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**Tracing Decline of Female Labour Force  
Participation Rate to Caste Inequalities in  
Urban and Rural India**

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## **Abstract**

*As India enters its demographic dividend<sup>1</sup>, it becomes increasingly important to empower women to smoothly enter the labour force. Developed countries in the past have used their demographic dividend to successfully integrate their working-age population into productive labour, and thus transitioned from developing economies to developed economies. This is important not only for the welfare of the general population but also because the largest age group population will become dependent on the country's welfare in the future when they drop out of the working age. In order to successfully meet the requirements of the demographic dividend, the country should ensure no one is left behind, irrespective of gender, caste or class. However, since 2005, we are seeing a drop in the Female Labor Force Participation Rate (FLFPR) that is not mirrored in other countries, in particular South Asian countries. For this paper, we try to observe the reasons for the decline, the extent of the impact of the caste and gender intersection, analyse existing government policies to combat the decline and make future recommendations for a way forward.*

**Keywords:** *Female Labor Force Participation Rate (FLFPR), Labour Force, Caste Inequality, Gender Inequality, Women, Rural-Urban Divide*

## **1.0 Introduction**

The World Bank Female Labour Force Participation (FLFP) report displays data from 1990-2020, with the employment of women peaking at a measly 31.792% in 2005, and steadily declining thereafter reaching an all-time low in 2020 at 20.335%. This is in accordance with the fact that overall employment has also been on a slight decline in India. However, the Male Labour Force Participation (MLFP) rate remains four times that of FLFP during the same time period. Comparing this data internationally, the Indian FLFP rate falls even below Afghanistan by 2% as well as surrounding countries of Sri Lanka (by 15%), Bangladesh (by 16%), Pakistan (by 2%), and Bhutan (by 39%), and Nepal (by a stark 63%). Understandably, due to the global rise and spread of the COVID-19 virus, world over employment rates have fallen.

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<sup>1</sup> "The economic growth potential that can result from shifts in a population's age structure, mainly when the share of the working-age population is larger than the non-working-age share of the population," (United Nations Population Fund).

Nevertheless, while most countries were previously seeing an upward trend, in India employment was declining and currently, the country is experiencing an all-time low. The situation is dire for women in rural India; due to the simultaneous incidence of relatively better and increased access to education in rural areas, and inadequate employment opportunities to soak up an increased labour force, women are involved in unproductive labour or unpaid labour. As India develops, the dominant sector contributing the most to national output moves from the agricultural sector to the service sector. This means that as access to education increases in rural areas, women move away from the agricultural sector, expecting to find jobs that suit their new skill sets. Moreover, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)<sup>2</sup>, a labour demand-driven programme, is limited to providing only 100 days of paid labour on public works projects per year. The few paid, formal jobs available, besides MGNREGA, tend to go to men and women with degrees, leaving women educated till the secondary school level in limbo—with skills that qualify them for non-agricultural work.

There are many differences between the lives of women in urban and rural areas. Social norms, such as women bearing the sole responsibility of household care and child-rearing are more pronounced in rural areas. Irrespective of this fact, women participation in the labour force is greater in rural than urban areas. In urban areas, the FLFPR has always been lower than in rural areas. This is in contradiction to the general notion of increased female participation with increased economic development and access to education.

Caste also plays a crucial role in the labour market. The opportunity to access a well-paying job varies according to skill sets, but the caste system is a major determinant too. India has worked on the provision of reservation in jobs and education for lower-caste groups according to the caste hierarchy. This policy is implemented only in the public sector jobs and educational institutions, which has led to an improved representation of lower caste in the public sector than in the private sector. Lower caste women are the most disadvantaged section of the Indian workforce as they bear discrimination of two layers of inequality: caste and gender inequalities.

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<sup>2</sup> Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005, an Indian labour law and social security measure that aims to guarantee the 'right to work'.

According to PLFS 2018-2019, 82.6% of urban females are literate whereas the same for rural females is 65.7%. It is expected that more educated women tend to have a greater probability of working in the labour force. This is clearly not the case as the urban female labour participation rate is lower than rural. The trend observed is that women are more likely to work before marriage. This trend is more pronounced in upper-caste families. There is a definite gap in labour force participation between male and female across categories but lower caste women tend to be more in proportion in the labour force than the upper caste women.

The trend of employment is such that lower caste women are mostly employed in low skilled jobs, such as Grade C and D jobs (clerical, maintenance and labour work), whereas they remain underrepresented in Grade A and B jobs (administrative and management work) where upper-caste women outnumber them. It is also observed that with economic havoc, the female labour participation rate is expected to shoot up whereas, with economic prosperity, household income increases and women tend to resort back to their domestic activities only.

## **2.0 Reasons for the Decline of FLFPR in the Rural and Urban sectors**

### **2.1 Social & Gender Norms**

By far, a major reason for the low FLFPR in India is the restrictive nature of social roles imposed on Indian women. These roles control to a full extent how and where women can work. Additionally, decision-makers are often men, who deem it not necessary for their wives/daughters to have jobs once they have children/elders to care for. The belief that women's primary role as the caregiver is prevalent in patriarchal (patrilineal and patrilocal) households in India. In fact, in many cases, women from upper-class households are confined to domestic duties more than their lower-income counterparts, who often have no choice but to go out and earn a living.

Social institutions in India show a gender disparate perspective on various issues: child marriage, the preference of sons, which has caused alarming trends of femicide and the shunning of daughters, and the dowry system, which severely disempowers women as her family is expected to pay an amount as she gets married. In some cases, the women's family continues to pay an amount even after marriage.

These trends have risen in the past decade; with a great gender ratio gap in the country and dowry payments showing a steady incline across all socioeconomic statuses over the last few decades. Dowry related violence, and other forms of violence against women, including sexual violence, have also steadily increased. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), India recorded 88 rape cases every day in 2019. Other aspects, such as those that may not be captured through numerical data, are captured in sentiments of men through a sample survey conducted by the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW). They found that 80% of the surveyed men believed diaper changing, and other child-rearing activities to be the mother's job. Moreover, while other countries surveyed showed that around half of the men agreed they play an equal role in one or more domestic duties, only 16% of Indian men agreed with this. Overall, researchers found that while the surveyed men support policies for equal opportunity for women, they have contradictory views when women are rewarded with equal rights, feeling that they lose out.

Gender roles are more strictly realized in rural areas than urban areas. However, FLFPR is higher in rural areas and lower-income groups than urban areas and higher-income groups. This is partly because of the high pressure to earn, and as family incomes rise, the need for secondary earners lessens, making women of higher income groups and urban areas less likely to be employed. In rural areas, as migration of men for labour leaves agricultural fields vacant, women have also had to take on farming responsibilities, which has eventually spread to families where men are present. Thus, many women are employed in the rural agricultural sector, leading to the feminization of agriculture and transforming women as head decision-makers at home, though it is important to note that this employment and structural change of decision-making is not always formally acknowledged. Further, a Nikore Associates research studying trends in women employment since Independence finds that women's employment is concentrated in low growth, low productivity sectors. This could be owing to the fact that the majority of urban women take on jobs only for a limited period before marriage. It is safe to say that a big challenge in employing women adequately so that they can contribute to economic growth is by eradicating toxic social norms that are limiting women's agencies.

## **2.2 Female Education in India**

	<b>1987-88</b>	<b>1993-94</b>	<b>1999-00</b>	<b>2007-08</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2017-18</b>
<b>Male Literacy Rate</b>	60.5	65.5	69.2	76.6	80.3	81.5
<b>Female Literacy Rate</b>	31.7	37.9	43.8	54.9	61.8	64.6
<b>Gap</b>	28.8	27.6	25.4	21.7	18.5	16.9

Figure:1.0

Source: National Sample Survey at Observer Research Foundation 2018, 2020.

As India undergoes a demographic transition, women are seeing more time open up as the burden of domestic duties declines with fewer children. This has been a gateway to education and further employment opportunities for women. While the combined effort of government and society has done well to maximize enrollment of girls in primary schools (98% female enrollment rate), there has been little success in sustaining their enrollment, especially in higher secondary schools, which is when most females drop out. According to the World Bank, the female literacy rate in India was at 66% in 2018. However, an aggregate picture often doesn't show the unequal discrepancies that exist within the country. Bihar, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh are among the worst-performing states for Dalit literacy, with the female Dalit literacy rate being 38.5% in Bihar in 2011. As of 2018, the adult male literacy rate surpassed the female literacy rate by 17 percentage points, a decline from before but still substantial nonetheless. This puts India at fourth place among the South Asian countries, with Sri Lanka and Bangladesh having higher female-male ratios in literacy. On a global level, India ranks 123 out of 135 countries for female literacy rates.

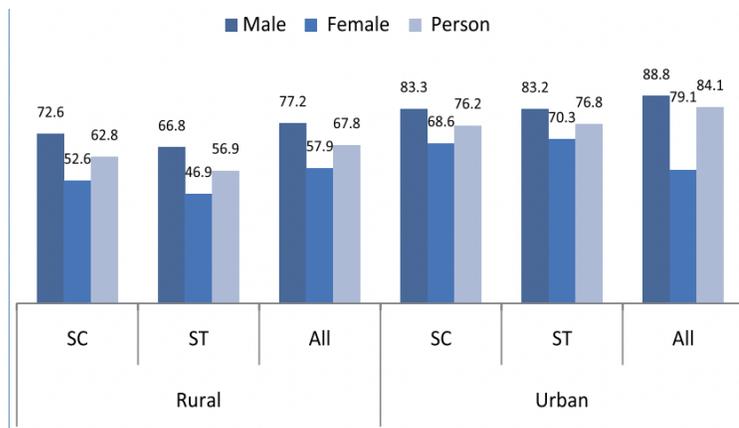


Figure:2.0

Source: CBGA. Major Dimensions of Inequality in India: Education, 2014, 2020

Figure 2.0 shows a variety of dimensions of inequality present in accessing education.

Literacy rates in rural India are lower than their counterparts, regardless of gender. And SC and ST rates are also always lower than their counterparts, regardless of place of residence or equivalent gender. This is highly worrisome, as literacy rates are crucial for having a skilled workforce and productive labour for the economy.

Girls face a multitude of challenges beyond the classroom that negatively affect their education. The rate of completion of secondary education in girls has been declining, from 81.1% in 2014-15 to 65.8% in 2016-17. This rate is lower in rural areas compared to urban areas. There are some main influences for this trend:

- (A) economic constraints
- (B) quality infrastructure gap
- (C) social and gender norms.

Economic constraints often make parents keep their children home, sometimes because the fee is too high and other times because the children provide additional labour and income for the house. Quality infrastructure is needed to address issues with girls not being able to come due to inadequate or insufficient amounts of toilets at schools, which allows them to eventually drop out. Lastly, social and gender norms that prioritize women's role as a wife and caregiver, thus putting domestic activities ahead of student activities, which eventually leads to dropping out by the girls.

An NSS survey in 2019 shows that almost 1/3rd of the school dropouts are because of engagement in domestic activities. Additionally, girls face a disparate digital divide with only 33% of women having internet access, which is less than half of the access to men (67%).

### **2.3 Employment Ratio & Opportunities**

According to the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2018-2019, the FLPR for urban regions is 16.1% whereas for rural regions it is 19.7%. Segregating the FLPR on another basis of categories and regions reveals that FLFPR for urban General is 14.5% while that of rural is 15.1%. For Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST) and Other Backward Classes (OBC), the respective FLFPRs for urban areas are 18.4%, 18.4% and 16.6%, and for rural areas, the figures are 19.5%, 28.7% and 19.6% respectively.

It could be inferred from the data that while rural women across categories have a higher FLFPR than their urban counterparts, it is the women from the General category (who belong to the upper caste) whose FLFPR is lowest among categories whether looking at urban regions data or rural regions data.

The Worker Population Rate (WPR) is the percentage of persons employed among the persons in the population. WPR for graduate females in urban regions is 23.1% (one-third of urban graduate male - 69.5%), while that of rural regions is 18.4% (less than one third for rural graduate male - 69.1%). WPR for illiterate females in urban regions is 21.9% while for rural regions is 30.7%. It could be established that illiterate women come from economically backward households. The data reveals that when household income is low, a greater percentage of women step out to work. There is also a strange pattern that female graduates proportion in the workforce who are more capable of doing substantial work is lower than that of illiterate females.

### **2.4 Caste-based Segregation**

Industry division	Rural females	Urban females
Agriculture	71.1	7.8

Mining and quarrying	0.2	0.2
Manufacturing	9	24.50
Electricity, water, etc	0.2	0.5
Construction	6	4.1
Trade, hotel and restaurants	4.3	13.8
Transport, storage and communication	0.2	3.6
Other services	9.1	45.6

Figure:3.0

Source: Annual Report, Periodic Labour Force Survey, July 2018-June 2019, 2020

This table reveals that while the majority of rural women are engaged in the agricultural sector, urban women work majorly in the service sector. Rural women have a lower literacy rate than urban females, which makes them undertake low-skill activities abundantly present in the agricultural sector. However, that may not be the only reason. India has been primarily an agrarian economy, and although it has managed to move to a service-sector-led economy in the last two decades, the majority of such jobs are concentrated in urban regions. This agrarian nature of rural areas, along with the migration of rural men to urban areas in search of jobs, helps in women getting some employment in the agricultural sector, though it is still mostly informal employment.

According to Socio-Economic Caste Census 2011, 0.73% of Scheduled Castes (SCs) households had government jobs while 0.17% had jobs in the public sector. This in contrast to 4.98% of total households holding government jobs at that time and 1.11% with jobs in the Public Sector. 3.56% of total households work in the private sector while only 0.45% of Scheduled Castes households work in the private sector.

The percentage of employees in Grade A(managerial/executive)jobs belonging to SC is 14.73%, for Grade B (supervisory), Grade C (skilled labour) and Grade D (unskilled labour) are 14.91%, 20.21% and 15.77% respectively.

According to Census 2011, Scheduled Castes constituted 16.63% of the population whereas Scheduled Tribes constitute 8.6%. The reservation earmarked for SC and ST in government jobs or public sector jobs are 15% and 7.5% respectively. The figures depicting the percentage of jobs in government jobs or public sector coming from SC households is below the earmarked reservations. There are no affirmative policies implemented in the private sector. SCs are represented as per the earmarked quota in Grade A and B jobs but overrepresented in Grade C and D jobs. The reason for overrepresentation is attributed to caste-related practice as much of the Grade C and D jobs are jobs of Scheduled Castes as per the caste rules. The good representation cannot be taken at face value due to the uneven access to jobs by people in the SC community with four to five castes majorly securing all the government jobs.

In the Central Ministries/Departments, Grade A and B jobs are held by 4.67% and 7.58% of the total jobs respectively by the STs whereas Group C jobs where if taken individual proportion of Safai Karamchari is 8.62% and for non-Safai Karamchari Grade C jobs, it is 7.18%. This data is from the Annual Report 2015-2016 of the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes. The low skill jobs accommodate STs in the required proportion whereas Grade A jobs do not represent STs in the proportion, reservation quota is earmarked for them. This shows light on the inaccessibility of managerial or administrative jobs due to the low education and social barriers.

## **2.5 Wage Gap**

There is gender pay parity and it is known globally. In most countries, India included, females are paid less for their equal contribution. The data below shows how caste plays a role in this gender pay parity in urban and rural areas.

***Real average daily urban and rural wages by type of worker, 2011-2012 (₹)***

Type of worker	Urban		Rural	
	Regular workers	Casual workers	Regular workers	Casual workers
Male General	579	173	375	152
Male OBC	383	193	297	158
Male SC	362	180	284	150
Male ST	445	160	337	122
Female General	504	104	251	100
Female OBC	276	115	194	105
Female SC	225	116	148	106
Female ST	340	105	197	97

Figure:4.0

Source: India Wage Report: Wage policies for Decent Work and Inclusive Growth, 2018

The data reveals that there is not only a gender pay gap but there are also caste discrepancies in wages. While General Female received lower wages than General Male irrespective of region, their wage for regular or casual work is greater than that of females belonging to OBC, SC and ST categories for both rural and urban areas. There is also a more pronounced wage gap between General females and the rest of the categories for females in the urban region rather than rural. In urban regular work, OBC females, SC females and ST females are paid 55%, 45% and 67% respectively of what is paid to General females. In rural regular work, OBC, SC and ST females receive 77%, 59% and 78% respectively of what females belonging to the General category are paid.

## **2.6 Unpaid Care Work**

A major roadblock to accessing opportunities to work for Indian women remains time poverty. The time that is spent child-rearing and performing domestic activities takes away from paid hours that could be spent on formal labour. On a time use survey conducted in 2019, women spent 5 hours a day on unpaid domestic labour as compared to 30 minutes for men. Unpaid care work is often not recognized or recorded in the National System of Accounts (NAS) due to the notion that measuring it would be impossible. Yet unpaid care work is crucial to the well-being of the larger society and constitutes a large gap of payment for services that would otherwise be paid. Women partaking in their domestic activities, thus, are not paid for the labour they perform, while also foregoing other opportunities of payment. At a macro level, this has three main consequences. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) study ties unpaid care work to:

- (1) Lower Female Labour Participation
- (2) Lower quality of employment
- (3) Higher gender wage gaps.

## **3.0 Analysis**

A low female labour force participation rate is going to affect the outcomes of a country at an economic scale, social scale, etc. Indian economy is hampered because of the low FLFPR and increasing it will not only help in boosting the economy but also help in empowering women of the country. It will lead to a progressive society where women are not dependent on their male counterparts for money. Now, analyzing the impact of low FLFPR on various factors-

### **3.1 Economic factors**

The decline of FLFPR is such that it decreased from 42.7% in 2004-2005 to 31.2% in 2011-2012 to 18.6% in 2018-2019. The most common reason for declining FLFPR is attributed to the income effect (measures the change in the demand for a good or service as a result of a change in total income that as the income of a household increases), women who are considered as secondary earners drop out from the labour market. The increase in income is attributed to the economic growth during the 2004-2011 period.

There was jobless growth during this period followed by loss of jobs from 2016. The transition from jobless growth to job loss from 2016 till date is quite dramatic. There has been an increase in unemployment to 6% as reported by NSS 2017-2018 withheld by the government which was the highest in 45 years.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic hit, this was the dire condition of the labour market and during the pandemic, a decline of jobs has been substantial due to lockdown and resulting cash crunch. Economic growth has also declined this year, but the pandemic itself cannot be held responsible for such a low FLFPR as there have been cracks decades long. Analysis of NSSO data from 1970-2018 reveals that women have been largely involved in labour-intensive, low productivity sectors. Since women work mostly in low productivity sectors, they earn lower wages. The lower wages make women drop out from the job market as they consider the tradeoff between household care and the extra income earned as the opportunity cost of water increases as household income improves attributing to earnings of male members.

As the female labour participation rate will increase, the economic growth of the country is bound to improve as half the manpower of the Indian economy is unutilised.

### **3.2 Government Policies**

The Indian government has recognized the decline of FLFPR in India and has implemented the following policies, that may apply to women in the workforce in India:

- (1) *Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017*: Paid maternity leave increased from 12 weeks to 26 weeks and mandatory creche facilities for workplaces having >50 employees.
- (2) *Factories Act, 1948*: Specifying “safe” hours for work of women, and adding safety measures for night shifts of women.
- (3) Training sessions through *Women Industrial Training Institutes, National Vocational Training Institutes* and *Regional Vocational Training Institutes*: Enhancing employability of women through various training institutes.
- (4) *Equal Remuneration Act, 1976*: Equal pay for the same quality and quantity of work regardless of gender.
- (5) *Minimum Wages Act, 1948*: Minimum wage set by the government does not discriminate on the basis of gender.

The current national policies fail to address or even recognize the major challenges to women's participation in the Indian labour force. The Equal Remuneration Act, Minimum Wages Act and Factories Act are all (1) not specifically geared toward women, (2) nor considerate about adding amendments that keep up with the evolving context of women in India. The Maternity Benefit Act, while specifically focused on women, is a policy that is the bare minimum for women in India. In all of these acts, there are additional issues with how outdated they are to current workforce trends, and are completely silent on caste and class disparities within the workforce. Though data shows that lower-caste and class women face the brunt of underemployment, wage gaps, and other bottlenecks in accessing formal sector jobs, there is absolutely no policy that has been introduced or amended to take into account this lost labour. Furthermore, the training sessions are building on the supply side of labour, which while also needs upliftment, is not the priority as some of the main challenges exist on the demand side (changing people's mindsets to allowing women from families to work, accepting women to work, etc). Lastly, the few number of policies fail to recognize the many nuanced ways that the policies work, leaving out the most vulnerable working groups to further exploitation, lack of access to jobs, and companies distancing themselves from hiring females who have to be paid only to leave after maternity leave.

### **3.3 Technological factors**

According to a report by McKinsey, Indian women are expected to lose 4 million jobs in agriculture, forestry and fishery by 2030 due to automation. The decline in FLFPR can also be attributed to the mechanisation of agriculture. Indian economy which has always been majorly dependent on agriculture employs almost 72% of working women in rural regions even today(which forms the bulk of the population)as per the PLFS data 2018-2019. There has been a decline in jobs especially among rural women in recent years. According to a journal article by Sunita Sanghi, A Srija, and Shirke Shrinivas Vijay in the journal VIKALPA, major loss of jobs in rural areas is reported in the agriculture sector. These women who lost jobs were unable to find jobs in other sectors as in rural areas, the job increase has been in construction and mining which are considered to be male suited jobs and skill set for such jobs will be difficult to acquire given the abstinence from male-dominated jobs.

There is a rapid development of Artificial Intelligence paving the way for automation; and to secure jobs, women need to update their skill sets especially in rural areas where the infrastructure for the internet is underdeveloped. Though technology has enabled women to work from home, the advantage remains mainly concentrated in tier 1 and tier 2 cities in India. The bulk of the population is in rural areas and a greater proportion of women engage in work in rural than urban areas. Vocational training with special emphasis on IT training in rural areas can go a long way to boost FLFPR in rural areas. The opportunities which come with technology remains inaccessible to most women. According to a study, only 46% of women have mobile phones out of which only 24% have access to smartphones. The Internet is the window to opportunities for employment.

There have also been jobs such as content writer, marketing, information technology, etc which are being done online. COVID-19 has proved that many jobs can be done through online mode entirely. These opportunities can only be accessed by women with possession and knowledge of the technical know-how of the internet.

#### **4.0 Policy Recommendations**

There are many policies implemented by the government to boost FLFPR such as the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act 2017 which ensures 26 weeks of maternity leave and a creche facility in the establishments having 50 or more employees, Factories Act 1948 ensuring proper women safety at night shifts, etc. These policies remain applicable to the formal sector whereas the informal sector is not bound to implement these. The formal sector accounts for 12% of the jobs while 88% of jobs falls under the informal sector. There is increased use of contractual employment (a person employed through a contractor and not directly by employer) by the employers as they get away without providing any of the benefits important to implement to retain women like maternity leaves, etc. This happens because contractual employment falls outside the legal compulsion to ensure compliance with the laws enacted for employees.

There are certain policies that could be implemented to boost FLFPR provided that policies are executed smoothly and administered properly.

#### **4.1 Vocational training with focus on IT services**

It is an established fact that women with vocational training are more likely to secure a job than without. The vocational training sought by women is mostly in beauty, education, health sector, etc. which has led to females dominating professions of teachers, nurses, beauticians, etc. Vocational training in IT services as in working on a computer, learning skills such as software related to accounting, data analysis, etc. will enable women to seek employment in online mode. There is also a lack of information to many women about the prevalence of opportunities for work. These problems could be solved partly by vocational training as women will access the internet in search of jobs.

Since many women especially in rural areas are primarily responsible for household care then enabling them to work on the internet from the home itself will increase the FLFPR. The preconditions for such a policy is sound infrastructure in internet facilities across the country.

#### **4.2 Development of jobs for women**

As education increases, women prefer to work only when they can get a suitable job. This is primarily because of the tradeoff between household care and extra income. A woman with secondary level education will find it very hard to find a suitable job without vocational training. There has been huge job loss in the last few years rendering it a difficult job to secure employment. Apart from this, women want to work in their free time after their household chores are finished but there are no proper jobs for that. A solution would be the development of part-time jobs which will enable women to do household chores and work as well.

#### **4.3 Ensuring safety**

Though there are laws to safeguard women from danger in the workplace, such laws remain out of the scope of informal sectors. There are around 95% working women engaged in the informal sector. Such women are exposed to sexual harassment, exploitation, low wages, etc. These women are helpless who have to ignore such harassment to be able to earn meals. These unsafe conditions discourage women to step out and work which has driven down FLFPR. Laws are only namesake in the informal sector.

There is evidence of overrepresentation of SC, ST, OBC in the informal sector which exposes mainly women from these communities to exploitation. This needs to change and safety needs to be ensured in the informal sector by bringing it in the purview of law and regulations.

#### **4.4 Development of institutions to support child care**

Child care is often considered the primary responsibility of women and this hinders them from joining the job market. There are creche openings mostly in metropolitan cities but this facility needs to be popularized in all the cities as of now. There needs to be at least one affordable facility for every city. With advancement, such facilities should be extended to rural areas as well but they need to do it first in urban areas because of the prevalence of nuclear families in urban areas whereas mostly joint families live in rural areas.

#### **4.5 Better representation in the secondary sector**

The patriarchal mindset has enabled women to believe that physical labour is not for her but that is not the case. There is a very low representation of women in manufacturing, mining, etc. which involves intense labour.

Proper training programs for endorsing women with skillsets for jobs need to be implemented. This will lead to better female representation in the male-dominated sector.

#### **5.0 Conclusion**

With an increase in the spread of education, participation in the labour force should increase but for Indian women, the scenario is just the opposite. The pass percentages of girls are better in matriculation examinations than boys, girls are outshining boys in many areas of study yet FLFPR remains abysmally low. The social pressure to get married and move to the husband's house has led to many women leaving their jobs to get settled into a married life. Such mobility is majorly done by women. The societal norms and orthodox viewpoints which considers women working outside as a sign of disgrace needs to be done away with. This can only come through awareness. At the same time, proper job generation needs to be done along with the development of institutions for child care and household care, these things will enable women to step out and work.

Ensuring the safety of women in informal sectors will help in boosting FLFPR. Technological advances are both a boon and curse for FLFPR. By automation, jobs are lost but proper infrastructure of the internet and computers accessibility will enable women to work from their homes. As far as men are concerned, gender-specific roles like women to do household chores and child-rearing by their own needs to be unlearned. This could be achieved by inculcating such roles to be gender-neutral via education. This will take time so the solutions which could be implemented in the short run is to improve the infrastructure to provide good quality internet and to move towards universalisation of computer literacy. These will set pre-conditions to generate work from home opportunities. The informal sector is not mandated to imply government laws however it accounts for around 88% of the employment in India. Women represent a major chunk of the informal sector who are exposed to sexual harassment among many other hardships. Ensuring safety for women especially in the informal sector will definitely encourage more women to join the labour force.

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