

## WOMEN LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION IN INDIAN PATRIARCHAL SOCIETY: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF THE BEHAVIOURAL, DEMOGRAPHIC, SOCIO-CULTURAL, ECONOMIC AND CYCLICAL FACTORS

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**Abstract:** In spite of a steady growth on the economic front, India has witnessed a sharp decline in the women's labour force participation rate in the last few years. According to the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) survey 2009-10, women work force participation rate in India has declined by 10.1 % in 2010, in comparison to 2005. According to the report published by International Labour Organization (ILO), women work force participation rate has decreased by 35-25% from 2004 to 2011. There are a number of social and economic factors responsible for this sharp decline in the Women labour force participation rate, such as – stringent labour market regulations, rise in crime against women, gender-inequality, lack of suitable job opportunities available for women, patriarchal society and the suppression of women, so on and so forth. In this paper, I endeavour to critically study and analyse the Behavioural, Demographic, Socio-cultural, Economic and Cyclical Factors that are principally responsible for a sharp decline in India's Women labour force participation rate, which has thwarted the economic growth and development of the country.

**Keywords:** Patriarchy, Women Empowerment, Economic Growth, Development.

### INTRODUCTION

“It's become popular in some activist circles to embrace notions from postmodernism, and that includes the idea that gender is somehow a binary. Gender is not a binary. It is a hierarchy. It is global in its reach, it is sadistic in its practice, and it is murderous in its completion. Just like race, and just like class. Gender demarcates the geopolitical boundaries of the patriarchy—which is to say, it divides us in half. That half is not horizontal; it is vertical. And in case you missed this part, men are always on top.” Lierre Keith, Radfem Reboot 2012.

Women empowerment, gender equalitarianism – are issues that are gaining prominence in the world today, since gender-based discrimination, violence against women, gender hierarchy, subjugation of the ‘weaker sex’ – are on rise at present. Even in this era of globalisation, Women are suppressed, they are denied enhanced access to education, to healthcare and to different facilities and resources, and even in some countries they have not been given equal status in society. To overcome these, countries have taken affirmative steps to ensure women's participation in

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the societal development. The strategies and policies of United Nations (UN) aim at eliminating “all obstacles that stand in the way of enjoyment by women of equal status with men”. The First World Conference on Women, held in Mexico City, in 1975 proclaimed three basic objectives of future oriented goals of the United Nations General Assembly, for ensuring gender equality and for conceptualizing the dream of women empowerment in developing nations. These objectives are:

- Full gender equality and the elimination of gender discrimination;
- The integration and full participation of women in development;
- An increased contribution by women towards strengthening world peace.

In 1979, the General Assembly of United Nations (UN) adopted The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which is also known as ‘an international bill of rights for women’. This ‘bill of rights for women’, consisting of a preamble and 30 articles, solely aims at ending gender-based discrimination. Nation, by adopting this convention, commit to:

- ‘to incorporate the principle of equality of men and women in their legal system, abolish all discriminatory laws and adopt appropriate ones prohibiting discrimination against women;’
- ‘to establish tribunals and other public institutions to ensure the effective protection of women against discrimination; and’
- ‘to ensure elimination of all acts of discrimination against women by persons, organizations or enterprises’.

While the international agencies, like UN have shown grave concern for the well-being of women in society, we need to introspect India’s stand in the midst of these.

It is well said that the position of women in a country indicates the standard of civilization of that country. Every Indian may here feel proud of his or her ancient standard of civilization. Ancient India venerated her women and gave them a high status which the forefathers of the civilized Western people could not even imagine. We are one of the ancient cultures in the whole world to acknowledge the rights of women. But long gone are those glorious days of past. 21<sup>st</sup> century india is a patriarchal society, a male dominated society, where women are subjugated and suppressed. The Patriarchal notions are very much rooted in the Indian mind-set, and Women are its worst victims. Women in India are not free from the clutches of India’s misogynistic society and culture, where women are considered as inferior and subordinate. Even in 21<sup>st</sup> century, Indian women are still confronting social and cultural constraints that hinder them from realizing their full potential. Gandhiji rightly observed: “a woman is the companion of man gifted with equal mental capacities also. Women have the right to participate in all walks of life along with men. Women have the same right of freedom and liberty as men’s. She is entitled a supreme place in her own sphere of activity as men also. The vicious

custom even the most ignorant and worthless men have been enjoying superiority over women which they do not deserve and ought not to have". Women are equal to men in every respect, but unfortunately, they are not given equal status in our society, which brings disgrace to the country.

Women work-force participation or women empowerment is about getting freedom from oppression, suppression and male dominance, about gaining control over their own lives and their intellectual resources, about challenging "masculine authority", about gaining independence and freedom from all constraints imposed upon them by the society, about flouting the rules set by patriarchal society. Women empowerment is the first step towards building a gender-just society, where the rights of women have been secured. Women empowerment contributes to the welfare and sustainable development of a society. As Jawaharlal Nehru rightly stated once, "You can tell the condition of the nation by looking at the status of women." Empowering women actually contributes to the human development of a nation and that's why, the developed and developing countries of the World are currently in the process of conceptualising this dream.

Women empowerment is one of the most important and significant topics of discussion in the present era. Women empowerment not only suggests women's participation in work-force, but also denotes a, and an opportunity gain independence and control of one's own life. According to UNITED NATIONS POPULATION INFORMATION NETWORK's Guidelines on Women's Empowerment, women empowerment constitutes of five components: "women's sense of self-worth; their right to have and to determine choices; their right to have access to opportunities and resources; their right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; and their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally". Thus for women, women empowerment is a means of attaining freedom, independence and control of their own lives. Societal bondage, social and cultural constructs, domestic violence, patriarchy, crime against women are the principal barriers or obstructs on the path of conceptualizing Women empowerment.

This paper is an endeavour to study Women empowerment, their social status in an Indian patriarchal society and the major hindrances that restrict us from conceptualizing this much desired goal. This paper is not only an endeavour to study the status and role of women in the development of Indian society, but the paper also proposes the implementation of some affirmative steps to eradicate the hindrances that stop us from conceptualizing women empowerment, to extirpate crime against women, to educate women, to give them an equal status in the society and encourage them to participate in the societal development in India.

This paper is structured in the following way. Sequentially, this paper discusses briefly the status of women in India, Indian Employment trends, and then identifies the possible determinants of women' participation in the labour market and analyses

the impact of domestic violence on the female labour force participation in India. And finally, Conclusion sums up the main ideas of the paper and proposes a few policies and recommendations.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Women constitute nearly half of the total population of India, but their contribution to the country's economic growth and development is far below its potential. Wide gender gaps persist in the Indian Labour Market, and this gender disparity has dramatically widened in the last few decades. As per the World Bank data, in 2014, female labour force participation rate in India was 27%, while the labour force participation for men was 79.9%. Female labour force participation rate has significantly declined in the last few years. According to the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) survey 2009-10, women work force participation rate in India has declined by 10.1 % in 2010, in comparison to 2005. International Labour Organization (ILO) has shown that women work force participation rate has decreased by 35-25% between 2004 and 2011. There are a number of factors responsible for this sharp decline in the Women LFPR, such as – rise in crime against women, gender-inequality, lack of job opportunities available for women and many more. Rachel Connelly, in her research study, “The Effect of Child Care Costs on Married Women's Labour Force Participation”, evaluates the significant role played by child-care expenses in women's Labour Force Participation. Rachel Connelly asserted that the ‘increased child care costs’ is instrumental in lowering women labour force participation rate in India. Lisa A. Cameron, J. Malcolm Dowling and Christopher Worswick, in their research study, “Education and Labour Market Participation of Women in Asia: Evidence from Five Countries”, on the other hand, have shown how education of women effects their labour force participation in five developing countries in Asia, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia and Korea. Piritta Sorsa, Jan Mares, Mathilde Didier, Caio Guimaraes, Marie Rabate, Gen Tang and Annamaria Tusk have shown that society, its traditions and the cultural constraints are responsible for the lower rate of women labour force participation in India, in their research study, “Determinants of the Low Female Labour Force Participation in India”. Rushidan I. Rahman and Rizwanul Islam (2013) possess the same view. They too consider society and environment as the major barriers to Women's labour force participation.

Indian society is a patriarchal society where women are dominated by men. They don't have the freedom to lead their lives on their own terms, to make the significant choices in their lives. Besides male dominance, domestic violence or crime against women in India is increasing at an alarming rate. Domestic violence, male-dominated society – have a negative impact on women empowerment. Thus, there is an urgent need of women empowerment in Indian society, as employment provides freedom and independence to women. Empowering women means giving voice to the

subaltern. It is generally believed that higher rate of women work force participation will mitigate and reduce the chances of domestic violence. Panda and Agarwal (2005) have shown in their research study that in Kerala, employed women hardly suffer domestic violence. Rao, 1997 has also shown that in Karnataka, employed women are less likely to be abused. Sunita Sanghi, A Srija, and Shirke Shrinivas Vijay (2015) have argued that in India, besides education, skill development, household income and social and cultural constraints, the structural transformation of Indian economy, i.e., transformation from agricultural to industrial economy has negatively affected women labour force participation rate in the country. Claudia Goldin (1995) has discovered a *u*-shaped relationship between women labour force participation and economic growth and development of a country. Eckstein and Lifshitz (2011) have argued in their seminal work that education and household income are the principle determinants of female labour force participation rate across countries. Mammen and Paxson, (2000) in their empirical paper have considered educational attainment of women as the most important factor responsible for this sharp decline in LFPR in India. While Bhalla and Kaur (2011), suggested that in India, the educational attainment of husband's exerts a larger negative effect on LFPR than women's own educational qualifications. Klasen and Pieters (2013), in their research study have argued that the primary factors responsible for such a sharp decline in LFPR in urban India are: educational qualifications of husbands, social constraints that restrict women from attaining higher education, household income, and the lack of adequate job options. According to Vericks & Chaudhary (2014), social and cultural constraints are primarily responsible for restraining women from realizing their full potential. Gonzalez, Jain-Chandra, Kochhar and Newiak (2015), have considered gender-biased laws, the legal restrictions imposed upon women in India are the principle barriers on the path of women empowerment. Steven Kapsos, Evangelia Bourmpoula, and Andrea Silberman (2014), in their scholarly article, *Why is female labour force participation declining so sharply in India?*, have identified four key factors that are responsible for the sharp decline in female labour force participation in India. These factors are: 'increased attendance in education', 'higher household income levels', domestic duties of women, and 'lack of employment opportunities for India's women'. Chowdhury (2011) has also argued that in India, lack of employment opportunities and contemporary craze for attending educational institutions – are the main driving force behind women's withdrawal from labour force.

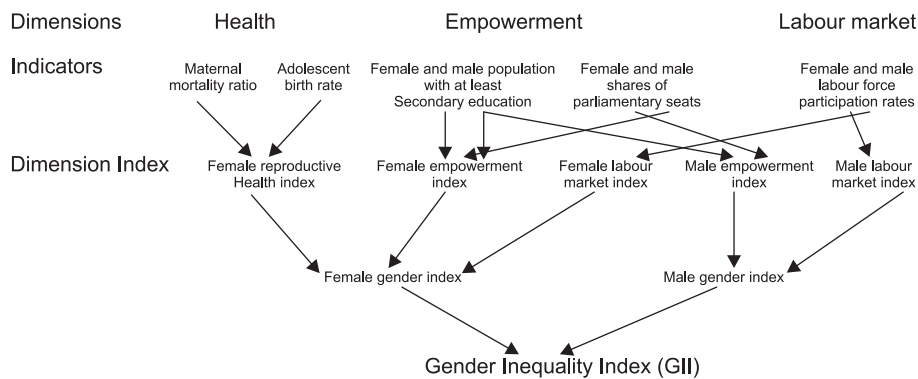
Thus, it can be inferred from the previous research studies conducted earlier that, there are a number of factors responsible for a sharp decline in LFPR in India. Some of them are cyclical, behavioural, socio-cultural and demographic. In this paper, I endeavour to critically study these factors or determinants of women labour force participation in India.

### Women Empowerment and Gender Inequality Index in the Indian Scenario

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) first proposed Gender Inequality Index or GII in its Human Development Report (2010). According to UNDP's report, Gender Inequality Index or GII is:

...an inequality index. It measures gender inequalities in three important aspects of human development—reproductive health, measured by maternal mortality ratio and adolescent birth rates; empowerment, measured by proportion of parliamentary seats occupied by females and proportion of adult females and males aged 25 years and older with at least some secondary education; and economic status, expressed as labour market participation and measured by labour force participation rate of female and male populations aged 15 years and older. The GII is built on the same framework as the IHDI — to better expose differences in the distribution of achievements between women and men. It measures the human development costs of gender inequality, thus the higher the GII value the more disparities between females and males and the more loss to human development.

Thus, Gender Inequality Index or GII is a composite index that measures gender inequality in three basic dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment, and labour market. As UNDP considers gender inequality, one of the major barriers on the path of human development, they have proposed this new gender inequality index to measure the inequality that exists between men and women in 155 countries of the world, in terms of their participation in politics, their educational qualifications, their participation in labour force, so on and so forth. This Gender Inequality Index gives us a critical view of the economic growth and human development



Source: UNDP Human Development Reports 2010.

Figure 1

of a country based on its gender disparity. It should be mentioned in this context that India ranks 130<sup>th</sup> in the Gender Inequality Index. Here's a graph displaying the dimensions, indicators and dimension index of Gender Inequality Index.

According to UNESCO report there is no single country in the world where women have achieved full equality and full enjoyment of the rights of women. The world average GII score in 2013 was 0.450 which indicates a 45% loss in potential human development due to gender inequality. According to UNDP's Gender Inequality Index (GII) of 2013 India ranks 127 with GII score 0.563 which means a 56.3% loss in potential human development due to gender inequality. The country which ranks 1<sup>st</sup> in GII is Slovenia with 0.021 GII rank.

**TABLE 1: GENDER INEQUALITY INDEX (GII) VALUE AND RATING**

<i>Country</i>	<i>Gender Inequality Index value, 2013</i>	<i>Gender Inequality Index rank, 2013</i>
India	0.563	127
Slovenia	0.021	1
World	0.450	---

*Source:* UNDP

### **Reproductive Health**

GII is the first index to include reproductive health indicators as a measurement for gender inequality. The GII's dimension of reproductive health have two indicators: the Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR), and the adolescent fertility rate (AFR). With a low MMR, it is implied that pregnant women have access to adequate health needs; therefore the MMR is a good measure of women's access to health care. A high AFR, which measures early childbearing, results in health risks for mothers and infants as well as a lack of higher education attainment. The UNDP expresses that women's health during pregnancy and childbearing is a clear sign of women's status in society. India registers 200 MMR as against 12 in Slovenia and 32.8 AFR as against 0.6 in Slovenia, which means early childbearing, results in health risks for mothers and infants as well as a lack of higher education attainment.

**TABLE 2: REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH, GII**

<i>Country</i>	<i>Maternal Mortality Rate, 2010</i>	<i>Adolescent birth rate, 2010/2015</i>
India	200	32.8
Slovenia	12	0.6
World	145	47.4

*Source:* UNDP

### Empowerment

The empowerment dimension of GII is measured by two indicators, viz., the share of parliamentary seats held by each sex, which is obtained from the International Parliamentary Union, and higher education attainment levels, which is obtained through United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and Barro-Lee data sets. The data on parliamentary representation is limited to national parliament and excludes local government or other community involvement. The GII index of higher education evaluates women's attainment to secondary education and above. Access to higher education expands women's freedom by increasing their ability to question and increases their access to information which expands their public involvement. Women's access to education may reduce the AFR and child mortality rates within a country. In Empowerment dimension India has 10.9 % seat share in parliament by women in 2013. In 25 years and above female there is 26.6 % who has at least some secondary education, whereas the same figure for men is 50.4%.

**TABLE 3: EMPOWERMENT, GII**

<i>Country</i>	<i>Share of seats in Parliament, 2013</i>	<i>Population with at least some secondary education, 25 +, female, 2005-2012</i>	<i>Population with at least some secondary education, 25 +, male, 2005-2012</i>
India	10.9	26.6e	50.4e
Slovenia	24.6	95.8	98.0
World	21.1	54.1	64.2

Source: UNDP

### Labour Market Participation

The labour market dimension of GII is measured by women's participation in the workforce. Labour market participation is considered by UNDP as a suitable substitute for economic aspects of gender inequality. Due to data limitations women's income and unpaid work are not represented in the labour market dimension of GII. This dimension accounts for paid work, unpaid work, and actively looking for work. The data for this dimension is obtained through the International Labour Organization databases. Female workforce participation in India of 15 years and above is 28.8% as against 80.9% males.

**TABLE 4: LABOUR MARKET PARTICIPATION, GII**

<i>Country</i>	<i>Participation rate, 15+, female, 2012</i>	<i>Participation rate, 15+, male, 2012</i>
India	28.8	80.9
Slovenia	52.3	63.5
World	50.6	76.7

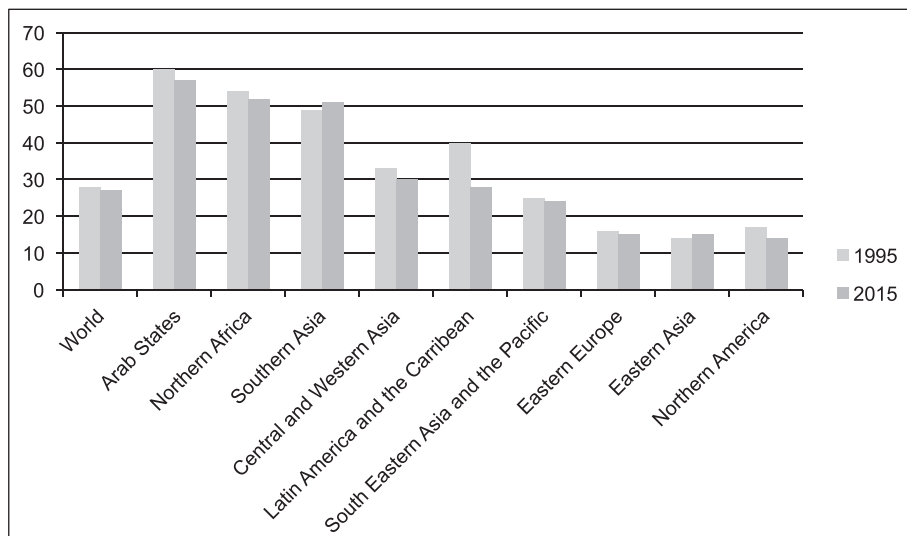
Source: UNDP



The above mentioned three indicators of Gender Inequality Index (GII) proves the fact that a huge gender inequality exists in India.

### Current Indian Employment Trends

Female labour force participation rate (LFPR) varies significantly across countries, based on differences in labour market policies, educational attainment, social and cultural norms, so on and so forth (Verick 2014). However, as per the recent statistics, Female labour force participation rate is lowest in India among all the developing countries in the world (Figure 2).



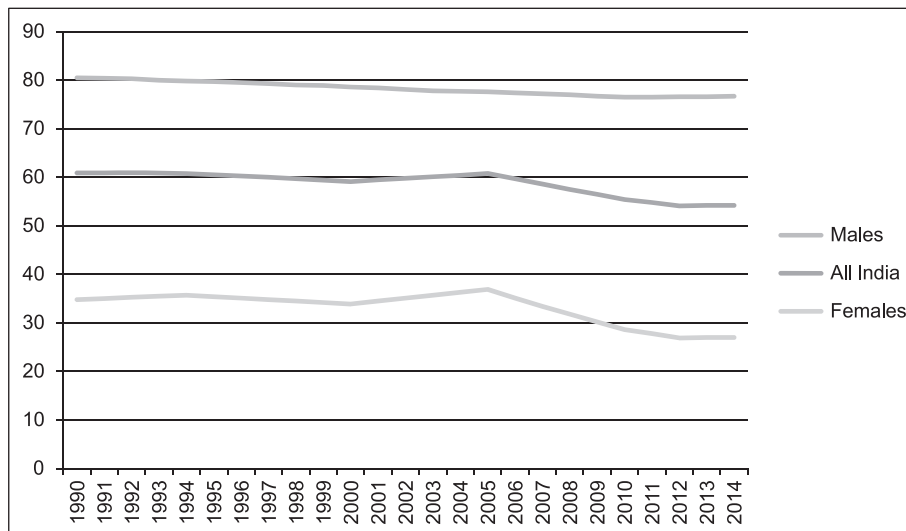
Note: In the above graph, the gender gap, in the context of employment has been measured.

Source: ILO calculations based on ILO, Trends Econometric Models, November 2015.

**Figure 2**

If we consider the labour force participation rate of men and women comparatively, we observe that female labour force participation rate has decreased remarkably, in comparison to men, in the last decades in India (Figure 3).

Figure 3 shows the gender gap that exists in the current employment trends in India. Labour Force participation Rate in India, in general, has shown a stagnant growth since 1990. For men, too, labour force participation rate has remained stagnant over the years, with certain ups and downs. While, Female labour force participation rate has declined sharply since 1990, with an exception of the period 2004-05. During 2004-05, Women labour force participation rate was highest, 36.3%, and after that it continued to decline, reaching its lowest in the year 2012 (26.9%).



*Note:* The vast difference that exists between men and women in the context of employment rate, from 1983 to 2007.

*Source:* World Bank data modelled ILO estimate.

**Figure 3: Labour Force Participation Rate in India from 1990 to 2014**

Female labour force participation rate varies significantly across rural and urban areas (Table 5). Female LFPR is comparatively high in rural areas, while it is significantly low in urban areas. This is because, in rural areas, a large proportion of women participate in agricultural work. While in urban areas, there are a number of circumstantial and economic factors that are responsible for driving women away from entering the labour market. However, in both urban and rural areas, women labour force participation rate has declined significantly, since 1993/94.

**TABLE 5: LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE OF RURAL AND URBAN MEN AND WOMEN IN (%)**

	1983	1993/94	1999/00	2004/05	2007/08
Rural India	70.5	75.5	66.3	65.9	61.7
Men	91.1	92	87	86.9	85.6
Women	45.1	53.1	45.2	44.7	37.6
Urban India	61.8	54.3	54.2	55	52.2
Men	88.6	82.4	82.4	82.7	82.5
Women	23	23	22.5	24.3	19.7

*Source:* Asia Research Centre Working paper 40.

TABLE 6: STATE-WISE LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE

<i>States</i>	<i>Total Population</i>	<i>Male Workers</i>	<i>Percentage of Male Workers</i>	<i>Female Workers</i>	<i>Percentage of female Workers</i>
Andhra Pradesh	4,93,86,799	24185595	48.97	15237311	30.85
Arunachal Pradesh	13,82,611	350273	25.33	237384	17.16
Assam	3,11,69,272	8541560	27.4037841	3428130	10.998428
Bihar	10,40,99,452	25222189	24.2289354	9502798	9.1285764
Chhattisgarh	2,55,45,198	7133866	27.9264463	5046359	19.754629
Delhi	1,67,87,941	4762026	28.3657537	825023	4.9143787
Goa	14,58,545	419536	28.764008	157712	10.8129677
Gujarat	6,04,39,692	18000914	29.7832656	6766833	11.196008
Haryana	2,53,51,462	6806636	26.8490867	2109872	8.3224865
Himachal Pradesh	68,64,602	2043373	29.7668095	1516049	22.085024
Jammu and Kashmir	1,25,41,302	3195090	25.4765414	1127623	8.9912754
Jharkhand	3,29,88,134	8424769	25.5387862	4673505	14.167231
Karnataka	6,10,95,297	18270116	29.904292	9602481	15.717218
Kerala	3,34,06,061	8451569	25.2995078	3167494	9.4817943
Madhya Pradesh	7,26,26,809	20146970	27.7404037	11427163	15.734084
Maharashtra	11,23,74,333	32616875	29.0252001	16811003	14.959825
Manipur	27,21,756	665463	24.449767	493590	18.134983
Meghalaya	29,66,889	703709	23.7187505	481910	16.24294
Mizoram	10,97,206	290740	26.4982146	195965	17.860365
Nagaland	19,78,502	547357	27.6652235	426765	21.570107
Orissa	4,19,74,208	11902655	28.3570687	5638934	13.434283
PUNJAB	2,77,43,338	8074157	29.1030481	1823205	6.5716858
RAJASTHAN	6,85,48,437	18297076	26.6921856	11589179	16.906555
SIKKIM	6,10,577	194358	31.8318574	113780	18.634832
TAMIL NADU	7,21,47,030	21434978	29.7101322	11449703	15.869958
TRIPURA	36,73,917	1045326	28.4526297	424195	11.546124
UTTARAKHAND	1,00,86,292	2551921	25.3008836	1320354	13.090579
Uttar Pradesh	19,98,12,341	49846762	24.9467884	15967953	7.9914749
West Bengal	9,12,76,115	26716047	29.269483	8040308	8.8087754
Andaman and Nicobar Islands	3,80,581	120889	31.7643287	31646	8.3151813
CHANDIGARH	10,55,450	328159	31.0918566	75977	7.1985409
Dadra and Nagar Haveli	3,43,709	119293	34.7075578	37868	11.01746
DAMAN & DIU	2,43,247	107434	44.166629	13837	5.6884566
LAKSHADWEEP	64,473	15318	23.7587827	3435	5.3278116
PUDUCHERRY	12,47,953	332931	26.6781682	112037	8.9776618

Source: Statistical Profile on Women Labour, 2012-2013 Labour Bureau Ministry of Labour & Employment Government of INDIA Chandigarh/Shimla

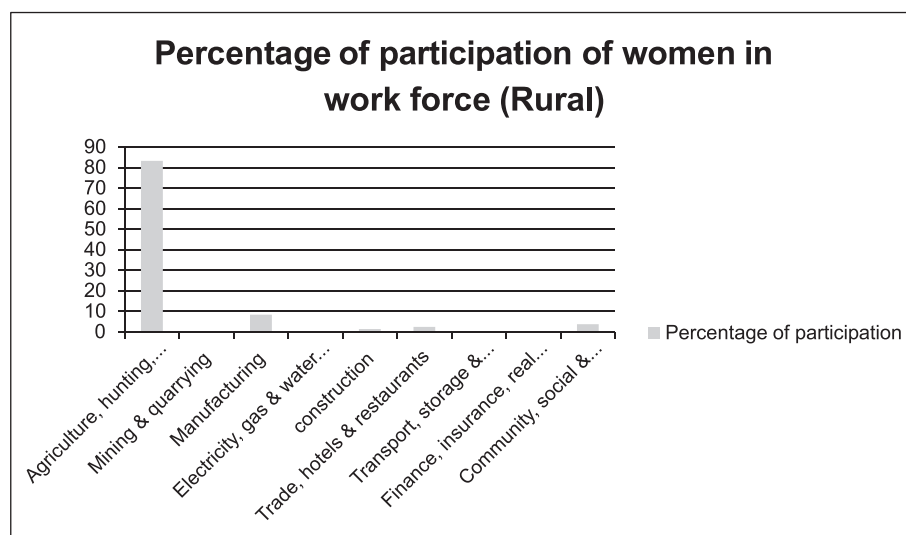
In India, Women participation rate varies across states and the large gender gap that exists between men's and women's labour force participation rate (LFPR) is distinctly evident in the above table. Table 7 details the percentage of men and women working as cultivators, agricultural labourers, domestic workers and other workers in the twenty-one states and six union territories of the country.

**TABLE 7: STATE WISE EMPLOYMENT STATUS**

<i>State/UT</i>	<i>Cultivators</i>		<i>Agricultural Labourers</i>		<i>Household Industry</i>		<i>Other Workers</i>	
	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
Andhra Pradesh	18.02	14.01	33.62	58.00	2.66	5.22	45.71	22.77
Arunachal Pradesh	43.64	63.13	5.25	7.50	1.18	1.78	49.93	27.60
Assam	36.29	28.06	13.22	20.89	2.41	8.33	48.08	42.72
Bihar	22.78	15.27	49.84	60.77	3.02	6.83	24.36	17.13
Chhattisgarh	33.98	31.32	32.87	54.44	1.59	1.47	31.57	12.76
Delhi	0.58	0.72	0.66	0.98	3.21	3.53	95.56	94.77
Goa	4.49	7.93	3.53	7.57	2.34	3.10	89.64	81.40
Gujarat	23.58	17.78	20.27	47.14	1.17	1.97	54.98	33.11
Haryana	26.28	32.78	15.30	13.60	2.74	3.59	55.68	40.55
Himachal Pradesh	44.35	76.24	5.04	4.75	1.82	1.42	48.79	17.59
Jammu and Kashmir	23.96	42.55	12.97	11.83	2.23	7.21	60.21	38.42
Jharkhand	27.20	32.60	27.80	44.81	2.68	4.91	42.33	17.67
Karnataka	26.02	19.03	17.97	40.33	2.40	4.94	53.61	35.71
Kerala	6.47	3.89	10.15	14.68	1.95	3.42	81.43	78.01
Madhya Pradesh	32.71	28.47	31.32	51.47	2.54	3.92	33.43	16.14
Maharashtra	23.28	29.61	20.77	39.92	2.12	3.18	53.83	27.29
Manipur	40.71	37.88	6.62	13.58	3.00	14.08	49.67	34.45
Meghalaya	39.41	45.10	15.11	19.10	1.34	2.30	44.14	33.50
Mizoram	44.54	51.09	7.73	9.85	1.34	2.03	46.39	37.04
Nagaland	47.40	65.20	5.82	7.29	1.73	3.13	45.05	24.38
Orissa	28.36	12.92	29.25	57.78	3.69	6.10	38.70	23.20
PUNJAB	21.72	9.94	15.35	19.14	3.09	7.50	59.85	63.43
RAJASTHAN	41.09	52.64	11.66	24.22	1.89	2.46	44.87	20.68
SIKKIM	32.58	47.53	6.63	11.52	1.52	1.93	59.27	39.03
TAMIL NADU	12.75	13.24	22.59	41.61	2.76	6.76	61.90	38.40
TRIPURA	21.89	15.81	20.48	32.89	1.67	5.66	55.95	45.64
UTTARAKHAND	28.82	64.00	11.23	8.84	2.72	3.41	57.24	23.75

State/UT	Cultivators		Agricultural Labourers		Household Industry		Other Workers	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Uttar Pradesh	31.12	22.21	27.69	38.43	4.72	9.67	36.47	29.69
West Bengal	16.84	7.67	27.90	34.03	4.17	16.69	51.09	41.52
Andaman and Nicobar Islands	10.47	12.34	3.10	3.28	1.87	4.63	84.56	79.76
CHANDIGARH	0.64	0.61	0.42	0.41	1.06	1.73	97.87	97.25
Dadra and Nagar Haveli	15.34	26.06	4.57	32.60	1.15	2.18	78.94	39.16
DAMAN & DIU	1.39	5.96	0.34	2.96	0.31	2.54	97.97	88.54
LAKSHADWEEP	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.87	3.78	99.13	96.22
PUDUCHERRY	3.01	1.84	12.85	22.85	1.22	3.43	82.92	71.88

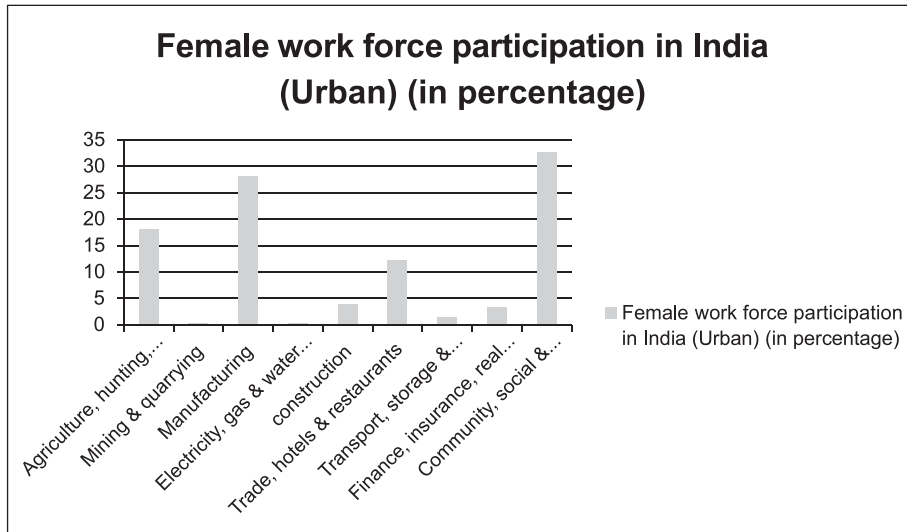
Source: Statistical Profile on Women Labour, 2012-2013 Labour Bureau Ministry of Labour & Employment Government of INDIA Chandigarh/Shimla



Source: Calculated from unit level employment and unemployment NSS data, 50th Round, 1993-94 and 61st Round, 2004-05.

**Figure 4: Female labour force participation rate in Rural areas**

As we can see in the above graphs, (Figure 4 and 5), in rural areas, more than 80% of the total women population, are involved in agricultural works, while in urban areas, the percentage decreases to only 18%. Thus while in rural areas, the majority of the employed women are engaged in agricultural works, in urban areas, we can observe a fair division of labour across various industries.

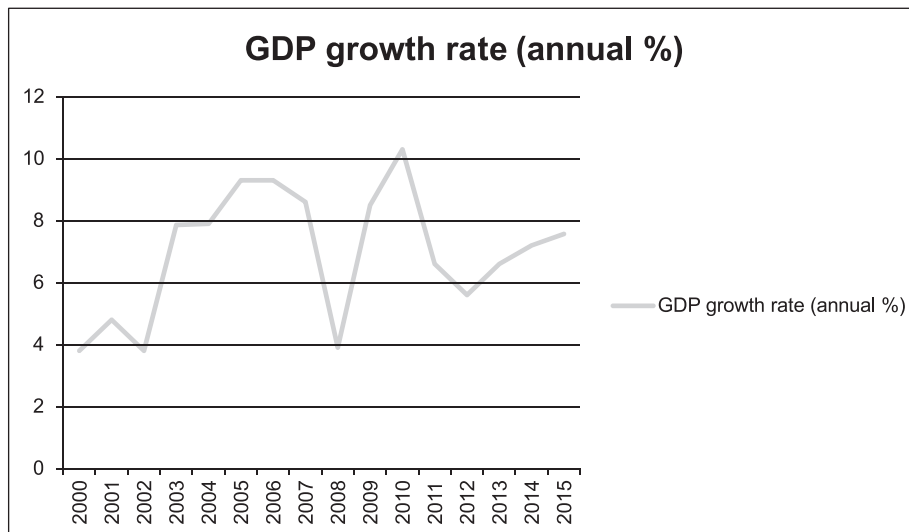


Source: Calculated from unit level employment and unemployment NSS data, 50th Round, 1993-94 and 61st Round, 2004-05.

**Figure 5: Female labour force participation rate in Urban areas**

### Determinants of Low Women labour Force Participation

Economic growth or development of a country has a linear or curvilinear relationship with that country's women work force participation (Pampel and Tanaka, 1986).



Source: World Bank national accounts data, and OECD National Accounts data files.

**Figure 6: GDP Growth rate of India**

This holds true in the context of the third world countries. But, it is different in the case of India, the third world developing country. The Indian economy has experienced astonishing and exemplary growth since 2000. The GDP of the country is growing at a higher rate.

Thus, Indian GDP has grown remarkably in the last few years. But, Female Labour Force Participation (FLFP) rate has and is declining markedly since 2000.

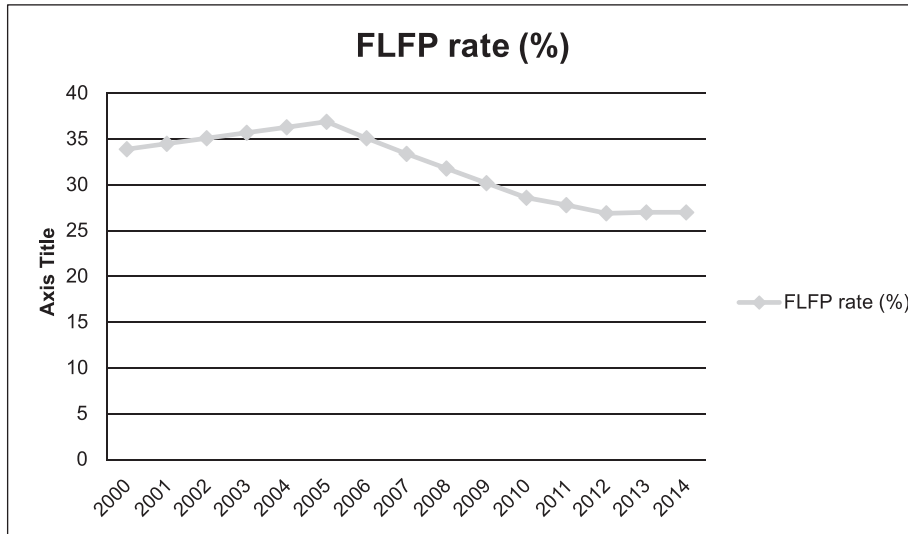


Figure 7: Female Labour Force Participation Rate in India since 2000

Thus, in India, the economic development and growth of the country does not facilitate the FLFP. This is because of a few reasons. Indian society is a patriarchal one, where women are dominated throughout their lives. They don't possess the freedom of leading their lives on their own terms, of taking the major decisions of their lives. Besides patriarchal domination, women are further detained from participating in the work force by a few factors, like – education, marriage, child-care, socio-economic conditions, cultural attitudes, traditional precepts of society, gender inequality. These are the principal determinants of female labour force participation in India.

**Education**

“Investment in the education of girls may well be the highest-return investment available in the developing world.” Lawrence Summers

Educational attainment of women influences their work force participation. Education has a U-shaped relationship with female work force participation (Lisa, et.al. 2001). College graduates and illiterate women mostly participate in labour market, while school-going or women having primary education are less likely to

participate in the labour market. In India, Women are deprived of equal rights to education, and in many parts of the country, women are denied access to higher education, which of course, affects their labour force participation. If we compare women's literacy rate with their labour force participation rate in different states of India, we can get an overview of education's impact on the female work force participation rate in India (Table 8).

TABLE 8

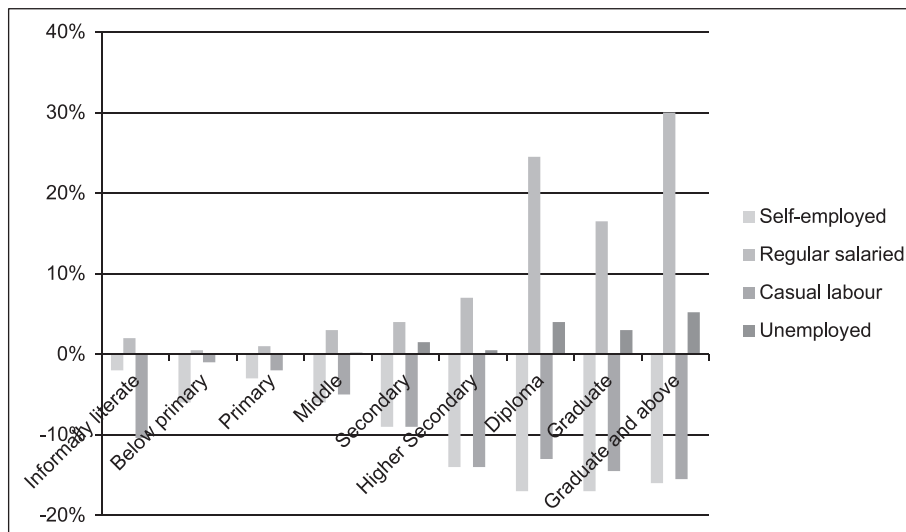
State/UT	Literacy rate	Female literacy	Women work force participation rate	
			Rural	Urban
Arunachal Pradesh	65.38 %	57.70 %	28.2	13.9
Andhra Pradesh	67.02	59.15	44.8	18
Assam	72.19	66.27	12.9	9.7
Bihar	61.80	51.50	5.8	5.4
Chhattisgarh	70.28	60.24	41.6	25.2
Delhi	86.21	80.76	14.6	10.9
Goa	88.70	84.66	21.2	17.4
Gujarat	78.03	69.68	27.9	13.5
Haryana	75.55	65.94	16.4	10.2
Himachal Pradesh	82.80	75.93	52.9	23.6
Jammu and Kashmir	67.16	56.43	26.3	14.5
Jharkhand	66.41	55.42	20.4	7.3
Karnataka	75.36	68.08	28.9	17.1
Kerala	94	92.07	25.8	22.2
Madhya Pradesh	69.32	59.24	23.9	11.9
Maharashtra	82.34	75.87	38.9	17.2
Manipur	76.94	70.26	27	20.4
Meghalaya	74.43	72.89	39.2	21
Mizoram	91.33	89.27	40.5	26.7
Nagaland	79.55	76.11	37.1	22.4
Orissa	72.87	64.01	25.1	15.8
Punjab	75.84	70.73	23.7	14.1
Rajasthan	66.11	52.12	34.9	14.4
Sikkim	81.42	75.61	49.2	27.4
Tamil Nadu	80.09	73.44	38.6	21.1
Tripura	87.22	82.73	28.7	26
Uttarakhand	78.82	70.01	31.5	10.8
Uttar Pradesh	67.68	57.18	17.8	10.6
West Bengal	76.26	70.54	19.4	18.6



State/UT	Literacy rate	Female literacy	Women work force participation rate	
			Rural	Urban
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	86.63	82.43	30	24.8
Chandigarh	86.05	81.19	4.7	13.5
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	76.24	64.32	16.1	11.5
Daman & Diu	87.10	79.55	3.4	15.2
Lakshadweep	91.85	87.95	17.7	17.8
Pondicherry	85.85	80.67	22.3	15.3

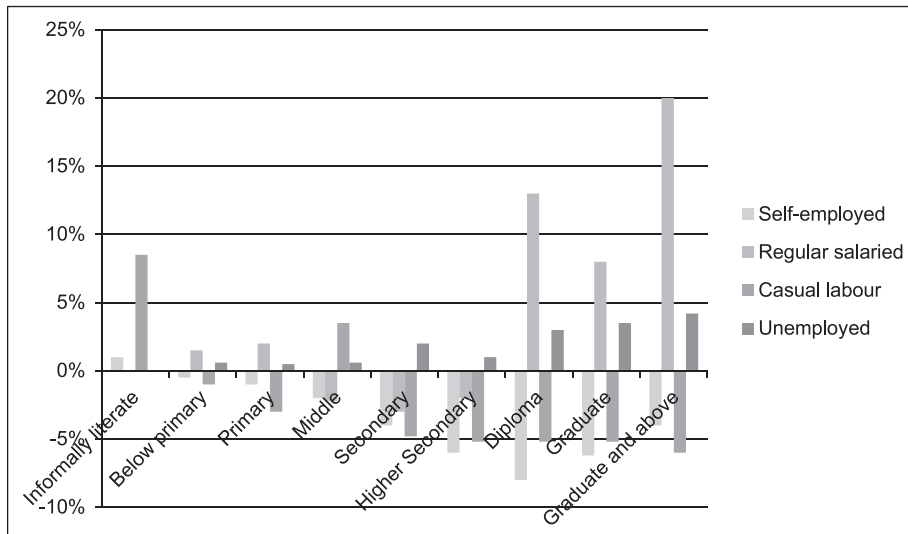
Source: NSS Database, Employment and Unemployment Surveys, 61st, 66<sup>th</sup> and 68<sup>th</sup> Rounds

Indeed, there is a U-shaped relationship between educational attainment and female labor force participation rates in a number of countries. Based on National Sample Survey data for India for 2011–2012, the lowest participation rates for women occur for those with a higher secondary school education (12 years of schooling), at 11.9% in urban areas and 19.3% in rural areas; rates are higher among better-educated women, for example 27.4% in urban areas and 32.7% in rural areas for women with an undergraduate degree. As other countries have experienced, there is, therefore, a threshold suggesting a payoff in the labour market only for women with more than a secondary education.



Source: NSS Data, Female labour force participation in India and beyond, ILO Asia- Pacific Working Paper Series, 2014.

**Figure 8: Educational attainment and its effect on the Women's labour market outcomes in rural areas**



Source: NSS Data, Female labour force participation in India and beyond, ILO Asia- Pacific Working Paper Series, 2014.

**Figure 9: Educational attainment and its effect on the Women's labour market outcomes in urban areas**

As we can see in the above figures, i.e., Figures 8 and 9, educational attainments of women significantly affect their labour market outcomes. For example, in rural areas, there's a higher probability, almost 30% chance of getting hired as regular employees with a salary for the women with a graduate degree or higher. However, in urban areas the percentage is a bit lower, almost 20%. In addition to it, it is distinctly clear from the above two graphs that the unemployment rate increases as the women's educational attainment increases. And there is a distinctly less possibility of being self-employed or working as casual workers for women with higher educational qualifications.

### Marriage and Child-bearing Costs

Women's marital status also influences their participation rates significantly. Single women are seen to participate more than married women (Panda, 1999). Sudarshan and Bhattacharya (2009) noted in their study on female labour in urban Delhi that the decision to work outside the home is usually a household decision and women's household workload, asymmetric information and safety concerns are key factors influencing their participation in the labour market. They noted that the role of family and kinship structures in determining women's work-life choices is important.

In both rural and urban areas there is a robust negative impact of marriage on female labour force participation. Marriage decreases the probability of female

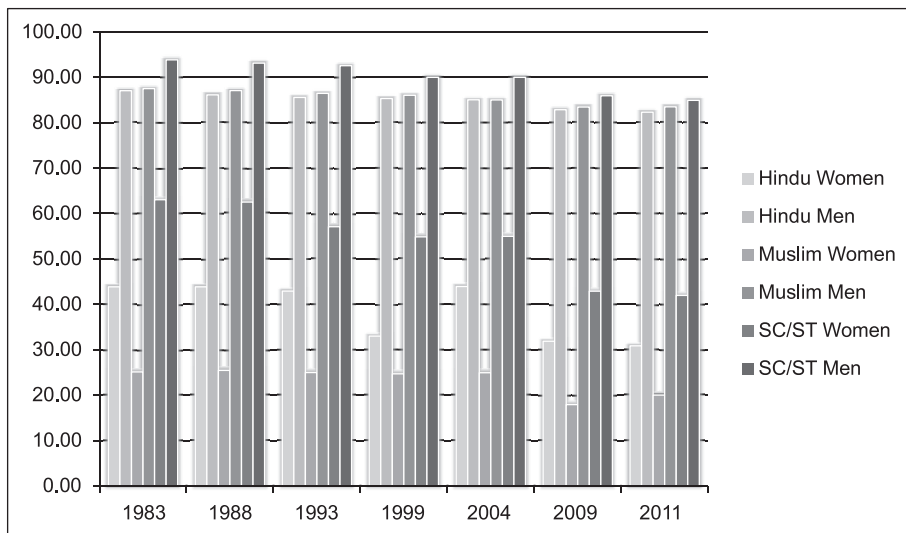
labour force participation by 7.8% in rural areas and more than twice as much in urban areas. This should not be surprising as rural women are often employed within the household in the agricultural production process. The effect is much higher in urban areas where the share of household employment is only 14% and the share of agriculture is very low relatively to other sectors. The importance of marital status for female labour force participation has increased over time. While back in 1987 being married had an insignificant impact on participation, in 2012 this effect was negative and close to 8pp. In urban areas this effect doubled between 1987 and 2012 and is continuously much higher relatively to rural areas.

The presence of young children in a household has a negative impact on participation. Having a child younger than 6 years old on average lowers the probability of being in the labour force by 3.8pp for urban women. Lack of child care can be a factor in urban areas. Having young children is less significant and weaker in rural areas. One of the explanations may be that again more women in rural regions have to work out of necessity. The negative influence of having young children on participation also increased over time although the effect is not robust throughout the examined period. Having young children decreases the probability consistently by more than twice as much in urban compared to the rural regions in 2000s. Notably, this effect was comparable in both regions in 1987; since then it has significantly diverged. Thus having more options for childcare could raise female participation especially in urban areas. The presence of children between 6-14 years old is insignificant for both regions and thus the hypothesis of older children positively influencing female labour force participation cannot be confirmed. Even in rural areas, there is no evidence that older children potentially looking after their younger siblings significantly affect the participation probability.

### **Social and Cultural Factors**

The socio-cultural milieu of the Indian society exerts influences on women workforce participation. In India, societal norms, cultural trends, traditions and customs influence women's economic participation. In India, as in any patriarchal social system, social and cultural norms dominate over a person's way of life, especially on a woman's life choices. In India, patriarchy has specified certain roles for women and men. And they have to act accordingly. As in India, men are the bread earners in a family, while women's responsibility is only to do household works and serve the family. Women are not the principal decision makers in a family, their choices, their decisions are influenced by family status, the needs and requirements of the family members. As in most middle-class families in India, women are not allowed to work outside the home, especially after marriage. As Persis Khambatta, a fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies rightly stated in this context, "Once a woman gives birth, they're expected to be home taking care of the family, and in many cases they're taking care of their in-laws as well. There are

family expectations and marriage expectations.” Often women themselves withdraw from labour force after marriage, since they couldn’t strike a balance between household work and job responsibility. Besides marriage, the financial condition of the family, religion, and caste – are also significant factors influencing women’s decision to participate in the labour market. Studies have shown that women who come from lower socio-economic groups, i.e., schedules tribes, scheduled caste and other backward classes, generally tend to participate in labour force. While women from higher socio-economic groups, show a less probability of participating in the economic development of the society. This is because women from the lower socio-economic classes feel the urge or compulsion to provide for their family. On the other hand, Muslim women, because of their lack of education and religious constraints, hardly get the opportunity of engaging in economic activity outside the home. Thus, LFPR is highest in the case of Scheduled caste and Scheduled Tribe women, while it is lowest in case of Muslim women (Figure 10).



Source: Calculated from NSS Employment and Unemployment Data

**Figure 10: LFPR of Hindu, Muslim and other economically backward classes**

Thus in India, socio-cultural factors play a vital role in suppressing women, restraining them from realizing their full potential and preventing them from gaining economic independence.

### Household Income and Spouse’s Education

Household income and the educational attainment of husband – have a dampening effect on women LFPR. In India, when the household income rises, women generally withdraw from labour force, and when the household income decreases, women

enter into labour market. This is because, majority of the empowered women in India, work out of necessity, to ameliorate the financial condition of the family. Similarly, the educational attainments of men lessen the chances of women getting employed. In India, men with higher educational attainments restrict their wives from working outside the home. In such cases, men become the sole or primary earner of the family, while women stay home, perform domestic duties and take care of the family members. Thus there exists a U-shaped relationship between spouse's education, household income and women LFPR.

### **Labour Market Regulations**

Indian labour market regulations, which are rigid and restrictive in nature, are a barrier on the path of conceptualizing women empowerment in the nation. Indian labour market regulations lack flexibility. Since Indian labour market regulations have significant variation, coverage and compliance are difficult to attain. According to The National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector (NCEUS)'s report, "if we take the effectiveness of coverage of different labour regulations into consideration, the actual coverage of the labour regulations in India is very small: the laws themselves apply only to a small proportion of workforce and they are actually implemented in the case of even smaller segments" (NCEUS 2009a, 170)... there is hardly any regulation of conditions of work and no provision for social security of any kind for the workers working in establishments employing less than ten workers. And they constitute an overwhelming majority – 92% of all workers and 84% of all wage earners" (NCEUS 2009a, 180). According to the Morgan Stanley report, India ranks 99 among 148 countries in the World in labour market efficiency. Thus, the restrictive Indian labour market regulations – is a significant barrier that not only hinders economic growth and development of the country, but also lessens the probability of women participating in the labour market. These regulations are needed to be reformed and should be made more flexible to encourage women empowerment.

### **Lack of Employment Opportunities for Women in India**

Another significant factor that is holding back the Indian women from realizing their full potential and getting employed – is the lack of ample employment opportunities in the country. Lack of decent and ample job opportunities for women, gender employment segregation – pose significant threat to women empowerment. According to ILO economist Steven Kapsos "Despite very rapid economic growth in India in recent years, we're observing declining female labour force participation rates across all age groups, across all education levels, and in both urban and rural areas," said ILO economist Steven Kapsos during a presentation of the report in India... Other potential causes include measurement issues, whereby women's employment may be undercounted, as well as a general decline in employment

opportunities for women, as they face increased competition with men for scarce jobs”. Indian women generally tend to engage in specific industries and occupations – like – agriculture, tea-plantation, clothes manufacturing, handicraft manufacturing and in different small and medium-sized enterprises. These sectors haven’t shown considerable growth in the last decade, which has cast negative impact on women empowerment in the country. These sectors have failed significantly in generating employment opportunities for women especially in rural India, because of which women residing in Rural areas have found it really difficult in getting employed. Besides this, the lack of decent and suitable job options near home, the domination of men in major occupations - are the major factors responsible for such a sharp decline in Female LFPR in India. To tackle this, Indian Government need to focus their attention on generating suitable and adequate employment opportunities for women in both rural and urban areas, to boost up the economic and humanitarian growth and development of the country. As ILO economist Steven Kapsos rightly stated: “Failure to allow women full access to the labour market is an under-utilization of human resources that holds back productivity and economic growth”.

### **Violence Against Women**

‘Violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of women.’  
- Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Crime against women, specifically domestic violence is a matter of grave concern, since it thwarts the economic growth and development of a society. Violence against women poses a significant and direct threat to safety, security, wellbeing and development of women. As Lakshmi Puri, Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director, Intergovernmental Support and Strategic Partnerships Bureau of UN-Women, rightly stated once, “Violence against women constitutes the most severe expression of discrimination and disempowerment of women and girls. It is a threat to democracy, peace and security, an obstacle to sustainable development and an appalling human rights violation.” Most unfortunately, if we take up the case of India, we get a really grim picture of the severe condition women in the country, both at home and at workplace. According to a survey conducted by Thomson Reuters Foundation’s TrustLaw, India is the worst place among G20s, the most insecure place for women. According to National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data, 2015, total 3,27,394 cases were registered in whole India, under Crime Against Women, out of which 34,651 were rape cases, 84,222 were cases of “assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty” including domestic violence, and 59,277 were cases of abduction of women. According to National Family Health Survey (NFHS 2 - 1998-99),

Almost three out of five women (56 percent) believe that wife-beating is justified for at least one of six specific reasons. At least one-third of women agree that a husband is justified in beating his wife if she neglects the house or the children, she goes out without telling him, she shows disrespect for in-laws, or he suspects that she is unfaithful.... At least 1 in 5 ever-married women have experienced domestic violence since age 15 and at least 1 in 9 have experienced domestic violence in the 12 months preceding the survey.

Economic empowerment and financial independence lessens the likelihood of Women getting abused by their husbands. Women's financial independence, economic empowerment and autonomy are an essential step towards fighting gender-based violence. National Family Health Survey (NFHS) data shows that women empowerment reduces the chances of women becoming victims of domestic abuse.

Violence or crime against women in India is on rise. Since 2010, crime against women has increased by 7.1% in the country (Table 9). Since 2005, cases of kidnapping and abduction of women have increased 264%. While incidents of rape have increased by 3.6%, and cases of dowry-related deaths have increased by 74% since 1995. As per the UN report, more than 70% of the women in India are victims of domestic violence. According to the National Family Health Survey report, more than 50% of women in India have faced cruelty at the hands of their husbands and their in-laws.

TABLE 9

<i>Crime Head</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2012</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>2014</i>
Rape	22,172	24,206	24,923	33,707	36,735
Attempt to commit Rape					4,234
Kidnapping and Abduction of Women	29,795	35,565	38,262	51,881	57,311
Dowry Deaths	8,391	8,618	8,233	8,083	8,455
Assault on women with intent to outrage her/their modesty	40,613	42,968	45,351	70,739	82,235
Insult to the modesty of women	9,961	8,570	9,173	12,589	9,735
Cruelty by husband or his relatives	94,041	99,135	1,06,527	1,18,866	1,22,877
Importation of girl from foreign country	36	80	59	31	13
Abetment of suicide of women					3,734

*Source:* National Crime Records Bureau data, Crime against Women -2014

In such a gloomy state, in such a disastrous situation, where the society as well as the Government fails to safeguard the rights of women, to provide them safety and security, it is vain to expect women to participate in the social and economic development of the country.

TABLE. 10

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total IPC Crimes</i>	<i>Crime against Women</i>	<i>Percentage to total IPC crimes</i>	<i>Women participation in Work Force (In percentage)</i>
2010	22,24,831	2,13,585	9.6%	28.6
2011	23,25,575	2,19,142	9.4%	27.8
2012	23,87,188	2,44,270	10.2%	26.9
2013	26,47,722	2,95,896	11.2%	27
2014	28,51,563	3,25,327	11.4%	27

*Source:* National Crime Records Bureau data, Crime against Women -2014, and World Bank data

As we can see in the above table (Table 10), crime against women in India has increased significantly since 2010, while female labour force participation rate has dropped sharply over the same period.

## CONCLUSION

As has already been stated in the Introductory part of this paper that, this paper was an attempt to critically study and empirically analyse the Behavioural, Demographic, Socio-cultural, Economic and Cyclical Factors responsible for the sharp decline in Women Labour Force Participation rate in India. I have studied the general employment trends in the country, the status and role of Women in economic and social development of the country, and the possible determinants of women labour force participation rate in India. I have also shown in this paper, the current rank or position of India in the world, in respect of women empowerment, gender gap in employment, and the status of women in society. Citing the statistics, and data of NSSO, World Bank, ILO, National Family Health Survey(NFHS), and National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), I have tried to show in this paper that in a developing country like India, there exist plenty of hindrances and barriers on the path of conceptualizing Women empowerment. India is a patriarchal society, and thus the patriarchal attitude and beliefs of Indian men, or society at large – are restricting women from gaining financial, social or intellectual independence. Thus, besides social and cultural constraints, the educational attainments of women, labour market flexibility, lack of suitable and ample employment opportunities, gender-based discrimination and crime, and of course, the patriarchal notions of the society are significant factors restraining women from realizing their full potential. Therefore, under such circumstances, there's an immediate need of reforming government policies, especially the strict labour market regulations, to encourage women empowerment. Besides, the outdated patriarchal notions should be exterminated from society, and women should be encouraged more to participate in the socio-economic development of the country. Only then a better society could be formed.



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