



## GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA

**Mrs. P. Hema latha**

Lecturer in Home Science, JMJ College for Women, Tenali.

**Dr. V. Venkateswarlu**

Asst Professor, Dept of Sociology and Social Work, Acharya Nagarjuna University, Guntur.

**ABSTRACT**

Gender equality is a general issue rather than a women's issue which has to be looked carefully because of its impact on several spheres of lives in the society. A woman has the right to be first recognized as human being before various roles are expected of her in the domestic and public arenas. In this regard, the gender discrimination which the women experience in everyday life and which is usually accepted and justified as socially legitimate have to be questioned and placed at a centre stage.

General differences are biological. Gender identity, gender role and gender attributions are learnt behaviour. So, culturally determined role differentials need not be permanent and they can be changed. Investing in women's capacity building is an investment for future as they are the influencing factors of future generations as mothers.

When women are healthy, educated and free to take the opportunities life affords them, children thrive and countries flourish, reaping the double dividend for women and children. Gender equality and well being of children go hand in hand. When women are empowered to live full productive lives, children prosper, where women are denied equal opportunities in society children suffer.

Women empowerment helps to break the cycle of poverty. It helps women do delay in their marriages, chose the timing and spacing of their pregnancies access need services and information, complete their education and gain knowledge and skills they need to participate in the economy and their countries development.

This paper throws light on need of gender equality and its role in women empowerment and its influence on family, society in turn on the national development.

**KEYWORDS :**

Development is a human centred process. People are both the ends as well as the means in this process. Development in its wider perspective embraces all aspects of community life. The accept goals of any nation includes optimal production, full employment, attainment of socio-economic equity and sustainable human development. Human Resource Development applies equally to both women and men in policy. But, the real situation is entirely different. Here comes the gender inequality or gender discrimination.

Development is about people and societies. It is not a matter of money or capital but of the capacity of a society to tap the route of creativity, to free and empower people to exercise their intelligence and their individual and collective efforts to achieve a better life. As development is human centred process there is need to become equal partners for both men and women.

There is need to understand the real meaning of power and empowerment in such a manner that men are not isolated from the process leading to equality. Women who are empowered socially, economically and politically would add to economic growth and overall development of the nation and they themselves bring more women in to the fold of better opportunities and choices.

There are many facets of gender discrimination, the first and foremost is the family where the child is born, then the school where the child is educated and finally the society in which the child is grown up. In the family, the female child is discriminated in cases like traditions of the family, household chores, treatment in general and so on. After moving out of the house with hardships, the school too lets them down by not letting them use the educational advantage. Finally the society, which is the web of gender bias continues the same. The norms, customs and traditions of the society made by the people just consider the women to be the weaker sex.

The subject of gender justice is very vital so far as the Indian society is concerned. Men do not accept women as their equal partners and the women themselves have not realized that they are equal to men. The status of women needs to be uplifted by sensitizing people against gender bias. In order to strike the goals of democratic

citizenship, to make the pronouncements concerning equality of educational opportunities are not far reaching. To utilize the talent of half of human resources we need to develop appropriate tools that are nothing but education.

Discrimination against the girl child in Indian society is age old and continuing concept of modern age. The current interest in women's education, status and development is very different from the earlier feminist movement, which was only a negative social protest, it is positive attempt order, to develop and harness women's potential. The vast economic changes around the world due to technological and scientific development have generated a keener interest in women's status, role of education and development in ensuring quality of life.

Family structures and social values function such a way that girls grow upon looking themselves as inferior and subservient, entitled to much less of everything such as less opportunity authority, property, status, power and virtually no choice. She acquires qualities of submissiveness, meekness and self-sacrifice. The socialization process reinforces these stereotypes at all levels in the society moulding her in and to be prisoner of her gender, unable to retaliate against the implicit and explicit injustice. If tomorrows women are to become an equal partner with man in bringing about social change and development, this is the time to accord the girl child her rightful share of human dignity and opportunity.

Women play a key role even in sustainability of development throughout the world. But the fruits of development are distributed unequally among the regions, classes, groups, men and women. Women form an integral part of every society and culture but are often underestimated and discriminated in different forms. Effective and meaningful involvement of women in decision making is absolutely essential. If their strength and creativity and energy are to be harnessed along with their knowledge and skills, they have to be mainstreamed and empowered to choose their path ways of development. They can exercise their choices best from a vantage position of power, prestige etc. Development options that are right for women are not always inconsonance with the economic goals of the nation and the world.

General differences are biological. Gender identity, gender role and gender attributions are learnt behaviour. So, culturally determined role differentials need not be permanent and they can be changed. Empowerment of women appears to be a much publicised and clinched concept of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The media, the local politicians, the national leaders, policy makers, and international bodies everyone talks about it in meetings, seminars, and conferences etc. Yet women are nowhere near to being full and equal participants in public policy choices that affect their lives. This lack of adequate political participation in decision making bodies has far reaching consequences. It deprives women of important rights and responsibilities as citizens. Their viewpoints and perspectives tend to remain unheard and ignored.

If we focus on governments initiatives regarding women empowerment in 8<sup>th</sup> 5 year plan for the first time the shift was made from development to empowerment and the need for the flow off benefits to women in the core sections of education, health and employment. The 9<sup>th</sup> plan states empowerment of women as a strategic objective. The 10<sup>th</sup> plan approach aims at empowering women by translating the adopted national policy for empowerment of women 2001 into action.

What we are seeking today is a complete overhauling of the societal attitudes, beliefs and notion vis-a-vis the role of women in society and public life. Such a change constitutes the first step towards empowerment of women. Generally the political model is based on the idea of winners and losers, competition and confrontation rather than on mutual respect, collaboration and consensus building.

Women empowerment is the key term that defines and determines the direction of diverse discourse on women. Gender equality and women equality are the buzz words entrusted with different interpreters to suit varied socio-political perspective.

Women empowerment refers a process by which women acquire due recognition on par with men to participate in the development process of the society through the political institutions as a partner with human dignity. Empowerment is a multi dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their lives in communities and in their own society. It results in due participation in decision making.

Women empowerment helps to break the cycle of poverty. It helps women do delay in their marriages, choose the timing and spacing of their pregnancies access need services and information, complete their education and gain knowledge and skills they need to participate in the economy and their countries development.

We can't end extreme poverty without focusing on women and girls and barriers that prevent them from reaching their full potential. When we concentrate on their development we can see a positive ripple effect across their families communities and nations, women empowerment creates a opportunity to make the world more stable secure and resilient.

There is no sustainable solution to fight gender inequality rather than working with fathers, husband, brothers and other men who are in their lives. Through this we can change harmful gender norms but lead to poor health outcomes and contribute to gender based violence and other practices that marginalise women and girls.

Empowered women built positive relationships with people and equip themselves with knowledge and skills regarding parenting and child development a lack of comprehensive, current information about women, hinders efforts to advance gender equality. Eliminating gender discrimination and empowering women are among the paramount challenges facing the world today. When women are healthy, educated and free to take the opportunities life affords them. Children thrive and countries flourish, reaping the double dividend for women and children. Until

there is gender equality there is no sustainable development. It is highly impossible to realise our millennium goals while there is discrimination against half of the human race. Gender equality and well being of children go hand in hand. When women are empowered to live full productive lives, children prosper, where women are denied equal opportunities in society children suffer.

Our country suffers from the two greatest evils, the oppression of women and the exploitation of poor. Empowerment of women must be an integral part of our culture to get sustainable human development it is a process of economic and social activities that may alter the position, participation and performance of women. Even post independence era women are suffering from the heterogeneous nature of the Indian society with its basic pattern of economic and social inequalities.

In a highly progressive country like Japan, human capital is regarded as the real asset particularly their women to remove economic backwardness and instill the capacities and motivations to progress it is necessary to increase the knowledge and the skills of women, they assume the roles of the leading force and balancing factor in the society, many of their tasks and responsibilities as well their needs and constraints had been seriously under valued they have to spend excessive amount of time and energy in unpaid domestic work such as childcare and kitchen work. The agony is double in case of working women due to the dual responsibilities at home and workplace.

It is widely recognised that apart from managing the household, bearing children, women bring home income with productive activities ranging from traditional work in the fields to working in factories or running small business. They have proven that they can be better entrepreneurs and development managers in any kind of activities. Women should be partners in development and development ultimately becomes a process of empowerment.

Gender equality and women empowerment are two sides of the same coin progress towards gender equality requires women's empowerment and women's empowerment requires increase in gender equality as shown. Since gender inequality and women's disempowerment occur in all the different domains in which women and men interact and function, both concepts are multi-dimensional; consequently, they give rise to a large number of potential indicators. Indicators of gender equality/inequality are typically designed to compare the status of women and men on particular characteristics of interest; whereas by definition, indicators of empowerment/ disempowerment tend not to be relative.

On the whole it is the woman, a pivot in the vicious circle of human development as she moulds the future, atleast to bring desired change in future society. As a mother, she can transform the social stigmas, gender inequalities there by cleaning the stumbling blocks towards our destination. Her competence, confidence and credibility will help to rule out the social evils, everything depends on attitudinal change. When both boys and girls grow up with mutual respect and understanding of their capabilities and roles in the society, women are more likely to find their rightful place within the family and community.

### Conclusion:

Empowerment of women cannot be ensured until they are enabled to organize themselves. Collective organizations spells strength this is a prerequisite for initiating action, lobbying, pressurizing and bargaining. If all women of India come together with unity in diversity by organizing, working together, sharing their experiences, problems, finding solutions, we can see independent access to opportunities for their betterment. Swamy Vivekananda and Sri Aarobindo also advocated women's education as they believed that educated mothers could play better in their role of motherhood. Increasing enrollment of women in higher education is not only the solution for gender equality but efforts must be

directed to change the attitudes of people and their mindsets towards gender equality. Then the development bird of the nation will fly with two wings as the bird can't fly with one wing.

## REFERENCES

1. Basu, A.M. and G. Brij Kollwal. (2005). 'Two concepts of female empowerment. Some leads from DHS data on women's status and reproductive health'. In S. Kishor (ed). A Focus on Gender: Collected Papers on Gender Using DHS Data. Calverton, Maryland, USA:ORC Macro.
2. Data Amindita and Sinha Sachidanand, India Journal of Gender Studie, Gender disparities in social well being: An Over view, Vol.4(1), Jan-June 1996.
3. Facts of Women's Development. by Dr. Anuradha Mathu and Dr. Rameshwari pandya (2006), Kalpaz Publications, New Delhi.
4. Hindin, M.J., S. Kishor, and D.L. Ansara. 2008. Intimate Partner Violence among Couples in 10 DHS Countries: Predictors and Health Outcomes. DHS Analytical Studies No.18. Calverton, Maryland, USA: Macro International Inc.
5. Hess B. Beth and Marya M.F. Analysing Gender: A Handbook of social science Research , Gender inequality in paid employment, sage publication, New Delhi, 1987.
6. International Center for Research on Women. (2007). New Insights on Preventing Child Marriage: A Global Analysis of Factors and Programs. ICRW: Washington D.C.
7. International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) and Macro International (2007). National Family Health Survey (NFHS-3), 2005-06: India: Volume I. Mumbai: IIPS. 2007. National Family Health Survey (NFHS-3), 2005-06: India: Volume II. Mumbai: IIPS.
8. Jugale V.B. (2008). Demography Economic inequality women and other essays. Serials Publications, New Delhi.
9. Kannan Kavitha, Gender Benders, Femina, Pradeep Goha, April 2002.
10. Kishor, S. and K. Johnson. (2006). Reproductive health and domestic violence: Are the poorest women uniquely disadvantaged? Demography Vol.43 (2): 293-397. 2004. Profiling Domestic Violence: A Multi-Country Study. ORC Marco, Calverton, Maryland.
11. Lakshmi pathi Raju.M (2007) 'Women Empowerment Challenges nd Strategies' regal publications, New Delhi.
12. Lalneihzovi (2007) Women Development In India. A Mittal Publications, New Delhi.
13. Lingamurthy N et. Al (2007) 'Towards gender Equality India's Experience' serials publications, New Delhi.
14. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare(MOHFW). (2000). National Population Policy, 2000. New Delhi: Department of Family Welfare, MOHFW.
15. Pulla Rao.D (2011) 'Women Empowerment- Emerging Dimensions in 21st Century' the associated publishers, Ambala City, India.
16. Sen, G. and S. Batliwala (2000). Empowering women for reproductive rights. In H. B. Presser and G. Sen (eds.) Women's Empowerment and Demographic Processes. New York: Oxford University Press.