



## WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE AND GLOBAL SCENARIO: UNDERSTANDING GENDER AND SEX - A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Shalini Shrivastava<sup>1</sup> and Dr. Kanta Alawa<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar , Mata Jijabai Govt. Girls P.G. College, Indore , Devi Ahilya University, Indore.

<sup>2</sup>Guide ,Dept. Head-Pol. Science , Shahid Bhimanayak, Govt. P.G. College , Dist. Barwani, DAVV Indore.



### ABSTRACT:

Woman constitute almost half of the total population of country but opportunity of their rising is determined by the male dominated society, they are living in. But it is not limited to India, in fact Women Empowerment and women Equality with men is a global issue. The widespread discrimination and exploitation of women evoke the need for empowerment of women, In spite of constitutional gurantees, implementation of law, initiatives of social reformers, efforts by the government by different schemes and programmes, UNO's directives, the equal status of women in world wide is not achieved the desired goals. Specially in some countries, girls fighting against poverty, wars, child marriages, gender discrimination to go to school and health services. UNDP Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2021 says that Gender equality is a fundamental human right and nescessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. However, gender enequality remains one of the most pervasive forms of discrimination in all development settings. While gender inequality affect anyone, impeding global progress towards achieving sustainable development, it is women who face the most discrimination. UNDP report shows a large numbers of Global gender gaps between labour force participation, Gender pay gape, proportion of day time spent on unpaid care work, seats in parliaments, agreeculture land holders etc. Report also says that 35% women subjected to physical/sexual violence. This situation gives an encouragement to present writer to analyse the actual position of women and problems among the facts and figures and also to find out the measure for woman upliftment. Hence an attempt is made to depict the present scenerio of women empowerment. Empowerment of women is indefeasibly the process upliftment of economic, social, political status of women. Women empowerment is all about giving women power and control of their lives that they may achieve anything they want and to do what they want in situations where they were not allowed once upon a time. It refers to make an enviroment for women where they can have decision making power for their own for personal and for the sorrounding and society as well as. Women empowerment is a thought and action against Gender Discrimination.

**KEYWORDS:** Women Empowerment, UNDP, UNO, UNISEF.

**"There is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women."  
-Kofi Annan**

### INTRODUCTION

The concept of empowerment flows from the word power. Empowerment of Women would mean encouraging women to be self reliant, economically independent, have positive self steem,

generate confidence to face any difficult situation and incite active participation in various socio-political development endeavours. The growing conscience is to accept women as individuals capable of making rational and educated decisions about them as well as the society, increasing and empowering economic, political and legal strength of women, to ensure equal rights as men, achieve internationally agreed goals for development and sustainability and improve the quality of life for their families and communities. The various facts of women empowerment that needs to be addressed for a rounded out development are-

1. Human Rights or Individual Rights
2. Social Empowerment of Women
3. Educational Empowerment of Women
4. Economic and Occupational Freedom
5. Empowerment Through legal knowledge
6. Political Empowerment of Women

#### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:**

1. To assess the present scenario of Women empowerment in India.
2. To find out the global efforts and work carried out for women empowerment.
3. Understanding difference between gender and sex.
4. Gender discrimination in India and as a world wide issue.
5. To identify the barriers of Women empowerment.
6. To examine constitutional efforts and government's provisions
7. To offer suggestions for women empowerment.

#### **METHODOLOGY:**

The present paper is based on the data collected from the secondary source i.e. published literature, review literature of the subject concern, interview, reports and web materials. The secondary source of data has been further analysed for drawing inferences on the level of participation of women in various institutional organisation, changes in nature of their involvement, participation and leadership over the years and extent of their empowerment based different parameters. Few case studies are also taken as a literature in this paper based on reliable webs and sites.

**Gender Discrimination as a world wide issue :** Meghan, Duchess of sussex(born Rachen Meghen Markle), a retired American actress who became a member of the British royal family upon her marriage to Prince Harry once expressed in her interview that when she was just eleven years old, she unknowingly and accidently became a female advocate when she had been in school and watching a TV show and a commercial of dish washing liquid came on with a tagline that "Women all over America is fighting with the greasy pots and pans...." Two boys from her class said, yeah, that's where women belong, in the kitchen. It was a feeling of anger, shocked and hurt. After an encouragement to write letters, she wrote to every possible and powerful people and organisation including the first lady at the time, Hillary Clinton and that soap manufacturer. Few weeks later she started receiving encouragement letters by The First Lady and others and the soap manufacturer changed his slogan to "People all over America...." it is an example how a little girl reacted to gender discrimination and initiate for change.

The youngest Nobel Prize winner for Peace and herself a story of struggle and inspiration Malala Yousafzai, the eleven years old Pakistani girl shot in Talibani attack in an assassination attempt in relation for her human right advocacy, specially the activism of women education in her native Swat vally despite of threats given by Talibani. Malala came out of that life threatning experience and still promoting awareness for women education in Swat vally of Pakistan and other Taliban occupied areas. Her advocacy has grown into an international movemet. These are two examples or case studies, famous world wide are enough to understand that there are a large diffefence between gender due to wrong socialisation in which women are associated to kitchen, house hold chores and inside home activities and education, schooling, occupation or livelihood are male's business, No matter if it is India,

USA, Taliban or Pakistan. Gender discrimination is a global issue and works as a barrier in the path way of women empowerment.

**Understanding Gender and Sex:** Gender Refers to the socially determined ideas and practises of what it is to be female or male, how a person's biology is culturally valued and interpreted into locally accepted ideas of what it is to be a woman or man.

Sex refers to the biological characteristics that catagorize someone as having either a female or male body. The table below shows the difference-

**Figure 1. difference between Gender and Sex**

No.	Sex	Gender
1.	Biologically determined	Constructed by society
2.	Universal for all human beings	Multi-Faceted differs within and between culture
3.	Unchanging	Dynamic, changes over time
4.	Inborn	Acquired

It is important not to determine the significance of biological difference. Some biological/physical differences do require differential treatment.

Women's marginalisation has often been seen as 'natural' and a fact of their biology. However these biological differences can not explain why women have less access to power and a lower status than men. Gender and hierarchical power relations between women and men based on this are socially constructed, and may not be derived directly from biology. Gender identities are associated expectations of roles and responsibilities are therefore changeable between and within cultures.

**Division of labour:** Generally in Indian and other south asian communities, women and girls concentrate on reproductive chores while boys and men dominate productive(earning) and political roles.

**Decision-making:** Generally men decide family life including life and wellbeing of women.

**Family headship:** Men own the property and women only have user rights. This property is passed on to the sons as sustodians of family heritage.

**Kinship:** Under patriarchy, the family name and identity defined along the male lineage. Children take on the names of their fathers. Girls are expected to marry and go to stay with their husbands; boys are seen as the permanent residents of the home, a factor that is related to expectation that they will offer protection to the family as well as being the continuation of the lineage and performing the last rituals of their parents. Mostly, in India and south asia, patriarchy is followed except for a few places.

**Role:** The women's roles are domestic and private while men's role are external and visible/public. The women's role are not very significant in terms of money, respect, power whereas those of men are highly appreciated as they fall within the productive category. Men's responsibilities are associated with economical and social capacity and with protected rights making it possible for them to exert power over women. Women's responsibilities are associated with minor rights, which leads to social and economic dependence and subordination compared to men.

## GENDER ROLES

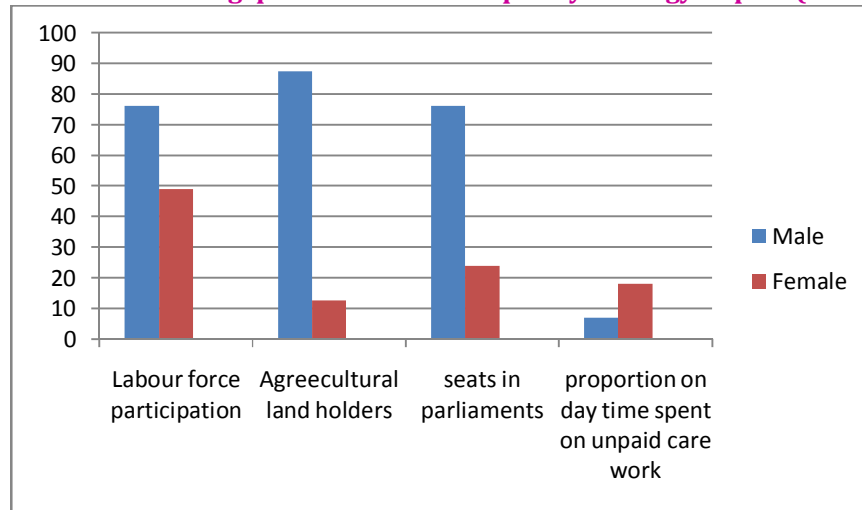
**Productive role:** comprises the work done by both men and women for payment in cash or kind  
**Reproductive/Domestic role:** comprises child bearing/rearing responsibilities as well as domestic tasks, required to guarantee the maintenance and wellbeing of household members. It includes not only biological reproduction but also the care and maintenance of the person who comprise the household.

**Community management role:** comprises activities undertaken at the community level to contribute to the development or political organisation of the community. It is usually voluntary, unpaid work.

Gender equality is a fundamental human right and necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. Gender equality is central to UNDP support to countries to implement and achieve the 2030 agenda for sustainable development and sustainable development goals as well as other commitments agreed by member states. The 2030 agenda envisions the world of "every woman and girl enjoys full gender equality and all legal, social and economic barriers to their empowerment have been removed."

**Women Empowerment-The concept:** Women empowerment is all about giving women the power and control of their lives to become anything they want and to do what they want in situations where they were not allowed once upon a time. It refers to the creation of an environment for women where they can make decisions on their own for their personal benefits as well as for the society. Women empowerment irrespective of caste, creed, religion and gender is a constitutional mandate, a basic human right and a decisive force of national development. "Empowerment means moving from a weak position to exercise a power." Women empowerment is a global issue and it was raised at the international women conference T NAROIBI in 1985. Women empowerment is the process of providing rights, power, opportunities and responsibilities to women so that they are able to develop their potential, think and act freely as par with men equally in society. It is the expansion of women's ability and freedom to exercise full control over their action.

**Measuring Women Empowerment:** Although since empowerment is a multidimensional concept and it is viewed as a process as well as an outcome, it is very difficult to measure empowerment of women in any country or society. Many attempts have been made by the scholars, researchers and organisations to develop conceptual framework to measure women's empowerment but most of them are at household level. It is found to be difficult to have any macro level framework. UNDP (1990) for the first time introduced the concept of Human Development Index (HDI) that evolved initially as a broader measure of socio-economic progress of a nation but it became popular as a measure of average achievements in human development for both the sexes. Contrary to the general belief that development is gender neutral, statistics show that women lag behind men all over the world including India in almost all aspects of life. It is for this reason that the focus on human development has been to highlight the gender dimension and continuing inequalities confronting women since 1995 (UNDP 1995). The Report noted that without empowering women overall development of human beings is not possible. It further stressed that if development is not engendered, is endangered. To bring out the facts and figures relating to deprivation of women two indices, namely, Gender related Development Index (GDI) and Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) were introduced. While GDI measures the achievements in the same dimensions and variables as the HDI, it also takes into account inequality in achievement between women and men (Anand and Sen, 1995). The greater the gender disparity in human development, the lower is country's GDI compared to its HDI. The GDI is the HDI adjusted downwards for gender inequality. On the other hand, GEM indicates whether women are able to actively participate in economic and political life. Theoretically, the index can take values between zero and infinity, with a value of unity reflecting an absolute equality in the respective attainments of males and females. A value higher than unity would imply that females have better attainments than males.

**Figure 2. Global Gender gaps: UNDP Gender Equality Strategy Report (2018-2021)****Figure 3. Gender gap UNDP Report**

Gender pay gape- 23%

Women subjected to physical/sexual violence- 35%

### Constitutional Provisions and Government Efforts for Women Empowerment in India:

The constitution of India has given provisions for empowering women, some of these are

1. Equality before law for all persons (Article 14)
2. Prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth (Article 15(1))
3. Special provisions to be adopted by the State in the favour of women and children (Article 15(3))
4. Equality of opportunity for employment to any officer under the state (Article 16), right to secure adequate means of livelihood for men and women equally (Article 39(a))
5. Equal pay for equal work for both men and women (Article 39(d))
6. Maternity relief (Article 42)
7. Promotion of dignity of women (Article 51(a))
8. Reservation of 50% of total seats for women in direct elections to local bodies (Articles 343(d) & 343(T))

The government has taken initiatives for women empowerment through different laws and several schemes operated by different departments and ministries. The National Commission for Women was set up by an act of parliament in 1990 for safeguarding the constitutional right and legal provision for women.

**"Achieving the Goal of equal participation of women and men in decision making will provide a balance that more accurately reflects the composition of society and is needed in order to strengthen democracy and promote its proper functioning at all levels of decision making, the goal of equality, development and peace can not be achieved."**

**-Fourth World Conference of Women.**

**Beijing, 1995: Article 181**

Reservation of seats in the local bodies of Panchayats and Municipalities for women has been provided by the 73rd and 74th amendment of the constitution, but later on 27 August, 2009 the cabinet has approved an amendment in article 243(d) of the constitution and added a provision to secure 50% of total numbers of seats in Panchayats for direct elections of women. The Department of Women and Child Development (DWCD) under the MHRD was established for implementation of various programmes and schemes related to betterment and advancement of women. The National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW) 2010 has emphasized to facilitate the process of all integrated programmes for welfare and upliftment of women undertaken by the ministries and department. The National Resource Centre for Women acts as a national convergence centre for all programmes related to women. The National Literacy Mission is also established that eradication of literacy can be done in the age of 15-35 years. The Functional Literacy for Audit Women (FLAW) was started in 1975-76 for development of functional skills and awareness for health, hygiene and children practices in women can be promoted.

The Government of India has undertaken different schemes for welfare, upliftment and security of the women. Some mentionable schemes are "Rashtriya Mahila Kosh" (RMK) 1992-93, "Mahila Samridhi Yojana" (MSY) 1993, "Indira Mahila Yojana" (IMY) 1995, "Swa Shakti Group" (SWG), Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP), Creches/Day-care Centre for the Children of working and ailing mother, Hostels for working women, National Mission for Empowerment of Women, Integrated Child Development Services, Rajeev Gandhi Scheme for Employment of Adolescence Girls (RGSEAG) 2010, Women's Development Corporation Scheme (WDCDS), Working Women's Forum, Indira Priyadarshini Yojana, NGO's Credit Schemes. The Present Prime Minister Narendra Modi has launched the programmes of Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao aims at tackling the low child sex ratio of 918 girls child resources and savings of a family which is helpful to meet the expenses of higher education and marriage. The first year of New Millennium (2001) was declared as "Women Empowerment Year". Some of above programmes are funded and granted by UNICEF and UNO too. In spite of all these efforts, it is necessary to supplement Government efforts by NGOs for facilitating women empowerment. Yet India has not achieved the expected goals, hence comprehensive programme for empowering women is still in high demand.

The Government of India has also made some Legislative provisions and enacted specific laws to safeguard the interests of women and uplift their status in society. The Government has enacted various legislative measures intended to ensure equal rights to counter social discrimination and various forms of violence and atrocities and to provide support services specially to working women. Although women may be victims of any of the crimes such as Murder, Robbery, Cheating etc, the crimes, which are directed specifically against women are characterized as Crime against Women. These are broadly classified under two categories:

### **1. The Crimes identified under Indian Penal Code (IPC)**

- a. Rape (Sec 376 IPC)
- b. Kidnapping & Abduction for different purposes (Sec. 363-373)
- c. Homicide for Dowry, Dowry Deaths or their attempts (Sec. 302/304-B)
- d. Torture, both mental and physical (Sec. 498-A)
- e. Molestation (Sec. 354)
- f. Sexual Harassment (Sec. 509)
- g. Importation of girls (up to 21 years of age)

Although all laws are not gender specific, the provisions of law affecting women significantly have been reviewed periodically and amendments carried out to keep pace with the emerging requirements. Some acts which have special provisions to safeguard women and their interests are:

### **2. The Crimes identified under Special Laws (SLL)**

- a. The Employees State Insurance Act, 1948
- b. The Plantation Labour Act, 1951

- c. The Family Courts Act, 1954
- d. The Special Marriage Act, 1954
- e. The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955
- f. The Hindu Succession Act, 1956 with amendment in 2005
- g. Immoral Traffic(Prevention) Act, 1956
- h. The Maternity Benifit Act, 1961(Ammended in 1995)
- i. Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961
- j. The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971
- k. The Contract Labour(Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1976
- l. The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976
- m. The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006
- n. The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 1983
- o. The Factories (Amendment) Act. 1986
- p. Indecent Representation of Women(Prohibition) Act. 1986
- q. Commission of Sati(Prevention) Act, 1987
- r. The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005
- s. The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013
- t. The Criminal Law (Amendment Act, 2013)

**UNO's Directives:** UNO has given The Sustainable Development Agenda and decided 17 goals to transform the world. In 2015, countries adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The Fifth goal refers to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls and targets are-

1. Globally, 750 million women and girls were married before the age of 18 and at least 200 million women and girls in 30 countries have undergone FGM.
2. The rates of girls between 15-19 who are subjected to FGM(female genital mutilation) in the 30 countries where the practice is concentrated have dropped from 1 in 2 girls in 2000 to 1 in 3 girls by 2017.
3. In 18 countries, husbands can legally prevent their wives from working; in 39 countries, daughters and sons do not have equal inheritance rights; and 49 countries lack laws protecting women from domestic violence.
4. One in five women and girls, including 19 per cent of women and girls aged 15 to 49, have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner with the last 12 months. Yet, 49 countries have no laws that specifically protect women from such violence.
5. While women have made important inroads into political office across the world, their representation in national parliaments at 23.7 per cent is still far from parity.
6. In 46 countries, women now hold more than 30 per cent of seats in national parliament in at least one chamber.
7. Only 52 per cent of women married or in a union freely make their own decisions about sexual relations, contraceptive use and health care.
8. Globally, women are just 13 per cent of agricultural land holders.
9. Women in Northern Africa hold less than one in five paid jobs in the non-agricultural sector. The proportion of women in paid employment outside the agriculture sector has increased from 35 per cent in 1990 to 41 per cent in 2015.
10. More than 100 countries have taken action to track budget allocations for gender equality.
11. In Southern Asia, a girl's risk of marrying in childhood has dropped by over 40% since 2000.

In Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2021, UNDP has a commitment to promote gender equality and mainstream gender in all its work, signature solutions 6 focuses attention on the deep- rooted structural barriers that perpetuate gender inequality and hinder sustainable development. The priority areas are-

- a. Removing structural barriers to women's economic empowerment, including women's disproportionate burden of unpaid care work;
- b. Preventing and responding to gender based violence;
- c. Promoting women's participation and leadership in all forms of decision making;
- d. Strengthening gender-responsive strategies in crisis (conflict and disaster) prevention, preparedness and recovery.

### **FINDING FROM THE STUDIES:**

Since empowerment is a multi-dimensional concept and closely related to human behaviour, it is very difficult to develop any composite scale for measuring empowerment. A number of studies have been conducted to measure women empowerment but most of them are at household level, different aspects used to remain left. There are a lot of national and International organisational reports and research data available regarding women empowerment but outcome is that women empowerment is all about the social practices in different communities and countries. No doubt legal provisions are working for betterment but such efforts are insufficient in case of different social scenario in different countries. The one thing is common and important which UNDP also pointed out that Human Rights are the basic concept to follow on priority basis. Workings on human rights eradicate gender discrimination. Actually women don't need empowerment, what they need is only 'liberty' that they may get themselves free to take their own decision. There shouldn't have any unwanted interventions in personal affairs. There shouldn't have any gender based discrimination for basic needs like health, hygiene, sanitation, nutrition, education etc. Malfunctions and wrong stereotype practices should be stopped immediately. Forcefully attribution of such things wouldn't work here. Capacity building, giving them favourable environment, making women strengthens, skilled and financially independent is a key ingredient. Giving women opportunity of leadership and decision making is not enough, in fact male's participation would bring change. Studies prove that gender discrimination is a big problem in under developing countries where education level is not improved. Education may pay a revolutionary contribution in order to work against gender discrimination. Government of different countries are needed to review their policy, planning and programming time to time and improvement should be done accordingly.

It is not this as developed countries not having anything to contribute in the direction of women empowerment. There are a lot of things to do at their level, few of them are-

1. Eliminating gender pay gaps;
2. Increasing women's roles in decision making;
3. Developing and implementing work-life balance policies;
4. Eradicating sexual harassment at work;
5. Enhancing women's access to non-traditional jobs;
6. Giving organisational protection to women working with public and private companies;
7. Actual valuation of labour proportions of day time spent on unpaid care work;
8. Eliminating difference between paid or office work and unpaid care work or household chores done by women.

### **CONCLUDING REMARKS:**

To conclude the present scenario, it can be said that following the approach of human rights and eradication gender discrimination at various levels would be the most effective tool for women empowerment. The goal of women empowerment can be achieved by co-operative efforts carried out by Government, Private sectors and NGOs through education, awareness and social change with involvement and participation of both men and women.

### **REFERENCES-**

1. Alankrita Singh(2018), Papers on Women Empowerment: Policy and Programmes, LBSNAA Mussoorie



2. Basu D.D. Constitution of India
3. Census and Statistics 2011, Government of India
4. Parihar Lalita(2011). Women and Law-From Impoverishment to Empowerment-A Critique. Eastern book Company.
5. Rajgopal Pratibha(2006), Gender Discrimination In India and Provisions for Women against Domestic Violence and Harassment at Workplace, Papers/Training Material Presented at RCVN Naronha Academy of Administration Bhopal
6. Sekera Navniet.(2017) Crime against Women and Legal Provisions in India, Study material presented at IIM Lucknow
7. Singh Rakesh K.(2010) Women's Reservation(108<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment) Bill, Coordinator, Women's Unit, Indian Social Institute, New Delhi
8. Sustainable Development Goals, United Nation's Report
9. United Nations Gender Equality Strategy, 2018-2021