Women Empowerment in India: A Critical Analysis

Prof. Seema Singh* and Dr. Antra Singh**,

* Professor of Economics and ** ICSSR Post Doctoral Fellow,

Delhi Technological University, Delhi- 110 042, INDIA

Abstract

Being a traditional patriarchal society, women have been given a secondary status which is reflected in the economic, social and political spheres. However, women equality and empowerment has always remained a priority area and has been taken utmost care by stake holders. The paper critically investigates the Indian status among other countries and tries to find out preparedness to achieve Sustainable development Goal -5 of the United Nations. The paper develops argument on the basis of secondary sources as review of existing literature published in journal, books, reports of various, NGOs, Government and international organisations and websites. The paper critically examines women empowerment in India, various models and dimensions. The paper discusses constitutional safe guards as well as plans and programmes by the government and their implementation, indicators of women empowerment. However, the country ranks low while comparing with other countries. There is need of reassessing and modifying programmes to achieve SDG-5 by 2030.

Keywords: Women Empowerment; Gender Equality; Government; Social; Rights

1. Introduction

Traditionally being a patriarchal society, women have secondary role to play in every household in India. However, issues related to welfare of women have always been a priority among policy makers since independence, though the path has witnessed repositioning with time and as per the requirement from the Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-78) onwards, there has been a remarkable shift in the approach to women's issues from welfare to development. India has also endorsed various global efforts as the the Mexico Plan of Action (1975), the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies (1985), Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

(CEDAW) in 1993, the Beijing Declaration as well as the Platform for Action (1995) and the Outcome Document adopted by the UNGA Session on Gender Equality and Development and Peace for the 21st century. In this background, the paper discusses status of women empowerment in India and its status at the international spectrum with regard to achievement of SDG Goal 5 of the United Nations by 2030. The plan of the study is as follows. The next section deals with the review of literature and discusses the concept of women empowerment with supportive models alongwith dimensions. Section 3 provides the research objectives and methodology of the study. Section 4 analyses various legislations and government programmes for women empowerment, variegated initiatives taken for women empowerment by different N.G.O.s and corporate sector, international comparison regarding status of women empowerment followed by Section 5 which provides suggestions to meet the challenges and path forward to move ahead.

2. Review of Literature

Empowerment refers to a situation where the powerless gain greater control over resources and ideologies. It has been associated with terms such as autonomy, power, status and agency. The Indian constitution has very clearly given an equal level playing ground to women and has directed authorities to frame rules and regulations to safe guard the right. However, feminist scholars during 1970s as a way to challenge patriarchy, as a radical approach concerned with transforming power relations in favour of women's rights and gender equality It in 1980s (Batliwala, 1993, 2007) and as an individual process of self-transformation during 1990s (Batliwala, 1993; Kabeer, 1994; Rowlands, 1997; Sen, 1997).They highlight the complex reciprocal relationship between women's self-understanding (Kabeer, 1994) and capacity for self-expression (Sen, 1997), as well as women's access to and control over material resources.

The decade of nineties may be considered as an impertinent phase for women empowerment throughout the world as most of the world conferences highlighted towards seizing the opportunities. It accentuated issues of reproductive and sexual rights, violence against women and gender inequality. Even among the eight the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) of UN developed in 2000 was targeting to be achieved by 2015, the Goal three was to promote gender equality and empower women. Women empowerment is the defined as the change in the context of a women's life, which enables her increased capacity for leading a fulfilling human life. It gets reflected both in external qualities (health, mobility, education and awareness, status in the

family, participation in decision making) and internal qualities (self awareness and self confidence) Human Development in South Asia (2000) (Mathew, 2003). United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) has been re-branded as the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the empowerment of Women.

2.1. Models of Women Empowerment

Three Dimensional Model

Women empowerment is considered as a process that takes place over time, making women agents who formulate choices, control resources and make strategic life choices (Lee-Rife, 2010). She emphasised on the strategic life choices (choice of livelihood, marital decision and child bearing decision) which are considered as first-order choices and how these impact second-order choice (inculcating values in children, daily household decision making and managing well being of the family) that are less consequential.

Figure.1 Three Dimensional Model by Kabeer

Resources (pre-conditions) → Agency (process) → Achievements (outcomes)

(Source: Kabeer, 1999)

The researcher emphasised having access to resources (material, human and social in form) is an obligatory pre-condition of empowerment as resources increase the ability to exercise choice (Kabeer, 1999). Kabeer emphasised that merely having access to resources is not sufficient women must also have the ability to identify and utilise the resources (Malhotra, Schuler and Boender, 2002). As per Kabeer, empowerment is both an end and a means to end for example one status is attaining education another status is acquiring gainful employment and a further step to it could be control over decision making related to self or family is the outcome of

empowerment. Thus attaining education can be an end or it can also be a means to end but the final outcome of empowerment is having the capabilities of achievement.

The Commission on Women and Development's Conceptual Framework

The Commission on Women and Development, an International Aid Agency, the Government of Belgium designed an empowerment framework and methodology influenced by Kabeer, Longwez, Rowlands and Leon and the DAWN women's movement. The commission was of the view that empowerment occurred at two levels i.e. the individual level and the collective level. But the earlier model primarily highlighted the individual aspects of empowerment and identified the four core concepts of empowerment being assets, knowledge, will and capacity. This model splits resources into assets (material resources that give one greater economic power) and knowledge (provides people with techniques, training, literacy and critical analysis skills). Will is defined as psychological strength or power within to make one's own choices followed by capacity which is described as having the opportunities to use resources (assets, knowledge and will), make decisions and take on responsibility.

Figure 2. Conceptual Framework by the Commission on Women and Development
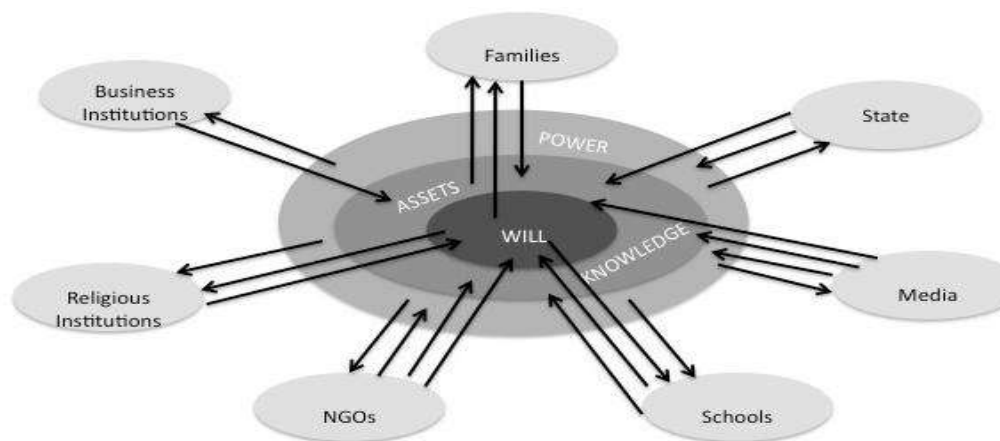
*(Source: Commission of Women and Development, 2007)*

The figure illustrates empowerment process as a catalyst for social change depicting will, assets and knowledge in concentric circles surrounded by power (power with others and power within). It also considers the institutional context comprising of family, government, media, educational institutions, NGOs, religious institutions and business institutions. The arrows pointing in and outward illustrates the potential to affect the components and not all arrows are same in weight.

World Bank's Agency and Opportunity Structure Model – Ruth Alsop and Nina Heinsohn

The capacity to make effective choices is dependent on two major factors contributing to empowerment and they are agency and opportunity structure. In this model assets are the indicators of agency and are characterised as psychological, informational, organisational, material, social, financial or human in nature. The other pre-condition in this model is the opportunity structure defined as the informal and formal institutions in which the individuals and the groups consider and includes laws, regulatory frameworks and norms governing behaviour, arguing that the opportunity structure determines who has access to assets and whether they can use their assets. The author hypothesizes that agency and opportunity structure are associated with the degrees (measured by the existence of choice, the use of choice and the achievement of choice) of empowerment of individuals and groups.

Figure 3. World Bank Model

Figure 3. World Bank's Model
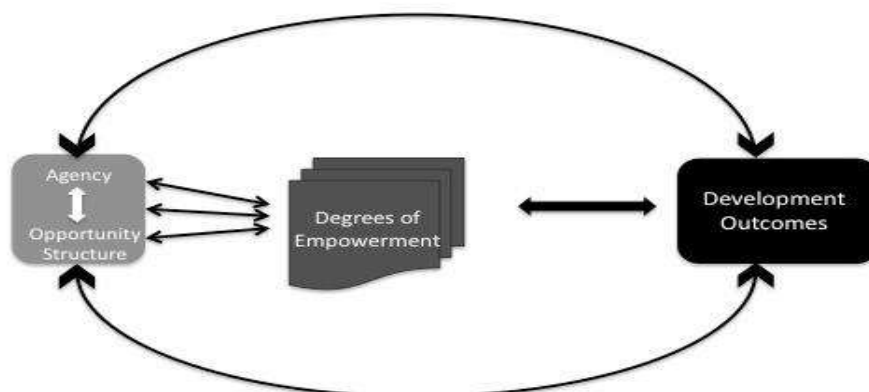
(Source: Alsop and Heinsohn, 2005)

As discussed, researchers viewed women empowerment as a process with numerous inputs and factors that influence the process and finally, the outcome of these dimensions needs to be measured to quantify women empowerment. Numerous indicators are required to capture different dimensions of women's agency and empowerment like sexual and reproductive health, household decision-making, economic activities, participation in community decision making bodies and national politics and gender norms and women's motivations for their choices and

actions (Hanmer, 2015). These dimensions are mostly identical with minor alterations in sub divisions which depend on the focus of study and can be elaborated accordingly.

2.2. Dimensions of Women Empowerment

The Human Development Index was introduced for the first time by United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in 1990 to measure the socio economic progress of a nation. The 1995 report emphasised on empowering women as it was required for the overall human development. To study the statistics related to human development and the share of women, two indices were introduced namely Gender Development Index (GDI) that takes into account inequality in the achievements between women and men and Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) which measures the extent to which a women has influence in decision-making in politics, in professional life and in organisations.

The Women Empowerment Matrix (Wieringa, 1994) was contrived to map out the general gender issues at national level and to outline the contours of dimensions of empowerment and to demonstrate the interlinkages of gender issues related to specific issues like education, health and women labour. The women empowerment matrix is a tool to aid the researcher in getting an overview of the various levels of women subordination presented along with various spheres in which women subordination is acted out. The matrix can be used for raising awareness, planning, policy analysis and others.

Table 1. Women Empowerment Matrix

Particulars	Physical	Sociocultural	Religious	Political	Legal	Economic
Individual						
Household						
Community						
State						
Region						
Global						

(Source: Wieringa, 1994)

The matrix provides a structure and holistic nature of specific issues to be dealt in case of women empowerment. Despite covering major issues still it lacks focus on class and ethinicity alongwith it is useful for qualitative usage and fails to provide historical depth.

The process of empowerment has five dimensions and they are Cognitive, Psychological, Economic, Political and Physical (Mokta, 2014). The different dimensions are explained below:

Table 2. Process of Empowerment and its dimensions

Dimensions	Explanation	Parameters
Cognitive	Women having an understanding of the conditions and causes of their subordination at the micro and macro levels. It involves making choices that may go against cultural expectations and norms	Raising self-esteem and self-confidence of women. • Elimination of discrimination and all forms of violence against women and girl child.
Psychological	Belief that women can act at personal and societal levels to improve their individual realities and the society in which they live	•Building and strengthening partnership with civil society particularly women's organisations.
Economic	Women have access to, and control over, productive resources, thus ensuring some degree of financial autonomy. However she notes that changes in the economic balance of power do not necessarily alter traditional gender roles or norms	• Enforcement of constitutional and legal provisions and safeguarding rights of women. • Building a positive image of women in the society and recognising their contributions in social, economic and political sphere.
Political	Women have the capability to analyse, organise and mobilise for social change;	• Developing ability among women to think critically.
Physical	Element of gaining control over one's body and sexuality and the ability to protect oneself against sexual violence to the empowerment process	• Fostering decision-making and collective action. • Enabling women to make informed choices. • Ensuring women's participation in all walks of life. • Providing information, knowledge, skills for self-employment

(Source: Mokta, 2014)

3. Proposed Model of Study and Methodology

The models discussed in the second section have dealt with factors which influences women empowerment. *Wieringa, 1993 and* Mokta 2014 have also discussed various dimension of Women empowerment. The model proposed herein discusses women empowerment on three facets and they are economic empowerment, social empowerment and political empowerment. These facets of women empowerment depends on legislative protections, affirmative policies for training, control over resources and various protective and promotional programmes of the government, NGOs and the corporate sector.

The study also aims to identify the gaps between present state of women empowerment in India and what is expected from stakeholders to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal – 5 on gender equality by 2030. Relevant secondary sources like scholarly articles, report by various ministries functional under Government of India, reports by corporate and non government organisations and international organisations have been used for review, analysis and discussion.

4. Analysis

From the Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-78) onwards there has been a marked shift in the approach to women's issues from welfare to development. In recent years, the empowerment of women has been recognized as the central issue in determining the status of women. The National Commission for Women was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1990 to safeguard the rights and legal entitlements of women. Several initiatives have been taken by the Government of India to achieve women empowerment. In course of discussing women empowerment, Tomar and Singh (2018) have given detailed list of constitutional safe guards. Relevant of them are given below:

4.1. Constitutional Articles, Government Plans and Programmes for Women Empowerment

Indian planners and policy makers have taken up the issue of women empowerment quite seriously. This section deals with the government's effort towards women empowerment.

4.1.1. Constitutional Articles

Women empowerment has been given required attention by the constitution committee headed by Baba Saheb Bhim Rao Ambedkar while framing the Indian Constitution. Some of the articles specifically dedicated to women have been discussed below:

4.1.1.1. Economic Empowerment

Provisions in the Indian Constitution

i. Equality of opportunity for all citizen in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the state (Article 16)

ii. The state to direct its policy towards securing for men and women equally the right for an adequate means of livelihood (Article 39(a)); and equal pay for equal work for both men and women [Article 39(d)]

iii. The state to make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief (Article 42)

4.1.1.2. Political Empowerment

i. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Acts passed in 1992 by the parliament of India ensures that not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct

election in every Panchayat to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat [Article 243D(3)]

ii. Not less than one-third of the total number of offices of the Chairpersons in the Panchayats at each level to be reserved for women (Article 243 D(4)]

iii. Not less than one -third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the scheduled Caste and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Municipality to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Municipality (Article 243T(3))

4.1.1.3. Social Empowerment

i. Equality before Law for women (Article 14)

ii. No discrimination against any citizen on grounds of sex beside religion, race, caste etc. (Article- 15)

iii. The state to make special provision in favour of women and children (Article 15(3))

iv. To promote justice, on the basis of equal opportunity and to provide free legal aid by suitable legislation or scheme or in any other way to ensure that opportunities for securing justice to all irrespective of economic inequality or other disability (Article 39A)

v. The state to promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and to protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation (Article 46)

vi. To renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women [Article 51(A)(e)]

4.1.2. Government Plans and Programmes

Since the inception of gender equality in the Constitution of India, it has been one of the priority areas and with special focus as SDG-5 government has been actively working to achieve gender equality through women empowerment and few initiatives have been discussed as below:

4.1.2.1. Economic Empowerment

i. The Ministry of Women and Child development has been administering 'Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP) Scheme' since 1986-87 as a 'Central Sector Scheme'. The scheme aims to provide employability skills and competency to women in the age group of 16 years and above to enable women to become self-employed/ entrepreneurs. The grant under the Scheme is given to an institution/ organisation including NGOs directly. The assistance will be available in any sector including but not limited to the Agriculture, Horticulture, Food Processing, Handlooms, Tailoring, Stitching, Embroidery, Zari etc, Handicrafts, Computer & IT enable services along with soft skills and skills for the work place such as spoken English, Gems & Jewellery, Travel & Tourism, Hospitality (STEP, 2009)

ii. The Government of India being concerned about the difficulties faced by working women, introduced a scheme in 1972-73 of grant-in- aid for construction of new/ expansion of existing buildings for providing hostel facilities to working women in cities, smaller towns and also in rural areas where employment opportunities for women exist. Based on an evaluation, the existing scheme has been revised to promote availability of safe and conveniently located accommodation for working women who need to live away from their families due to professional commitments (Scheme for Working Women Hostel, 1972-73). Rajiv Gandhi National Creche Scheme for the Children of Working Mothers was recast by government of India in 2006 and the aim of the programme was to provide day-care facilities for children (6 months to 6 years) of working mothers in the community, to improve nutrition and health status of children, to promote physical, cognitive, social and emotional development of children and further to educate and empower parents /caregivers for better childcare.

iii. The Ministry of Women and Child Development launched Mahila E-Haat a bilingual portal on 7th March, 2016. This is a unique direct online marketing platform leveraging technology for supporting women entrepreneurs/Self Help Groups/ Non Government Organisations for showcasing the products and services which are made, manufactured or undertaken by them. It is an initiative for meeting aspirations and needs of women. This was done keeping in mind that technology is a critical component for business efficiency and to make it available to the majority of Indian women entrepreneurs, Self Help Groups and Non Government Organisations. Mahila E-haat received the SKOCH GOLD Award on 09th Sep, 2016 and was also awarded 'SKOCH Order-of-Merit' Award, as it was adjudged as one of the "Top 100 Projects in India"

for the year 2016. To increase visibility major PSUs, IRCTC, Nationalised Banks like SBI have provided a link to Mahila E -haat on its website (https://wcd.nic.in/sites/default/files/Mahila%20E-haat%2024012017.pdf).

iv. The Finance Minister in his budget speech (2017-18) announced setting up of Mahila Shakti Kendra at village level in 14 lakh ICDS Anganwadi Centres with an allocation of 500 crore. The purpose of this scheme is to provide "one stop convergent support services for empowering rural women with opportunities for skill development, employment, digital literacy, health and nutrition". Ministry of Women and Child Development has proposed a sub-scheme namely Mahila Shakti Kendra under the Umbrella Scheme of Mission for Protection and Empowerment for Women, this scheme is envisaged to provide an interface for rural women to approach the government for availing their entitlements and for empowering them through training and capacity building. The scheme provides convergent support is being proposed for equal access to healthcare, quality education, career and vocational guidance, employment, health and safety, social security and digital literacy at Gram Panchayats level in selected districts/ blocks across the country (https://wcd.nic.in/sites/default/files/Mahila%20Shakti%20Kendra%20Scheme.pdf).National Mission for Empowerment of women Scheme is effectively merged with MSK wherein the National level and State level structures will continue and facilitate the implementation of MSK at the district, block and Gram panchayat level duly covering the Anganwadi Centres.

4.1.2.2. Social Empowerment

i. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) Scheme was launched in January 2015 in Panipat, Haryana by our Hon'ble Prime Minister to address the issue of decline in Child Sex ratio and related issues of empowerment of girls and women over a life cycle continuum. The scheme was initially launched in 100 districts in 2014-15, was expanded to 61 additional districts in 2015-16 and then it was expanded to all 640 districts of the country through a nation-wide mass media campaign, focused intervention and multi-sectoral action in select districts. Goal of the scheme is to celebrate the girl child and enable her education. (Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme Guidelines, 2019) The campaign aims at ensuring that girls are born, nurtured and educated without discrimination to become empowered citizens of this country with equal rights. The government introduced many innovative activities under this scheme like Digital Guddi-Gudda Board, Udaan-Sapneya Di Duniya De Rubaru, My Aim My Target Campaign, LAkshya se

Rubaru, Pahal-Ek Kadam Nari Samman ki Aur, Ghar ki Pehchan Beti ke Naam, Bal Cabinet, Introduce Pink Cards and many more.Panic Button on Mobile Phones was an initiative by The Ministry of Women and Child Development since June 2014 had taken up the issue of installation of physical panic button on mobile phones.

ii. One Stop Centres (OSCs) are intended to support women affected by violence, in private and public spaces, within the family, community and at the workplace. Women facing physical, sexual, emotional, psychological and economic abuse, irrespective of age, class, caste, education status, marital status, race and culture will be facilitated with support and redressal. Aggrieved women facing any kind of violence due to attempted sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic violence, trafficking, honour related crimes, acid attacks or witch-hunting who have reached out or been referred to the OSC will be provided with specialized services. Under this Scheme, in the first phase, one OSC envisaged to be established in each State/Union Territory to facilitate access to an integrated range of services including medical, legal, and psychological support. Further, 150 additional Centres are taken up in second phase during2016-17 in addition to 36 Centres in the first phase. The OSCs will be integrated with 181 and other existing helplines (One Stop Centre Scheme 2015). Women affected by violence and in need of redressal services could be referred to OSC through these help lines.

iii. The Scheme of Universalisation of Women Helpline is intended to provide 24 hours immediate and emergency response to women affected by violence through referral (linking with appropriate authority such as police, One Stop Centre, hospital) and information about women related government schemes programs across the country through a single uniform number. Women Helpline (WHL) will be integrated with One Stop Centre Scheme (OSC) under which one OSC shall be established in every State/UT to provide integrated support and assistance to women affected by violence, both in private and public spaces under one roof. Women affected by violence and in need of redressal services will be referred to OSC through WHL. Under the Scheme, the States/Union Territories will utilise or augment their existing women helplines through a dedicated single national number. Department of Telecommunication, Government of India has allocated short code 181 to all States/Union Territories (Universalisation of Women Helpline, 2015)

iv. UJJAWALA scheme has been effective from 2016 Ministry has formulated a Central Scheme "Comprehensive Scheme for Prevention of Trafficking for Rescue, Rehabilitation and Re-

Integration of Victims of Trafficking for Commercial Sexual Exploitation-Ujjawala". The new scheme has been conceived primarily for the purpose of preventing trafficking on the one hand and rescue and rehabilitation of victims on the other. The beneficiaries of the scheme are women and children who are vulnerable to trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation (Ujjawala, 2016).The implementing agencies can be the Social Welfare/Women and Child Welfare Department of State Government, Women's Development Corporations, Women's Development Centres, Urban Local Bodies, reputed Public/Private Trust or Voluntary Organizations.

v. Swadhar –A Scheme for Women in Difficult Circumstances was launched by the Department of Women and Child Development in 2001- 02. The scheme envisions a supportive institutional framework for women victims of difficult circumstances so that they could lead their life with dignity and conviction (Swadhar Greh, 2015). It envisages that shelter, food, clothing, and health as well as economic and social security are assured for such women. It also envisions that the special needs of these women are properly taken care of and under no circumstances they should be left unattended or abandoned which could lead to their exploitation and desolation.

vi. The Ministry of Women and Child Development, celebrates International Women's Day every year on 8th March as it is the nodal Ministry for the issues related to women. Taking this as an opportune moment to acknowledge Women's achievements, it has been decided by the Ministry in the year 2015, to confer Nari Shakti Puruskars to eminent women and institutions in recognition of their service towards the cause of women empowerment. In the last decade, there has been concerted effort by the Government to recognise and encourage women as reflected through a National Policy for Empowerment of Women in 2001. The issues related to women has gained utmost importance and focussed attention. "Nari Shakti Puruskars" shall showcase the Government's commitment towards women with the aim of strengthening their legitimate place in the society (http://narishaktipuraskar.wcd.gov.in/aboutus). It will also provide an opportunity to the current generation to understand the contribution of women in building of society and the nation.

vii. Following the tragedy (heinous rape of para-medical student on a moving bus in Delhi) of December 2012, the Government has set up a dedicated fund – Nirbhaya Fund – which can be utilized for projects specifically designed to improve the safety and security of women. It is a

non-lapsable corpus fund, being administered by Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance.

As per the guidelines issued by Ministry of Finance dated 25.03.2015, the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) is the nodal Ministry to appraise/recommend proposals and schemes to be funded under Nirbhaya Fund. MWCD further has the responsibility to review and monitor the progress of sanctioned schemes in conjunction with the line Ministries/Departments. An Empowered Committee was set up on 26.10.2015 to appraise and recommend proposals to be funded under Nirbhaya Fund. Government also initiated a portal to facilitate victims/ complainants to report cyber crime complaints online. Complaints on cyber crimes against women and children that are reported on this portal are dealt by law enforcement agencies/ police based on the information available in the complaints.

Women are susceptible to violence both in public and private spaces, including domestic violence, sexual assault, rape, stalking and others. A gender responsive police service requires specific training, increased presence of female personnel within the police force and community outreach to integrate gender issues into policies, protocols and operational procedures Government of India, 2016)In recent years, there has been enactment of various legislations in the Parliament which address issues related to Gender Based Violence like the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 2013, the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013,the Protection of Women From Domestic Violence Act, 2005 and provided a platform to women facing violence to take the recourse to law. According to the latest National Crime Records Bureau data, during the year 2018, 3,78,277 incidences of crime against women (both under Indian Penal Code and other laws) were reported as against the 3,38,954 cases reported during 2016.

Table 3. Crime against women (IPC + SLL)

Particulars	2016	2017	2018
Total States	322949	345989	363817
Total Union Territories	16005	13860	14460
Total All India	338954	359849	378277

(Source: National Crime Records Bureau report of 2018, 2017 and 2016)

As observed by the Working Group on Women's Agency and Empowerment, these numbers have to be viewed keeping in mind that not all crimes against women are reported. The actual numbers may give even greater cause for concern. Role of Police is pivotal in safety and

security of citizens in general and women in particular. To increase the visibility of women in the police force, Home Ministry has carried forward the initiative to give 33% reservation to women in police force by implementing it in UTs and propagating in the States (12th Five Year Plan Report of the Working Group on Women's Agency and Empowerment, 2011). There has been an increasing emphasis on gender sensitivity of police force through training programmes, performance appraisal, women police stations to tackle crime against women.

Past research concluded that women empowerment can bring about demographic change lead to positive reproductive health outcomes (Mason, 1995). Empowering women economically is associated with higher levels of physical mobility, economic security, autonomous decision-making, exposure to violence, legal and political awareness and participation (Schuler and Hashemi, 1994). Women empowerment has also been linked with self-confidence, financial confidence, attitude towards gender norms, autonomous decision-making, household communication, partner relationships, participation in social groups and collective action (Mabsout, 2011; Hindin, 2000; Yount et al., 2019; Basu and Koolwal, 2005; Upadhyay et al. 2014).

4.2. NGOs Initiative for Women Empowerment

Women empowerments especially in rural areas have been primary focus for Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) beside the Government. The Ministry of Women and Child Development collaborates with many NGOs for the implementation of its various schemes and for conducting research studies. The Government of India implements many of its schemes with the active participation and support of the NGOs as they play an important role in accelerating the pace of implementation at the ground level. Table 4 lists out presence of performing NGOs in states (with 77.55% of NGOs working for women empowerment) and it states the highest presence in Delhi and the least in Goa, Mizoram and Tripura and one of the reasons could be based on the statistics of crime rate in these states.

Table 4. State-wise List of NGOs

State	Performing NGOs	% age of NGOs working for Women Empowerment*
Andhra Pradesh	35	68.6
Arunachal Pradesh	4	100
Assam	38	81.6
Bihar	18	100
Chandigarh	7	57.1
Chattisgarh	7	100
Delhi	146	54.8
Goa	1	-
Gujarat	16	93.8
Haryana	17	58.8
Himachal Pradesh	8	100
Jammu and Kashmir	2	50
Jharkhand	11	90.9
Karnataka	63	74.7
Kerala	12	75
Madhya Pradesh	12	75
Maharashtra	82	90.2
Manipur	37	89.1
Meghalaya	2	-
Mizoram	1	100
Nagaland	2	100
Orissa	72	87.5
Punjab	5	60
Rajasthan	25	92
Tamil Nadu	53	87.7
Telangana	20	75
Uttar Pradesh	61	86.9
Uttarakhand	15	73.3
Tripura	1	-
West Bengal	37	73
Total	**811**	**77.5**

* the area of work included women development or/and empowerment

(Source: List of Performing and Non-Performing NGOs issued by Ministry of Women and Child Development, Govt. Of India)

Some works conducted by NGOs in this area are as follows:

i. Apna Ghar Ashram support destitute and disabled women get a safe and caring home. More than 50% of their residents have been rehabilitated. 458 men and 1,004 women currently live in the Ashrams spread across 17 major cities across India. The Ashram was also awarded the State Award by the State Government as the Best Services Organization.

ii. Started in 1973, Alpnalaya works for women empowerment in India by helping them to overcome the social, political, and economic barriers. They provide sewing classes and train women who otherwise have not been given the choice or opportunity to become financially independent. 209 women have economically benefited from Self Help groups organized by Apnalaya. In 2017, this NGO for women was awarded the Champion Level- GuideStar India Platinum for the highest levels of transparency and public accountability.

iii. Since its inception in 2005, Maitri has worked with over 45,000 individuals on the issues of social and health problems and public health concerns through education, community outreach, networking and legal advocacy. The organization has been addressing the issue of violence against women, running a victim support program and providing support to abandoned elderly widows in Vrindavan.

iv. Action Aid India since 1972 shelters the poor and the excluded. Gauravi is the first crisis center set up in India with the help of the Department of Health in 2014 to fight for Indian women's rights and saving them from domestic violence. Currently, there are 22 Gauravi centers across the country and over 40,000 cases have been registered in the centers.

v. Ashadeep Mission was initiated to develop a better quality of life (medical treatment and therapy) for people with mental disabilities. The Navachetana home run by Ashadeep rescues women with mental health issues and provides them with shelter, food, and medical care. They also help these women reunite with their families if possible after treatment. So far, 355 women have been rescued and rehabilitated under Ashadeep mission.

vi. Seven Sisters Development Assistance works to create a just and equitable society in Northeast India devoid of poverty. The organization has two programs, leadership programs for the educated youth of North East India and empowering poor rural women through livelihood activities via Self Help Groups (SHGs). Since it was established in 2011, SeSTA has mobilized nearly 8,000 women to form 700 Self Help Groups (SHGs).

vii. Foundation for Mother and Child Health works to bring good health and nutritional provisions to vulnerable mothers and children in poor communities. Their programs encourage preventive health, balanced nutrition, and child development practices in underprivileged communities. So far, the programs initiated by FMCH impact close to 927 pregnant and lactating mothers annually. Their services include regular growth monitoring, availability of accurate information and support from the detection of pregnancy till the child completes two years.

viii. Majlis Manch's legal center through its program 'Rahat', provides socio-legal support to victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse. The all-women team of lawyers and social workers meet with victims and explain the process and procedures involved in a court case. They are also told about all the legal, public, and private schemes that they have access to.

4.3. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) for Women Empowerment

As per the new Companies Bill passed by the lower house of Indian parliament in December 2012, Public Sector Units (PSUs) and private companies having a turnover of over 10 billion or a net worth of 5 billion or recorded net profit of 50 million and above are required to spend 2 per cent of their average net profits in the preceding three financial years towards CSR. A few of the CSR initiatives by companies for women empowerment is listed in table 5.

Table 5. Companies CSR Initiatives for Women Empowerment

Companies	Focus Area	Prescribed CSR of Co. In FY 2017-18 (amount spent) in INR	Locations	Implementing Partner
ITC	Capacity Building of Women (gainful employment opportunities)	290.47 Cr (14.76 Cr)	Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Delhi, Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh	BAIF Development Research Foundation, Pratham Education Foundation, Ramakrishna Mission, Bandhan Konnagar, SEWA Bharat, Foundation for Ecological Security
IndusInd Bank Ltd.	Livelihood generation of rescued trafficked women (rehabilitation and skill development of women)	70.17 Cr (11.63 Cr)	Bihar (Gaya, Nalanda and Nawada)	Justice and Care
Godrej Consumer	Project Salon-i (trains young girls	18.83 Cr (8.86 Cr)	Gujarat, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Chattisgarh,	Dhriiti, Ambuja Cement Foundation, DDJF, Don

Products Ltd	and women in beauty and hair care)		Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Delhi	Bosco Tech Society, Father Agnel Ashram, Labournet, Saath, Pratham, NSHM, Save the Children India, Tara Livelihood Academy, Unnati
Inter Globe Aviation Limited	Project 6E Shakti (skill enhancement by providing agriculture and non-agriculture based training)	42.03 Cr (4.67 Cr)	Maharashtra, Assam, Meghalaya, Uttar Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Rajasthan	AFARM Grameen Sahara, Bandhan Konnagar, Divinity Serves
Hindustan Zinc Ltd	Sakhi (provide platforms for women to engage in full and effective participation in the public life of their villages)	189.65 Cr (3.57 Cr)	Rajasthan, Uttarakhand	Saheli Samiti & Manjari Foundation
Bayer Crop Science Limited	Discovering Hands-Training Center for Visually Impaired Women (training centre for visually impaired women to become medical tactile examiners in early breast Cancer Detection)	10.09 Cr (1.88 Cr)	Delhi	Indian Cancer Society, National Association for the Blind, Rajiv Gandhi Cancer & Research Centre, Disha Foundation
Sterlite Technologies Ltd	Vocational Training for Women (conducts vocational training on nursing, computer operations, data entry, tailoring, fashion designing and basic beauty culture)	3.63 Cr (1.72 Cr)	Maharashtra	Jeewan Jyoti Women Empowerment Institution
CEAT Ltd	Swayam (training underprivileged women in driving skills to enhance livelihoods across the transport sector)	10.71 Cr (1.45 Cr)	Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu	RPG Foundation
Sasken Technologies Ltd	m-bachat (platform for financial independence of women)	4.51 Cr (1.03 Cr)	Gujarat	SEWA
Apollo Tyres Ltd	Livelihood Enhancement Project for Women (supporting women farmers by training them on modern techniques and ways to increase agricultural productivity)	21.57 Cr (0.77 Cr)	Gujarat	Apollo Tyres Foundation

(Source: Compiled from the websites of the companies)

Big corporate houses consider women empowerment as a vital aspect of CSR and it has been observed that they usually carry these interventions in the surrounding areas of the main operational regions either by the in-house team or outsourced professional CSR team and it is sometimes carried out in collaboration with NGOs.

The 55th Round of the National Sample Survey (July 1999-June 2000), which was the first-ever nation-wide survey on informal sector non-agricultural enterprises, showed that the total number of informal workers in non-agricultural enterprises was 79.7 million. Out of these, 30 million were home based (Sudarshan et al, 2001) and a vast majority of these workers are women. Organisations like Dastkar has provided a platform to artisans (especially in rural areas) engaged in hand embroidery and other crafts to receive fair price (eliminating the middle men) for their products. It provides fair wage and fair rate for the products of the local artisans.

4.4. SDG Goal 5- Achieve Gender Equality: Status of India

Under SDG Goal 5 to achieve gender equality by 2030 there are several targets to be achieved aand they are as follows:

Target 1.End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere

Target 2. Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation

Target 3. Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation

Target 4.Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate

Target 5. Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life

Target 6. Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on

Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences

Target 7. Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws

Target 8. Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women

Target 9. Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels

The National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog), has been assigned the responsibility of overseeing the implementation towards achievement of SDGs. A multi-disciplinary VNR Task Force was constituted by NITI Aayog to coordinate the review and process documentation.

India has achieved gender parity at primary education level and is on track to achieving parity at all education levels, the proportion of seats in the Lok Sabha held by women had only reached 11% and in Panchayati Raj Institutions by 46%. Though the sex ratio has improved marginally. Lowest was 927 women for 1000 male in 1991 which has marginally increased to 933 in 2001 and 940 in 2011) but, India is confronting the challenge of violence against women (domestic violence, sexual violence in public spaces, physical and mental exploitation at work place).

Thus, the Indian government has identified ending violence against women as a key national priority for the same it has targeted to end all forms of discrimination, all forms of violence and exploitation against girls/ women, eliminate all harmful practices like child, early and forced marriage, recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, social protection policies and promotion of shared responsibility within the household, enhance the usage of information and communications technology for empowerment of women.

4. Global Gender Gap Index: Status of India

4.4.1. World Economic Forum introduced the Global Gender Gap Index in 2006 as a framework for capturing the magnitude and scope of gender based disparities and tracking their progress

over time across four thematic dimensions and they are Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival and Political Empowerment.

Table 6. India's position in global Gender Gap

Year	Global Index	Economic Participation and Opportunity	Educational Attainment	Health and Survival	Political Empowerment
2020	112 (0.668)	149 (0.354)	112 (0.962)	150 (0.944)	18 (0.411)
2018	108 (0.665)	142 (.385)	114 (0.953)	147(0.940)	19 (0.382)
2016	87 (0.683)	136 (0.408)	113 (0.950)	142 (0.942)	9 (0.433)
2014	114 (0.6455)	134 (0.4096)	126 (0.8503)	141 (0.9366)	15 (0.3855)
2012	105 (0.6442)	123 (0.4588)	121 (0.8525)	134 (0.9312)	17 (0.3343)
2010	112 (0.6155)	128 (0.4025)	120 (0.8369)	132 (0.9312)	23 (0.2913)
2006	98 (0.601)	110 (0.397)	102 (0.819)	103 (0.962)	20 (0.227)

(Source: Global Gender Gap Report 2006, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018 and 2020 by World

Economic Forum)

The year 2016 witnessed an increase in the overall ranking which positioned India at 87 out of 144 countries and the reasons may be the Gross Domestic Product for the year which stood as US $ 2073.54 billions, population growth rate at 1.15%, population sex ratio (female to male) at 0.93 and human capital optimization at 57.73%. Another impertinent reason for the increase in the parity is associated with enrolment in primary education (1.01), secondary education (1.01) and tertiary education (0.94). Parity has also been maintained in healthy life expectancy (1.05) and sex ratio at birth (0.89).

India (112) maintains a stable ranking this year but its gap is directionally larger this year with a 33% gap yet to be bridged. The country records a decline in wage equality for similar work, succeeds in fully closing its tertiary education gender gap for the first time, and keeps primary and secondary education gaps closed for the third year running. However, it continues to rank third lowest in the world on Health and Survival, remaining the world's least-improved country on this sub index over the past decade. In fact, India actually widens the gender gap on this sub index this year. However, the condition of women in large fringes of India's society is precarious. Among the 153 countries studied, India is the only country where the economic gender gap is larger than the political gender gap.

4.4.2. South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Nations is the regional intergovernmental organization and geopolitical union of states in South Asia. SAARC

comprises 3% of the world's area, 21% of the world's population and 4.21% (US$3.67 trillion) of the global economy, as of 2019. Table 7 points out that Maldives has gained first rank in achieving parity in educational attainment as compared to Pakistan that ranks 143 where the gap is 0.823 reason being the societal pressure in Pakistan which does not allow girls to attain education. India is improving in lowering the gender gap in providing education and penetrating in rural India by providing suitable infrastructure. Sri Lanka ranks first in maintaining gender parity in health and survival as compared to India which is also working towards achieving parity.

Table 7. Ranking of SAARC Nations in Global Gender Gap

Member States	Global Index	Economic Participation and Opportunity	Educational Attainment	Health and Survival	Political Empowerment
Afghanistan	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Bangladesh	50 (0.726)	141 (0.438)	120 (0.951)	119 (0.969)	7 (0.545)
Bhutan	131 (0.635)	130 (0.544)	116 (0.954)	144 (0.960)	132 (0.082)
India	112 (0.668)	149 (0.354)	112 (0.962)	150 (0.944)	18 (0.411)
Maldives	123 (0.646)	131 (0.518)	1 (1)	147 (0.953)	115 (0.111)
Nepal	101 (0.680)	101 (0.632)	133 (0.895)	131 (0.966)	59 (0.227)
Pakistan	151 (0.564)	150 (0.327)	143 (0.823)	149 (0.944)	93 (0.159)
Sri Lanka	102 (0.680)	126 (0.558)	88(0.988)	1 (0.980)	73 (0.193)

(Source: Global Gender Gap Report 2020 by World Economic Forum)

4.4.3. BRICS is the acronym for the economic bloc of countries consisting of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. Economists believe these four nations will become dominant suppliers of manufactured goods, services, and raw material by 2050 due to low labour and production costs. India is struggling to achieve gender parity among its counterparts which hold better position in all aspects. India ranks the lowest in comparison with other BRICS nations and needs to take effort to outshine its counterparts.

Table 8. Position of BRICS nation in Global Gender Gap

Member States	Global Index	Economic Participation and Opportunity	Educational Attainment	Health and Survival	Political Empowerment
Brazil	92 (0.691)	89 (0.653)	35 (1)	1 (0.980)	104 (0.133)
Russia (Russian Federation)	81 (0.706)	32 (0.749)	1(1)	1 (0.980)	122 (0.095)
India	112 (0.668)	149 (0.354)	112 (0.962)	150 (0.944)	18 (0.411)
China	106 (0.676)	91 (0.651)	100 (0.973)	153 (0.926)	95 (0.154)

| South Africa | 17 (0.780) | 92 (0.649) | 67 (0.994) | 1 (0.980) | 10 (0.497) |

(Source: Global Gender Gap Report 2020 by World Economic Forum)

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

Women Empowerment is not merely a slogan but a prerequisite for an optimal capacity for overall development of a family, society, nation and a sustainable world. The paper has covered about affirmative legislation, plans and programmes initiated by the Government, NGOs and Corporate sector through their Corporate Social Responsibility over a very large spectrum starting from the Indian constitution to development in the recent years. It has been reflected by improvement in achieving gender parity in the category of educational attainment, showing improvement in political participation but showing a declining trend in economic participation and opportunity as well as in health and survival segment. In terms of Health and Survival, it is worse even among SAARC countries. As we have a decade towards achieving the SDG Goals, the Government needs to focus on these two segments more to achieve gender parity. There is urgent need of reassessing India's affirmative actions, giving fresh impetus on empowering girls and women not only through conventional education but also hand holding for skill acquisition and providing them with equitable economic opportunity with providing them with fitting medical and healthcare. The findings open up several avenues for policy discussion and intervention towards women empowerment.

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