

# Women empowerment

[Society](#), [Child Abuse](#)



The National Policy for Empowerment of Women 2001 aimed at bringing about advancement, development and empowerment of women in all spheres of life. However, a close examination of social and economic status of women, especially in the rural areas shows unsatisfactory achievements in most human development indicators. Citing published facts and figures, evaluate the reasons for the failure of the government of India in areas such as growing feminization of poverty; exploitation of women in low paid, hazardous and insecure jobs in the unrecognised sector; wide gender gaps in literacy and in wage rate; and escalating violence against women and the rising incidence of female foeticide and infanticide. What concrete steps should the government take to address this issue?

The First Five Year Plan, 1951: highlighted the need for organizing women. The Second Five Year Plan, 1956-61: made an attempt to protect women against unsafe work, stressed for maternity benefits and crèches for children. It also suggested speedy implementation of the principle of equal pay for equal work and provided for training to enable women to compete for high level jobs. The Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-79): brought in a comprehensive policy for women's employment. It provided for special steps for admission for women to educational institutions on a strictly non-discriminatory basis and recommended a programme of functional literacy. In 1976, a National Plan of Action was evolved based on the United National World Plan of Action for Women. A Women's Welfare and Development Bureau under the Ministry of Social Welfare was established to serve as nodal point to coordinate programme of other Ministries and to collect relevant data. The Sixth Plan: stressed the need for greater attention to the economic emancipation of

women along with access to health care and family planning services. It further stipulated that women were to form at least one third of the beneficiaries under the scheme of Training of Rural Youth for self-employment (TRYSEM). A special women's income generating programme was also introduced in 1982 (DWCRA). The Plan emphasized that the women workers would require new skills and that the existing skills need to be upgraded. The Seventh Plan: envisaged to instill confidence and to generate awareness amongst women and to open up new avenues of work by expanding access of women to critical resources such as land, credit, training, etc. Women's Development Corporations were to set up and training and employment programmes were started to promote self employment and wage employment. The Eighth Five Year Plan (1990-95): In order to increase the visibility and acknowledge women's contribution, the plan stated that steps will be taken for identification and registration of women workers. They also decided that obstacles will also be removed to expand women's access and control over resources, better wages and improved access to social security. The 73rd and the 74th Constitution (Amendment) Acts have made provisions for reserving 1/3rd seats for women in election in local self-Government. Introduction: Women in India have always been issues of concern. The folks and society at large consider women as second class citizens. Though we admire and preach them in the name of Durga, Saraswati, Parvati and Kali, we also abuse her in the form of Child-marriage, Female infanticide, Sati, Sexual harassment, Dowry and so on. The status of women in India has been subject to many great alterations over the past few millenniums. From a largely unknown status in ancient

times through the low points of the medieval period, to the promotion of equal rights by many reformers, the history of women in India has been lively. The status of women has varied in different time periods. In this presentation, I would focus on the following topics: Status of women : - In Ancient India - In Medieval India - Before independence - Post independence v Timeline of famous Indian Women - Sexual Violence - Domestic Violence - Dowry - Female infanticides - Child Marriages ~ Trafficking - Conclusion

Women in India The early Vedic period women were educated. There were some kingdoms in ancient India, which had customs such as `nagarvadhu` i. e. the bride of the city. According to this custom women competed to win the prestigious title of `nagarvadhu`. In this era, women no doubt had superior position than their spouses or their male counterparts. It is truly in this period that women were treated as Durga and Parvati. There was a special thread ceremony in which girls were tied threads of honour based on merit. Later this ceremony was replaced by `child-marriage`, which afterwards transformed into an evil act which is bothering the society even today. Child-Marriage by this time was started on a large scale because of many holy books. Girls were married when they were infants. They were send to their husbands house when they attained puberty. Girls were not permitted to gain education. Status of women in Ancient India It is believed that women benefited equal status with men in all spheres of life in ancient India. In female infanticide was practiced largely. India got secluded by arrival of Muslims in India and they introduced the `purdah` system i. e. to cover their heads fully with a `veil`. on Muslim women. The Rajput women of Rajasthan practiced an evil commonly known as `jauhar`. Jauhar was the practice of

the voluntary immolation of all the wives and daughters of defeated warriors, in order to avoid capture and consequent molestation by the enemy. Even polygamy was also practiced by most Hindu Kshatriyas. Polygamy is a practice where a husband married more than once. At the same time many women excelled in arts, literature, music. Women were also rulers in the medieval period. Some of the great women rulers were Razia Sultan, the only women ruler to reign over the throne of Delhi. The Gond Queen Durgavati ruled for fifteen years, before she lost the battle to mughal emperor Akbar`s general Asaf Ali. Sati was also practised where women were forced to jump in the burning funeral of their dead husband. ` Devdasi` was prevalent in south India where girls were married to deity or trees. This practise had destroyed the lives of many girls as they were physically molested and sexually exploited by many pundits. So we can say that the status of women in the Medieval India was hectic and the main discrimination was started from that period. Status of women in Medieval India The condition of Women in society was worsening during the medieval period. At this point of time child-marriage, sati. Status of Indian women before Independence India witnessed improvements in the Status of Women after the arrival of British. There were many women reformers who worked for the betterment and upliftment of their other female counterparts. The begum of Bhopal discarded the purdah and fought in the revolt of 1857. Many reformers like Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, Jyotiba Phule with his wife Savitribai Phule undertook several measures to eradicate social evils from the society. Sir Sayyed Ahmad Khan established the Aligarh Muslim University for the spread of education among the Muslims. He also

eliminated the purdah system among muslim women. Many Acts were passed for the upliftment of women among which Widow Remarriage Act of 1856 was important. technology, and so on. Indian women were also given liberties and rights such as freedom of expression and equality, as well as right to get education. But still at this moment in time, we are fighting for crisis such as dowry, female infanticide, sex selective abortions, health, domestic violence, etc. Women today are educated but illiterate in terms of knowing their rights properly. Another harmful practise is the Dowry system where gift of money or valuables are given by the bride`s family to the groom`s at the time of their marriage. This is the new harrasment in the name of wedding gift. Women are killed if they bring less dowry after marriage. The term Bride Burning is criticized within India itself. I would be discussing the problems faced by the today`s women afterwards. Status of Indian women after Independence Indian women now chip in in all activities such as education, politics, media, art and culture, service sectors, science and Timeline of notable Indian Women The steady change in their position can be highlighted by looking at what has been achieved by women in the country: 1905: Suzanne RD Tata becomes the first Indian woman to drive a car.[20] 1916: The first women's university, SNDT Women's University, was founded on June 2, 1916 by the social reformer Dhondo Keshav Karve with just five students. 1927: The All India Women's Conference was founded. 1994: Harita Kaur Deol becomes the first Indian woman to perform a solo flight. 1951: Prem Mathur becomes the first Indian women commercial pilot of the Deccan Airways 1959: Anna Chandy becomes the first Indian woman Judge of High Court[21] 1966: Captain Durga Banerjee becomes the first

Indian woman pilot of the state airline, Indian Airlines. 1966: Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay wins Ramon Magsaysay award for community leadership. 1966: Indira Gandhi becomes the first woman Prime Minister of India 1970: Kamaljit Sandhu becomes the first Indian woman to win a Gold in the Asian Games 1972: Kiran Bedi becomes the first female recruit to join the Indian Police Service.[22] 1989: Justice M. Fathima Beevi becomes the first woman judge of the Supreme Court of India.[23] November 1997: Kalpana Chawla becomes the first Indian woman to go into Space.[24] September 21, 1992: Priya Jhingan becomes the first lady cadet to join the Indian Army (later commissioned on March 6, 1993)[25] 2004: Punita Arora becomes the first woman in the Indian Army to don the highest rank of Lt General.

Violence against Indian women in the Society Violence against women and girls is the most persuasive human rights violation in the world today. Violence against Indian women in the Society In recent years, there has been an alarming rise in atrocities against women in India. Every 26 minutes a woman is molested. Every 34 minutes a rape takes place. Every 42 minutes a sexual harassment incident occurs. Every 43 minutes a woman is kidnapped. And every 93 minutes a woman is burnt to death over dowry. One-quarter of the reported rapes involve girls under the age of 16 but the vast majority are never reported. Although the penalty is severe, convictions are rare.

Sexual Violence The largest democracy of the world, sheltering more than a billion souls; the birth place of a great civilization; the place of origin of Vedas full of respect for women; the great cultural land ? India, fails to protect its daughters from violence, physical, sexual, psychological, in public and in secure territories. (<http://www.newstrackindia.com/newsdetails/154>) It has

been estimated that a woman is murdered, raped or abused every three minutes on average in India. The men do this act whenever they are drunken, whenever they are having vulgar fun or they are anti-socials. According to the 2006 In-Depth Study of the Secretary-General: " Sexual violence by non-partners refers to violence by a relative, friend, acquaintance, neighbour, work colleague or stranger. Estimates of the prevalence of sexual violence by nonpartners are difficult to establish, because in many societies, sexual violence remains an issue of deep shame for women and often for their families. Statistics on rape extracted from police records, for example, are notoriously unreliable because of significant underreporting" ([http://www.unifem.org/campaigns/vaw/facts\\_figures.php?page=30](http://www.unifem.org/campaigns/vaw/facts_figures.php?page=30)) Some facts on Sexual Violence: Sudhir Kakkar has estimated that at least 600, 000 to 700, 000 Indian children are likely to have experienced sexual abuse, most by members of their own families. For every crime reported against children, there are 100 that are not reported. The incidence of rape of girls under age 10 increased by 27 per cent between 1996 and 1997. 20 per cent of the pregnancies of adolescent abortion seekers in Mumbai were due to rape and incest. Domestic Violence The level of Domestic violence is also high in India. Husbands beat their wives in a drunken state to get rid of their frustration. Domestic violence is also prevalent because of `dowry`. Trafficking is also a big reason for female abuse. According to a recent World Health Organisation (WHO) report, one in six women around the world suffer from domestic violence. Based on a survey of 24, 000 women from rural and urban areas in 10 countries, the report noted that female victims of domestic assault were twice as likely to



suffer poor health than other women. This kind of abuse was also responsible for the spread of HIV amongst women, as abused women were not in a position to demand safe sex. Some facts on Domestic Violence: In spite of the fact that most spousal abuse goes unreported, more than 70 per cent of women in some regions report physical abuse by their husbands. Wife-beating is often seen as " a husband's right". Divorce is not an option for battered wives. Alcohol abuse contributes to the likelihood that men will beat their wives. Steps taken by Government of India to prevent Dowry The incidents of domestic violence are higher among the lower Socio-Economic Classes (SECs). There are various instances of an inebriated husband beating up the wife often leading to severe injuries. Domestic violence is also seen in the form of physical abuse. The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 came into force on October 26, 2006. Dowry Dowry or Dahej is the payment in cash or/and kind by the bride's family to the groom' s family along with the giving away of the bride ( called Kanyadaan) in Indian marriages. The practice of dowry abuse is rising in India. The most severe in " bride burning", the burning of women whose dowries were not considered sufficient by their husband or in-laws. Most of these incidents are reported as accidental burns in the kitchen or are disguised as suicide. It is evident that there exist deep rooted prejudices against women in India. Cultural practices such as the payment of dowry tend to subordinate women in Indian society. Dowry is the one of the evil practices which is and in fact which was criticized on a large scale by the Indian society. Dowry has now been given a new name after many dowry prohibition acts as marriage gifts. So we can say that Dowry is a social practice which would take ages to eradicate. Some

facts on Dowry: As many as 15, 000 women annually are killed by their husbands in disputes over dowry. Reported dowry deaths have increased by 170 per cent in the past decade. Thousands more are injured and maimed because the husband, or the husband's family, is dissatisfied with the dowry brought by the wife. Steps taken by Government of India to prevent Dowry In 1961, the Government of India passed the Dowry Prohibition Act, making the dowry demands in wedding arrangements illegal. However, many cases of dowry-related domestic violence, suicides and murders have been reported. In the 1980s, numerous such cases were reported. In 1985, the Dowry Prohibition (maintenance of lists of presents to the bride and bridegroom) rules were framed. According to these rules, a signed list of presents given at the time of the marriage to the bride and the bridegroom should be maintained. The list should contain a brief description of each present, its approximate value, the name of whoever has given the present and his/her relationship to the person. However, such rules are hardly enforced. A 1997 report claimed that at least 5, 000 women die each year because of dowry deaths, and at least a dozen die each day in 'kitchen fires' thought to be intentional. The term for this is " bride burning" and is criticized within India itself. Amongst the urban educated, such dowry abuse has reduced dramatically. ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women\\_in\\_India#Crimes\\_against\\_women](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_India#Crimes_against_women))

Female Infanticide

Female infanticide is an evil practice of killing the female infants as they are born because the people do not want a girl as they have a fear of dowry and other unnecessary stuff. Female infanticide is the most extreme expression of the preference for sons. This practice was popular a couple of decades ago

but is still prevalent in far off rural areas. According to a recent report by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) up to 50 million girls and women are missing from India's population as a result of systematic gender discrimination in India. In most countries in the world, there are approximately 105 female births for every 100 males. In India, there are less than 93 women for every 100 men in the population. The accepted reason for such a disparity is the practice of female infanticide in India, prompted by the existence of a dowry system which requires the family to pay out a great deal of money when a female child is married. For a poor family, the birth of a girl child can signal the beginning of financial ruin and extreme hardship. ([http://www.indianchild.com/abortion\\_infanticide\\_foeticide\\_india.htm](http://www.indianchild.com/abortion_infanticide_foeticide_india.htm))

Infanticide in India occurs mostly among poor, rural populations. Daughters are considered economic burdens because of the high cost of weddings and dowries, while sons provide income, and are seen as type of insurance by their parents. New prenatal sexdetermination techniques, such as ultrasound, have led to an increase in the abortion of female foetuses rather than female infanticide. Female infanticide and abortion have increased in recent years as women opt for smaller families. In India the sex ratio is 93 women for every 100 men, but in some regions there are fewer than 85 women per 100 men. Research carried out at a Mumbai (formerly Bombay) hospital revealed in 1995 that for every aborted male, there were 1,000 aborted females. ~(<http://www.tiscali.co.uk/reference/encyclopaedia/hutchinson/m0012028.html>) Some facts on Female Infanticide: Between 3 million and 5 million female foetuses are aborted in India each year. In one Bombay clinic, 7,999 out of 8,000 aborted foetuses were female. Indian

gender-detection clinic advertisements suggest that it is better to spend US\$38 now to terminate a female foetus than US\$3, 800 later on her dowry. More than 10, 000 girl children each year are killed when they are born. Girl children are murdered by suffocation, having their spines snapped, or having rock salt shoved down their throats. The Intentional deprivation of girl children - through insufficient breast-feeding and denial of food and health care - leads to malnutrition and death. This mistreatment, along with feticide and infanticide, has led to 50 million women " going missing" in India's population. Steps taken by Government of India to prevent Female Infanticide

India has a low sex ratio, the chief reason being that many women die before reaching adulthood. Tribal societies in India have a better sex ratio than all other caste groups. This, in spite of the fact that tribal communities have far lower levels of income, literacy and health facilities. It is therefore suggested by many experts, that the low sex ratio in India can be attributed to female infanticides and sex-selective abortions. All medical tests that can be used to determine the sex of the child have been banned in India, due to incidents of these tests being used to get rid of unwanted female children before birth. Female infanticide (killing of girl infants) is still prevalent in some rural areas. The abuse of the dowry tradition has been one of the main reasons for sex-selective abortions and female infanticides in India. ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women\\_in\\_India#Crimes\\_against\\_women](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_India#Crimes_against_women))

Child Marriages According to the rural Indian people or the narrowminded communities, a girl child is twice vulnerable- for being a child and a girl. Discrimination against them begins even before their birth and continues as they grow. Their psychological, physical and economic dependence on the family makes them

vulnerable to violence and child abuse within or outside the family. To get rid of the girls in the family, the parents try to get their daughter married as soon as possible. This was practiced in the medieval India on a large scale. But due to efforts of many social reformers and acts, it has been minimised and is generally practiced in the far rural areas and in poor families. A May 1998 article in the New York Times states: Child marriages contribute to virtually every social malaise that keeps India behind in women's rights. The problems include soaring birth rates, grinding poverty and malnutrition, high illiteracy and infant mortality and low life expectancy, especially among rural women. The article cites a 1993 survey of more than 5, 000 women in Rajasthan, which showed that 56 percent of them had married before they were 15. Barely 18 percent of them were literate and only 3 percent used any form of birth control other than sterilization. Sixty-three percent of the children under age 4 of these women were severely undernourished. " Each year, formal warnings are posted outside state government offices stating that child marriages are illegal, but they have little impact." One man interviewed for the article has seven daughters. He borrowed some 60, 000 rupees to pay for the dowries for six of his daughters, ranging in age from 4-14. He reported that " the weddings mean that he can now look forward to growing old without being trapped in the penury by the need to support his daughters." (New York Times) Trafficking Trafficking means girls are sold to big people for satisfying their sexual needs or kidnapped to make them prostitutes. In many rural families, girls and women face nutritional discrimination within the family, and are anaemic and malnourished. Trafficking involves the recruitment and transportation of persons, using

deception, coercion and threats in order to place and keep them in a situation of forced labour, slavery or servitude. Persons are trafficked into a variety of sectors of the informal economy, including prostitution, domestic work, agriculture, the garment industry or street begging. ([http://www.unifem.org/campaigns/vaw/facts\\_figures.php?page=5](http://www.unifem.org/campaigns/vaw/facts_figures.php?page=5)) Children are trafficked for the following reasons: ~Sexual exploitation ~Entertainment & sports ~Labour ~Drug peddling ~Smuggling ~Adoption ~Marriage ~Begging

Organ trade India has been identified as a source, transit and destination point in the international circuit; large numbers of children are also trafficked within the country. According to a study conducted by Shakti Vahini in 2006, “ Trafficking in India”, 378 of the 593 districts in India are affected by human trafficking. 10% of human trafficking in India is international, while almost 90% is interstate. Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu are the states from where the maximum numbers of people are trafficked to other states. Intra state/inter district trafficking is high in the states of Rajasthan, Assam, Meghalaya, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra. States like Delhi and Goa are ‘ receiver’ states. Trafficking of women and children from the North-Eastern states of India and the bordering countries in the north-east is a serious issue but has so far not drawn public attention. There was no evidence of trafficking in Jammu & Kashmir. Intra country trafficking has not been documented to the extent that cross border trafficking has been. However, Shakti Vahini conducted a study in 2006: “ Trafficking in India”. The study reports that 378 of the 593 districts in India are affected by human trafficking. India’s porous border with Nepal, Pakistan and Bangladesh are

the major reasons cited for the prevalent high levels of children being trafficked every year. ([http://www.savethechildren.in/india/key\\_sectors/child\\_trafficking.html](http://www.savethechildren.in/india/key_sectors/child_trafficking.html)) Some facts on Trafficking: Between 70, 000 and 100, 000 prostitutes were working in the six major cities of Bangalore, Mumbai, Calcutta, Delhi, Hyderabad and Chennai in 1991. 15 per cent of Indian prostitutes are children. Steps taken by Government of India to prevent Female Infanticide The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act was passed in 1956. However many cases of trafficking of young girls and women have been reported. These women are either forced into prostitution, domestic work or child labour. ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women\\_in\\_India#Crimes\\_against\\_women](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_India#Crimes_against_women)) Conclusion Now, I would like to conclude this project. Through this project, I got acquainted about the status of women in many eras of Indian culture. I came to know about the present status of women in the society. I came across many points about the violence against women which I had not even heard of before doing this project. Preparing this presentation, I also learnt a lot about the culture of Greece and the position of women in Greek society. Still, I had a nice experience of creating this presentation. Now I think that we all should work towards the better status of women which is still being abused.