively undermines their full and equal social, economic, political and cultural participation in society. (Kathy Lahey, 'Feminist Theories of (In) Equality', in *Equality and Judicial Neutrality* 71 (s. Martin & K Mahoney (eds) 1987

Kathy Lahey in her work, 'Feminist Theories of (In) Equality' argues that courts must adopt an approach which considers the effect of the rule or practice being challenged, to determine whether it contributes to the actual inequality of women and whether changing the rule will actually produce an improvement in the specific material conditions of the women affected.

The political status of women can be measured through the degree of freedom and equality as enjoyed by women in shaping and sharing of power of the society. Throughout the world, it is seen that women continue to face inequality in all spheres of their life.

In politics, women are just a "blip on the male political landscape". The worldwide percentage of women in National parliaments is only 16 percent out of 190 countries of the world. Women as the head of government i.e. either as President or Prime Minister is just in 7 countries. In 2005, Sweden, Norway, Rwanda, and

Argentina women's political representation ranges from up to 40 to 50%.

In 1995 at the 4th UN Conference on Women, the Governments of 189 States participated and recognized that, 'inequalities between men and women have persisted and major obstacles remain.'

It is seen that throughout the world, women continue to face inequality in all spheres of their life. In public life women remain under - represented in international & national decision & policy making bodies, including legislative & economic bodies & all those agencies responsible for making law & justice. Politically, adult women have not achieved the Right to Vote in many countries. Only 24 women have ever been elected as the heads of State, although 10 women head of States, who were in office at the end of 1994 is the highest in history.

Article 8 of the UN Charter provides that no restriction shall be placed on the eligibility of men and women to participate 'under conditions of equality in its principal and subsidiary organs'. Nevertheless, women still does not occupy senior positions in case of 'key' areas of International areas like, international peace and security, peace keeping, and disarmament and in programmes for trade and investment or economic development.

Accurate data in economic, social, and cultural matters is uncertain due to frequent concealment of women within the private spheres of the home and family.

However, the index ranking of 130 countries on gender equality in basic health, education, and income contained in the 1995 Human Development Report prepared by the UNDP shows that in no country, do women fare as well as men.

Women make half the population of every country of the world. They perform nearly two thirds of its work hours, receive one tenth of the world's income and own less than one hundredth of the world's property.

Politically, adult women have not yet achieved the right to vote all parts of the world. Women are under represented in national decision making bodies, including legislative and economic bodies and most of the agencies of law and justice.

Political sociologists G. William Domhoff (1998) have rightly remarked that those who govern are both drawn mainly from a ruling or power elite. Though individual women may have rose to position of independent elected chief executive of the state government in U.S. like Ella Grasso. "Governess Grasso"..... Give examplesthrice elected Margaret Thatcher (Prime Minister) of U.S. who is known as 'Iron Lady'.

Women may have been queens, prime ministers, state governors, mayors, legislators. Whether in case of U.S. India, every U.S. President, every major party candidate for U.S. President and Indian Prime Minister have been man and not women. In few exceptional

cases, women may have rose to the top position but few women's token presence does not mean that governance is not gendered.

In such case, representation of women in politics may check general monopolization of power and position by man in politics in other words, 'gender governance'. Women may have little presence and importance in state politics but more than western democracies under state socialism in Eastern Europe women's representation is much higher. Ironically, the eastern European transition to 'democracy' after 1989 have reduced women's description representation even in populist and revolutionary states. However, few women have made in highest ranks in military and state bureaucracies like, Sharon Wolchick, 1989, Maxine Molyneux in Cuba 2001, Margraret Randall Nicaragua in 1974 and Maxine Molyneux in 1991 (Yemen).

Table 1**WORLD RANKINGS FOR WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT IN
SELECTED COUNTRIES, 2005**

Country	Rank	% of Women in Parliament
Rawanda	1 st	48.8
Sweden	2 nd	45.3
Norway	3 rd	38.2
Finland	4 th	37.5
Denmark	5 th	36.9
Netherlands	6 th	36.7
Cuba	7 th	36.0
Spain	7 th	36.0
Costa Rica	8 th	35.1
Mozambique	9 th	34.8
Belgium	10 th	34.7
Iraq	15 th	31.6
New Zealand	19 th	28.3
Vietnam	20 th	27.3
Namibia	21 st	26.9
Australia	26 th	24.7
Mexico	27 th	24.3
China	41 st	20.2
Poland	41 st	20.2

United kingdom	52 nd	18.1
United Nation	61 st	15.2
Israel	62 nd	13.3
Ireland	66 th	12.2
France	72 nd	11.1
Botswana	79 th	10.7
Zimbabwe	82 nd	9.8
Russian Federation	89 th	8.6
Brazil	95 th	8.3
India	97 th	7.1

The world average of woman membership in national Parliaments was only 12.7 percent. The highest representation was in Rawanda 48.8 percent and the lowest was in Egypt 2.9 percent. In Islamic country like, Kuwait women representation in politics was nil as per Census, 2005

“No government can claim to be democratic until women are guaranteed the right to equal representation”. (4th UN World Conference on women in Beijing, 1995)

Women constitute fifty percent of the population in most countries of the world. More than 98% of countries of the world have guaranteed the voting right in the election. But 20% of women in some countries make the legislative bodies. Women still cannot vote in

countries like, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Lebanon. The main goal of women suffrage and representation is to check the direct and overt discrimination against women in politics.

In December 1869, Wyoming territory became the first modern legislative body to grant suffrage to women. (McCammon 2001, 2003) some argue that, the passage of female suffrage on Wyoming was a joke. Edward M. lee, Secretary of the Territory in 1869, quoted that, 'Once, during the session, amid the greatest hilarity, and after the presentation of various funny amendments and in the full expectation of a guber national veto, an act was passed enfranchising the women of Wyoming. The bill, however, was approved, became law, and the youngest territory placed in the van of progress..... How strange that a movement destined to purify the muddy pool of politics... should have originated in a joke. (printed in Cheyenne's Wyoming Tribune, October 8, 1870; cited in Larson 1965: 58). Two months later, Wyoming passed women suffrage it was Utah but Dakota Territorial legislature failed to pass female suffrage by 1 vote in January of that year (Larson, 1965).

By 1920 most of the western countries became successful to pass bill for women suffrage. However, in US, Michigan, Kansas, Midwestern were offered women to vote only in presidential elections. Among the southern and eastern states of US only Oklahoma & New York granted full female suffrage. Three years after Wyoming, New Zealand became the first country to introduce universal suffrage.

Women Worldwide

1. New Zealand – 1893
2. Australia – 1902
3. Finland – 1906
4. Norway – 1913
5. Denmark, Iceland – 1915
6. Canada – 1917
7. Austria, Estonia, Georgia, Germany, Ireland, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Poland, Russia, United Kingdom – 1918
8. Belgium, Belarus, Kenya, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Sweden, Ukraine - 1919
9. Albania, Czech republic, Slovakia, united states - 1920
10. America, Azerbaijan, Lithuania - 1921
11. Kazakhstan, Mongolia, St. Lucia, Tajikistan – 1924
12. Turkmenistan – 1927
13. Ireland, united kingdom - 1928
14. Ecuador, Romania – 1929
15. south Africa, turkey – 1930

16. Portugal, Spain, Srilanka – 1931
17. Maldives, Thailand, Uruguay – 1932
18. Brazil, Cuba – 1934
19. Myanmar – 1935
20. Philippines – 1937
21. Bolivia, Uzbekistan – 1938
22. El Salvador – 1939
23. Panama – 1941
24. Dominican Republic – 1942
25. Bulgaria, France, Jamaica – 1944
26. Croatia, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Senegal, Slovenia, Togo – 1945
27. Cameron, Djibouti, Guatemala, Liberia, Macedonia, North Korea, Panama, Romania, Trinidad & Tobago, Venezuela, Vietnam, Yugoslavia – 1946
28. Argentina, Malta, Mexico, Pakistan, Singapore – 1947
29. Belgium, Israel, Niger, Seychelles, South Korea, Suriname – 1948
30. Bosnia, & Herzegovina, Chile, China, Costa Rica, Syria – 1949
31. Barbados, Haiti, India – 1950

32. Antigua & Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, Nepal, St. Kitts & Nevis, St. Vincent & the Grenadines – 1951
33. Bolivia, Cote d'Ivoire, Greece, Lebanon – 1952
34. Bhutan, Guyana, Hungary, Syria - 1953
35. Belize, Colombia, Ghana - 1954
36. Cambodia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Honduras, Nicaragua, Peru – 1955
37. Benin, Comoros, Egypt, Gabon, Mali, Mauritius, Somalia – 1956
38. Malaysia, Zimbabwe – 1957
39. Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea, Laos, Nigeria – 1958
40. Madagascar, San Marino, Tunisia, United Republic of Tanzania – 1959
41. Canada, Cyprus, Gambia, Tonga – 1960
42. Bahamas, Burundi, Malawi, Mauritania, Paraguay, Rwanda, Sierra Leone – 1961
43. Algeria, Australia, Monaco, Uganda, Zambia
44. Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Fiji, Iran, Kenya, Morocco – 1963
45. Libya, Papua New Guinea, Sudan – 1964
46. Afghanistan, Botswana, Lesotho – 1965

47. democratic People's Republic of Yemen, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kiribati, Tuvalu – 1967
48. Nauru, Swaziland – 1968
49. Andorra, Yemen Arab republic – 1970
50. Switzerland – 1971
51. Bangladesh – 1972
52. Bahrain – 1973
53. Jordan, Solomon, islands – 1974
54. Angola, cape Verde, Mozambique, Sao tome & Principe, Vanuatu - 1975
55. Portugal – 1976
56. guinea-Bissau – 1977
57. republic of Moldova - 1978
58. Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Palau – 1979
59. Iraq – 1980
60. Liechtenstein – 1984
61. central African republic – 1986
62. Namibia – 1989

63.Samoa – 1990

64.south Africa – 1999

65.Kuwait 2005

Denial of political rights and in the male dominated society all over the countries of the world women had almost same position. The position of women in politics both in West and East was not better than any other. Since 1850, the right of women to vote was propagated in America and England. The first state in the world to accept women's franchise was Wyoming (USA) in 1869. The first sovereign state to adopt female suffrage state was New Zealand in 1893. Legal Rights of women like that she could sue her husband was granted in Mississippi (1839), New York (1848) and Massachusetts (1854). Great Britain granted women's Franchise in 1918 of women over 30 years and in 1928 to women over 21 years. In India all provincial legislatures had given voting right in 1929. Switzerland accepted the female Franchise in 1971.

Table 2

**Regional Representation of Women in Parliament
(Census, 2005)**

Region	Single/Lower House	Upper House	Both the Houses Combined
Scandinavia	39.9	-	39.9
America	18.8	19.5	18.9
Europe	16.9	16.9	16.9
Asia	15.2	13.5	15.1
Sub-Saharan Africa	15.0	14.2	14.9
Pacific	11.2	26.5	13.3
Arab States	8.8	5.6	8.1

Table 3

Nordic Countries	America	Europe (Excluding Nordic Countries)	Asia	Sub-Saharan Countries	Pacific	Arab Countries
41.4	21.8	19.1	17.4	17.2	13.4	9.6



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Table 4

REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN SOUTH ASIA

COUNTRY	YEAR WOMEN RECEIVED RIGHTS	YEAR 1ST ELECTED OR APPOINTED IN PARLIAMENT	LOWER HOUSE AS IN 2002
INDIA	1950	1952	8.8%
PAKISTAN	1947	1973	NIL
NEPAL	1951	1952	5.9
BHUTAN	1953	1975	9.3
SRILANKA	1931	1947	4.0
BANGLADESH	1972	1973	9.1
MALDIVES	1932	1979	6.0

SOURCE: UNDP REPORT, 2001

Historical background

Since the ancient period, women were dominated by men and were treated inferior and imprisoned within four walls were totally excluded from politics. Political philosophers of West were also against participation of women in political affairs. Philosophers, political leaders, religious preachers and scientists despite being genius, treated women inferior to men; Men's position was quite different than women. From the beginning in Bible, Eve was blamed for the downfall

of men. Thus women's subordination began to be compared to the status of men.

Aristotle describes "..... the relation of male to female is by nature such that one is superior and the other is dominated with barbarians, of course, the female and the dominated have the same rank. This is because that they do not possess a naturally dominating element." Sex prejudice hampered development and women's sufferings were not noticed and recognized. Home and family became the main source of oppression she became a part of patriarchy of men i.e. First father, second husband and her son at last, she was unable to enjoy the dignity.

Status of women was almost same throughout the country until the beginning of Industrial Revolution in 1868. Women were admired for their motherly quality and grace but regarded as completely inferior to men in the Greek states, Roman Empire describes no better status of women. In Germany, early medieval society followed "mundium" right i.e. wife under the complete control of her husband. Position of women in Japan was inferior to men since Tokugawa period.

The position of women in India during medieval times had 'closed life' by purdah system and treated as "commodity". The 18th century was considered as darkest period for the position of women. She remained as supplement to male society. Till the end of 18th

century women were completely and forcefully dominated by male superiority, physically and intellectually.

Evolving Position and Power of Women from Ancient India to Modern Days

In this situation an attempt has been made to glance through some position of women in the writings of great personalities and during different periods, Indus Valley Civilization (2500-1700) from the archeological remains of 2500 to 1700B.C. Archeologists noted that women in Indus Valley Civilization were worshipped as the ideal of female beauty and movement from which started the tradition of Indian classical dance even today in the form of Bharatnatyam School.

The Mauryan Empire (320-185 B.C.), it was during Chandragupta Maurya, the founder of Maurya dynasty the legal rights of women was adopted in the form of 'Stridhan' (the gift of parents during women's marriage and augmented by her husband afterwards). During this period women could remarry but they lost property rights of their deceased husband. Moreover, women of this age were active in public economic activities as wage-labor in state owned textile factories as well as serving as temple dancers, courtesans, and court attendants and nothing has been discussed regarding the lower class women. (Arthasastra 1992).

The Gupta Age (320-540 B.C.), the Gupta age is famous for its literary and artistic accomplishments. The legal rights and the ideal images of women were highly circumscribed. Through the laws of Manu, the period from 200 to 400 B.C. the independence of women was controlled by patriarchal family.

In childhood, women should be under her father's control, in youth under her husband, and when her husband is dead, under her sons. She should not have independence (Chap5 verse 148, Doniger, p.115)

A virtuous wife should constantly serve her husband like a god, even if he behaves badly, freely indulges his lust, and is devoid of any good qualities. (Chap. 5, verse 154, Doniger, p. 115) But a woman who violates her (vow to her dead) husband because she is greedy for progeny is the object of reproach here on earth and loses the world beyond. (Chap. Verse 161, Doniger, p. 116)

A wife, son, and a slave: these three are traditionally and said to have no property; whatever property they acquire belongs to the man to whom they belong. (Chap 8, verse 416, Doniger, p. 196)

The bed and the seat, jewelry, lust, anger, crookedness, a malicious nature, and bad conduct are what Manu assigned to women. (Chap9, verse 17, Doniger, p. 205)

The appointment of widows is never sanctioned in the Vedic verses about marriage, nor is the remarriage, nor is the remarriage of widows mentioned in the marriage rules. (Chap. 9, verse 65, Doniger, p. 205)

A thirty-year-old man can marry a twelve-year-old girl charms his heart, and a man of twenty-four can marry an eight-year-old girl; and if duty is threatened, (he should marry) in haste. (Chap. 9, verse 94, Doniger, p. 28)

During the age of Guptas, the practice of child marriage, the physical seclusion of women, and the system of 'Sati' became popular. Sati system was most prominent in higher-caste Rajputs, especially Kshatriyas, and Brahmans in Bengal including southern part of India. Since widows were held responsible for their husband's death, so through the means of 'Sati' spiritual and social prestige to a woman's family and in-laws as well as economic relief was maintained by killing the widow women.

According to Altekar, during **Vedic Age (2500-1500 B.C.)**, women's position was satisfactory. They were well taken with educational facility and married at the age of sixteen and seventeen years. They got right to select their husbands.

Age of Samhitas, Brahmans and Upanishads (1500 to 500 BC)
Women continued to have satisfactory status. They used to own marriage gift or movable property. Girls from only higher class were

given education mostly by their father or close relatives. Marriage age was usually sixteen. Especially kshtriya girls were given right to choose their life partners. But these are other reasons for women's role in religious, political affairs and widow remarriage. Since, when men used to go in battle fields, women used to do their works in their absence. Sati system was abolished and Niyoga and widow remarriage was encouraged to get heirs to fight in wars.

Age of Shastras and Early Smritis (500 BC to 500 AD)

Child marriage, polygamy, purdah system was started due to foreign invasion in northern India. Due to joint family & for property right, women were forced to perform Sati. Manusmirti laid the social code which legitimized hierarchal caste structure, patriarchal joint family system and low status of women.

Age of Aryans:

“Yatra naryastu puhyante, ramante tatra devta” (the place where women are worshipped, God themselves inhabit that place)

In ancient India, Aryans gave women the status of Goddess. During Aryans era, women represented from assemblies to holy religious rituals. No religious rituals of Hindu Brahmins were completed without the presence of women.

Ancient Indian women had right choose their own life partner through the process called "Swayamvar" in this process, grooms used to assemble in the house of bride and she was supposed to choose one amongst them. Beside all these, ancient Indian women like, Gayatri, Maitreyi, Anusuya were known for renowned religious teachings of Hindu Sastras & Slokas.

Aryan & the Vedic Age (1700-500 B.C.)

Indian historians regarded Vedic period (1500 to 700 B.C.), as the heart of golden age of Indian culture. The position of women in Vedic India was 'fairly satisfactory'. (Altekar 1978:338)

Wendy O'Flaherty regarded earliest collection of Aryan religious hymns of about 1300-1000 B.C. as "a book of men about male concerns in a world dominated by men, and one of the concerns is women".

In the later Vedic period, i.e. from 8 Century B.C. onwards with mixed religion and culture led the women like, Gargi Vacaknavi to represent the tradition of Vedic scholarship among women and question the court of king Janakar at around 600 B.C. But during the last centuries of the pre-Christian era, Brahmans imposed restrictions on women as well as lower social groups (Jamison 1996).

Uma Chakravarti defines "brahmanical patriarchy" as "a set of rules and institutions in which caste and gender are linked, each

shaping the other, and where women are crucial in maintaining the boundaries between castes". (Chakravarti 1996 b: 9)

Women were supposed to maintain Stridharma (the ideal of wifely fidelity) and their life were controlled through laws and customs of the society (including physical punishment). Through the combination consent and coercion the upper caste women were tried to be pleased through simultaneous spiritual & material rewards (Chakravarti 1993a)

Age of later Smiritis, Commentators and Digest Writer (500 A.D. - 1800A.D.)

The status of women continued to be more deteriorated from 8th century onwards. 'Sati' (burning of widows with the husband's dead body at the funeral pyre) system became prevalent and women who did not perform Sati were supposed to tonsure their head and lead ascetic lives. Early marriage and early widowhood became popular. But widows continued to have property rights, caste system became more rigid and greater control over women's freedom and right became prevalent with purdah system.

Neera Desai summed up women's deteriorated position in 8th century in the following sentences: 'ideologically woman was considered a completely inferior species, having no significance, no personality: socially she was kept in a state of utter subjection, denied any right. Suppressed and oppressed, she was further branded as

basically lacking the ethical fibre. The patriarchal joint family, the customs of polygamy and purdah, the property structure, early marriage, sati or a state of permanent widowhood: all of these contributed to the smothering of the free development.

Neera Desai and Maithreyi Krishnaraj in their combined work, 'Women and Society in India' summarized the conditions of women during Manusmriti from 500 BC to 1800 AD in the following ways

'In concluding this vast phase of history in the context of women's position, it may be mentioned that particularly after the establishment of class society and the rise of private property in the post Vedic period, women's position in the society declined. Patriarchal values relating to sexuality and regulation of her movement, thus controlling her purity, get entrenched during this phase. The overwhelming concern for purity and maintenance of honor through a woman resulting in underpinning of her role as wife and mother, exercised through both overt and covert regulations, seem to have been necessitated by the material development of the needs of the society.'

Gradually, after Vedic age, women's position and high status in the society started degrading. They lost their freedom towards religious learning and practices and their status became lower than the status of 'Sudras' (lowest caste of ancient Hindu society). The status of women became more miserable till the time of 'Smirits' (religious scripture of Hindu). By this time, women were not allowed to have free

education though they were given educations which were just related to domestic purposes.

Despite the practice of purdah among Muslims, the Delhi Sultanate of Delhi 1206, the Turkish Muslim women acquired a literary education and even participated in political events.

Role of Women in Politics during the Muslim Rule in India

Razia ruled from 1236 to 1240. She used to appear in public without veil, she was popular for horse riding skills and she led her military troops in the battle.

Women played major imperial politics during the Mughal dynasty. During Babur's reign, his mother, daughter played, advised and assisted monetarily during his entire political life. Among all the muslim women Nur Jahan, a thirty-four year old Persian widow who married the mughal Jahangir was not only politically manipulative and diplomatic in nature but she actively participated in imperial tiger shoots and hunting expeditions. (Findly 1993)

After getting married to Jahangir she appointed her brother and father in the major official positions of Mughal Empire and by there she strengthens the Persian relationship with the Mughals.

The wife of emperor Shah Jahan was another muslim for whom one of the seven wonders of the world, 'Taj Mahal' was built, Beside this, she took major part in all the policies of mughal empire during Shah Jahan's reign which was later on followed by her daughters, Jahanara Begum (1613-1683) the eldest daughter of mumtaz supervised the imperial household, and became political confidante of emperor Shah Jahan and her brother, Dara Shikoh.

Kuppuswamy, Kapadia, Indu Menon disregarded that through muslim invasion Indian women's position was devastated. To them, muslim infact found Hindu society like their own patriarchal muslim brought purdah system among hindu women but muslim influence was detrimental to the status of women. Since, women's position was already low when muslim invaded India.

Muslim women were better off as compared to Indian women since they enjoy right to education, both secular and religious and enjoyed the property rights. They used to paternal property rights. They used to enjoy parental property, the right to seek divorce under certain conditions, right to remarry incase of divorced or widowed. Though muslim conquerors in India resulted in seclusion of Indian women and confined them to the four walls of their houses and made them to practice 'Jauhar' (mass women suicide especially practised by Rajput women when their men used to defeat in the battle).

After the invasion of Muslims in India, they spread their culture in Indian societies. For them women were the sole property of her father, brother, and husband. They brought the system of polygamy and purdah (veil) among hindu society. In order to save the Indian women from muslim rulers women's freedom were restricted and girl child were regarded as burden towards the family. Moreover, among hindu society the social evils like, Child Marriage, Sati, Jauhar and restriction of girl education became popular & mandatory.

In ancient India, women enjoyed considerable freedom, status and prestige in the society. Women were regarded as man's companion and not his attendant. Lawmakers like. Manu degraded women's position to mere "Commodity and Gateway to Hell." Finally, these entire thing lead woman's position settled in typical indoor family life due to the rise of institution like, joint family in India (Rathna Ramchandran, 1995).

It may be noted that the social reformers of 19th & 20th centuries in India originated women's movement. Women from upper middle class with both the western and Indian oriented education infact organized themselves to form women organizations with the help of educated liberal minded Indian men. Ladies Association was in Calcutta was started under the auspices of Brahamo Samaj, Arya Samaj in Northern India and Prathna Samaj in western India. Beside all these, Shayadan Sadan in 1892, Seva Sadan in 1909 and Bhagini Samaj in 1911 were formed in British India.

The social reformers and all these organizations brought awareness among women regarding their status in the society. Though it accepted women as wives, mothers and their primary roles as a woman in the family but the social reformers propagated for women's education and even pressurized British Government to pass legislation to stop and social evils of Indian society like, Sati system, Child Marriage, prohibition of widow remarriage, purdah system of those days.

Gradually with the help of philanthropic men in the late century, prominent women like, Pandit Ramabai Saraawati, Ramabai Ranade, Ms.Serennai, M.Cursetjee etc. started Bharat Mahila Parisad, Arya Mahila Samaj, Stri Zarthosti Mandal for philanthropic and charitable work and at the same time for introducing the uplifting enlightenment of women.

The first autonomous women's organization was started by Sarala Devi Chaudhurani as the Bharat Stree Mahamandal and had its first meeting in 1910 in Allahabad. It became successful to open its branches in other places like, Lahore, Allahabad, Delhi, Karachi, Amritsar, Hyderabad, Kanpur, Bankura, Hazaribagh, Midnapur and Kolkata to organize and unite women from all spheres of life regardless of their caste, culture, creed, class, religion to start moral and material progress of the women in India. Three national women's organizations viz. Women's India Association, National Conference of women in India

and All India Women's Conference were started in 1917, 1925 respectively.

These organizations mainly started for eradication of social problems of the Indian society. Women Indian Association was open to both Indian and Europeans and it was founded by Margaret Cousins, an Irish feminist, with the help of Annie Besant. She became the first President with Margaret Cousins, Dorothy Jinarajadasa, Mrs. Malati Patwardhan, Mrs. Ammu Swaminathan, Mrs. Dadhabhoy and Mrs. Ambujammal as honorary secretaries. This organization flourished in thirty-three branches within five stipulated years. They were having forty-three branches, twenty centers and 2,300 members.

Lady Amerdeen founded the National Council as a branch of the International Council of women. In India, Mehribai Tata started this organization along with three other life Saheb of Baroda and Lady Dorab Tata. Another woman social activist of their time Maniben Karpatri- Dowager, Begum Saheb of Bhopal, Maharani a organized Sewa Mandir to work among poor slum women in India.

All India women's Conference was also started by the efforts of Margaret Cousins and distinguished elite Indian women like, Rani Saheb of Sangli, Maharani Chimnavai Sahib Gaekwad of Baroda. Women like, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, Renuka Ray were some of the dedicated workers of this association.

AIWC became successful in passing Sarda Act against Child marriage and the Hindu Code Bill with the help of women like, Muthulakshmi Reddy of the WIA, Mrs. Hamid Ali, and Rani Rajwade and Sarojini Naidu from AIWC supported and voiced for Universal Adult Franchise in India.

Statement of the Problem

In India, the social structure, cultural norms and value systems are important determinants of women's role and their position in society. The constitution not only grants equality to women and laws for women and children but it also forbids any discrimination based on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth. It also empowers the state to practice protective discrimination in favor of women, children, socially, educationally backward classes of the society. In spite of all these factors and provisions made by the Constitution of India, they deeply rooted customs, traditions, belief, practices Indian patriarchal society of past and present fully contributed the subordination of women even today on various grounds.

In the ancient times, women were in a better position in the society. The Vedic period was golden days for women when they, like men participated in all the social fields and took active part in each and every sphere of human life. In the society, the men and women stood on the same footing. There was no discrimination between men and women. The women enjoyed full freedom and equality with men

during that period. Great women like, Ghosa, Apala, Viswavara, Lopamudra, Gargi, Indrani and many others are known with great respect. The period between 1500 B.C. to 500 A.D (Post Vedic period), the womenfolk had to suffer a setback as Manu had laid down some restrictions on the rights and privileges of women and as a result, the status of women received setback and they were confined to the four walls of the houses.

In pre – Vedic period, the society in India was matriarchal and women occupied the superior place as compared to men. In Vedic age, women enjoyed equality in education and were not confined to purdah. They were allowed to marry with the man of their choice. They took keen interest in political matters but evidence of male domination cannot be brushed aside. Later on, the condition of Indian women became worse.

Hindu Dharma Shastras and customs had already paved the way for the complete subordination of male dominated society. Women were deprived of property rights, they were supposed to worship their husband as God, and dowry and Sati system misguided the dignity and freedom of the women.

The Mohamedan rule confined upper caste women to their homes and early marriages were preferred. However, the British rule contributed a lot for emancipation and the revival of lost identity of Indian women.

Today, Empowerment of women has become the 'Slogan of the day.' Now, the question arises, Why is women representation necessary? Why women needed to be empowered? Are they less empowered?

States are where the power lies and the power is gendered. "We the people" of each and every country share and shape the decision and the actions of the country .Politics is an art of possible and the individual who holds the official positions in government and is in charge of resources and decision making policies of the nation. In such case, if women are not equal and invisible in political scenario, then decisions are made and legislate in, the male interest. In democratic states, state means "We the people" govern ourselves an important activity of life, an endless source of worthwhile tasks and challenges to human intelligence and creativity, and the potential avenues of justice. State power vests in law making bodies be it social, political, financial, cultural, sexual and familial. State and social policies can mobilize, recognize and rebuff citizens and their claims. State institutions and capacities makes and distribute resources for popular and elite struggles of the nation.

State and social policies establish and maintains from elementary education, healthcare, physical safety of the citizens, environment sustainability, economic viability, checks degree of inequality, infers civil quality of life, the national interest and to the international bounding with other states.

In such case, feminist argue that, most laws of the states are gender neutral but in practice, neutrality towards gender and the maintenance of equality between men and women in government actually hides substantial gender inequality. Since women are invisible in decision making policies of the country.

Women are not equal and open to contest in the election i.e. only men appear in politics and to hold the political positions of authority where politics is authoritative allocation of values and men are supposed to allocate the values of the country according to their individual or collective choices for themselves, for society and the country and for the women of the country. Theorists like, Annie Phillips, Carol Pateman, and Iris young have noticed that the abstract terms in political theory, such as individual or citizen, though having the appearance of being gender neutral, actually signify- White males (Pateman 1988,1989; Phillips 1991,1995; Young1990).Others forcefully argue that the state was structured from its inception to benefit men having continuing interest in the maintenance of male domination, both in western countries (Lerner1986; MacKinnon 1989)and in non-western countries (Charrad 2001, Do women really need power?) These are some of the fundamental questions which confront the people of the world. India is also no exception to this.

However, in terms of every set of indices of development and socio-economic status, women have fared worse than men in all regions and in all strata of the population. In work, employment,

earnings, education, health status and decision making powers, there is a clear difference between the male and female entitlements. The empowerment of women has become more vital with the wake of globalization.

'Out of 1 billion people living in abject poverty, women are an overwhelming majority'. (UNDP: 1995)

Moreover, women earn less for comparable work, are often barred from certain forms of (lucrative) employment, and perform much of their work in the unpaid private sector, including the rural sector. They often have no choice but to accept poorly paid, undervalued work in dangerous working conditions sometimes and with no job security. Legal barriers, including those derived from customary law to the ownership of, or access to land, resources, capital, and technology restricts women's economic advancement. Besides, most of the women are more frequently exposed to violence and sexual exploitation in their workplace

United Nations Organization stated that, 'any discrimination against women is global, all pervasive, and persistent''.

The realities of women's lives through the planet indicate that gender equality in all its manifestations remain a long way off. Women are still the group of people who undertake the bulk of the unpaid work which is done in the society, live in greatest poverty, control the

fewest resources, and (most of whom) are hardly educated even to the primary school level" (Dagar Rainuka, 1998)

The United Nations Report (1977) on the status of women worldwide states that, "In south Asia, women's representation in political institutions has declined since from Nairobi Conference. (Second Asian & Pacific Ministerial Conference on Women in Development, Review & Appraisal of Implementation of the Nairobi Forward looking strategies for the advancement of women, June, 1994).

According to global data on women parliamentarians prepared by the Inter-Parliamentary Union shows that women constitute only 10% of the total membership of the Parliament.

Though cases can be found in Nordic countries some socialist countries but within these countries too women do not occupy significant position in decision making positions in political structures.

Beijing Conference, 1995 (Jakarta Declaration) "Empowerment of women is not only a equity consideration, it was also a necessary precondition for sustainable economic & social development. Involvement of women in the political arena & in decision making role is an important tool for empowerment as well as monitoring standards of political performance."

World Summit for Social Development held at Copenhagen in March, 1995 figure out 'empowerment' as a prominent objective. The

Draft Declaration of the Third Preparatory Committee (New York from 16-27 January, 1995) held by the heads of the states and government adopted and asserted that, in both economic social terms, the most productive policies and investments are those which empower people to maximize their capacities, resources and opportunities.

The Declaration and the Programme of Action of World Summit for Social Development, 1995 tried to link empowerment with economic globalization. The statement and the declaration made by the Third Preparatory Committee used the word empowerment not to achieve goals but implemented in the context of production and investment. However, point 23.0 of the Declaration states, "Recognize that empowering people, particularly women, to strengthen their capacities is a main objective of development and its principle resource. Empowerment requires the full participation of people in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of decisions determining the functioning and the well being of our societies.

In the Fourth United Nations Conference on Women in the year 1995 attended by the governments of 189 countries stated that, inequalities between women and men have persisted and major obstacles remaining still. The former Secretary General of the United Nations, Boutros Ghali asserted that, 'few causes promoted by the United Nations have generated more intense and widespread support than the campaign to campaign to promote and protect the equal rights of women.' He further explained that, 'the organization has

helped to create a historic legacy of internationally agreed strategies, standards, programmes and goals to advance the status of women worldwide.'

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)'s Human Development Report (1995) states "investing in women's capabilities & empowering them to exercise their choices is not only valuable in itself but also the surest way to contribute to economic growth & development". The report reaffirms that, 'human development is impossible without gender equality. As long as women are excluded from the development process, social development will remain lopsided. Sustainable human development implies engendering the development paradigm; and here lies the importance of women empowerment'.

The declaration on the Elimination of discrimination against women 1967, The Declaration of Mexico on the equality of women and their contribution of development and peace, 1975 and the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, 1979, Conference on Population and Development in Copenhagen in 1995, the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. Further, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which would guarantee women's human rights was ratified by 166 countries. After 1993, the United Nations instituted Women's Human Right through World Conference on Human Rights to monitor the condition of women and

their status worldwide and to be included in UN reports on countries' human right status.

In 1945, the UN Charter under Article 1(3) included that, 'to achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion.....

UN General Assembly in Article 13 authorized that, 'to initiate studies and make recommendations in a number of matters, including 'assisting in the realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion'. Other than Article 8, 55, 56, 60, 62, 68, and 76 articulated the principle of non-discrimination on the grounds of sex in numerous institutional contexts.

In 1946, the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) was set up under articles 55 and 56 of the Charter of the UNO. Under the leadership of Eleanor Roosevelt in 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights declared the concept of non-discrimination on the grounds of sex under articles 1 & 2. The so-called International Bill of Rights was declared legal through the two Human Rights Covenants of the UN in the year 1966. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) under article 2 prohibits discrimination in the exercise of any of the rights enumerated in the Covenant, and article 3 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

(ICESCR) does the same thing. Moreover, ICCPR through free-standing non-discrimination clause affirms equality before the law under article 26 which states that,

‘All persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law. In this respect, the law shall prohibit any discrimination and guarantee to all persons equal and effective protection against discrimination on any ground such as race, color, sex, language, religion or other political opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

Similarly, the ILO (International Labor Organization), the UNESCO (United Nations Economic Social Cultural Organization) prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sex at work, employment respectively. Moreover, Article 27 of the Fourth Geneva Convention asserts to protect women in international armed conflict ‘against any attack on their honor, in particular, against rape, enforced prostitution, or any form of indecent assault’.

In 1946, a sub-commission on the status of women under CHR but the original mandate for the Commission on the Status of women (CSW) was prepared by the reports of ECOSOC for the promotion of women’s rights in ‘political, economic, social and educational fields and to make recommendations on urgent problems requiring immediate attention in the field of human rights’.

In 1965, the first specialized Convention on the elimination of discrimination was completed by the CHR (especially Racial Discrimination)

In 1967, drafted by CSW declaration was made for the elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against women in UN.

In 1975, UN's first Conference on women was held in Mexico city. The Conference called for a binding convention on the elimination of discrimination against women. CSW again prepared second convention in 1980 at Copenhagen. The main aim of this convention was to achieve & to maintain equality for women and their recognition in full global development, the welfare of the world, the establishment of a just new international economic order, and for the international peace and security.

Part I of the Preamble to the Women's Convention in article 1 defines discrimination against women as distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex for the purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women irrespective of their marital status, on the basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.

According to the Convention, 'It affirms that it applies only to adverse discrimination and includes direct and indirect discrimination. Intention to discriminate is not required. The definition was noted and

approved by the United Nations Human Rights Committee in its General Comment No. 18 on the ICCPR, which provides consistency and cohesion between the Women's Convention and the more general, mainstream rights treaties.

Parts II, III & IV of the Convention identifies gender based discrimination. Article 7, 8 deals with the participation of women in public life of the country. Article 9 talks about equality in acquisition and Conference of nationality. Article 10 gives women access in all other aspects of education. Article 11 identifies equality of women in matters of payment and Article 12 gives access of women in health services. Article 13, 15, 16 confers equality in economic and social life of women and before the law and within the family respectively. Special provision for rural women can be found in Article 14. Part V of the Convention establishes the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and it comprises 23 independent experts through initial, periodic reports from the states parties 'on the legislative, judicial, administrative or other measures' and implemented under the obligations of the Convention. But unlike, Human Rights Committee CEDAW does not possess power to receive inter-state or individual or group complaints.

Political Profile of Indian Women

India is a land rich not only of ancient heritage but also with an ancient history and civilization as old as china. The Harappan civilization along with great civilizations like, Egyptian and

Mesopotamian civilizations was regarded as advanced civilizations of humankind. The Harappan civilization which existed in the third millennium B.C. (2700-1800 B.C.) has been called the first manifestation of civilization which occurred outside the Western Asia (Mesopotamia) and Egypt in Neolithic period (Fair Servis, 1997:56)

India, the 2nd most populous country after China with 989million population, 120 million women still lives in poverty. Generally, country with active political participation of women makes considerable advances towards women empowerment but reverse trend happened as in case of India.

During the freedom movement of India, Indian women played a crucial role in social, economic, political process of the country mostly under the leadership of Gandhi.

The political status of woman can be measured through the degree of freedom and equality as enjoyed by women in shaping and sharing of power of the society. In India, it started from the foundation of Indian National Congress in 1885. In the early twentieth century, women of Bengal and western India more vocal and actively participated in protest movements like, the Partition of Bengal (1905), Swadeshi, Boycott against the foreign rule. Such movements promoted the use of indigenous goods against foreign goods especially with the help of women activists (Borthwick 1984; Forbes 1988). In the patronage of Gandhi women started spinning yarn to wear 'khadi' (the cloth woven from khadi yarn).

Later, it became the nationalist movement and struggle against British rule in India. The early 20th century saw the birth of women's active participation and organization for political rights.

Through Gandhiji's Non-Cooperation movement (1919), Basanti Devi (1880-1974) and Urmila Devi (1883-1956) the wife and the sister of C.R. Das respectively, were the first Indian women who sold 'khadi' & were arrested by the colonial authority. For the demand of enfranchisement of women on the basis of equality with men, Smt. Sarojini Naidu for the first time represented the British Parliament on behalf of Indian women in 1917. Gandhi barred women's participation in Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930 but still women openly challenged the British authority by picketing and burning foreign shops. Beside all these factors, young women like, Bina Das, Shanti Ghosh, Suniti Choudhary, Pritilata Das were also known for terrorist activities like, making bombs, attacking District Magistrate, forming groups in order to bring political freedom, social change of Indian society and women itself.

As a result, in 1930, through the meeting of women's organizations, women demanded immediate acceptance of adult franchise without the discrimination of sex. It was accepted in the Karachi session of the Indian National Congress in 1931 and committed itself to women's political equality regardless of women's status and qualification. This promise was redeemed after the independence in

the form of fundamental rights and the Directive Principle of State Policy in the Constitution of India.

During 1920s, narrow franchise was granted to Indian women Kamala Devi Chattopadhyaya (1903-1990) and Hannah Angelo contested for Madras Legislative Council in 1926 but neither of them won. Muthulakshmi Reddi (1889-1968), a physician by profession was nominated as the first woman and she was also selected as Deputy Speaker of the Madras Council.

She is even famous for proposing legislation to end the institution of 'Devadasis' (M.Reddy, 1930) (Devadasis are young women dedicated in their youth to save Hindu temples through their dance before the temple deity and had to perform sexual relationship with temple priests & patrons in states like, Madras (later Tamil Nadu), Mysore, (later Karnataka, & Orissa (Keresenboom-story 1987; Marglin 1985; Nair 1994a; M. Reddy 1930; Srinivasan 1983, 1985). In Madras, the legal abolition of Devadasis came in 1947. However, Devadasis lost their material basis & they mostly moved to larger urban centers like, Bombay to become 'Sex Workers'. (Nair, 1994a)

The Government of India Act of 1935 extended the franchise rights of women but the British offered such rights to few married women (to the wives of certain property classes and military personnel) as in case of Great Britain. But very soon Indian women largely demanded universal franchise and not the partial steps which were based on women's relationships and identification through their

husbands. As a result, in 1936-37 Election, women won 56 out of approximately 1,500 seats in the provincial legislature. Among which Vijaylakshmi Pandit, sister of Jawaharlal Nehru, was selected as the Minister of Local Government and Public Health in the United Provinces (Pandit, 1979). Beside this, three women Deputy Speakers and two became Parliamentary Secretaries (Forbes, 1996).

As in case of India, theoretically, the principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Constitution of the country in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights and Duties and Directive Principles of State Policy. Recently, the empowerment of women has been recognized as the central and positive issue in determining the status of women. The National Commission of Women in India was set up in the year 1990 by an Act of Parliament to safeguard the rights and legal entitlements of women. Further, the 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendments of 1993 have provided seats for women in local bodies of Panchayats and Municipalities.

However, the demand for 33% reservation of women in India, itself shows a clear demarcation of restriction on women's independent, equal participation with men. Moreover, political parties with no single interest for women empowerment, emancipation and without any kind of commitment towards women's bill regarding women's rights make both the concept baseless.

The terms like, 'Empowerment' and 'Reservation' of women in politics is just an attempt to limit women's scope it clearly indicates

that they are unable to challenge the dominant structures and all the processes of patriarchal society of India.

Their struggle for political participation against unequal power relations with men in their families, in the state and in politics in actual sense has been replaced and defined in terms of what we popularly call 'Women Empowerment' as in case of India.

Feminist political scientists argue that, 'women have been largely absent from images of political leaders as well as from the set of practices involved with leadership and governance. (Representations of women in politics) inevitably have to deal with the complexity of inventing a way for women to be understood both as women and as (potential) political leaders, something imbued with masculine gender..... image of symbols have much to do with attributes of leadership of governance. (Durest –Lahti & Verstegen 1995, p. 214)

The term 'Empowerment' of women has become the slogan of contemporary world. Empowerment gained its popularity from the year 1976 which was actually started by the Third World feminists, including India. They mainly raised their voice for social justice and equality of women.

Power can be defined as control over resources and control over ideology that can be exercised through decision making process. The term empowerment is often used to describe a process whereby

powerless or disempowered can gain greater share of control of resources and decision making. Thus, empowerment is about power and changing the balance of power.

As in case of India, theoretically, the principle of gender equality is enshrined in the 'Women Friendly' Constitution of India in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, and Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles of State Policy. Recently, the empowerment of women has been recognized as the Central and Positive issue in determining the status of women.

The National Commission for women in India was set up in the year 1990 by an Act of Parliament to safeguard the rights and legal entitlements of women. Further, the 73rd & 74th Amendments (1993) to the Constitution of India have provided reservation of seats for women only in local bodies of Panchayats and Municipalities in India. However, the argument for 33 percent reservation for women in grassroots level,

Parliament, and Legislative Assembly in India in itself shows a clear demarcation of restriction on women's independent, equal participation with men. Moreover, political parties with no single interest for women's empowerment, emancipation and any kind of commitment towards women's bill regarding their rights make both the concepts baseless. Infact, the terms like, 'Empowerment' and 'Reservation' of women in Indian politics is just an attempt to limit women's scope and it clearly indicates that they are unable to

challenge the dominant structures and all the processes of the patriarchal psyche of India.

Their struggle for political participation against unequal power relations with men in their families, in the state & politics has been replaced & defined in best possible terms of what we popularly call 'Women Empowerment' as in case of India.

According to February 1998, Times of India report, 'Domestic responsibilities, lack of financial clout, raising criminalization of politics and the threat of character assassination' are making it difficult for Indian women to participate in Politics. Moreover, women politicians point out that even within the political parties, women are having problem to maintain leadership positions. In fact, 'women candidates are usually fielded from 'losing' constituencies where the party does not want to 'waste' a male candidate.'

Profile of Women in the Indian Parliament

In India, from 1991–1996, 39 women representatives were mostly from middle class, professional women with little or no links to the Indian Parliament and with the women's movement. Most of them accessed politics through their families, few of them through students and civil rights movement and some as a result of and increasing representation from the lower castes. The majority of women in the Indian Parliament are elite women while their public role challenges some stereotypes, their class position often allows them a far greater

range of options than are available to poorer women. Quotas for women as a strategy for accessing to the political arena have growing support among MPs of India despite the fact that very few have accessed the system through this route; most women are still firm believers in the meritocratic argument. Most women MPs have supported the 81st Amendment ensuring 33% reservation of women in Parliament, even though several parties objected this bill in favor of women empowerment.

In 1995, the question of quotas was raised again which was mainly focused on women in Parliament. Initially, most parties agreed to this proposition. But when the bill addressing the 33% reservation of women was introduced in the 11th Parliament in 1997, several parties and groups raised objections. Like, overlapping quotas for women in general and women of lower castes and the issue of elite women created rift in women's involvement in politics.

Most women's groups felt that the caste issue would create division among women. Many felt uneasy about giving special privileges to elite women by ensuring seats for women in parliament. However, Hindu Nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has supported and committed itself to introduce another women's quota bill in Parliament.

Consequently 3.1 Percent of the total contestants in 1996 election occupied less than 6 to 10 % of the total seats in the Legislative Assemblies and Parliament of India.

Status of Women in India

It is pertinent to quote Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, who said, "You can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of its women."

The year 1975 was declared by the United Nations as the International Year of women, and later, the entire decade from 1975 onwards was devoted to it.

'Status' is a sociological concept when we talk about status it represents an individual, as a member of a society and occupies a number of statuses. Infact, it is the totality of these statuses that gives an individual a 'station' in the social system. Some statuses are common whereas some are ranked in different strata of the society. Statuses for instance, mother wife, and sister are common in all kinds of society. However, statuses like, student, teacher, principal are ranked statuses of the same society but status of principal is higher than the status of teacher and student at the same time. Similarly, the common statuses of father, husband, and sister are higher than the statuses of mother, wife and brother respectively in India.

When we talk about status of women we are referring to the position of a woman by the virtue of her being a woman in general which differs from particularly status of women as compare to men women has been regarded as the weaker section of the society.

Today, women may be educated, self employed, or may be in higher positions but still they are categorized as 'backward' and does not constitute a 'class' by themselves like men of the same society.

Most of the societies in India is patriarchal in its nature and is characterized mostly by male dominance. Despite the very name Hindustan and the fact that Hindu religion dominates in population and of the territories of India and the other fact that Hindu religion even though believes and worship goddess and regard them as embodiment of 'shakti' the Goddess of power, force and courage. On the one hand, it is proclaimed that, "the gods live where women are worshipped" but in practice women are regarded as inferior to men and there is gender biasness in Indian society.

In India, the status of women was an issue of great concern especially during the 19th century reformers in India. Their main efforts were directed against social evils, customs of those days like, sati, female infanticide and prohibitions against Widow Remarriage which was seen as detrimental to the status of women. For this they were criticized by non other than women themselves. Saraladevi Choudhurani, the founder of Bharat Stree Maha Mandal in her work, 'A Women's Movement' wrote that, "They are the so-called social reformers. They advertise themselves as champions of the weaker sex; equal opportunities for women, female education and female emancipation are some of their pet subjects of oratory at the annual show. They even make honest efforts at object lessons in the above

subjects by persuading educated ladies to come up on their platform and speak for themselves but woe to the women if they venture to act for themselves”.

It is a million dollar question in our society that when any mother may love both her child (girl or boy) equally but when mother herself is poor, oppressed, illiterate, ignorant, unhealthy and regarded as Second Sex in home and the society, then what kind of future she can provide for her child?

Parmita Shastri in Outlook India, 1998, commented that, “I was told Indian women don’t think like that about society. But I would like to argue that if they don’t think like that they should be given a real opportunity to think like that”.

Women Empowerment: Meaning and the Issues of Gender in India

“Man’s capacity for justice makes democracy possible but man’s inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary.”

Jakarta Declaration pointed out that, “empowerment of women is not only an equity consideration it was also a necessary precondition for sustainable economic and social development. Involvement of women in the political arena and in decision making roles is an important tool for empowerment as well as monitoring standards of political performance.”

“At the dawn of the twenty-first century, states and international community can no longer refute the fact that humanity is made up of two sexes, not just one.” (Oliveria 26)

Women do not hold important roles in government and participate in making important decisions in our country. People in India do not just bother to hear or read about women in politics as often as they do about men.

The status of women in modern India is paradoxical in its nature, some are on top & have taken positions of Prime minister, President of the country and doing quite well in multinational companies but many are suffering and killed in domestic violence, torture by non other than their own family members and also sacrificed in the name of ‘Honor Killing’,

The sex ratio of India shows that Indian society is still prejudiced against women & girl child against boy child which was recorded 933 females per thousand males in India in 2001 Census which is much below the world average of 990 females. Despite various legislations & guarantees of equal rights & status to men & women through the Constitution of India there is a wide gap between their de jure & de facto position.

Due to paternalistic family set up and male-dominated society in India, women do not have any role in decision making process. Moreover, due to growing money and muscle power,

communalization, and criminalization of politics, women are forced to leave the politics and participate in politics beyond voting. In a country like India, with negative cultural attitude which considers politics as a 'man's job' makes women's participation of politics insignificant and pose problems to researches to draw the general conclusions.

Ignorance of women regarding their own rights and legislations for their benefits makes women's participation impossible. In fact, Indian society in the later half of the twentieth century, does not look upon women's participation with sympathy and understanding.

Sapiro observed that the public and private spheres approach defines in two end points regarding men and women's participation in politics. Man's political concern revolves around competition, power, and authority, supremacy which have been labeled as natural and 'public'.

In contrast, women's political concern revolves around themes of welfare and domestic values and has been labeled as 'private'. In such case, empowerment of women has been widely acknowledge and regarded as important goal; in an international development.

A source book by World Bank on Empowerment and Poverty Reduction declared empowerment as "expansion of freedom of choice and action" (Narayan 2002, XVIII). Applicable to both women as well as to other disadvantaged or socially excluded groups, it is important to acknowledge that women's empowerment encompasses some unique

additional elements. Since, women are not just one group among various disempowered subsets of society, (the poor, ethnic minorities etc).

Other than this, household problems are a central focus of women's disempowerment which is not applicable to other disadvantaged groups. For other factors, empowerment needs institutional transformation, women's empowerment requires systematic transformation in institutions but support and revision in patriarchal structures of the societies. But again, without women as an agent of change and their interference, empowerment is impossible. Moreover, without women's individual or collective ability, recognition and utilization of resources like, economic, political and social cannot bring women's empowerment.

In early 1981, Acharya and Bennett argued that 'status' is a function of the power attached to a given role but women since fill a number of roles, it may be misleading to speak of 'the status of women'. To Mason (1986), phenomenon of gender inequality is inherently complex and spread among different dimensions: socio-political, psychological and others. She regarded that both men and women can be unequal in different ways and through different dimensions in various social set up of the various societies. Women may be empowered in one area of life while not in others. (Malhotra and Mathur 1997. Kishore 1995, 2000b; Hashemi, Schuler, and Riley 1996, Beegle, Frankenberg, and Thomas 1998).

Empowerment process is poorly captured by proxy measures and largely depends on women's decision making power. As in case of India, the Constitution made a deliberate and radical departure from the inherited social system by giving Indian women equal social and political status through various provisions. The political empowerment of women in India has made considerable strides from first General Election of the country starting from 4.4% in the First Parliament of 1952-1957 to 7.4 % in the election of 1996.

Women Representation in Rajya Sabha however has shown greater improvement which started from 7.7% in 1952 to 15.5 in 1991. Moreover, the 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendment Act have ways to many women in decision making process of urban and rural elected bodies through 33% women's reservation of seats in the Panchyati Raj institutions. However, Document on Women's Development (1985) showed that women's role in political structures virtually remained unchanged despite the rapid growth of informal political activity by them.

Gender as a political ideology, view woman as basically different from man - psychologically and often intellectually women's perception of life is a web. Man's is that of a ladder. Women's life is connected to that of stress, attachment, affiliation, empathy and dependence. Men emphasizes on competition, independence, separation and formal rights. (Shanti, K., 1998)

The political status of women can be defined as the degree of equality and freedom enjoyed by women in shaping and sharing of the power and the value given by the society to enjoy those powers conferred to them as their role. Women should enter into the political decision-making structures in order to change their subordinate social and economic status and change the political structures in the interest and well-being of the poor, the children and for women to make the structures of the society more humane and to check criminalization and communalization of politics of the country.

Despite various legislations to implement equal participation and empowerment of women in India, a majority of illiterate rural and even urban women are mobilized in the political process by the political parties who come to approach women candidature during elections for party issues and gaining sympathy for mass public for short term election winning goals and not for long term goals for bringing social and political changes and the issues of women empowerment and gender equality in decision making bodies. Since gender based subordination is deeply ingrained in the psyche of both men and women, female subordination to male ego has always been perceived as natural corollary to their biological differences (Biological School of Thought) (Beneria, L; and Sen, G; 1984) which is further interfered by religious beliefs, cultural practices and educational systems (Cultural School of Thought)

In such cases, women's empowerment is not only necessary for development but also creates the right environment and circumstances through which people can use their faculties and abilities to utilize their potential.

Empowerment in such context arises from cultural, ethnic, historical, economical, geographical, political and social, out of an individual, groups of people and various life cycle and helps to gain opportunity and strength to voice. Women empowerment and empowerment in general means access to power and control over resources and services. It aims at achieving goals, maintaining equality and justice, decision making power, challenging existing power.

To Shrilatha Batliwala (1995), power is "control over resources, the ideology and self, exercised in a socio-economic and political context among individuals and groups." To Jo Rowlands (1997), Empowerment can be identified with four different forms of power –

1. Power over – control or influence over others, instrumentation of domination,
2. Power to – generative or productive power which creates new possibilities and actions without domination.
3. Power with – a sense of the whole being greater than the sum of the individuals, especially when a group tackles problems together; and

4. Power from within – the spiritual strength and uniqueness that resides in each one of us and makes us truly human.

The term empowerment is often used to describe a process whereby the powerless or disempowered gain a greater share of control over resources and decision making and control over resources and decision making and control over ideology. Empowerment is of two types:

1. Empowerment in general is basically related to the poor or powerless people.
2. Empowerment of women is essential to emancipate women from the social evils like, traditional, cultural, customs. Women are marginalized over years together at various stages, and also they are branded as weaker and are kept outside from reaching the front stage. In this context, empowerment is required to increase awareness and capacity building for their greater participation in the decision making and transformation action (Saguna B, 2001)

To Chandra (1997), "Empowerment of women as the redistribution of power that enable thus to challenge patriarchal ideology and the male dominance. It is both a process and the result of the process. In the process, it not only increase their capacity, but also enable them to face new challenges in the overall development of the

household and also to contribute to the local community development.”

Empowerment enhances confidence, awareness, mobility, choices, control over resources and decision making power. Hence, empowerment is a process and not a product; it aims to change the nature and direction of systemic forces which marginalize women and other disadvantaged sections.

But in countries like India, caste and religion, class, race, ethnicity determines women’s position, condition and their empowerment. Empowerment is widely entered the gender equality arena in India through feminists’ activists challenging patriarchal gender relations, of progressive government policies. By 1990s, women’s issues and gender equality were more popularized by state, actors, aid agencies, and development professionals and by various feminists’ activists and advocates. Finally, in 1993, empowerment as a process of transforming the relations of power between individuals and social groups, shifting power in three critical ways:

1. by challenging the ideologies that justify social inequality (such as gender or caste)
2. by challenging prevailing patterns of access to and control over economic, natural and intellectual resources

3. by transforming the institutions and structures that reinforce and sustain existing power structures (such as the family, state, market, education, and media). The document argued that ideological and institutional changes were critical to sustaining empowerment and real social transformation. And it emphasized that transformatory empowerment could not be achieved by tackling any one of these elements of social power – even at that early stage, its architects were clear that there was no “one – shot” magic bullet route to women’s empowerment, such as providing women access to credit, enhanced incomes, or land – titles. (Batliwala 1993).

The Parameters for Women Empowerment are

- Building a positive self- image and self-confidence ;
- Developing ability to think critically;
- Building up group cohesion and fostering decision-making and action;
- Ensuring equal participation in the process of bringing about social change;
- Encouraging group action in order to bring about change in the society; and
- Providing the wherewithal for economic independence.

LEVELS OF EMPOWERMENT

The levels of women empowerment according to Longwe (1990) could be classified into five namely, welfare, access, awareness or conscientization, participation or performance and control and the need to move from the level of welfare to control, is a useful one. "Welfare" is nothing but to improve the living conditions of women. "Access" is the possibility to obtain services, products or commodities, and it is one of the indicators of progress of women's development. "Awareness" or "Conscientization" stands for the process of exposing people to the problems, which affect men and women because of discrimination and other societal problems. In women's development conscientization involves the process by which women analyze and understand the prevalence of gender discrimination. It is a crucial step towards enabling environment.

"Participation" or "Performance" involves ensuring equitable participation of women in the socio-political and economic processes and structures. In other words, it ensures equal participation of women in development planning, development processes and development programmes. "Control" means the ability to direct, or to influence events, recognizes women's right to control her destiny, have an equal share in the resources and benefits and expanding the role of women as decision makers in public and private domains, so that they are better able to control their lives.

“The empowerment idea manifests itself at all levels of societal interaction. It is found in giving a voice to the disenfranchised, in allowing the weak & the marginalized to have access to the tools & the materials they need to forge their own destinies.”

Empowerment of women in the small region of every state of India is necessary because the benefits will be felt not only by the women themselves, but by the society & the nation as a whole. Since there can be no true democracy, no true people’s participation in governance & development without the equal participation of women with men in all spheres of life & levels of decision making. Whether in case of households, workplace, in communities, in government & in the international arena, women participation will make society more responsive to the development of the country.

Empowerment is not merely a mind set, but a visible demonstration of that change which the world around is forced to acknowledge, respond to, & accommodate as best as possible. As a result, women’s empowerment will lead to a world where women & men ensure that resources are utilized not just equitably, but justifiably.

“Participation” can be of different types, as defined by different people. Anthony M. Orum defines political participation as the variety of ways in which people try to influence the political process.

Participation is not a single, undifferentiated entity. There are alternative modes of participation that differ significantly in the ways in which they relate the citizen to his Government. Besides voting is accepted almost without exception as the standard political act. They mention three other modes: campaign activity, co-operative activity, & citizen initiated contacts. (Verba, Ahemed, Bhatt)

Participation in politics and public debate helps to build a better & nobler character in the people.... People would be better human beings if they so participated". (Milbrath & Goel)

Participation gives some sort of satisfaction to the citizens – satisfaction with the government & satisfaction with one's own role. (Nie & Verba)

Participation benefits the participants as well as the larger community. It enables men by giving them a sense of their own dignity & value, alerts both rulers & the ruled to their duties & responsibilities, & broadens political understanding. (McClosky)

Participation helps the individual to be effective & it associates him or her with the political system. The higher the rate & the levels, the more varied the forms of participation, the healthier is the democratic system. (N.D. Palmer)

Hence, Political participation is a process of growth of citizenship. The main thrust in women's participation is how far they

have assumed the role & citizens beyond their traditional roles & to what extent such a role has been legitimized to the political structure.

The Political Participation of women means democratization of various political process & groups in society & it can be linked with the various struggles for women's empowerment. In India, political participation came within the national freedom movements of India. Political representations of women lead the women's empowerment in India. Whereas some authors argue that 'general' empowerment through political representations has limited the political empowerment of women was done in the name of reservation policy as in case of India. Furthermore, neither the concept of political representation nor the concept of political empowerment has been verified in most of the given studies, & the link between the two remains ambiguous. As compare to other constitutions of the world particularly in western democracies issues like quotas be it for women, ethnic, racial & religious minorities is still politically a highly contested issue whereas many constitutions are framed in such a way which makes the introduction of quota for marginalized groups are extremely difficult.

The bill which has already been in use through 73rd & 74th Constitution Amendment Act in India for reservations of seats for women in India & was passed smoothly as a women's Bill for the introduction of a women's quota in PRI (Panchyati Raj Institutions) but the same bill is still heatedly debating & has been variously delayed &

rejected many political parties when it comes to the introduction of women's quota in the National Parliament & Legislative Assemblies. The question here lies is why? Why such duplicity? Why discrimination on women's reservation of seats in higher political bodies?

Though Anne Phillips in her 'Politics of Presence (1995) one can draw a conclusion that like, in Germany & Nordic countries reservations of quota is election agenda & due to competition among different political parties, where no party introduces quota & if any party introduces no other parties can reject it is because of the fear of punishment ballot box nor can they criticize. The same thing can happen when it comes to Indian politics. However, in India the quota was not introduced at the level of party like, in most of the democracies in the west. In India it was started on the basis of the reservation of single- member constituencies.

Status & participation of women in politics in general has been measured on the basis of women suffrage in most of the democratic country of the world. Indian women's participation as an equal citizen of the country started with the grant of Universal Adult Franchise which started from the first General Election of India (1950) through the various provisions that has been discussed in the Fundamental Rights in the Indian Constitution. Judiciously Indian women may have exercised their equal rights & right to franchise along with the men but inequality, gender biasness is deeply rooted in India communities. Which make women dependent voters due to illiteracy, ignorance,

patriarchal set up of the society. Majority of women make their choice on the basis of suggestions from male members of the family. Like, from husband, father, & sons. Moreover, most of the women lack information, political awareness they are not aware of their own strength & rights.

Like men, women are not politically conscious. However, in the First General Elections three women became prominent parliamentarians' viz. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur was the first woman cabinet minister for health, & the Deputy Minister was Margatham Chandrasekher. Lakshmi Menon, however, was made a Parliament's life & continued to remain as Deputy Minister for External Affairs under Jawaharlal Nehru Prime Ministership & served as Foreign Minister till the year 1967.

In the year 1962 six Indian women became the members in the centre as Ministers of state or Deputy Ministers in the Centre as Ministers or Deputy Ministers twenty one Ministers or Deputy Ministers in State Governments, 34 were elected to the Lok Sabha & 12 women were returned through the voting process in the state Legislative Assemblies by the normal process of returning members to the Upper House in Delhi.

A publication brought out by the Indian National Congress in 1967 showed that 230 Congress women candidates were put for the 1962 elections out of which 152 were elected to the State Assemblies. This was reduced to 85 out of 175 in the year 1967.

Indian women like, Vijaylakshmi Pandit was the first woman to serve as a Minister in Provincial Government & the first ever Indian woman to be elected as the President of UN General Assembly. Later on she became the Ambassador of the USSR, the United States & High Commissioner in London.

INDICATORS FOR WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

The indicators for women's empowerment are as follows:

- Women become vocal, articulate and fearlessly self-expressive through their assembly in small groups and start making discussions about the self; within the family and in the group where she belongs.
- Women's knowledge and awareness of their situation, and access to, new kinds of information, knowledge, attitudes and skills.
- Women's ability to speak out and act on oppressive practices and violence against women within the family and outside it, for asserting their views and rightful share.
- Women gain significant confidence because of their role as decision makers, accounts keepers, planners of action programmes, trainers, etc.

- Women's physical mobility increases due to their attendance in meetings, trainings, cultural programmes, study tours, conferences and field action programmes.
- Women often along with their men begin to collectively address the forms of exploitation such as right to minimum wages, right to ownership of land and other family assets in their own names. Thereby women's economic status improves, leading to higher say and status in family matters.
- Women develop capacities and skills to understand and perceive situations, reflect upon it, critically analyze the situation further and explore possible solutions, for the problems posed before them.
- Women put together courage to do the chores taken care of and performed by men so far and learn relevant scientific and mathematical skills (like constructing bunds, handling technical instruments, calculating one's wages, etc.)
- Women's formation of formal and informal groups, for unitedly engage in struggles and action on common concerns and issues.
- Women's groups can access resources/schemes/services to meet their needs such as health, nutrition and child care and set up and manage their own services if necessary, e.g., crèches and non-formal schools for children, credit and saving schemes.

- Levels of violence, atrocities and oppressive social customs begin to decrease due to her social and economic empowerment.
- Altogether the image of women as a respectable source of strength improves significantly within and outside the family because of the change in women's self-image from one of subordination and subjugation to one of self-esteem, confidence and equality.