CHAPTER – 1

RESEARCH AREA AND REVIEW

OF LITERATURE

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SECTION – A : RESEARCH AREA

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In the light of the view shared by eminent academicians on the question of empowerment of women and the reasons for their low involvement in political affairs several theories have been put forward especially the theory of empowerment where it involves two concepts of 'resources' and 'agency' to enable women to take decisions on their own and attain self- efficacy and power within to attain self -confidence. However, as discussed earlier since women are a multidimensional group cutting across several cultures and norms that are prevalent in societies across the world, it is impossible to categorise them into a single entity and study their political orientation and how it shapes her political activism and participation. This is because cultural norms and patriarchal relationships vary from country to country. This is the main problem for carrying out research on 'women' as a group and hence empowerment of women must be assessed taking into account all the variables that operate both at the micro and the macro level.

There have been various debates on the question of political participation of women both at the global level as well as in India: one debate tries to look at women's participation as "empowering women" particularly as political categories(Parida, 2009,43) Second debate tries to argue that voting rights or suffrage will remain as symbolism or "political tokenism" (Suchinmayee, 2008,27) instead of actualizing participation in traditional societies such as India, Iran etc, the third debate looks at right to vote as an important component for creating egalitarian society and final debate argue that political participation particularly through "quota" or reservation does not necessarily end up in social emancipation of women, as women are still without property rights and gender bias still operates at a massive level in the society.(Klausen, 2001)

Gender equality is thus a phased phenomenon. It develops slowly, step wise and as a cooperative effort where state intervention might assist in creating equality in high direction (Delharup, 2006). In order to make democracy to be truly representative and inclusive, all citizens must have equal opportunities to participate in the democratic processes. In the first wave of feminism, women came to be regarded as citizens and were granted the right to vote. The second wave of feminism significantly eliminated the legal and social barriers which

made women the 'second sex'- economically and legally subordinate in marriage, discriminated and exploited in the workplace and denied access to reproduce and sexual freedom. At a time when sexual harassment is illegal, wage equality is enshrined by law, rape and domestic violence are recognised as a crime and the word 'Chairman' has been replaced by 'Chairperson' to reflect the fact that some women hold positions of power, somehow women's access to democratic process is still limited. The right to vote does not ensure women's full access to the public sphere. There is an invisible barrier which prevents them from advancing beyond a certain point on the professional and political ladder. Politically, the reforms in the Panchayat Raj Act have given greater share for women in rural governance with the introduction of 33 per cent reservation for women in local village level elections (73rd amendment 1992). More and more women have shown that if they have power, they are able to use it for the benefit of society in general and women in particular. However, their active participation in politics is incredibly slow.

Women's role in economic development, in most countries of the world, cannot be under estimated. Although women constitute almost half of the total population of the world, their economic, social and more significantly their political status is lower than that of men and they are subjected to the exploitation and oppression of a particular social order for centuries and considered defacto even today. They are primarily expected to confine themselves to the four walls of the household and play a passive role even in the family as daughters, daughters-in-law, wives and mothers. They are typically considered weaker than men. This attitude has definitely restricted their mobility and opportunity to develop their personalities. Women belonging to the underprivileged and poorer sections, are the most down-trodden amongst all irrespective of their social strata or region and therefore are in no position to voice their opinion and problems. Discrimination and exploitation has led them to occupy a lowest status in domestic, socio-economic and political scenario.

Political participation is not just casting votes. It includes other activities like membership of political parties, electoral campaigns, attending party meetings, demonstrations, communication with leaders etc. As per the Human Development Report of 2011, "in India, only 10.7% urban elite women are active in politics much less than China and Pakistan at 21.3% and 22.5% respectively." The basic assumption is that the lower level of activism is the result of process of socialization that leads them to think of political activity in a different way than men. Indian society is extremely hierarchical where everyone is ranked according to their caste (or caste like groups), class, social prestige, economic wealth and power. This ranking is even operative in the working of certain business settings

although it is not openly acknowledged by them. If we study the background of political leaders in our country, it reveals that most men have had past experiences as leaders in trade unions, cooperatives which provided them a training ground but not so much in case of women leaders. It is common throughout the world to see women activists supporting democratic activities at the grass-root level where it is more acceptable. Yet few women serve in the political leadership positions perpetuating the cycle of marginalisation. In many countries legal framework guarantees political equality for women but there are challenges that deter women to participate freely. Women in particular face threat to their physical security especially sexual violence and may deter women from voting or running the office. In addition, gender-based violence (the specific killing of professional women in Afghanistan and Iraq for example) and intimidation may be prevalent and used to discourage women from participating in elections. Women and children are more likely to be displaced in conflicts which make it more difficult to register their names or have adequate access to polling stations. For women from minority and indigenous communities such barriers are often compounded with caste legacies. That explains why in India the 84th amendment regarding 33% reservation of seats is still pending in the Lok Sabha.

While lower caste men and women have been subjected to violence, women have faced the greatest threats of   even when they have just expressed their desire to contest elections. Rape and sexual assault have occurred, besides which women representatives who are efficient have been falsely alleged of sexual liaisons to defame and demean their reputation. Unsurprisingly, violence against women representatives who are members of the scheduled castes or tribes are more prominent. In this case mention may be made of the famous case of a dalit woman sarpanch in Madhya Pradesh who was prevented from hoisting the national flag on Independence Day – because the Yadavs another backward caste majority in the village insisted that a dalit would pollute the national flag by touching it. (Jayal,2008,1-7).

Women's access to power and participation in the public sphere has always been one of the main objectives of the feminist movement. The Right to work seen by the first wave of feminism as a tool for gaining equality for women pushed them into double or even triple burden situation where they are considered to be efficient workers(at places of work), loving mothers and partners(in families) as well as active citizens playing concrete political roles. As a result, they are not able to devote quality time to every aspect and are forced to sacrifice either her work or family or both in order to be active citizens.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The Preamble to the Constitution of India resolved to secure to all its citizens "Justice, social economic and political, equality of status and of opportunities." To attain these national objectives, the Constitution guarantees certain fundamental rights. Indian women are equal beneficiaries to these rights in the same manner as Indian men. Article 14 ensures "equality before law", and Article 15 "prohibits any discrimination on the basis of caste, creed, religion, sex or place of birth". There is one specific provision In Article 15 (3) which "empowers the state to make any special provision for women and children". This provision has enabled the state to make special provisions for women, particularly in the field of labour legislation like the Factories Act, the Mines Act, etc Article 16 (1) guarantees "equality of opportunity for all citizens, in matters relating to employment, or appointment to any office under the state". And article 16 (2) forbids "discrimination in respect of any employment of office under the state on the grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, etc". All these could suggest that the expected revolution in the status of women with the extension of their roles in the society was well on the way but the Committee on the Status of Women in India (1974) reached a very different conclusion. The Committee reported that "... the right to political equality has not enabled women to play their role as partners and constituents in the political process." (1974,372)

Post publication of the report government and non-government organizations are working hand in hand to eradicate gender inequality from the Indian society. As a measure of empowerment national policy makers formulated many policies in favour of female welfare. Following United Nations (UN), here, in India, the policy approaches modified from welfare to participatory one. For example, before seventh plan all the policies and programmes were aimed at welfare of women, but from Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-97) and onwards the focus was on `Human Development' with special reference to women development where they were not only considered as beneficiary but their active participation was emphasized in order to empower them. Approach of the Eighth Plan was unique in the sense that it focussed on "empowerment'' of women. The National Commission for Women was set up in 1992 to protect and promote the interests of women in India. As per the report of the Steering Committee on Empowerment of Women and Development of Children for the Tenth Five Year Plan, 2002-07, "the National Commission for Women is continuing to pursue its mandated activities like safeguarding women's rights through legal awareness programmes, individual complaints, pre-litigations, sexual harassment of women at work place; organizing `Parivarik Mahila Lok Adalats' with the help of local NGOs and Legal Aid Boards; and

reviewing of the existing legislations and preparation of new Bills relating to empowerment of women."

But the fact is that inspite of earnest efforts from the government and non-government organizations, we have failed to achieve targeted results. As per the report of the National Committee on the Status of Women (2012) women's participation in the economic sphere has been declining since 1921. Statistically it is revealed that "only26.1% rural and 13.8 % urban (2009-10) of the total population is constituted of such women". (Indiastat.com, "Workforce Participation Rate by Sex and Sector in India.") The reasons for the decline of women's participation in the work force differ in urban and rural areas. In rural areas there is a deep- rooted view and age-old custom that women should not work outside as it is regarded as a sign of social status by others. The other factors behind the low percentage of women's employment are heavy domestic work load, lack of assumed work, irregular and underpayment of wages, absence of transport facilities, lack of child care centres and other supportive structures. Regarding workforce participation rate in India as per 2001 census only about 26% of total female population are working, against 52% of the total male population. In case of non-workers, female accounts for 74.3% of the total female population, while male accounts for only about 48% of the total male population.

Along with United Nations, Indian Government also had the objective to achieve Millennium Development Goals (MDG) within 2015. The third MDG target is to empower women, but still, India is lagging behind the target rate. Many scholars opine that not only social but economic factors are also responsible for this lag in achievement. In other words, many believed that financial instability and denial of access to property may be the root cause of denied power. This demands a minute enquiry to locate the exact causes of failure or successes that affect the achieved level of empowerment. A study of their day-to-day experience may reveal the internal dynamics of social history.

With regard to economic status, it is evident that one in each four households in the world is headed by a woman. When compared to men, the majority of women earn, on an average, about 3/4th of the wage that males earn for the same work outside the agricultural sector, in both developed and developing countries. As per Human Development Report 2004, "women make up 31 per cent of the official labour force in developing countries and 46.7 per cent worldwide". Women play a major role in agriculture in developing countries. About 55% of the food grown is done by women. In terms of employment, they enjoy the same status as men and have to be given equal pay for equal work but their work participation mostly goes unrecorded and unrecognized. "They work double as many hours as

men. In terms of gender equality in employment, male - female ratio was 5:1 in government and government owned enterprises while in private sector it is 3:1 ratio. Companies with more than 10 employees per company, the organised public and private sector employed 5.5 million women and 22 million men. (Human Development Report,2004)

The cultural norms operate both as a restriction on a woman's mobility as well as an impediment for her participation in the public sphere. There are region-specific customs and different standards of behaviour for men and women that get carried over into the work environment as well. Restricting women's participation in these activities and community-based organisations has denied them opportunity of developing their skills required to function as representatives in the public sphere. Hence, in this context it is essential to enquire whether there has been any change in their status, and if yes, how far this achieved change in status could uplift their position in the society. Also, it is necessary to identify the factors, either social, or economic or both, that influence the level of achievement of empowerment by women.

As per the Census of 2011, West Bengal is now the fourth most populous state in India with a population density of 1029 per square kilometres. A large number of migrants from neighbouring states as well as neighbouring countries are have come and settled in the state over the years. West Bengal has recorded high rates of agricultural growth during the last few decades. It also has a strong industrial base which must be further strengthened and also diversified to usher in the new phase of development. It is true that the pace of social changes in West Bengal has accelerated in recent years but the problem of gender inequality in the state has acquired a new dimension. Despite the pioneer of various political, social, economic and cultural movements since pre-independence India, the state has failed to organize a concrete movement for the development and upliftment of women as an entire class. Women's mobility in West Bengal is still constrained by lack of education and access to information. The clearest examples of gender inequality are manifested in the different forms of violence meted out against women. They are practically excluded from decision making. The representation of the marginal sections of the society- the women, and the socially oppressed remained much less than is desired.

Indicators of women's participation in political processes with reference to the last Assembly elections held in West Bengal in 2016 and 2021 respectively suggest that West Bengal has the highest number of women members – 41 in 2016(13.94%) and 40 in 2019 (13.6%)) of the 294-member assembly. People of West Bengal have elected maximum number of women parliamentarians. The state has elected "14 women MPs out of 42 nominations in 2014

compared to seven in the 2009 parliamentary election and 11 women MPs in 2019" (*Source: Election Commission of India*.2014,2019). Trinamool Congress led by Mamata Banerjee gave nominations to maximum number of women candidates as compared to other political parties this election. The political parties of Bengal, which also dominated the panchayat election gave representation to the economically backward sections and traditionally overlooked villagers but remained indifferent to the socially deprived class i.e.-women. This under representation of women was infact the patriarchal approach and unresponsive attitude of political parties in the country towards the underprivileged. It has further been observed, that in West Bengal, women representatives are becoming more self-reliant and by and large they do not need to function as proxy members but it is also a fact that women panchayat members are not always given equal positions like their male counterparts. They are considered less equal than their male representatives and hence, they are seldom given important portfolios. As per the UNIFEM report titled "*Women and Urban Governance*" of 2000, "even when women enter the power arena there is "evidence of poor retention rates and high turnover resulting from the difficulties women face in balancing their responsibilities at home and at work with their political engagement".

Women in Kolkata have always actively participated in the vibrant cultural life and diversified political issues of the city. Women have made their mark in all spheres of economic activity. In Kolkata, women are to be found in services and professions, as entrepreneurs, NGO activists, as industrial labourers as also home-based domestic workers. However, if we look at the working women of Kolkata then the percentage of women working in high-income group has declined and most of them now fall in the low income group. (West Bengal Human Development Report, 2004). Pradeep Chhibber (2012) seems to emphasise "that less active in politics are those women who mostly remain confined in home." However, a contradictory view is observed in the empirical study of slum dwellers by Anirban Mondal and Gitanjali Hajra (IJRC, 2012) that "women's autonomy depends not only on economic empowerment and education but also on social organisation, kinship and marriage". Sometimes "role of individual decision- making decreases and family decisions take a major role." (Mumtaz, 1982) This fact is supported by two other studies of Debaleena Chakraborti and Sharbani Goswami (2009) and Dr. Sukamal Dutta (2009) who feel that "paucity of capital, problem of marketing, lack of support makes it difficult to work with dignity and grace." Sarit K. Bhowmik (NASVI, 2011) in his article on women hawkers of some big Indian cities including Kolkata find that "due to lack of space, harassment by the police etc, women have become politically apathetic. Again, in some cities women hawkers

being members of some secondary groups (like SEWA) get protection and hence become politically active." Studies show that numbers of domestic workers in any society rise with level of inequality. This means is that in order for this occupation to flourish, there should be enough desperation among people to do this type of work that no one else wants to do, and people should be economically well off to pay them for this work which they normally don't want to do. Thus, domestic workers occupy one of the lowest rungs in the social hierarchy, have little or no dignity of labour, and are exploited in both every-day and egregious ways.

The main purpose of the present study is to make a comparative analysis of the pattern of political orientation of the working women in select formal and informal sectors in South Kolkata. It is often held that the growth of education of women and their employment outside the house has led to a social change. An educated woman working in the formal or organised sector is more exposed to the mass media. Her understanding, developed due to education, would enable her to give a proper response to the political issues, activities and events but women who are illiterate or down trodden and work in the informal sector of the economy also have their own way of looking at politics and have separate attitudes and answers towards political questions. They have a different orientation to politics. Thus, these factors like urbanization, education, employment, exposure to mass media etc. surely have an important impact on participation level of women and on their attitudes. The present study seeks to find out the correlation among these variables, in order to get an idea about the orientation and extent of political participation by the women of South Kolkata.

However, before embarking on this comparative analysis, it is first necessary to enumerate the fine line separating the formal and informal sectors. They are characterised by the following differences:

1. Informal sector dominates the economy of the country engaging the major population. It is generally characterised with the exemption of taxes not found in the formal sector. Formal sectors on the other hand are legalized where the workers enjoy social prestige, economic security with incentives such as bonuses, earned leave not to forget maternity leave and fixed working hours. Informal sectors still do not have any laws regarding such privileges.

2. Formal sector include those activities which are monitored by the government and people engaged in them pay taxes which contribute and included in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In contrast, activities of the informal sector are not regarded as contributors to the GDP and Gross national product (GNP) of a country.

3. In the formal sectors all jobs have specified working hours and regular wages coupled with job security. The workers are employed in the government sectors, public or private

sector enterprises. It includes large-scale operations such as banks and business corporations. Conversely, people working in the informal or unorganized sectors are characterised by irregular working hours and wages. It is characterised with the primary production of goods and services generating employment and income on a small scale. For example, a street vendor selling his/her products on the street or pavement to earn his daily bread is an example of informal economy. Rag pickers, money-lenders, brokers can also be considered as part of the informal economy.

4. Informal sectors have low production value. In India majority of the population are engaged in agriculture, dairy products, horticulture and related occupation which employ 52% of the workers. It is less remunerative, unlike the formal sectors. Moreover, since it lacks legal and economic security there is the greater vulnerability of the workers who are outside the reach of the labour legislation due to worker's absence of social protection and worker's right.

In a detailed report titled '*Report on Definitional and Statistical Issues Relating to the Informal Economy'* submitted in 2008 the Labour Commission recommended that the informal or unorganized sector consists of unregistered private companies owned by individuals or group of individuals which may or may not operate from the household engaged in the production and selling of goods and services managed either on a proprietary or partnership basis and which employs than ten total workers. In the organised private sector with more than 10 employees per company, the biggest employers in 2008 were manufacturing at 5 million; social services at 2.2 million, which includes private schools and hospitals; finance at 1.1 million which includes bank, insurance and real estate; and agriculture at 1 million".(Skills Anaad,2021) The Commission also reported that "in accordance with the 2000-2010 new employment recorded data, out of the 6.4 million new employment opportunities recorded, approximately 76 percent were in the informal sector. Furthermore, 81 percent were informally employed of the 24 percent newly employed in the formal sector. The 25 percent of the informal sectors constitute the urban employment in India".

The National Commission for enterprises in the unorganised sector (2007) in their report regarding street vendors said that though they interact and serve different segments of the urban population and have a specific role in the society yet they are considered as a hindrance by government officials. Though hawking is considered a legal activity in many cities, in Kolkata the Municipal Act prevents any type of street vending and punishment amounts to fine and rigorous imprisonment up to 3 months. The constant dealings with the

police, party cadres, inappropriate behaviour from men of their own groups tend to make the environment highly insecure for women. Another big strata in the informal sector are the domestic workers but the biggest problem faced by them across India is their non-recognition as workers.92% of domestic workers are women, girls and children. As the National commission points out they are excluded from labour laws that look after employment related issues such as conditions of work, wages, social security, provident funds, maternity leave etc. It is looked down upon as unskilled because it is a social construct which considers most women are traditionally considered capable of doing house-work which does not require any formal training. The employer-employee relation is thus of domination, dependence and inequality. Though the Indian Government's Ministry of Labour has adopted laws for social security and welfare of unorganised workers these are typically applicable to those employed in agriculture, construction, trade, transport and communication. Domestic workers have no right to worker's compensation, weekly holidays and minimum wages. Even the Child labour (Prohibition and Regulation Act 1986) does not include domestic workers. India's Ministry of Labour, in its 2008 report, classified the unorganised labour in India into four groups namely- (a) occupation (b) nature of employment (c)specially distressed categories and (d) service categories. The occupational groups include small and marginal farmers, landless agricultural labourers, sharecroppers, fishermen, those engaged in animal husbandry, beedi rolling, labelling and packing, building and construction workers, leather workers, weavers, artisans, salt workers, workers in brick kilns and stone quarries, workers in saw mills, and workers in oil mills. (https://www.vikaspedia.in)

The category based on nature of employment includes such workers like "attached agricultural labourers, bonded labourers, migrant workers, contract and casual labourers." Distressed unorganised sector includes those workers like "toddy tappers, scavengers, carriers of head loads, drivers of animal driven vehicles, loaders and unloaders." The last unorganised labour category includes service workers such as "midwives, domestic workers, barbers, vegetable and fruit vendors, newspaper vendors, pavement vendors, hand cart operators, and the unorganised retail."(https://www.vikaspedia.in).India's National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) in its 67th report in 2010 found that unorganised manufacturing, unorganised trading, retail and unorganised services employed about 10% each of the labour force nationwide and India had about 58 million unincorporated non-agriculture enterprises.

We want to establish that the working-class women working in both the formal and informal sectors of South Kolkata belong to a minority community and are still not regarded as potential political collectivity. By socio-economic background we primarily mean

identification (i.e. name, permanent residential address, sex, age, profession, location of work etc) of the respondent, her social status(i.e. religion, caste, education, marital status etc), her economic condition(i.e. the monthly income of her family, her family expenditure, pattern etc), her socio-economic security (i.e. her independent role in decision-making within the family in terms of investment , control over her income, taking major and minor decisions, nature of treatment meted out by family members or from the society at large, nature of such harassment if any and the kind of help provided or not provided by any political party or NGOs). By political orientation of the respondent we primarily mean her cognitive (i.e. her knowledge about political parties, their symbols, their stay in power), affective orientation (her attachment towards the political system, issues and events, her interest in political and non-political forums) and evaluative orientation (her partisan preference and pattern of voting behaviour).

SECTION – B : REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The emergence of the women's movement has been accompanied by a comprehensive literature – speculative and literary, scholarly and empirical - identifying and documenting the grievances of women in the twentieth century. An important contribution to the sphere of women's studies is a collection of articles edited by Vivian Gornick and Barbara K. Moran, entitled *"Women in Sexist Society-Studies in Power and Powerlessness"* (1971). Similarly, Judith Hole and Ellsn Levine edited a volume entitled, *"Rebirth of Feminism"* (1971). Anne Koedt, Ellen Levine and Anita Rapone edited, *"Radical Feminism"* (1973), and Robin Morgan edited, *"Sisterhood Is Powerful: An anthology of Writings from the Women's Liberation Movement"* (1970). All these collections still serve as basic sources for understanding the issues behind women's political movement. Presenting some of the same themes, but, in a more moderate tone are two studies: One is the *"Changing Women in a changing Society"* edited by Joan Huber (1973), and the other is Jo Freeman edited *"Women: A Feminist Perspective"* (1975). A more detailed and comprehensive study, which discusses the issues on which the women's movement has focussed, is Elizabeth Janeway's *"Between Myth and Morning Women Awakening"* (1974), Barbara Sinclair Deckward's study entitled '*The Women's Movement's Political, Socio-economic and Psychological Issues*' (1974) presents an overview of the movement as a whole.

Some researchers attempt to go beyond the definition of the condition of women which experiences powerlessness vis-a-vis men. They offer a Marxist or class analysis of the

condition of women in modern society. Such studies include Juliet Mitchell's "*Women's Estate" (1971),* Sheila Rowbothan's *"Women's Consciousness: Man's World."* (1973), Heleith I. B. Saffiola's "*Women in Class Society"* (1978) and "*Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism*" edited by Ziliah R, Fisenstein (1978). The impact of women's changing roles on social, political and economic life around the world has been summarized in "*Towards the second Decade, the Impact of the Women's Movement on American Institutions"* edited by Betty Justice and Renate Pore (1981). The same task has been undertaken by Joyce Gelf and Marine Lief Palley in "*Women and Public Policies"*(1982).That feminism is making a difference politically – in political attitudes and to a lesser extent, in political behaviour among the American women - is the subject which has been treated by Claire Knoche and Fulen Wider in their well- known book, "*Feminism in American Politics"* (1980) and J. Kirkpatrick in "*Political Women"*(1979).

The 20th Century probably has experienced one of the most important debate- the role of a person as male or female. Judith Butler has completely changed the direction of women's studies through her most influential book, "*Gender Trouble"*(1990).Early women's studies scholars tended to think the difference between men and women as being inherent and unchangeable. The theories of the 1990s emphasised that the concept of gender was flexible over time and over different social structures. The demography of United States of America was slowly changing from a white dominated to racially and culturally diverse population. This posed new challenges to feminism. Many feminist scholars and social activists began to engage with these multiple identities and the ways in which multiple structures of inequality intersect. The strategy of levelling women at par the men by bringing in laws, introducing the power of rights, and finding ways to move women out of disadvantaged positions seemed all right for several decades but it was clearly not enough. Devaki Jain in her article titled 'To Be or Not to Be: Problems in Locating women in Public Policy' says that there was unthinkable, invisible discrimination deeply rooted in the society. The women's movement responded to this by making inequality visible but it could not eradicate the ignorance and invisibility of women's value as citizens, workers, providers who are equal like men. So, the movement generated new knowledge to show the importance of women in development-- again with the expectation that revealing truth would lead to women's equality with men. But that strategy still disabled them because they had no voice in the determination of their lives and its road map. Therefore, the new concepts of equal participation, equal power, and leadership entered the development discourse to redress inequality (Jain,2007). Individuals within households had highly disparate locations in power, apart from occupations, health and education status

etc. This disparity among individuals was more enlarged as one went down in the asset/ income scale. The new concept of women as contributors to society emerged. The researchers began to look at such practices like unequal wages, discrimination or sexual harassment of women in the workplace, women's dual load of work for regular wages and domestic chores and the absence of social security for homemakers who work as unpaid labour. Professor Amartya Sen talked of development as the process of expansion of entitlement — i.e. sustaining by herself and self-esteem — and capabilities- giving freedom. Prof. Sen is of the opinion that development improves "quality of life" by ensuring freedom from hunger, exploitation, discrimination and oppression and also inculcate a sense of self belief and provides the strength to stand up against violence (Sen,1984). Nirmala Banerjee has contradicted Sen's view. She says that Amartya Sen's view (1990) that wage work increases the bargaining power of women within her household and hence the overall economy and thus empowerment is highly qualified. She is of the opinion that whether this wage work improves her position should be assessed in terms of how far it is possible for her to strike out on her own on the strength of that income. It may happen that her job and her income is insufficient for her to live singly. Again, there may be restrictions and reactions from the society if women wants to walk out of the family and lead a single life. In such cases wage work increases her workload in the household as she is not able to share this with any other members of the family. (1997,427-438). The gender and development approach thus recognises the relation between men and women as a power relation, and proposes that such power relations stem from social construction of gender which is created by unequal relations within the family, community, market and state. It does not see women as passive victims but agents who are negotiating spaces within their multiple identities for empowerment. Thus Devaki Jain (2005) at a seminar on 'Democracy, Communalism, Secularism and the Dilemmas of Indian Nationhood' held in New Delhi opined that the very beginning of women's quest was for 'equality' or for 'overpowering', if not effacing, 'inequality'.

GENDER INEQUALITY AND EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment itself is an abstract multi-dimensional concept where, multidimensionality refers to the co-existence of various domains and layers like society, organization, family or individual, the concept of empowerment is mainly concerned with possession of power, which means one is endowed with power where it is absent. Economic empowerment of women was connected with the social condition as it improves and

influences the decision-making process in the household. It is to note that power should be achieved in each and every domain because empowerment in one dimension does not signify empowerment in other dimensions; for example a female empowered in socio-cultural dimension (mobility freedom, lack of discrimination against daughter) necessarily may not mean that she will be empowered in economic dimensions also (women's control over income, relative contribution to family support). Large numbers of studies attempt to deal with the problems of defining as well as measuring empowerment. Some of these studies are theoretical and some are empirical. From the emergence of studies on empowerment, many scholars have attempted to study the importance of agency as a weapon of empowerment. Main concepts around which all the studies spin are power/agency and opportunity structure. All of these concepts are interrelated and are difficult to deal with separately. Oxaal and Baden (1997) use the empowerment indicators suggested by CIDA to measure it. CIDA classifies empowerment as *legal, political, economic* and *social empowerment.* Where '*legal empowerment'* refers to the "legal assistance and access to information of poor/disadvantaged group' (UNDP), '*political empowerment'* signifies the "process of transferring various elements of power (resources, capabilities, and positions) to those who do not have it.' (UNFP) '*Economic empowerment'* means 'the capacity of a person to participate in, contribute to and benefit from growth processes in ways which recognise the value of her/his contributions, respect their dignity and make it possible to negotiate a fairer distribution of the benefits of growth'(OECD, 2011) Finally, '*social empowerment'* signifies the 'process of developing a sense of autonomy and self-confidence, acting individually and collectively to change the social relationships and to reform the institutions and discourses which tries to exclude poor people."(CIDA)

Maxine Molyneux's article '*Mobilization without Emancipation? Women's Interests, the State, and Revolution in Nicaragua'* made the distinction between 'practical gender needs' and 'strategic gender needs'(1985,227). While the former is a response to an immediate practical need in response to women's position in the gender hierarchy, the latter arise from an analysis of their subordination and the formulation of a more just and equitable social order (1994,1-11). Naila Kabeer in her book "*Reversed Realities: Gender Hierarchies in Developmental Thought"* argues what is required is the unravelling of male power relations, an analysis of conflicting gender interests among women based on their position in other power relations (e.g. race, class), shift in discourse from roles to relations, and prioritisation of not just a planning solution but also a political solution. It is important for women to negotiate with social institutions. These institutions are under contradictory

pressure from capitalism, patriarchy, race, caste etc. and create spaces which can be used for negotiating women's diverse interests. Kabeer (1994), Sen and Grown, (1985) not only measures empowerment but also detects the *causal factors* that regulate empowerment. They argue that structural conditions determine the distribution of resources among different categories of members in any society along with gender, class, caste and other lines. Further, measurement of women's empowerment is necessary to recognize the need for gender equality within the family and society. Social-structural realities work in a way that do not allow the agency to actualise in certain spheres. For example, women may collectively be empowered by invoking their disapproval of public consumption of alcohol or step in to resolve issues related to pension distribution and so on, but the same woman, despite their agency, may fail miserably to stop sex-selective abortions, inter-personal bargaining or abuse.

Globalisation is accompanied by expanding markets and thus individual relationships are becoming less personal. Alsop, Bertelsen and Holland (2006) in their book titled **"***Empowerment in Practice: From Analysis to Implementation. Directions in Development"* provide a detailed conceptual framework of empowerment. They argue that in different walks of life, people have to make various choices, and all of them cannot be transformed into desired action. They pointed out that the poor, excluded ethnic or social groups and women are relatively more disempowered than others in the society. Empowerment is explained by them in terms of a*gency* and *opportunity structure. Agency* is described in terms of *measurement of* and *action to enhance empowerment* and agency of a person/group is assessed by their asset endowment. Asset of an individual or group is defined by the "stocks of resources that help actors to use economic, social, and political opportunities, to be productive, and to protect themselves from shocks.*"* (Moser 1998) This is in line with the 'capability approach' as emphasised by Amartya Sen. According to Sen "capabilities" refer to the "alternative combination of functioning the person can achieve and from which a person can choose a collection." (1993,62) The 'capability approach' is an ethically individualistic theory. This is also important for feminist research because ethical individualism rejects the idea that women's well-being can be subsumed under wider entities such as the household or community while not denying the importance and effectiveness of care, social and family relations and interdependence between family or community members. Secondly, it is not limited to the market but also looks at non-market settings and finally, it acknowledges human diversity such as race, age, ethnicity, gender etc. This approach specifies that the process of empowerment should start from our home. Women's position in the household determines women's autonomy in the family. It is worth to examine

whether women can decide about household matters like buying jewelleries, having access to money, having mobility to go to the market or relatives house or getting health care facilities. As Sen in *'Development as Freedom'- and As What Else?'* points out, individual 'preferences' can infact be "socially architectured in that the entrenched values may be internalised to such an extent that they appear as preferences and choices whereas in reality they are not". (Sen,2006,501-531) Childcare, mothering-rearing and nurturing are good examples- Badgett and Folbre (1999, 316) quoted in Gasper and Staveren (2006,152-179) call it "socially imposed altruism" from which there cannot be much escape. It is thus said that powerlessness is rooted in the unequal institutional relations; thus, institutional empowerment is extremely important for ending discrepancy. It is observed that poor lag behind the development process because their freedom of choice is severely curtailed by their powerlessness with respect to formal and informal institutions.

GENDER AND SOCIAL INEQUALITY

In the discussion on class and gender, Silviya Walby *(2002)* in *"Gender and Patriarchy: The Blackwell Dictionary of Modern Social Thought"* argues that within the household economy, women are seen as the working class and thereby they are alienated from other productive resources. The research evidence from around the world presents a complicated picture of gender inequality and social change; Sevilla-Sanz and Gimenez in **"*Trends in Time Allocation: A Cross-country Analysis*."** (2010,138) suggest that even if women are engaged in economic activities that doesn't necessarily imply that the burden of her household work decreases. "In the global North, the symbolic meaning of unpaid work is shifting" as noted by Sayer in **"*Gender, Time and Inequality: Trends in Women's and Men's Paid Work, Unpaid Work and Free Time*"** (2005,285–303). However, in the studies done by Bianchi et al (2012,55-63), in the USA in 1965, 1975, 1985 to analyse the change in the concept of household work, it was found that since women have engaged themselves in economic activities outside they have began to spend less time in household activities without men increasing time spent on these activities. This has somewhat led to equality in gender division of labour. This rigidity on the part of men for not participating in household chores in relation to women's active participation in economic activities has been described as the 'incomplete gender revolution' that pushed women into socially valued masculine activities and pulled men away from socially devalued feminine activities like 'care work'(Bianchi, 2012, 61). In post reform China, women's involvement in urban activities has forcibly

initiated a reduction in the performance of domestic chores due to the lack of flexibility in these activities. However, Chen in **"*Employment Transitions and the Household Division of Labour in China.*"** observes that overall Chinese women are still subjected to a heavy double burden, and that social support from extended family and even from neighbours still plays an important role. (2005, 845)

In India despite employing paid domestic help for household activities, women have to do dual work both in the workplace as well as home without any familial support. This is particularly true in urban middle-class nuclear families thus raising the question (following Hochschild and Machung's influential book, The Second Shift, 1989): Are Indian women experiencing a 'second shift'? Some generalizations are unavoidable. Becker's "*A Treatise on the Family*" shows that women still perform a greater share of unpaid work within the household willingly as they regard it as their 'love labour' or 'solidary labour' (1981, 79). Hochschild and Machung's 'second shift', irrespective of time, can be detected; for example, in more recent studies by Lenon and Rosenfeld in **"*Relative Fairness and the Division of Housework: The Importance of Options"* (1994,506-531) and Jacob and Gerson (2004) "*The Time Divide: Work, Family and Gender Inequality"*.** They have found that the tasks in the home like cooking, washing, cleaning, taking care of the elderly and children, and such chores typically carried out by women are generally more time consuming and less flexible. Thus, men continue to benefit, directly or indirectly, from the "gender division of labour ensured by patriarchy", as argued by socialist feminists (Becker 1981) in "*A Treatise on the Family"*. As more and more women are getting engaged in employment outside there is a need for reorganization of personal lives at home. Bryson (2007) in his book "*Gender and the Politics of Time: Feminist Theory and Contemporary Debates"* describes this extension of the time discipline of capitalism as a 'linear, goal-oriented commodified clock time.' Household division of labour also leads to the segregation of the private space within the home. Apart from the gender-based specialization of certain tasks, gender attitudes lead to uneven distribution of household chores between women and men. The gender perspective argues that wives and husbands must play an equal part in household work to display their proper gender roles which is a symbolic enactment of gender relations. (Brines 1994,652-658) Norms of behaviour, masculinity in particular, may keep men away from doing a lot of housework; for example, Bittman and Wajcman in *"The Rush Hour: The Quality of Leisure Time and Gender Equity.*"** note that "the more a husband depends on the wife, the less he works at home, possibly to reassert his masculinity"(2004,152-178). Sociologists explain this with the notion of 'doing' gender; that is, individuals performing the internalized gender-role

expectations held by others. Consequently, wives in dual income or women-earning households tend to do more housework than men. It is thus a common feature seen in small-town India in urban middle-class homes where, in spite of women going out for work, gender relations have remained unchanged. This is the reason why Bhatia's study **"*Measuring Gender Disparity Using Time Use Statistics*."** in India identified significant gender disparities, using time-use statistics as the tool. The age-old patriarchal system gives primacy to males. According to Bhatia, this privilege extends to several spheres. "It relegates women to the private sphere, place restrictions on her mobility; perpetuate the view that the girl child is an economic liability." (2002,3464–3469). Traditions and customs endorse practices that are derogatory to women's dignity and perpetuate stereotype images thus strengthening the dichotomy of the 'private' being the domain of women and 'public' for men. This in turn restrains the development of self- confidence and esteem among women. As stressed earlier in the study of Kolkata slum dwellers by Anirban Mondal and Gitanjali Hazra(IJRC,2012) and Mallika Bose(2005) in her seminar paper entitled '*Shifting Boundaries: Women's settings in the slums of Calcutta India*'- the researchers are of the view that even though the binary division of society into 'public' and 'private' have been criticized, the association of women with the home still continues to direct developmental efforts especially in the developing countries. The different experiences of women in the above studies indicates that factors like stage in family life-cycle, household structure and specific circumstances like dire economic need or sickness of spouse all work together to influence women's work choice. In conditions of grave economic crises women leave their home to work outside. Once the crisis subsides, many women willingly retreat to their home environments. This points out that the public and private domains are not mutually exclusive bur rather intricately related. When an individual belongs to a family, the role of individual decision-making decreases and family decisions take a major role. Women seem to participate less as there are far more demands on a woman's time including child care and house work. Moreover, they are actively discriminated against- legally or otherwise. However, this is a difficult topic of research since direct evidence of discrimination is not often available.

The Scheduled caste and the Scheduled tribe population in India represent the most economically backward and marginalized groups. The male-female gap in literacy among them is just a representation of the common trend persisting both among the backward sections as well as the general population. These trends are a general reflection of the social and cultural boundaries that exists between classes and also the degree of gender inequality in India. Over 200 million people are still termed as backward classes also known as

untouchables or outcasts. They are worst sufferers and victims of violence, discrimination, and social exclusion. Women face discrimination not only from people of higher castes, but also within their own communities. Men occupy a dominant position even in backward classes communities. Above all, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes women have very little power to voice their opinion within the backward class movement itself. There are real differences between the situation of the upper-caste woman and the lower-caste woman in India. It is true that both are oppressed by caste patriarchy but the nature of this patriarchy can remain hidden to the upper-caste woman even when she takes up a feminist stance. The Scheduled caste and the Scheduled tribe women, on the other hand, can never be unaware of this. These women's rights of freedom of her person, of control over her body and her sexuality, cannot be protected neither by the women caste panchayat nor by the political power in the system of electoral democracy which is invariably a serious limitation of the rights of citizenship that is the right of every Indian. Like their poor counter- part from other female groups, they also suffer from lack of access to income earning assets, education and high poverty. However, these women differ from rest of the women lies in the fact that their performance with regard to human development indicators is much lower compared with their counterparts from other social groups. It corroborates the fact that that these women face social exclusion. This results in the deprivation of choices and opportunities to escape from poverty and also denies them a voice to claim their rights. There is a close inter-relation between patriarchy and social exclusion which enforce each other. The women from discriminated groups thus suffer from triple deprivation – gender, poverty and social exclusion.

GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

There are quite a number of studies, which focus attention sharply on the aspect of what has been described as 'gender discrimination'. These studies try to demonstrate that there is definite gender bias in employment and the basic principles of equality in opportunity and equality in treatment get violated. Socio- economic factors do not permit women to participate in the market in the same manner with that of men workers. *'Women Workers of India'* by Padmini Sengupta (1998) examined over time the nature of female work participation as contrasted to their male counterparts with a view to understanding the extent of women's advancement relative to men's. The analysis of the behaviour of participation is carried out in terms of a number of socio-economic and demographic variables for the major

metropolitan Indian cities, viz., Calcutta, Delhi, Bombay and Madras, on the basis of data thrown up the decennial population Censuses of India for the period 1961-91. Interestingly, the major conclusion that comes out from this study corroborates the one arrived at by Arriagada (2002) in her study "*Changes and inequality in Latin American families*" in the context of Latin American and Caribbean countries. In another study (Sen Gupta, 2000), it is argued that the position of women in the society and their role or importance in decision-making depend, to a large extent, on their earning capability or economic independence. It is found that the female work participation rates have increased but it has remained concentrated in some specific sectors.

The most discrimination that women face is violation of the principle of equality with regard to payment for work. In our country patriarchal norms and labour market trends are inter-related restricting women's entry. Occupational segregation is a central instrument for perpetuating patriarchy since it reinforces gender division of labour, encourages payment of low wages to women and maintains women's economic dependency. To mention a few instances, we notice in the paper by Arriagada (2002) that inequality in income distribution by gender gets heightened by the crisis in Latin American countries after 1980, to the extent that average female income in some cases account for half of the average male income. In another paper titled 'The Female/Male Unemployment Rate Differential' (1990) published in '*Canadian Journal of Economics*' Myatt and Murrel show that developed economy like Canada is no exception in this case, as here the female/male unemployment rate differential is explained mostly by the level of minimum wage. This, is coupled with the fact that women are engaged in the low-paying jobs, their average earnings are much less than their male counterparts and also the number of women earning at or below the minimum wage is more than that of the latter. They also pointed out that minimum wages in Canada have been falling since 1974 and "further falls could lead to a negative female/male unemployment rate differential and reverse all the standard arguments about a greater female labour force share increasing the natural rate of unemployment." In this context, we may refer to the comments made in the editorial of the second issue (1978) of the International Labour Organization (ILO) journal 'Women at work' which states that women account for more than one-half of the human race and they work for nearly two-thirds of the total working hours but they receive only one-tenth of the world's income, and own less than one percent of world's productive assets. Michelle Fram Cohen is of the opinion that "though public attitudes towards married women's employment have shifted, yet law has not been able to alter the traditional attitudes of parts of the population." (Cohen 2006,261-274). This is substantiated

by the U.S Department of Labor Women's Bureau 2006 says that in the "US women are still concentrated in low paid clerical jobs, sales, teaching and nursery". According to Moser (1993) and Drolet (2010), women's experience of domination always differ in relation to their race, class, culture, economic position, and region. Moser (1993) however has tracked down the approaches in understanding women's position in development plans and processes in the Third world over the decades. Moser's analysis include five approaches in a sequence of welfare, equity, anti-poverty, efficiency and empowerments. All the approaches have distinct origins and purposes but their implementation periods are mostly overlapping.

In the present scenario of globalization and liberalization of the economy, the demographics of employment have been changing in India. Following the recommendation by the Fourth World Conference on Women and the guidelines given by the Statistics Division of the United Nations (UNSD), the Central Statistical Organisation of India attempted to estimate the approximate monetary value of unpaid work done by women using time-use survey method during July 1998–June 1999, covering six states. This study, revealed that women contribute over US$ 600 billion to the Indian economy every year (Rajivan 1999). The study included the participation of women and men in informal activities, and it revealed the amount of unpaid work that a woman performs at home thus raising certain functional and theoritical issues (Hirway 1999, 2000; Pandey 1999) . The picture that emerges with regard to the position of women in the Indian labour market is rather gloomy and quite complex. The NSSO study of 55th and 50th rounds (2004) suggest that the share of women in professional, technical and related workers, administrative, executive and managerial workers, clerical and related workers have increased over the period which are generally considered to be skilled, quality jobs. This points to some degree of reduction in sex-based occupational segmentation. Nevertheless, the concentration of female workers in 'Domestic Services' has declined and that in the 'Professionals' increased, points towards an overall improvement in the economic status of female workers. The sectoral distribution shows a stagnant and highly segregated picture with women concentrated in the primary sector as against the trends in other liberalised countries. The service sector employs a substantial proportion of women workers but the degree of concentration that is visible in the sector is especially in personal services in the urban areas and in educational institutions. In India the rise of the service sector has not been formidable enough to absorb large proportion of the female population. The increased concentration of women in categories such as health and education further reveal the conservative approach

towards women's employment. These not only restrict the entry of women in the labour market but also decide the pattern of employment.

Women are represented in the workforce in greater numbers and holding managerial and executive posts, but these roles demand a considerable amount of time which makes balancing personal and professional lives a challenging one. Women working in the service sector of formal economy like bank managers, executives, officers, school and college teachers face some common problems. The most common among them are playing dual role at home and workplace, men are not ready to accept women as colleagues or seniors, they need to work twice as much as men to gain recognition etc. As opined by Dr. Meeta Pathade, in her unpublished paper *"Workplace Stress among Women Executives in Banks''* (2013) that "women working in high ranking posts in banks may have to work in different shifts especially in foreign banks and this creates problem in adjusting shift timings for them. Especially married women executives face a lot of stress in adjusting their work life with family life". In the informal sector 90% women are engaged in manufacturing, as construction workers or street vendors and domestic services where working conditions are very poor and worker's organisations are slow to reach them.

In the study conducted by (S Bharti et Al) in India only "37% of paid earners have the right to take decisions how money will be spent in the family." The states with higher levels of self- decision have been found in Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, West- Bengal, Karnataka and Kerala. However, it does not imply that they exercise this power alone. Usually they spend money with consultation with others which include husband. Again, actual economic power cannot be measured through access of money but also whether they can spend the money on their own. Here socio-cultural factors and religious background are also important factors in the decision-making process of how money should be spent. The survey emphasises that paid workers in New Delhi, Goa, Sikkim, Punjab etc have greater autonomy than West- Bengal or Kerala. Women's free movement may be considered as a fundamental measure of autonomy. If persons other than the women themselves determine whether women members in the family can or cannot go outside the house, many areas of functioning may be closed. In west- Bengal almost 82.25 women need permission to go out. Cultural norms prescribe women to be chaste and modest in all actions. Indian women particularly that of lower castes often find themselves in a paradoxical situation- when a family suffers economically, they expect that a woman should go out and work, yet at the same time women's participation in public sphere is viewed as slightly inappropriate, subtly wrong and detrimental to their chastity and womanly virtues.

GENDER INEQUALITY AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

As researchers tried to understand the different aspects of political participation and political behaviour in greater details, the question of woman's participation in politics also received more attention. Some of these studies deal with general citizen participation, while some refer to women's participation to indicate the sex differences in political participation and the sole focus of some is on women's participation. Kate Millet indicates, in '*Sexual Politics'* (1985) that sex is a frequently neglected political aspect. William Henry Chafe in his two well-known studies *on 'American Women'* tried to examine the socio-economic and political roles of women from 1920 to 1970. His studies point out that discrimination against women was deeply rooted in social structure, in the roles played by women in the sexual division of labour that restricted women primarily to the domestic sphere of life. Suffrage could not change that structure. In India the Committee on the Status of Women,1974 reported that "the right to political equality has not enabled women to play their role as partners and constituents in the political process. Instead these rights have helped to build an illusion to equality and power." Three years after the Committee's Report, a group of social scientists pointed, in an even sharper manner, to what they called "the national neglect of women"(Mazumder,1976)·It can be concluded that unless the of economic and social significance of women is increased in the eyes of their families and the nation by opportunities to take part in socially and economically productive roles, the national neglect of women would continue. Erosion of productive roles emphasizes women's position as consumers and bearers of children, makes their lives cheap and easily expendable through increasing malnutrition and mortality, reduces employability through inadequate training opportunities and increases economic discrimination and exploitation. Bokkan(1970) in his study titled "Citizens, Elections, Parties" and Di Palma in his study titled "Apathy and Participation : Mass Politics in Western Society"(1970)observed that sex differences are reducing among urban, industrialised settings specially among better educated and affluent individuals. Some studies, however, have challenged the notion that economic development are reducing sex differences in political participation. For examples studies of cross-national variation in women's status, including political status in countries across Latin America, Eastern and Western Europe conducted by J. F. Aviel(1981,156-171) and S. L. Wolchik found that "economic development is an insufficient explanation for such variation in Latin America and eastern and western Europe"(1981,445-476).

John J, Stucker (1977) in **"*Women as Voters: Their Maturation as Political Persons in American Society"*** observed the maturation of women voters as political persons in American Society, Likewise Virginia Sapiro (1983) studied the political integration of women. Women's liberation movement in Germany did have a marked impact on the political attitudes of the women has been discussed by Newmann Noelle in 1981. Vicky Randall ICO in a study on the political status of the women in the U.S.S.R. found that though the mass political participation has increased as a result of social policy, no comparable success has been achieved in drawing women into positions of political leadership. In a log-linear analysis of Presidential candidate selection from 1948 to 1980 Kathleen M. Blee has observed that marital and occupational mobility have different effects on women's political orientation, but the direction of political change across mobility statuses was not consistent.(1986.385-400) Welch, and Studlar in their study entitled "*British Public Opinion toward Women in Politics*" have examined the attitudes of the British public towards women as political leaders using data from the 1979 British Election study (1986,138-154). General elections in Britain have shown interesting developments in the relationship between gender and voting, These developments have been examined by Pippa Norris in *"Conservative Attitudes in recent British Elections: An Emerging Gender Gap"* (1986,120-128)**.** Listhuq and Miller have examined the gender difference in Norwegian Voting behaviour in *"The gender Gap in Norwegian Voting Behaviour***"** (1986,187-266)**.** Presley, Weaver, and Weaver examined the political attitudes and socialization of traditional, transitional, feminist women (1985-86, 51-77). Shirley Nuss in her article "Women in Political Lifes Variations at the Global Level" tried to analyse the data regarding the women participation in elective political office at local and national levels in 60 countries. On the whole the data reveal that "globally, women's presence among political elites remains low" (1985,65-78). Clark and Clark in *"Models of Gender Political participation (In the U.S.A.)"* examined "three alternative explanations for the relationship between gender and participation that focus upon (1) Childhood socialization, (2) adult role socialization and (3) structural factors of socio-economic status." They found that "the linkages between gender and participation are influenced by a complex set of factors" (1986,5-25). Glendon Schubert in her study titled *"Sexual Difference in (US) Political Behavior***"** finds that "there have been important and pervasive changes in the extent of female political participation and activism", but "those changes have been largest in elections and least in non-electoral activities" (1985,1-66). Barry J. Kay's **"*Gender and Political Activity in Canada 1965-1984"*** study deals with questions pertaining to the level of political activism of women in Canada and the various

obstacles that restrict it. (1987, 851-864**)**. Peter Casten Miller and Paul Dekker's *"The Political participation of Women & Men in the Netherlands, 1973-86",* found that "the electoral participation gap between men and women is diminishing though for activities that involve the use of conventional political channels, differences between man and women are' substantially greater" (1987,409-447**)**.

Ros Der Van tried to pursue the argument, in a study entitled "Class, Gender and participatory Behaviour" that "gender specific explanatory models should be used in behavioural studies" (1987,95-123**)**. Daniel Wirls in *"Reinterpreting the gender gap (in US elections"* analysed "the recent political differences between women and men that contradicts the conventional description of the 'gender gap' in American politics" (1986**,**316-330). In a recent study entitled "The Gender Gap in Yugoslavia", Clark and Clark compared "the levels of political participation of men and women in Yugoslavia"(1987,411-426). Gertrude A. Steuernagel's paper entitled "Reflections on women and Political participation", deals with women and political participation (1987**,**3-13). In another study entitled 'Multimember Districts and the Representation of women'. Susan Welch and D. T. Studlar (1990) suggested a corelation between multi-member district plurality elections and higher representation of women.

Much of the feminist concerns in recent times with 'politics' and the 'political' may be seen embodying what Anne Phillips has characterised a "double movement towards both critique and recuperation".(1998,4).The critique may be seen more or less continuing with the issues raised by women's movement in the 60s and 70s notion of politics that was based on dualities of social life and the inherent dichotomies which were opposed to each other around the concept coined by Carole Pateman as 'private/personal' and 'public/political'. Feminist critics have not only pointed out the exclusive nature of these boundaries but also the ways through which they negotiated in different historical to make them communicable or rearranged them thus redefining their constitutive elements and their mutual relationships. Gurpreet Mahajan (2003) terms it "two modes of enhancing democratic citizenship" which results in coexistence for enhancing citizenship, their development is no longer seen as antagonistic, but of mutual respect overlying the ongoing process of democratization. The issues that are addressed therefore are not simply identifying a notion of women's politics or a politics centering on women's issues. It rather as Phillips points out "holds out the promise of transforming the ways in which we think about any kind of politics." (Phillips ,1998)

Ryan and Deci (2000) have identified reasons behind the choices made by women. Therefore, authors collected data on the engagement of women in certain practices related to

children's education, respondent's employment, household duties, health-related decision making, mobility opportunities, and the perception of group empowerment. If respondents were attached with any of the above they were asked to rate the reasons. Ryan and Deci (2000) aggregated the responses into a weighted index which is described as the 'Relative Autonomy Index'. Among others, Longwe and Clarke (1999) provide an effective measure of women empowerment by developing a Women's Empowerment Index. Also, they provide a quantitative indicator of women's progress towards gender equality where women's rate of representation in leadership positions is used as a measure of women empowerment. In this connection they introduce the concept of "Self-Reliance" and "Empowerment" to distinguish between personal and collective aspects of women's position in the society. These *self-reliance* and *empowerment* are differentiated on the basis of various types of indicators. *Women's Self- Reliance* (WSI) means their individual capacity to advance, which is measured by the level of education, share of earned income and proportion of women in industry. Women's 'Empowerment' means their actual power to control public policy and over the allocation of resources. To measure 'Women's Empowerment Index (WEI)', employed women's power to make decision in the public domain (i.e. seats in parliament, and top management positions) is taken as the main indicator. Further, they verify the relationship between *self-reliance* and *empowerment* because general perception is that increased *self-reliance* helps to achieve increased *empowerment*. They treat 'gender' as an essential concept for social and economic categories. Therefore, to get the actual picture of empowerment, Longwe and Clarke (1999) concentrate on the gender gap for each indicator used in the study. They define *gender gap* as the difference in the percentage of women and men, in any given category. Therefore, in Asian countries a shift in women's ability to visit any place without taking permission from a male or any other senior household member may be a sign of empowerment but this is not relevant for the women of western countries or societies where they enjoy relatively more liberty in this regard. Economic security of an individual creates greater self-confidence, which enables her/him to control household decisions to a greater extent. Besides, mobility freedom, future vision, effective participation in non -family groups, public spheres also generate an enormous confidence among individual which automatically place her/him in an important position in the household as well as in the society. In this respect women are considered as *empowered* if they can *make decisions*, *do not cover head by scarf or won't wear burqa (i.e. they are not modest), decide about small purchases, visits other women, make large purchases and use public transportation* within the existing gender norms. The reason for choosing these factors as indicators of empowerment is that existing

gender norms emerge from gender stereotyping which result in sexism believing that female is inferior to male. As a result, females are supposed to occupy less power, less prestige, and less pay or no pay in any setting be it inside her household or outside at workplace. Thus, any factor challenging to the existing rules or stereotypes may be considered as empowerment of women.

Women's participation in the political arena and their activities and voting pattern are severely conditioned by the considerations of gender and patriarchy. A preconceived notion of the nature and attributes of men and women operate in the society. Cultural attributes of different societies definitely affects women's political behaviour thus depriving them of the self-confidence required for political leadership. A culture which gives more importance to male than the female, women may never muster the confidence and the independence required to look for power and yield it effectively. This observation made by Jeene J Kirkpatrick(1979) on American women can very aptly be applied in almost all the societies. The transition from the roles of a housewife and mother to the role of political decision-maker is not easy and not been frequently attempted. Barbare Nelson and Najma Choudhury, the editors of the book 'Women and Politics Worldwide', (1994) maintain that a study has been carried out in 43 countries on women's political engagement which reveals the fact that everywhere women have a secondary political status. According to 'Passport Switzerland Guide' (Francois Micheloud, 2001) that "in Switzerland only 5.7% women occupy positions of power." Lori S. Ashford (Global Women's Issue, 2012), observes that" around the world till 2010 just 11 out if 192 heads of Government were women." Globally women hold only 16% of ministerial post except Finland with 63% of cabinet posts held by women. Suzanne Soule and Jennifer Nairne (Centre for Civic Education, Chicago,2006,) observes "that women in the developed countries have been found to be less engaged and interested in political process than men." The IEA Civic Education Study (2001) titled "Are girls Checking Out? Gender and Political Socialization in Transitioning Democracies" by Schlozman, Verba and Brady about Indonesia shows that women's role in the public sphere is undergoing a change in the post-industrial society from an agrarian one which has been defined as industrial democracy. The IEA observes that political interest is highly correlated with political knowledge. The researchers found that participation of girls in political activities through female political role appears to work only when there is ample media coverage that follows female candidates which then garners support from family discussions at home. As per observations of the United Nations observed women are making scanty progress around the world in getting into leadership positions in business, government and academia or even

politics. The pace is also slow even in wealthy nations. The first country to grant voting rights to women was New Zealand in 1893(www.softschools,com). Even now only 24 women have become head of state or government in the world and as per the UN report 2013 they hold only 10.5% of seats in world's parliaments. (Inter-parliamentary union report to UN, 2013). The UN Data Base on Women's Indicators and Statistics shows that only eight countries have achieved the target of 30% or more seats held by women in parliament headed by Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Norway.

WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN INDIA

In India women started to take part in politics right from participating in the freedom struggle from the 1920's - 1940's and significantly contributed to the establishment of an independent India. The Constitution of India captures the essence of the freedom movement which guarantees equality with non-discrimination to all Indian women. In spite of the progressive nature of the Constitution, after India gained independence traditional social structures that restricted women's social participation were quickly reinforced (Ranjana 2011,27*). Women were again confined to the domestic sphere and virtually excluded from decision-making processes at the family and community level. Further, traditionally women have been influenced by the preferences of male family members or have voted along caste lines. The Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI) took up the issue of greater representation of women in political institutions in India and published its report in 1976. It suggested that female representation in political offices especially at the grass-root level must be increased by reserving certain percentage of seats for women. 'Symbols of Power' edited by Vina Mazumder, is the first publication in the planned series "Women in a Changing Society". The papers in this volume deal mainly with the themes of women and politics. Most of the papers indicate the failure of political rights to bring about the, desired changes in women's status.

In 1988, the 'National Perspective Plan for Women' also suggested that a 30% quota for women be introduced at all levels of elective bodies. Women's groups and gender politics strictly insisted that reservation be restricted to the panchayat level to encourage women participation in electoral politics. The national consensus around this demand resulted in the adoption of the 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution in 1993 that introduced 33% reservation for women in institutions of local governance. In 1995 the question of reservation of seats for women in Parliament was raised again. When the bill was introduced in the 11th

Lok Sabha in 1997, initially, most political parties agreed to this demand, but soon there were dissent and conflict of opinions on two main issues raised by several political parties and pressure groups. The objections were on two main issues namely (a)the issue of overlapping quotas for women in general and those for women of the lower castes and (b)the issue of elitism (Praveen Rai,2011). The proposed bill is yet to be passed by the Lok Sabha although it has been passed in the Rajya Sabha in 2014.

However, their participation as voters has seen a significant push in the late 1990s and reached an all-time high in the recent Lok Sabha election. At present they are engaged in political dialogue, actively taking part in student politics, exposed to the media and are challenging the traditional patriarchal frameworks and structures. Women are now voting in huge numbers than men but still they face discrimination not only in terms of allotments of seats to contest elections but also within the organisational structure   of major political parties. The marginalization of women in electoral politics is deeply rooted in the structure of the party system and the imbalanced gender power relations. "Their representation has increased from 22 seats in the 1952 election to 61 seats in 2014, a phenomenal increase of 36%. However, gender disparity is quite evident as nine out of ten parliamentarians in the Lok Sabha are men. An assessment of the success rate of women candidates with respect to men in winning elections shows that it is higher in the last three general elections. In 2014, the success rate of women was 9% as compared to men at 6%." (Inter-Parliamentary Union,2011). The under-representation of women in the Lok Sabha, and from crucial decision-making positions in the Cabinet, point to their systematic exclusion from the political structure and the deeply rooted gender bias in Indian society. Though women head a significant number of national and state-level political parties, the overall representation of women within the internal administrative bodies of these parties is negligible. (The Inter-Parliamentary Union, and UN Women,2011)

Women have been relegated to the second rank of leadership. They rarely play any role in formulating policies and strategies in political parties and are at best assigned the job of keeping an eye on women's issues and use them only if it is required for electoral benefits for their parties. In India representation of women have never exceeded more than 11% in all parliamentarian elections and ministerial post are held by only 6% women except in 2014 where 25% cabinet positions are occupied by women.

It has been found that women in general even those educated and working seem to accept the dominant male ideology. A survey conducted on women and political participation in 1998 in Haryana revealed that they do not question their male counterparts and solely

follow them. Caste plays a critical role in their attitudes to social issues. It is observed that these women are more conservative in nature and likely to adopt positions similar to those of men. Lower caste women are however more independent in voicing their opinion. It was surprisingly noted that in Haryana only 44% urban women know about the reservation policies but do not know the extension of reservation is. So, it is not true that education enables a person to be politically active. Given the well-known importance of political families in India we can expect women from proactive political families to be more aware of policy changes but here also the percentage of women is only 3 which shows that not all women are interested to pursue the same profession. An analysis by 'International Idea of women in the Indian Parliament' between 1991 and 1996 found that "among the small number of women parliamentarians a disproportionate number represented the Brahmin caste." (http://archive.idea.int/women/parl/studies4a.html).MIT study of 2008 revealed that "most local governments remain largely patriarchal and caste-based institutions, hindering inclusive governance." In a survey conducted in Chennai by John Harris titled *'Antinomies of Empowerment: Observations on Civil society, Politics and Urban Governance in India'* it was found that "the poorer and in some cases the less educated women were more active in political life and more active in solving their problem themselves instead of resorting to political parties and their cadres for redressal"(2007,2716-2724). A majority of SGH's in Chennai have undertaken social activities for women like providing crèche, night school to enable working children and school dropouts to take their education, tailoring and computer classes etc including participation in Women's day events. The large numbers of women who take part in these events are more politically conscious than the elite or middle class.

In India personal laws are religion specific pertaining to religious communities which are different from one another and universal civil codes that apply to all citizens. While the latter appear to protect the rights of Indian women to equal treatment and equal opportunity, the personal laws of most religious communities have undercut women's access to judicially enforceable civil rights. While the members of the Constituent Assembly agreed on the need for a solid framework of fundamental rights, they disagreed on the matter of blending the civil and political rights as opined by Pratibha Jain in her article *'Balancing Minority Rights and Gender justice: The Impact of protecting Multiculturalism on women's rights in India'.* The state according to Samita Sen (2000) has adopted a dual and paradoxical attitude towards the women's question. On the one hand it tries to protect women through a range of pro-woman legislation thereby playing a paternalistic role but on the other hand, seldom such legislations are fully implemented. For instance, family laws relate to the sphere

of personal relations but also, they are person- specific. As a result, family laws are codified separately for four communities- Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Parses which have a direct control over marriage, divorce, maintenance, guardianship of children, adoption etc. All four codes treat women subordinate and dependent on male kin. These laws are based on religions which are very different from one another. Sen argues that as a secular state, India maintains these laws alongside secular laws, civil and criminal all of which are administered by the same judicial apparatus. This has led to the 'politicization of the personal laws'(Shiva Kumar Lal,2006).He analyses the effectiveness of legislative weapon for women empowerment and identifies the issues that affect this. It tries to analyse the effectiveness of women's participation in the political activities based on their political awareness, their capability to make decision, their consciousness about various issues concerned with women like providing education to girls, health, nutrition, fighting against dowry, oppression, rape, molestation etc. It tries to examine whether women empowerment can be achieved through legislation or women participation in the Panchayat Raj institution or not. Alternatively, it seeks to examine whether through effective political participation of women are able to create a new path for themselves in the traditional patriarchal environment and successfully create a forum to deal with the women or gender related issues effectively or it is just an eyewash with no real empowerment outcome. Sharma and Biswas (2008) examined the impact of employment status (i.e. whether employed or unemployed) of women separately on the household decision-makings. Considering the factors like monetary transactions, daily and large purchases, final say on husband's earnings, whether she has money for her own use or has a bank savings account, whether she can take decision to visit relative or friend's house, market, outside villages and/or health facilities an empowerment index is constructed separately for employed and unemployed women to compare their achieved levels of empowerment by their employment status. Author ran a 'Mean Comparison Test' to explore the influence of employment on empowerment and applied a multiple regression test to analyse the magnitude and direction of impact of employment and other social variables like the respondent and her husband's education, husband's occupation, media awareness and the standard of living on women's empowerment It is found from the study by Chakrabarti and Sharma Biswas (2012)titled *'An Exploratory Analysis of Women's Empowerment in India: A Structural Equation Modelling Approach'*, that despite repeated effort, India has failed to achieve targeted level of women empowerment, mainly because it has failed to identify the causal factors and the direction as to how they are related to empowerment. They argued that on the one hand empowerment is affected by some causal factors, while conversely enhanced

empowerment has influence on those causal factors. Findings of this study show that women's financial independence, cultural status and exposure to media are three major positive contributing factors, which increases women's level of empowerment including both decision-making and freedom of mobility. On the other hand, education of the respondent plays a significant negative role everywhere in India allowing women to take part in decision-makings in family matters. Household's economic standard has negative significant impact on decision-making; it is not unexpected in Indian case as wealthier families are usually male dominated.

The working- women in India continue to face stiff challenges and social resistance. A recent survey conducted by World Economic Forum 2012, choosing 60 of the 100 best employers in India as a sample revealed that only 10% of senior management post is held by women in two-thirds of the surveyed companies. Industry chamber ASSOCHAM conducted a survey in 2010 revealed that majority of working women often do a tight rope walk balancing a rather hostile domestic environment and professional lives as husbands and in-laws are yet to adapt modern mindsets. Dashora (2013) in her article '*Problems Faced By Working Women in India*' observed that with globalisation and advancement in education, the elite and the upper middle class section of women have gained exposure in the global market. They are now becoming entrepreneurs, participating globally in international platforms like the Inter- Parliamentary union but exclusive responsibility at workplace or taking independent decisions is still lagging behind. It has been advocated by Amartya Sen (1990) that though it is a fact that economic independence reduces dependence of women on men but their bargaining power or voice of opinion is based on the nature of work and also the sector she is employed in. In many families women still do not have a voice in anything inspite of the fact that she is contributing to the family expenditure either equally or in some cases even more than their husbands while in some families the women may play a dominating role. The result is that empowerment of women in India is highly imbalanced along with huge gaps. Economically independent and literate women lead a particular kind of life which are envious for other women. This disparity is also a cause of worry because balanced development is not taking place. Ejaz Ghani, William Kerr and Stephen D. O'Connell (Promoting Women's Economic Participation in India, 2013) are of the opinion that empowerment can assume various forms like increased presence of female in labour force, reduction in wage discrimination and induction and promotion of talented women into leadership and managerial roles. According to this survey female ownership in business enterprises is high in Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu than in Delhi, Haryana, Bihar and

Gujarat. However, men find it difficult to accept women as their colleagues especially seniors. In general women have to give extra effort to gain recognition. They often develop a feeling of being neglected which leads to mental stress. The psychological pressure has lead women to quit their jobs. Evidence shows that in most countries participation of women is not very impressive. Women who are able to get decision-making power are mostly from urban and elite groups. As per the report of 'Inter-Parliamentary Union' to the 'U.N Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women' (2010), "the highest percentage of women Parliamentarians are in the Nordic countries at 42.55% followed by USA at 22% and 21% i Europe, Asia at 18.4% and sub- Saharan Africa at 18% and the Pacific at 15.2% and the lowest in Arab states at 9.4%. Among individual countries Sweden ranks first with 47% followed by Cuba at 43.2% and Iceland at 42.9%. In India it is much less only 10.7% much less than even China and Pakistan at 21.3% and 22.5% respectively." Gender specific roles for men and women coupled with traditional division of labour, illiteracy, economic backwardness, the type of electoral system, lack of sufficient training for preparing for political roles etc have restricted women participation in politics. In addition, elections have become a very costly affair. Women find it difficult to establish strong foothold in politics without party base. It has been observed that only women who belong to political families get easy recognition and support from party leaders. Illiteracy, women's triple burden, patriarchal values, lack of access and control over income and other resources, restrictions to public spaces and unresponsive legal systems continue to act as impediment to their effective political participation. This is coupled by the absence of infrastructural facilities and support services.

Raka Ray (2000) in her book '*Fields of Protest*' discussed the engagement of women's movement in two cities of India, Bombay and Calcutta. She argues that it is the political field that directed women's movements in every city which in turn determined the extent of women's empowerment for that particular city. Political field comprises of actors such as: state, political parties and women's organization which are connected with each other in both friendly and oppositional manner. Hence the women's question was differently articulated in Bombay and Calcutta. In Bombay, women's movement has primarily focused on 'violence against women' as the cause of concern. On the other hand, women's activists in Calcutta were concerned about employment and poverty eradication which has direct linkage with the state and economy. Ray (2000) argued that women's movement in Bombay questioned the patriarchal power structure within the institutions of family being influenced by the 'second wave feminism of the West' whereas in Calcutta, feminism has challenged the

state and economy by questioning the sexual division of labour operative within the family. This empirical study shows us the difference in perspectives between women's movements which were located in specific socio-cultural, demographic and economic climates. For instance, women's groups in Calcutta are politically affiliated organizations therefore their presence was felt in mainstream and oppositional politics. In Bombay, women's groups are autonomous in nature, they operated in the protest field. Thus, social change is defined and demarcated in relation to the time, space and political climate in which each women's movement is embedded. As Anagol argued, "the awareness of women as a specific group and developing the women's network or sisterhood were the two defining features of Indian feminism and social change" (2013,104-113).

The study and research on the women's movement in India is a subject of wide social importance these days. Today, more and more voluntary organizations, national agencies and government departments are taking up women's issues. Not merely are these activities expanding into new areas of action, but they are also seeking to reach out to women in the rural and remote areas. The approach to women's issues is also gradually changing from one of protection and welfare, to that of participation and empowerment. In fact, interest in the participatory problems of women is spreading fast. New programmes of women's studies are being undertaken at different centres. So, it can be expected that further additions will soon be made to the field of existing literature.

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