

# A Study of Women's Empowerment and Reservation for Women in Tripura: An Overview

Nikita Sarkar

NET:- Qualified (Department of Education)

Agartala (West Tripura)

“All nations have attained greatness by paying proper respect to women. That country and that nation which do not respect women have never become great, nor will ever be in future”.

- Swami Vivekananda

**Abstract:** Women empowerment is an important area of state policy. Women's empowerment is a key to attain gender equality. Empowered women help develop a nation or state. Reservation for women has a significant effect on women's empowerment. Tripura has made significant strides in women empowerment and reservation. The state government has implemented various initiatives to promote gender equality and increase women's participation in different sectors. By focusing on education, economic empowerment, political participation, and social awareness, Tripura can continue to make progress in empowering women and ensuring their meaningful representation across all spheres of life. The success of these efforts will not only benefit women but also contribute to the overall development and prosperity of the state. Hence, the main aims of this paper is to study of Women's Empowerment and Reservation for Women in Tripura.

**Keywords:** Women empowerment, women reservation, gender, equality, rights.

## Introduction:

The concept of "empowerment" originated in the mid-17th century, initially carrying a legalistic meaning of "investing with authority." Subsequently, this concept evolved to signify "enabling or permitting." (Kabeer, 1999) defines empowerment as "the expansion of people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them." More specifically, empowerment can be understood as the capacity to exercise greater power than other women within the same context. Over the past decade, gender equality and women's empowerment have been explicitly recognized as crucial not only to the health of nations but also to social and economic development. India's National Population Policy 2000 identifies the empowerment of women for health and nutrition as one of its crosscutting strategic themes. Furthermore, the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women constitute one of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to which India is a signatory. Gender equality and women's empowerment are two sides of the same coin. Women's empowerment in India is heavily influenced by various factors, including geographical location (urban/rural), educational status, social status (caste and class), and age. Policies on women's empowerment exist at the national, state, and local (Panchayat) levels across many sectors, including health, education, economic opportunities, gender-based violence, and political participation. Women's empowerment and reservation policies in Tripura, as well as more broadly in India, involve a complex interaction of socio-political dynamics aimed at enhancing gender equality and representation. The concept of women's empowerment in the region is multifaceted, involving economic, political, social, and cultural dimensions. Effective empowerment strategies require addressing these dimensions comprehensively.

At the national level, India has made progress in women's political representation through the implementation of reservation policies. These policies originate from the concept of affirmative action, which provides reserved seats for women in elected bodies, aiming to correct gender gap in decision-making roles. The logic behind such reservations is that increased female representation in politics will bring about more equitable development priorities and perspectives (Sharma, K. 2000).

In terms of local implementation, states such as like Tripura have faced challenges. While legislative measures support women's representation, actual empowerment is restricted by societal norms and educational inequalities. The state-level analysis shows that Tripura still has position for growth in terms of women's empowerment when compared to other states like Goa, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala. These states have higher levels of political empowerment and healthcare services utilization linked to higher empowerment index (Das, S. et al., 2023).

## Woman Empowerment:

“If you educate a man you educate an individual, however, if you educate a woman you educate a whole family. Women empowered means mother India empowered” - Jawaharlal Nehru

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, empowerment is defined as the act of enabling an individual by granting power or authority to perform various actions or duties (Dr. S. 2022). Women empowerment is a process that provides equal opportunities to women in the social, economic, educational, and political sectors and gives them the ability to make their own life choices. Over the past five decades, the notion of women's empowerment has significantly evolved from a welfare-oriented approach to one focused on equity. It is now understood as the process through which individuals who lack power gain increased control over the conditions of their lives. Empowerment particularly encompasses control over both resources and ideology (Nayak, P. & Mahanta, B. 2016). Empowering women is an important for the comprehensive development of a nation. As women constitute nearly half of the global population, their advancement is needed to the overall development process. Empowerment serves as an enabling mechanism for marginalized individuals and groups to access opportunities and benefits (Dr. Roy, K. 2021). Efforts towards women's empowerment must address cultural participation and rights, as well as their access to economic and political resources, to promote holistic empowerment. This involves not only legal reforms but also a cultural shift towards recognizing women's contributions and rights in all sectors of society (Moghadam, V. & Senftova, L. 2005).

The comprehensive development of women has been a main focus of the planning process in India. The First Five-Year Plan (1951-56) proposed several welfare measures for women, including the establishment of the Central Social Welfare Board, the organization of Mahila Mandals, and the implementation of community development programs. In the Second Five-Year Plan (1956-61), women's empowerment was closely associated with the broader strategy of intensive agricultural development programs. The Third and Fourth Five-Year Plans (1961-66 and 1969-74) prioritized female education as a significant welfare measure. The Fifth Five-Year Plan (1974-79) emphasized the training of women in need of income and protection, coinciding with the International Women's Decade and the submission of the Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India. In 1976, the Women's Welfare and Development Bureau was established under the Ministry of Social Welfare, which was responsible for the welfare of women and children. The Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-85) marked a shift from welfare to development, recognizing women's lack of access to resources as a critical impediment to their progress. The Seventh Five-Year Plan (1985-90) highlighted the necessity of gender equality and empowerment, focusing for the first time on qualitative aspects such as confidence building, awareness of rights, and skills training for improved employment opportunities for women. The Eighth Five-Year Plan (1992-97) concentrated on empowering women, particularly at the grassroots level, through Panchayati Raj Institutions. The Ninth Five-Year Plan (1997-2002) adopted a women's component plan strategy, allocating no less than 30 percent of funds/benefits for women-specific programs. The Tenth Five-Year Plan (2002-07) aimed to empower women by implementing the recently adopted National Policy for the Empowerment of Women (2001) and ensuring the survival, protection, and development of women and children through a rights-based approach.

### Schemes for Women Empowerment in India:

The government of India started women development programme in 1954. But the actual participation began only in 1974. At present, the India Government has over 27 schemes for women. Some of these are given below:

- Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP)
- Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment (TRYSEM)
- Prime Minister's Rojgar Yojana (PMRY)
- Women's Development Corporation Scheme (WDCS)
- Working Women's Forum
- Indira Mahila Yojana
- Indira Mahila Kendra
- Mahila Samiti Yojana
- Rashtriya Mahila Kosh
- Khadi and Village Industries Commission
- Indira Priyadarshini Yojana
- SIDBI's Mahila Udyam Nidhi Mahila Vikas Nidhi
- SBI's Stree Shakti Scheme
- NGO's Credit Schemes
- National Banks for Agriculture and Rural Development's Schemes
- Rajiv Gandhi scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls –Sabla
- Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY)
- Hostel for Working Women (WWH)

- Support to Training & Employment programed for women (STEP)
- Women Empowerment and Livelihood Programed in Mid-Gangetic plains- 'PRIYADARSHINI'

## Women Reservation in India:

The reservation of seats for women in legislative bodies constitutes a form of affirmative action aimed at enhancing their representation within law-making institutions. This reservation policy allocates a specific number of seats to female candidates to address historical gender-based oppression and to foster greater gender equality in decision-making processes. The primary objective of women's reservation is to cultivate an inclusive political environment by ensuring equitable opportunities for women from diverse backgrounds to engage in governance. The National Vision for Women, established in 1988, underscored the necessity of reserving seats for women in legislative bodies. This initiative anticipated the enactment of the 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution, which formally sanctioned the reservation of one-third of the seats for women at all levels of Panchayat Raj institutions and in urban local self-government, as well as one third of the chairperson positions. This reservation also encompassed one-third of the seats reserved for women belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. On 12 September 1996, the United Front government, led by Prime Minister Deve Gowda, introduced the Women's Reservation Bill (81st Amendment Bill) in the 11th Lok Sabha, which proposed a one-third reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies. However, certain political factions misinterpreted the bill's substance, while others advocated for a sub-quota for women from marginalized groups. Consequently, the absence of political consensus and delaying tactics resulted in the bill's abandonment. A similar situation recurred with the 84th and 85th Amendments in 1998 and 1999. Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee endeavored to secure the bill's passage but failed to achieve consensus on the issue. The National Policy for Empowerment of Women, 2001, aimed at 'progress, development, and empowerment of women,' included policies for gender equality in power sharing, full access, and equal participation in the legislature, executive, and judiciary. It recommended positive measures for women in higher legislative bodies for a limited duration. The Women's Reservation Act or the Constitution (108th Amendment) Bill, 2008, is a pending measure in the Indian Parliament that seeks to reserve 33 percent of all seats in the lower house of the Indian Parliament, the Lok Sabha, and all provincial legislatures for women. The seats will be elected in phases and through lottery so that only one vote is allotted once in three consecutive general elections. It states that the reservation of seats for women will cease after 15 years from the date of introduction of the reformed rules. The proposal was passed by the Rajya Sabha on 9 March 2010. However, the legislation did not progress to enactment in the Lok Sabha, and the bill was ultimately repealed in 2014. Meanwhile, the Report on the Status of Women in India (2015) reiterated the demand for reserving seats for women in the legislature. Finally, in 2023, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government (second term), the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha during a special session of Parliament on 19 September 2023. The bill was ultimately passed by both Houses of Parliament and became an Act, marking a significant milestone in the pursuit of gender equality in independent India.

After a constitutional amendment in 1993, reservation of 33% for women in Panchayati Raj institutions was made compulsory. 19 states, including Bihar and Odisha, have increased the reservation to 50%, according to the Panchayati Raj Ministry.

## Women Reservation in Tripura:

On the occasion of International Women's Day in 2022, Union Home Minister Amit Shah declared various women-oriented initiatives taken by the government of Tripura for empowered women. Tripura government announced a State Policy for Empowerment of Women. This policy includes several significant initiatives purposed at enhancing the status of women across education, social, economic, and political domains. This policy includes following initiatives:-

- 33% Reservation for Women in State Government Jobs: Women will now benefit from a 33% reservation in all state government jobs.
- Higher Educational Institutions: The policy assures reservation based on gender ratio in all higher educational institutions for women.
- Interest Grant for Girl Students: 3% interest grant will be provided to girl students
- Market Stalls and Shopping Complexes: Women will have a 50% reservation to operate shops in government shopping complexes or markets.
- Venture Capital Fund: 50% earmarking of funds will be allocated for women entrepreneurs in the capital fund of the state government.
- Women Startups: The policy aims to encourage women to lead startups through collateral-free loans.
- Health Centers: 13 women health and wellness centers with integrated one-stop services will be founded.
- Mother and Child Unit: A super-specialty 100 bed for mother and child unit will be set up at the Agartala government medical college.

- Establish support networks and mentorship programs for women in various fields

It said that implement and enforce reservation policies for women in government jobs and educational institutions. And also ensure proper representation of women in local governing bodies like Panchayats and municipal corporations.

### Conclusion:

In conclusion, we can conclude that government policies have most importance role in promoting women empowerment. Women empowerment aims at achieving higher literacy and education, improved healthcare for women and their children, equal ownership of productive assets, increased participation in economic and commercial sectors, awareness of their rights, improvement in the standard of living and efforts to achieve self-reliance, confidence and self-respect among women. Recently, the NDA government has launched the Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao scheme which aims to make girls socially and financially independent and which will help in creating awareness and improving the skills of providing welfare services to women. Such schemes should be implemented nationwide to bring about the desired change. While policy measures such as reservations facilitate political engagement and representation, genuine empowerment in Tripura and alike regions necessitates a comprehensive approach that addresses both societal attitudes and structural impediments to women's rights.

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