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# The Empowerment of Women in Tamil Nadu: A Multi-Dimensional Approach

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**Abstract:** *The advancement of women's political, social, economic, and health status, together with their increased autonomy and empowerment, is a very significant goal in and of itself. Furthermore, achieving sustainable growth depends on it. Every aspect of productive and reproductive life, including shared responsibility for the upkeep of the home and the care and rearing of children, requires the full participation and partnership of both men and women. Because of their excessive workloads, lack of authority, and influence, women over the world are threatened with losing their lives, their health, and their general well-being. Women typically obtain less formal education than men around the world, yet at the same time, their own skills, knowledge, and coping techniques are frequently undervalued. Power dynamics that prevent women from leading healthy and satisfying lives exist at all societal levels, from the most intimate to the most visible. To effect change, policy and programme actions are required that will increase women's access to stable employment and financial resources, lessen their heavy domestic burdens, remove any legal barriers to their participation in public life, and increase social awareness through efficient education and mass communication campaigns. The position of women also affects their ability to make decisions at all levels and in all areas of life, particularly in relation to sexuality and reproduction. To ensure the long-term effectiveness of population programmes, this is also crucial. Experience has shown that initiatives aimed at advancing women's position have the greatest impact on population and development programmes.*

**Keywords:** *Gender, Empowerment, Equality, Policies and Programme*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The empowerment of women is one of the most important issues for the development of nations around the world. Tamil Nadu has a proud legacy of valuing women's empowerment and has done so for many decades. The contributions of authors and social reformers have a long history. In addition to designating 2001 as the Year of "Women's Empowerment," the



Indian government made women's empowerment one of the main goals of the Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002). Equal opportunity for men and women, universal adult suffrage, and equality before the law are all essential rights that our constitution has granted and protected. It is understood how crucial gender parity is to growth. Appropriate institutional processes and interventions have been purposefully included in the development plan to support the empowerment of women. Separate institutions for women and child development, departments at the central and state levels, the establishment of the National Commission for Women, as well as State Commissions for Women in several states, are just a few of the significant developments for women's empowerment and prosperity. The launch of Rashtriya Mahila Kosh, Indira Mahila Yojana, and Mahila Samridhi Yojana, as well as the reservation of one-third of Panchayat and local body seats, are programmes aimed at improving and empowering women on social, economic, and political fronts.

### Concept of Empowerment of Women

The concept of empowerment has many facets, dimensions, and layers. Women's empowerment is a process in which they gain more power over resources, including those that are material, human, and intellectual, like knowledge, information, and ideas, as well as financial resources like money. They also gain access to money and control over financial decisions in the home, community, society, and country. The Government of India's Country Report states that "*Empowerment involves shifting from a position of enforced powerlessness to one of power.*"

**Table-1: Growth of the Female Population**

Census Years	Tamil Nadu (in million)			All India (in million)		
	Male	Female	Persons	Male	Female	Persons
1951	22.8	7.3	30.1	186	175.6	361.1
1961	16.9	16.8	33.7	226	212.9	439.2
1971	20.8	20.4	41.2	284	264.1	548.2
1981	24.5	23.9	48.4	353	330.0	683.3
1991	28.3	27.6	55.9	439	407.1	846.3
2001	31.4	31.0	62.4	531	495.7	1027.0
2011	36.1	36	72.1	623	586	1210.8

Source: *Director of Census Operations, Tamil Nadu, 2011.*

### 1. Sex Ratio

The sex ratio, or the number of females per 1,000 males, is a key marker of the status of women. With the exception of 2001 and 2011, the ratio in Tamil Nadu has consistently decreased. The state's sex ratio was 996 in the 2011 Population Census, up from 987 in the 2001 Census. In comparison to metropolitan areas, where the sex ratio is 1000, rural areas have a relatively favourable 993 ratio. Additionally, Tamil Nadu regularly had a higher sex ratio than the national norm. The gender distribution in Tamil Nadu and throughout India is shown in the following table.

**Table-2: Sex Ratio in Tamil Nadu and All-India**

Year	Tamil Nadu	India
1951	1007	946
1961	992	941
1971	978	930
1981	977	934
1991	974	927
2001	987	933
2011	996	940

Source: *Director of Census Operations, Tamil Nadu, 2011.*

## **2. Life Expectancy at Birth**

The life expectancy at birth is frequently a useful summary indicator of the health of mothers. Women typically outlive males. Women often outlive men in high-income nations by six years on average. Only two additional years are added to life expectancy in lower income countries. As a result of advancements in the health sector, the life expectancy at birth for females in the state increased steadily, rising from 66.2 years in 2002–2006 to 70.6 years in 2010–16.

## **3. Women Literacy**

In any civilization, education is the primary tool for change. Women's education has significant economic and social benefits. The majority of societal evils can be effectively treated by education. A nation may lessen poverty, increase production, relieve population pressure, and provide a brighter future for its children by educating its women. For the advancement of female education, a "package strategy" is needed.

The literacy rates for men and women differ significantly. The literacy rate in the state was 86.8% for men and 73.4% for women in 2011, according to the census. In Tamil Nadu, there is a gender gap in literacy rates between rural and urban areas. 91.8% of urban males and 82.3% of urban females experienced this incidence. In comparison to urban regions, literacy disparities between men and women were noticeably greater in rural communities. This suggests that a targeted approach may be needed to raise the literacy rates of the female population, particularly among less affluent groups in rural areas.

## **4. Employment and Work Participation Rate**

A significant amount of the economic empowerment of women in society is indicated by the labour participation rate. The economic standing of women, which in turn depends on their ability to participate in economic activities, is closely related to how they are perceived socially. Everyone agrees that education is a key factor in the acceptance of modest family norms, which are necessary for family planning, coupled with women's engagement in the workforce. In all State employment sectors, there has been a noticeable improvement in the entry of women. In Tamil Nadu, female participation in the labour force increased from 31.8% in 2001 to 31.8% in 2011. To achieve better and more comprehensive economic empowerment, this share must be raised. Table 3 shows that the number of workers in Tamil Nadu as well as the participation rate in the labour force.

**Table-3: Work Participation Rate of Tamil Nadu and India**

Category	Tamil Nadu		India	
	2001	2011	2001	2011
WPR – By Demographical Segment (%)				
Rural	50.3	50.7	41.7	41.8
Urban	37.5	40.2	32.3	35.3
Overall	44.7	45.6	39.1	39.8
By Sex (%)				
Male	57.6	59.3	51.7	53.3
Female	31.5	31.8	25.6	25.5

Source: Directorate of Census Operation, Tamil Nadu, 2011.

## 5. Women and Political Participation

Political equality for all children, regardless of birth, sex, colour, etc., is one of the basic premises of democracy. The right to access the institutionalised centres of power is just as vital as the equal right to vote in terms of political equality. Therefore, power sharing, joint decision-making, and joint policy-making at all levels are all necessary for women to participate in politics. Women's empowerment and the creation of a society where there is gender equality, as well as the quickening of the process of national development, are both facilitated by their active participation in politics. In terms of political equality, the right to access institutionalised centres of power is equally as important as the equal right to vote. Therefore, for women to participate in politics, power sharing, collaborative decision-making, and joint policy-making at all levels are all important. Their active involvement in politics facilitates women's empowerment, the formation of a society where there is gender equality, as well as the acceleration of the process of national development.

### I. GEI and GDI in Tamil Nadu

The Gender Equality Index (GEI) compares the levels of human development attained by men and women as a percentage. The position of women in Tamil Nadu significantly improved between 2001 and 2011, according to the state's Gender Equality Index. Thanks to significant investments in the health and education sectors, Tamil Nadu finished second among the main Indian states in the GEI in 1991. According to this summary metric, Tamil Nadu has relatively little gender bias in comparison to the rest of India and other significant states. The Gender Development Index (GDI) is the touchstone of the position of women in society. The GDI for Tamil Nadu in 2017 is 0.784. Tamil Nadu's districts' GDI scores range from 0.994 in Kanyakumari to 0.447 in Perambalur and 0.282 in Ariyalur. The low GDI indicates that women's status was the lowest in Ariyalur in terms of literacy rate, enrollment ratio, and life expectancy at birth.

### II. STRATEGIES ADOPTED BY TAMIL NADU FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

The primary impediments to liberation were widely acknowledged to be women's poverty and poor educational achievement levels. The Tamil Nadu government has developed a number of policies, created targeted interventions, and launched a number of programmes to combat poverty and give education to the weaker segments of society in light of this fact.



### **1. Education of Women**

The most effective tool for transforming women's social status is education. Additionally, education reduces inequities and helps people rise in social rank. Schools, colleges, and even universities were founded in the State specifically for women in an effort to promote women's education at all levels and lessen gender prejudice in the delivery and acquisition of education. The government has been offering a package of concessions in the form of free supplies of books, uniforms, mid-day meals, scholarships, boarding and lodging, clothing for hostilities, free by-cycles, and other things to encourage more girl children, especially from marginalised BPL families, to enrol in the main stream of education. The Mother Teresa Women's University was founded to further women's studies and promotes women's social mobility through higher education.

### **2. Entrepreneurship Awareness Programme**

Entrepreneurship Development Programs (EDP) and Entrepreneurship Awareness Programs (EAP) are designed to help women become self-sufficient by showcasing their talents. Science City has taken on the mission of compiling a database of women scientists across the entire state of Tamil Nadu in order to assess the situation of women scientists. Science City established the Lifetime Achievement Award and Young Women Scientist Awards in order to support female scientists.

### **3. Tamil Nadu Corporation for Development of Women**

The socioeconomic empowerment of women is the main objective of the Tamil Nadu Corporation for the Development of Women, which was founded in 1983. The Corporation is introducing the Mahalir Thittam among poor rural women as a preamble in order to encourage saving practises, foster entrepreneurial abilities and aptitudes, promote exposure to banking transactions, and liberate them from the control of neighbourhood moneylenders. In collaboration with banks and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the programme is being executed. Under the programme, NGOs connected to the Tamil Nadu Corporations for the Development of Women organise and oversee SHGs.

### **4. Self Help Groups**

Self-Help Groups are compact, homogeneous associations formed voluntarily to encourage saving by 12 to 20 women from BPL families. They are self-managed organisations made up of impoverished women who formed them in order to pool their savings and lend the money among themselves to meet each other's credit needs. The specific objectives of SHGs are to:

- Improve saving habits among women.
- Increase the total family income.
- Fulfill the economic needs through the self-employment of women.
- Utilize bank loans and government welfare schemes.
- Help the members to escape from the clutches of moneylenders and
- Mobilize financial resources.



## **2. CONCLUSION**

The world today needs more empowered women. Women's empowerment has progressively increased. The basic right of women is to be empowered. They each have an equal right to take part in all activities. Women's empowerment is essential to the advancement of civilization. Typically, women have to put forth more effort than males. Despite the crucial role that women play in families and society, they consistently face disadvantages compared to men in all areas of life, including education, income, inheritance laws, partner choice, decision-making processes, property rights, community organisation, and leadership positions in the fields of business, education or politics.

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