



## ROLE OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA: A BRIEF STUDY

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**Abstract:** The Word 'Empowerment' denotes the granting of Political, Social or Economic Power to an individual or group. The Women Empowerment is one of the major concerning issues in India. It seems out worldly that Indian Women are being empowered today with help of government policies. As the amendments and legal initiative have been taken by the Government, the policies are being energized from the school level. But it will take its time and also it needs the support of common man in India. At the same time Indian women also need to come forward and to have the courage to explore their carrier interests without having any burden of marriage or other responsibilities. The increasing percentage of working women is evident of the great start. Let's hope, this journey of empowering every woman should march fast and faster to arise the golden dawn for Indian woman.

### Introduction:

The Word 'Empowerment' denotes the granting of Political, Social or Economic Power to an individual or group. The Women Empowerment is one of the major concerning issues in India. It seems out worldly that Indian Women are being empowered today with help of government policies. But the question arises, is it truly getting applied properly or they still lag for behind the males in terms of economic, social and political attainments.

According to the 1981 census, the sex ratio in our population is 934 female per 1000 men and it has further reduced to 923 in 2001 and 933 in 2011 census. The major reason being the discrimination between man and woman are sex creating various types of gender biases. It is the irony to state that women in our county who have been widely acclaimed as an object of worship in our scriptures are relegated to a secondary position in comparison to their male counterparts in all walks of life. The women's movement in India has been addressing various social issues and has gained the momentum through years. Several mechanisms have been created in the county to work form the enhancement of women and generate social awareness on gender issues. Empowerment of women has become the main goal to help to remove discrimination. While several legal and policy level initiatives have been taken but even after a half century of the freedom with as many as constitutional gazettes, the status of women in the country continues to be unsatisfactory, shows the planning commission study of indicators like health, education, employment, political participation and decision-making. Hence the call for empowering women has started gaining ground during the last two decades in order to enable the Indian women.

A statistical profile prepared by the commission's social development and women's

programme division reveals that where the women's participation at work increased by 8.1 percent in the past three decades, selected crimes against them has increased manifold. In nearly 17 years from 1983 to 2000 women's representation in politics and administration has increased by more 2.3 percent whereas the representation in public sector undertaking has increased by 7.8 percent from 1971 to 1993. The statistics reveal that women are still lagging behind men in four major indicators i.e. sex ratio, mean age of the marriage, literacy and work participation are evident that the gender discrimination is still haunting the male dominated Indian society. According to statistics, there is a disappointing decline in the sex ratio in the past 40 years.

Not only the above decline percentage is the reason of concern but there are many areas where the essential improvements are needed e.g. female foeticide, mean age at marriage, higher maternal death rate, female illiteracy, crimes against woman, lower rates of wages for women laborers, malnutrition, dowry victimization, rape, sexual harassment, molestation and human trafficking for immoral purposes. All these crimes and humiliations are still threatening to the Indian womanhood. It is the irony of the age that it took 16 December 2012 to open the eyes of the government and Indian society to form the rigid laws for the crimes against the women. All these factors are affecting the growth of woman empowerment in India.

The following table shows the ratio of gender inequality prevalent in certain countries including India. The ratio reveals that India is lagging far behind other countries, though having a good economical exposure. The position of Indian women in earring status vis-à-vis men according to the above ratio is not satisfactory, as today India is marching towards the economical growth.

### **The constitutional Provisions for women empowerment:**

The Indian constitution has tried to ensure the liberty, dignity, equality, rights of all Indians, at the same time it has also ensured equality which eliminated almost all kind discrimination based on caste, creed, sex or religion. It has declared the equality of men and women. The equal rights and opportunities on men and women in the political, economical and social spheres are conferred in the Article 14. Article 14 has empowered the state to make affirmative discrimination in favor of women. Similarly, Article 16 provides for equality of opportunities in the matter of public appointments for all citizens; Article 39 stipulates that the State shall direct its policy towards providing men and women equally the right to means of livelihood and equal pay for equal work; Article 42 directs the State to make provisions for ensuring just and human condition to work and maternity relief; and Article 51(A) (e) imposes a fundamental duty on every citizen to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women. To make this equality factful, many policies and programmes were put into action from time to time, besides enforcing special legislation, in favour of women. Various legislative measures were designed to reinforce the provisions enshrined in the constitution. The government has enacted 41 legislations both women specific and women related legislations to safe guard the rights and interests of women, besides protecting against social discrimination, violence and atrocities and also prevent social evils like child marriages, rape, dowry death, practice of 'Sati' etc. The Government has enacted 41 legislations having direct or indirect bearing on women. Government has reviewed and amended these Acts from time to time to take came of the interest of women in the changing situations and social demands and obligations.

#### **The women related legislations are:**

##### **WOMEN RELATED LEGISLATIONS**

- ❖ The Guardians and Wards Act. 1860 (8 of 1890)
- ❖ Indian Penal Code, 1860
- ❖ The Christian Marriage Act. 1872 (15 of 1872)
- ❖ The Indian Evidence Act. 1872 (yet to be reviewed)
- ❖ The Married Women's Property Act. 1874 (3 of 1874)
- ❖ The Workmen's Compensation Act. 1923
- ❖ The Legal Practitioners (Women) Act. 1923
- ❖ The Indian Succession Act. 1925 (39 of 1925)

- ❖ The Child Marriage Restraint Act. 1929 (19 of 1929)
- ❖ The Payment of Wages Act. 1936
- ❖ The Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act. 1937
- ❖ The Factories Act. 1948
- ❖ The Minimum Wages Act. 1948
- ❖ The Employees' State Insurance Act. 1948
- ❖ The Plantation Labour Act. 1951
- ❖ The Cinematography Act. 1952
- ❖ The Special Marriage Act. 1954
- ❖ The Hindu Marriage Act. 1955 (28 of 1956)
- ❖ The Hindu Adoption & Maintenance Act. 1956
- ❖ The Hindu Minority & Guardianship Act. 1956
- ❖ The Hindu Succession Act. 1956
- ❖ The Maternity Benefit Act. 1961 (53 of 1961)
- ❖ The Beedi & Cigar Workers (Condition of Employment) Act. 1966
- ❖ The Foreign Marriage Act. 1969 (3 of 1969)
- ❖ The Indian Divorce Act. 1969 (4 of 1969)
- ❖ The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act. 1971 (34 of 1971)
- ❖ Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973
- ❖ The Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act. 1976
- ❖ The Equal Remuneration Act. 1978
- ❖ The Contract Labour (Regulation & Abolition) Act. 1979
- ❖ The Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act. 1979
- ❖ The Family Courts Act. 1984
- ❖ Juvenile Justice Act. 1986
- ❖ The Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act. 1986
- ❖ National Commission for Women Act. 1990 (20 of 1990)
- ❖ The Infant Milk Substitutes, Feeding Bottles and Infant Foods (Regulation of Production, Supply and Distribution) Act. 1992
- ❖ The Pre-Natal Diagnostic Technique (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act. 1994

It must be admitted that legislation and judiciary has its own limits as the needs of the women are diverse and multiple. The problems like ignorance, illiteracy, discriminations, and violence continues to persist. The judicial redress still remains a costly, time consuming and patience destroying. Even with the provision of best safeguards and sensitive judicial approach, women's rights continue to be a casualty in any conflicting situation with the opposite sex. Constitutional provisions and the legislations enacted by the government of India to safeguard the interests of women have been bringing slow but effective change in social,

economic, and political status of women in India.

The ray of hope has not ended yet as people in general and women are becoming aware of their rights and legislations for them. Now, people are going to police stations and courts for grievances, eliminating the hesitating part for the sake of false prestige and all. The old stigma and fear to being looked down upon by the society has been hammered by the judgments of the Hon'ble courts. The effective judgments on important cases have strengthened the confidence of women in judiciary.

**Table. 1-**

Year	Women	Men
1961	941	1000
1971	930	1000
1981	934	1000
1991	927	1000
2001	923	1000
2011	933	1000

**Table. 2-**

Country	Ratio of estimated earned income of female to that of men
China	0.66
United States	0.62
United Kingdom	0.62
Nepal	0.51
India	0.38
Pakistan	0.34

To conclude, the woman empowerment in India is the call of the time. As the amendments and legal initiative have been taken by the Government, the policies are being energized from the school level. But it will take its time and also it needs the support of common man in India. At the same time Indian women also need to come forward and to have the courage to explore their carrier interests without having any burden of marriage or other responsibilities. The increasing percentage of working women is evident of the great start. Let's hope, this journey of empowering every woman should march fast and faster to arise the golden dawn for Indian woman.

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### Conclusion: