Chapter II

GENDER AND MEDIA: DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

2.1 Different Perspectives of Feminist Theory

Over the last century significant voices have been raised on feminist issues in the form of various researches, books, seminars, conferences, etc. by different feminist theorists at different point of time. The feminist studies commenced with the concern on the issues of the women differences based on the race and class. Many feminists studies has been conducted and academic journals of feminist media studies has been published such as Communication: 1986; Dervin: 1987; Foss and Foss: 1983; Journal of Communication Enquiry: 1987; Mc Cormack: 1978; Rakow:1986; Smith:1983; Steeves:1987; Van Zoonen: 1988. Friedan's (1963) The Feminine Mystique, gave rouse to revival of women’s movement which has been dormant in the struggle of women’s suffrage. The 20th century, probably, is one which has experienced the most trouble in defining the role of a person as male or female. Judith Butler has completely changed the direction of women’s study through her most influential book, Gender Trouble (1990). In early Women Studies scholars tended to think of the differences between men and women as being innate and immutable. The new theory argues that a person’s role was specified under a patriarchal framework where scope of gender (masculine or feminine) was limited within the understanding of biological, understanding of sex (male and female). The Theories of 1990s emphasized that the concept of gender was fluid over time and social situations. These modern theories give enough space to create a person's own identity by having equal opportunity for both men and women.

Approaches in general studies, have shown changes over time. Moser (1993), however, has trust the approaches in understanding the women’s position in development plans and processes in the third world over the decades. Moser’s analysis includes five approaches in a sequence of welfare, equity, anti-poverty, efficiency and empowerment. The purposes of the approaches are different; the planning for the women in the society makes up different approaches in different ways. Therefore, considering the roles and actions of men and women in development process are taken to bring them on an equitable platform. Since the past
decade onwards there has been growing acceptance of gender-focus approach to development. Gender equity was emphasized on Programmes of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development in 1994 and the fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. As a result two consecutive programmes have initiated the process of gender sensitive planning. India too as a part of these programmes of action, is making an effort to do gender justice through planning.

But in the 1980s, the feminist intrusions in the media have gained more attention in the field of cultural studies with the Women’s Studies group of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural studies (CCCS) at Birmingham. The feminist scholars recognised the importance of gender, questioned the naturalization of masculinity and masculine discourse in media studies and argued for “feminine” as a new philosophy of study (McMillin: 2007).

Further, feminist issues gained more importance in the media, especially after the UN Fourth World Conference on Women held at Beijing in 1995. “The Strategic objectives of the Beijing platform for Action were - Increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision making in and through the media and new technologies of communication; promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media”. Thereafter, many women's organisations began to voice their concerns against the negative portrayal of women as a commodity and as second-class citizens through both private- and government-controlled print and electronic media, and the need for encouraging women to join the profession.

According to Van Zoonen, Feminist media studies differs from the other studies such as post modernism, pluralism, neo-Marxism because of its absolute focus on analysing gender as a mechanism that structures material and symbolic worlds and our experiences of them.

A feminist is someone who reigns the thought that, the reason behind the suffering of discrimination by women is due to their sex, they have explicit needs which are hardly noticed, annulled and unsatisfied but for the satisfaction of these needs would require a
radical change (some would say a revolution even) in the social, economic and political order. Feminism is a position adopted by or ascribed to particular women groups.

The words ‘feminist’ or ‘feminism’ are all political brand names emerged in the late 1960s aiming the support of the new Women’s Movement. ‘Feminist criticism’ was then a critical and theoretical practice committed to the struggle against patriarchy and sexism, not simply a concern for gender in literature. According to Millet, feminists have politicized existing critical methods (in much the same sort of way that Marxists have), and it is on this basis that feminist criticism has grown to become a new branch of literary studies. Feminist reader looks towards politics of gender. French version of ‘feminine’ refers to femaleness or femininity.

With the development of industrial societies in the 18th and 19th centuries, the structuring of gender relation has been clearly visible in the division of labour between the sexes. Women were meant for domestic chores and raising children and the men were meant for working outside and earn money (Mehta: 2008). Feminization of the labour force is also forming an important part of this discourse. The concept of “feminization of the labour force” has opened up two drastically different dimensions. Firstly, the concept indicates an increasing participation of females in wage employment. Secondly, the term is used to describe the flexibilisation of labour for women and men, a fall out of the changing nature of employment wherein irregular conditions once thought to be the hallmark of women’s secondary employment, has become wide spread for both the sexes (Kanji and Menon –Sen: 2001).

Role of Media from Female Perspective

Going through the study of different feminist approaches and theories related to the subject. It is apparent that the media is the main instrument passing on respective stereotypical, patriarchal and hegemonic values about women and feminity and they also work as mechanisms for social control.

➢ Liberal Feminist Perspective
In liberal feminist discourse media essentially pass on a reformist approach to the society that tends to see more equal gender relations being brought about by equal opportunities policies and affirmative action programmes. It does not appear to question the power dimensions in society that maintain male superiority of status and female inferiority. Instead it concentrates on sex role stereotypes, prescriptions of sex-appropriate behaviour, appearance, interests, skills and self-perceptions (Tuchman, 1978:5; Van Zoonen, 1991: 121). According to Projansky (1998: 1), this has already occurred. She makes comparisons between perceptions of women and the media at the start of the 20th century and that of today. For example, a popular fictional female character at the turn of the century was the 'vamp' that appeared to represent 'danger, sexuality and the possibility of independence'. Towards the end of the century, movies such as ‘Thelma and Louise’ showed women acting 'independently, doing things they were not supposed to do, and celebrating women's bonding’. Van Zoonan (1991: 130) calls these latter women, 'superwomen', and makes mention of the many ways in which 'glossy magazines' for example, have introduced the superwoman who adeptly manages her family and her successful work life. Numerous quantitative content analysis have shown that women hardly appear in the mass media, be depicted as wife, mother, daughter, girlfriend; as working traditionally female jobs such as of secretary, nurse, receptionist or as sex object Van Zoonan (1991). For example: Indian media has always represented woman in popular stereotypes such as either clad in heavy sari with full make up and ornaments, good housewife performing the households chores, respecting elders and spreading love or as a vamp but in the end truth takes over evil and unsatisfied mother-in-laws always subduing their daughter-in-laws. This is not the true picture as shown in media; the patriarchy has redefined itself in the present society where there is depiction of freedom of the woman. The picture that is portrayed in the media does not portray the true picture of the Indian woman. Thousands of years back in the mythological story of Ramayana Goddess Sita had to give Agni Pariksha (a test for truth by burning oneself in the fire), to prove her loyalty towards her husband. Similarly in this 21st century also a woman with minimum qualification of 10th standard, in the city of Indore had to give Agni Pariksha to prove her loyalty. This story was highly exaggerated in media, which shows the poor representation of woman in the Indian media (Parmar and Sharma:}
The soap operas present both essentialists and deconstructionist meanings of women by portraying the images of women’s life consisting of pre-marital sex and pregnancy, extra-marital affairs, divorce, rape cases etc.

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- **Radical Feminist Perspective**

Radical feminism on the other hand, argues that patriarchal media serve the needs of patriarchal society by suppressing and distorting women’s experiences which would seriously disturb the patriarchal set up whereby all men directly or indirectly dominate and oppress all women. They are particularly concerned about the media's role in the construction of consciousness and gender identities instead of specific stereotypes. The analysis of male dominance in the media and other social institutions identified the need for women to separate themselves from male-controlled systems and create their own organisations and structures (Van Zoonen: 1991; Donovan, 1985: 24).

Radical feminists confronts on the exposing of female abuse by male and politicizing issues considered as private such as sexual violence, wife battering, incest pornography, women trafficking and sex tourism, etc. lesbianism is also an example of the radical politicization of the personal (Zoonen:1991). The media is to some extent generating sexual meaning of woman’s body through cinema, music videos, soap operas, etc. The sensuous scenes, combined with songs create erotic meaning of the woman’s body which heightens further with the male gazing or selective exposure of certain body parts. This creates market forces which generate and supply demands of people for articles which make body expose in the image of media representation. The representation of woman in the advertisement of perfume, deodorants, toothpaste, inner wears such as in ads of Axe Deo effect, Colgate toothpaste has reduced woman to a mere commodity. The sexual presentation of woman reinforces the negative aspects of women’s role, status and relationship. The depiction of women as sex objects in literature, films, advertisements, television and the glamorization of movies titillate and excite the male thinking. It is not always lust that motivates rape but custody rapes are also adopted by males to mark their superiority and women her place. Other than rape, divorce, dowry, wife beating are also sorts of violence against women, this mark the inequality between the sexes. But the masculine point of view is that, it is prevalent
simply because men control the industry. Pornography exists because men despise women and men despise women because pornography exists – the focus is on pornography (Dworkin, 1980:289).

The process of globalization and liberalisation with the help of information technology have further lowered the image and status of women, though it has created new opportunities for role mobility and role reversal and changed traditional gender based role hierarchies. For example: the programmes such as Mtv Roadies and Splitsvilla where boys and girls abuse one another, use slang languages, fight and quarrel among themselves. Sometimes the scenario peaks to an extent where boys and girls flirt and seduce one another with the most indecent, vulgar and over explosive outfits. This is not the reality of our Indian society which is rich in values and morals but is the impact of globalization and liberalisation which has lowered the status and image of woman. Sexualization of content is on an increasing note.

The American Academy of Pediatrics reports that of the approximately 14,000 references to sex a teen will see each year in the media, only 165 will contain any reference to delaying sex, using contraceptives, or avoiding sexually transmitted diseases. Music videos that contain unflattering and aggressive lyrics about women are also of concern to women’s and children’s advocates, many of whom see this gender baiting filtering its way down to sexual harassment of girls in schools. (http://worldsavvy.org/monitor/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=603&Itemid=1050-->

Radical feminism opts for media strategies where women should create their own means of communication. Radical feminist does not allow hierarchies rather distortion of masculine hierarchy (Zoonen: 1991). Hartsock (1987/1990) fought for the transformation of power relations through a revised and reconstructed theory of five steps: first, women have to recognize themselves as the makers of history, as through whom the male self is constructed; second, their work should be developed as an important philosophical piece of work to show that systematic knowledge of the world of the marginalized is possible; third, a theory is needed that acknowledges that within women’s daily activities is embedded an understanding
of the world, fourth, women should understand the difficulty of creating alternatives and lastly, women need to envision where they actively participate in changing power relations.

According to *Riano (1994)* feminist communication goes beyond development communication to bring around all round development of the women with respect to ownership, inclusion and accountability for women in the development process. It aims at naming oppressions of race, gender, sexual orientation and disability; negotiate fair representation and equality of access, construct individual and collective identities and produce alternate. The mass media could contribute significantly to the advancement of women and the promotion of gender equality. Unfortunately, the print, visual, audio and electronic media in many countries do not provide balanced pictures of the diversity of women and men’s lives and their complementary roles in society. To take just two examples, pornographic and violent media products degrade women while the mainstream programming often reinforces perceptions of women’s and men’s traditional roles (*Gallagher Margaret: 2005*).

Similar to the above views, *Jones and Jones (1999: 66)* revealed that women's lives were only partially reflected and represented by the media. More often which is published is distorted and misleading. For example, *Coward (1984: 64-66)* points out, images and articles in popular magazines such as ‘Better Homes and Garden’ relate to home-improvements. They have a definite style of writing of which any idea of domestic labour is repressed. Labour is there but it is the labour of decorating, designing and painting which leads to the 'house ending up in the perfect state’. *Turner (1997: 330-331)* suggests that this misrepresentation of the 'real home environment' not only represses women's labour but women are made to believe that they are, for the most part, responsible for domestic life. Any deviation from this 'norm' connotes 'inadequacy'.

➢ **Socialist Feminist Perspective**

Socialist feminism unlike the previous approaches does not concentrate exclusively upon gender but assumes that media present the capitalist, patriarchal scheme of things as the most attractive system available. It incorporates analyses of social class, ethnicity, sexual
preference, age and disability into the discourse (Van Zoonen: 1991). Socialist feminists concentrate on the ways in which gender is constructed through language and imagery. It is based within a Marxist framework of reference, namely Gramsci’s (1971) theory of hegemony also known as 'the manipulative model' (Jones and Jones: 1999: 68). For example, news might serve as the means by which a dominant class, such as white male elites, could condition a population of subordinate classes (women, minorities) to adopt prevailing values and behaviours, thereby perpetuating an inherently unequal system of power (Byerly, 1990a: 80). Rakow (1992: 9) supports this claim by suggesting that the 'news is essentially a masculine narrative in which women function not as speaking subjects but as signs '. Moritz (1995: 127) says that 'news media practices continue to be deeply implicated in the perpetuation as a sexist, heterosexual, homophobic, and class-driven culture that privileges elite, white, conservative, male voices.

According to Kray (1995: 225), media personnel may appoint as newsmakers and or salespersons, individuals they feel to be representative of marginal groups however most are males while females of any type are 'symbolically annihilated'. Producers and owners (powerful elite) believe this representation, although minimal, will clear them of any discrimination and place them in a favourable position with their public. The media has ignored the women’s issue and movement, it has failed to give due importance to women coverage. Bathla (1998) in her study on five English Dailies of India comprising of a sample from the years 1981, 1985, 1989, 1993 found that fifty seven percent of the stories about women are on crime and violence. Of the 584 editorials in her sample only eight (1.4%) were women issues. Research tends to show that women are still largely oppressed. Dominick and Rauch (1972: 76-79) conducted a systematic study of gender stereotyping on American television in 1972 and found that seven-five percent of advertisements used women for kitchen and bathroom products, over fifty-six percent of women were portrayed as housewives while men were portrayed in authoritative roles and eighty-seven percent of voice-overs used a male voice. In 1990, Cumberbatch (1990: 11-14) showed that men still outnumbered women on screen by the ratio of nearly 2:1 and over eighty-nine percent of voice-overs were male. Women were still portrayed far more commonly in decorative roles than men were and far more as attractive and slim. Thus, it is concluded that women remain
in what is essentially a man's world. According to Dow (1996: xi-xii) 'in the 1990s patriarchy is still alive and well while women's attempts at self-definition and self-determination continues to be marginalised and silenced. Popular culture and media play key roles in that process'. The problematic representation of woman prostitution, child marriage, rape, purdah system gets into media as seductive sensuality rather than concerned issues. The issues get marginalized as media person quarrel on the issue of who should be interviewed for which channel. Media has always shown women to be helpless, docile, orthodox, and vulnerable and also as sex objects (Mehta: 2008).

Media also projects woman in politics but those in politics are required to keep public face of decency as vote catching device. For example: few days back, a serial named ‘Sarkar’ appeared in Zee TV which was based on the story of Indira Gandhi as a Prime minister and her two son. Again in a recent film “Rajneeti” where Katrina kaif played the role of Indu Sakseria who takes over the seat of the party to get the sympathy vote when her father-in-law and husband die.

The depiction of violence against women and stereotyping sex role is the major problem in the portrayal of women in media. Whether it is print media or audio visual media the concerns for women problems are always deficient but are alarming preponderance of issues sensationalising women. Another instance where a fifteen year old British tourist girl named Scarlett Eden was found dead on the Goa sea beach due to gang rape on 18\textsuperscript{th} February, 2008. The story hit the media with the photo of the victim for many days. This story marks the downfall of the society and disgrace towards the woman, but the media houses were no less behind in sensationalizing the story for high rated TRPs. (Parmar and Sharma: 2009). This is the true picture of Indian media after many years of independence.

Van Zoonen, hits the notion that that the media projects only sexist stereotypes and denies the true nature of women and state female audiences into passive acceptance of patriarchy. Alternately, she argues the essentialist conception of femininity underlying this approach should be replaced by a culturalist understanding of the socially constructed nature of feminine subjectivities. Women’s pleasure in the media should not be seen as a process of passive victimization and indoctrination but as a way in which women actively express
something about themselves as women, and the media itself should be viewed as a site of negotiation between conflicting definitions of gender rather than as an unproblematic agency of patriarchy.

Similarly, Christine Geraghty (1996:4) shows how sweeping indictments of the ‘reactionary’ images of the women in the media, advanced by some radical feminist critics, gave rise to misgivings among other feminists. These indictments seemed to privilege one type of women over others and involve rejecting more feminine traditional roles in a way which seemed to collude with male denigration of them. From these misgivings emerged redemptive readings of TV soap operas and prime time melodrama which both took seriously women in ‘traditional’ roles and yet offered scope for female audience rejection of patriarchal values.

Madhok (2005) on her study on “Women and Media” found that media coverage on crimes and violence on women issues are detailed, often sensational and voyeuristic. By the mid 1990s popular stereotypes most common in average Hindi movies were rape, dowry deaths, sati, etc with the ultimate transformation of the victim to the image of Goddess Kali and these clichés often became the news stories on local dailies and at times in the front page of the dailies. Feminism has become a major shift of contemporary Indian Thought the media spotlighted a handful of savviest activists and turned them into stars. The data suggests that the present situation of Indian women is far better than the 1970s. During the pre-independence period many women played an imperative role by emerging out of their home and participating in the freedom struggle of movement which made them experience the real empowerment.

Valdiva (1995: 8) believes, 'the reasons why feminism has been broadly misunderstood and changes have 'not been successful' is that of women's differences not being acknowledged within the media or fully explored within past feminist theories'. Instead, the media and most feminist theories have concentrated on women as stereotypically white, middle-class, heterosexual and existing within Western cultural beliefs and values. Women have been discussed and treated collectively, as though they possess the same cultural identities and desires. She, along with other feminist writers such as Guzman believe that a perspective in
which women of colour, sexual preference, ethnic background, religious beliefs, economic position and geography are inclusive would provide a greater force in combating the oppression of all women (Guzman, 1995: 30-31).

To bring women’s issues to the front pages, women’s organizations will have to work closely with journalists covering these issues. Riano (1994) made the argument that if connections between the media and women’s participation in public arenas to be understood, feminist media scholarships must go beyond consideration of problems in the content and structures of mainstream industries and instead (or at least as well as) also consider women-generated media.

### 2.2 Background Study on the Status of Women in India

The status of the Indian women has undergone different stages of up and down at different time period, from the ancient times to the present time both in the east as well as the west. In the ancient Rig Vedic age women occupied a high position in the society and were equally involved in every sphere of life like men. In the primitive societies women occupied superior status compared to men. Indian women in the ancient Rig Vedic age were held in a very respectable position in the society and public life. They were even allowed to perform and participate in the religious activities and get hold over the family matters and decision in the Rig Vedic age. Women had proprietary rights during covertures and proprietary rights during inheritance and partition and also had right to education (Altekar: 1959, Lal: 2005). Women were considered man’s friend, partner and never his subordinate, she even enjoyed the property rights of her father and husband both, struggled against the political as well as social problems freely with man. It has been found in Patanjali’s Mahabashya (150 B.C.) and Kautiliya’s Arthasastra (about 300 B.C.) that women were also proficient soldiers with bows and arrows. During this period woman selected her husband, this can be substantiated from the practice of svayamvara marriages of Sita, Draupadi, Savitri, Rukmani, etc. The custom of Sati was unknown in the Vedic age and the widow remarriage was common and was allowed in the society. The Rig Veda does not mention anywhere the practice of burning or burial of dead widows with their husbands (Altekar: 1959, Rao: 1960, Upadhayay: 1991, Lal: 2005, S.B.Verma: 2005, R.C.Mishra: 2006, Ahmed: 2007). Though the Vedic society was
patriarchal, where a man used to command over their wife and children, still women only in the capacity of an obedient daughter and a sincere wife were admitted to the privileges of higher education, girls were even sent to Gurukul for studies. She was equally entitled for sacred thread ceremony (Upanayana) and resided with the family of the Guru for several years in the Gurukul along with the male students, but had to maintain complete celibacy to complete her Vedic studies. Eminent women scholars in the early Vedic age whose contribution are immense are Vishwawara, Lopamudra. In the later Vedic Age eminent scholars like Sulabha, Vadya, Maitreyi and Gargi made significant contributions in the advancement of Knowledge. However in spite of this, the status of women in the Rig Vedic society was much higher than in later time.

In the later Vedic period women were always free as subordinate to man as mentioned in the Hindu texts such as Manu, Samhita, Vedas, etc. As mentioned in the Manusmirti that “a woman must never be independent in childhood she must be under the guidance and control of her father, in youth under her husband and in old age under her son” (Verma:2005). The post Vedic period is considered as crucial in determining the present status of women in India. In the two epics, The Ramayana and the Mahabarata women were treated with honour and adorned. The Bhakti movement brought a new message and for women and downtrodden. In Bhagawat Gita, Lord Krishna gave due honour to the women folk. After the Vedic period the position of the women deteriorated significantly. According to Lal (2005) “Even Buddha was reluctant to incorporate women into the Sangha and this attitude resulted in the subsequent neglect of female education by his followers”. Lal (2005) quotes, “If during one period of time or in one civilization she was brought up as a prized possession of the parents, in some others she was completely neglected and was accepted only as a provider of sexual pleasure to man and as a producer of children, her education was completely neglected”. To quote Alteker, “Thus for nearly, 2000 years from 20 B.C. to 1800 A.D. , the position of women steadily deteriorated though she was founded by the parents, loved by the husband and revered by the Children. The revival of sati, prohibition of remarriage, the spread of purdah system and the great prevalence of polygamy made her position very bad” (Upadhayay: 1991). Neera Desari writes, “Ideologically women were considered a completely inferior species, inferior to male, having no significance, no personality, socially
she was kept in utter subjection, denied any right, suppressed and oppressed. She was further branded as basically lacking the ethical fiber. The patriarchal joint family, customs of polygamy, the purdah system the property structure, early marriage, self immolation of the widows (sati) or state of permanent widowhood, all this contributed to the smothering of the free development of women”. However, during the Muslim regime the status of women deteriorated especially due to the polygamy in the society and ultimately rapid fall in the percentage of literacy among women and further more with the advent of the British regime female education had practically disappeared. Sati, Purdah system, Polygamy, Child marriage, Dowry, Prostitution, etc. were the evils that grew up in this medieval period which lowered the status of women in the society (Upadhyay: 1991, Kumar: 2009). Women were usually uneducated and were married very early at the age of 8 to 9 years. Society discriminated towards female education. Female education was confirmed in very limited numbers only to the cultured and well to do families where the custom of child marriage did not develop. Though the purdah system was prevalent in respective form among royal and noble families before the Muslim conquest but the Hindus adopted purdah system as a protective measure to save the honour of their women folk after the Muslim conquest. “In the holy Quran woman are exhorted to be modest, chaste, lead a life of decorum and decency which was interpreted by the religious leaders in terms of putting the women in Purdah, put a veil or burkha on their bodies thus Islam differentiated between man’s world and the woman’s world.” (Lal: 2005).

During the British rule different social reforms were initiated for the upliftment, betterment of the women such as abolition of Sati, purdah system and child marriage, advocating women’s education, widow remarriage and other oppressive and cruel customs affecting women’s lives from time to time by some of the great leaders and thinkers of the time such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Dayanand Saraswati, Ram Krishna Paramahansa, Kabir, Sri Chaitanya, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Mahatma Phule, Govind Ranade, Karsandas Mulji, Maharishi Karve and many others (Ahmed: 2007). Eventually, many women’s organisation came up and participated in the freedom struggle of movement.
The 1931 Karachi Session of the Indian National Congress (INC) took the historic decision committing itself to political equality of women regarding of the status and qualifications. The father of the Nation, Gandhiji advocated for more empowerment to women participated in the national movement in the village reconstruction programme. He was in favour of socio economic equality to women to attain all round development of the society. Gandhiji and the independence movement finally led to the emancipation of Indian women to a great extent in the twentieth century.

In the early decades of the 20th century many women organisation sprang up to safeguard and protect the interests, rights and privileges of the women, among these the most important organisation which has played a significant role in the upliftment of the women is the All India Women’s Conference (AIWC) which came into being in July 1930 and later came to be known as Akhil Hind Mahila Parisad. In the pre-independence days the women’s movement was very much a part of nationalist movement and it led to the edifice of women's growing participation in public life. AIWC commenced, supported and fought for the implementation of certain important laws such as the Child Marriage Restrain Act 1929, then for better central supervision of orphanages, widow’s homes and marriage bureaus in 1940. In 1975 International Women’s year conference on women activities was held in Mumbai. In the same year, a national seminar on woman’s problem was held in Tiruvanandapuram at the proposal of the communist party of India. The position of women in Indian society is visibly in the process of transformation and will have a significant impact of future social development.

With the acceptance of the Constitution of India, Article 16, equality of opportunity in public employment, the Preambles, the Directive Principles of State Policy and the Fundamental Rights various dimensions for the right to women have been well accorded. Different Commissions has been set up in independent India, the prominent amongst them are Durgabhai Deshmukh Commission (1956), Hansa Mehta Committee (1961), Bhakta Vatsalam Committee (1965), National Education Policy (1986). The Hindu Succession Act provides equal rights to girl child to inherit her parent’s property but hardly such rights are given and they depend upon their husband and son. Since the Sixth Five Year Plan many
strategies have been adopted to empower women relating to employment, economic independence, education access to health care, family planning and support services to meet gender needs. Upadhyay explored that though the constitution has grant equality of the sexes but still there is good number of crimes and violence against women. Constitutional laws formed to give justice to women, has benefited a small portion of women only. Similar to the above, R.C.Mishra (2006) reveals that inspite of women’s immense and equal participation in the field of income generation; they are still neglected and deprived of her social status. Inspite of different constitutional initiatives to safeguard women freedom and socio-economic-gender equality in the Indian society, still the social injustices such as sexual harassment, rape, gender discrimination, prostitution, violence and such other related crimes faced by the women are immense.

Women issues have always demanded and drawn the attention of social leaders from time to time but it was in the beginning of the 20th century when the liberal and feminist movement took shape as an agitational social agenda, it received huge success. With the passage of time it had turned into a deep rooted signific, balanced, well thought and global human effort with the passing of the U N charter, U N convention for elimination of all forms of discrimination against woman. A significant achievement has been the transformation of ‘Woman Lib’ rebellion into ‘Woman Empowerment’. The next achievement was at the 3rd International Woman Conference in 1985 in Nairobi, which further appeared as the Plan of the Action through the 1994 Jakarta Plan Action and arrived at the 4th International Women Conference in 1995 during Beijing Deliberations. Thus, at the stage of 1999 Bangkok Platform of Action, it hit the new agenda of Gender Concerns and Gender Main Streaming. India played a major role in the year of woman. This landed new strength to the Gender informed way of social order (Singh: 2005).

Women comprises almost one half of the world’s population but they are always considered inferior compared to man in social, economic and political status whether it be countries like U.S.A., U.S.S.R., U.K. or China, India, Iran. In India with the emphasis on modernization educated women are engaged in various industrial, commercial and tertiary sectors. Thus
Indian women underwent a twin status to make her effectively in the socio-economic-political role in the economic development (Upadhayay: 1991).

_Dube (1990)_ in his study on the position and status of women in different family types found that in the tribal and lower strata rural and urban families women along with doing household chores work along with man and elders look after home and children. In the upper strata rural families and traditional families women only work at home and have autonomy in intra-caste social, religious and intra kin matters whereas the men does the outdoor works, take care of economic matters, decide upon the important issues of the family and meanwhile elders are consulted and woman exercises more influence as she grows old. Then the progressive families emphasize the domestic chores of woman and women takes part in social life. And the sophisticated urban elite families emphasizes the equal participation of both men and woman and there is a dim separation of activity between the genders, some of the women are earning members of the family and the decisions are taken on the basis of the simultaneous discussions between the husband and wife though at times very decisions are taken by the man of the family but it is always in consultation with the woman of the family.

_Susan Wadley (1988)_ speaks of the duality of women in Hindu Ideology. Identified with nature, she is a giver of birth and protector of her children. On the other hand she is evil and destructive. Her sexuality is controlled determines her essentially benevolent or malevolent nature. Everyday roles and behaviour she is expected to play are dictated by this mythical view of femaleness. But as women take more powerful positions in India’s changing society, they will find validation for their new roles in long standing Hindu textual traditions. In the similar way _S.C. Dube (1990)_ discussed about the dual role played by women she is believed to represent power (Shakti) and evokes both fear and reverences. If pleased she can fulfill every wish, when annoyed she can unleash unprecedented terror.

But in the modern era there are many women who have earned glory to the country such as: Indira Gandhi, the most powerful and second woman politician ever to become Prime Minister in the world on 24th January, 1966 after Sirimavo Bandaranaike of Sri Lanka who is world’s first Female Prime Minister; Dr. Vijaylakhmi Pandit, first woman President of UN
General Assembly, Ms. Sorijini Naidu to become first lady governor of Uttar Pradesh in India, M.Fatima Beevi (1989) the first women Judge of Supreme Court of India; Anne George Malhotra (1950), the first IAS officer; Kiran Bedi (1972), the first IPS officer (Ahmed: 2007), Meera Kumar (2009) became the first women Lok Sabha Speaker in India. One of the most relevant examples is our President and head of the constitution, Mrs. Pratibha Patil is also a women and first lady President of India.

Though the recent decades have seen many achievements of women still they are neglected, exploited and humiliated. Violence against women are common in the annals of the century in the form of female foeticide, female infanticide, girl-child neglect, physical and sexual abuse, child marriage, eve-teasing, sexual harassment in the work place, domestic violence and even dowry death.

The Committee on the Status of Women (1975) analysed the status of women in mass media and stated that “the content of communication at any given time reflects the pattern of values of the society. The ways subjects dealing with women are treated indicate to great extent the prevailing attitude of that society towards its women. Compared to men, women are underprivileged in many ways and suffer from serious disabilities. Since formal education is a costly and long term process it is essential to harness the mass media. However, incidental studies on the impact of the mass media indicate that, women’s exposure to the media is often marginal and unsatisfactory. It appears that the mass media has not been an effective instrument to inform and prepare women to play their new role in society. The committee’s investigations indicate a general lack of awareness of about the rights, problems, opportunities and responsibilities among both men and women. Since government controls a significant section of the mass media it should set the pace”. According to Dagar (2004) it is not only femininity but the dominant notions of masculinity that are portrayed through the media. The media has well-documented the portrayal of gender as a product and as a complementary body politic. Women’s representation has moved beyond female images of the family and home to personal care as dictated by the market agenda in a predominant patriarchy.
The status of women has changed from time to time and women have to fight for their position. Modernization paved its way in the Indian society with the momentous change in women’s position from the beginning of the 20th century with the intrusion of urbanisation, industrialization, westernization and government’s support policies for the woman. One of the prime reasons for the sub-ordinate status of women is very low work participation rate of woman compared to man.

**Present Global Status of Women**

- Of the world’s 1.3 billion poor, nearly 70 percent are women.

- Between 75-80 percent of the world’s 27 million refugees are women and children.

- Only 24 women have been elected as heads of the governments in the last century.

- Women hold only 10.4 percent of the seats in world’s parliament.

- Of the world’s one billion illiterate, two-thirds are women.

- In most of the countries, women work approximately twice the unpaid time men do.

- Rural women produce more than 55 percent of all food grown in developing countries.

- Two-thirds of 130 million children worldwide, who are not in school, are girls.

- HIV is increasingly affecting women. About percent of the estimated cases are those of women.

- The value of women’s unpaid house work and the community work is estimated at 35 percent of GDP worldwide.

- 20 million unsafe abortions are performed every year resulting in the deaths of 70,000 women. *(Bipin:2009)*
2.3 Gender Equality and Role Conflict

Gender Equality means men and women have equal opportunities to realise their individual potential, to contribute to their country’s economic and social development and to benefit equally from their participation in society. Gender Equality strengthens the countries’ abilities to grow, to reduce poverty, to govern effectively, promote development and women’s access to economic resources, education, information and communication technologies and governance, as well as to protect women’s human rights and eliminate all forms of violence against women.

In some patriarchal societies, religion or traditions are used as barrier for equal rights. For example, as Inter Press Service reported, the Bangladesh government tried to hide behind laws to deny women equal rights. In Pakistan for example, honour killings directed at women have been carried for even the slightest reasons. Similarly, Amnesty International also points out, “Governments are not living up to their promises under the Women’s Convention to protect women from discrimination and violence such as rape and female genital mutilation.”

There are many governments who have also not ratified the Convention, including the U.S. Many countries that have ratified it do so with many reservations. According to Dr Margaret Chan, Director-General, World Health Organization, even after thirty years of adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), many girls and women still do not have equal opportunities to realize rights recognized by law. In many countries, women are not entitled to own property or inherit land. Social exclusion, “honor” killings, female genital mutilation, trafficking, restricted mobility and early marriage among others, deny the right to health to women and girls and increase illness and death throughout the life-course. Sustainable progress is not possible unless failures in health systems and society are fixed so that girls and women enjoy equal access to health information and services, education, employment and political positions. (http://www.globalissues.org/)

'Gender Mainstreaming’ is a concept which emerged on the international development scene in the 1980s. According to the UN Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and
Advancement of Women, "Gender Mainstreaming is a globally accepted strategy for promoting gender equality. Mainstreaming involves ensuring that gender perspectives and attention to the goal of gender equality are central to all activities - policy development, research, advocacy/dialogue, legislation, resource allocation, and planning, Implementation and monitoring of programs and projects" (http://wcd.nic.in/).

*Majumdar (2008)* described *Gender disparity* in the narrower sense as the purely, descriptive observation of different outcomes between males and females. In broader sense it can be defined as unequal sharing of the burden of adversities between women and men. The prevalence of gender disparity leads to the strengthening of women’s work, discontinuation of girl’s education and increase in the level of mental stress, abuse and violence against women in the society.


Though women has every time showed that they are equally capable like men this can be evidenced from the instances such as- Indira Gandhi, Sirimavo Bandaranaike of Srilanka world’s first Female Prime Minister, Dr. Vijaylaksmi Pandit, Indira Nooyi, chairman of Pepsi; then there many women as mayor, Municipal councilors, chief Ministers, judges High Court and Supreme Court and even Chief justice of High court. Even there has been a successful IPS officer such as Kiran Bedi and astronauts in NASA from India such as Kalpana Chawla and Sunita Williams. Apart from this ‘Aishwarya Rai Bacchan’ is such a distinguished lady in the world that there is her waxed statue in Madamme Taussaue’s gallery. Women has been successful in all field whether it be running household or huge successful serials like ‘Ekta Kapoor’ and there has been 33% of representation for women in panchayat initiated by Rajiv Gandhi as an effort towards equality. Last but the most important is even Mrs. Pratibha Patil, our President, head of the constitution itself is a
women. What more examples can be cited for equality? This is the high time in the 21st century to have equality of genders.

**Gender Equality and the Millennium Development Declaration**

Gender equality and gender empowerment are two sides of a coin. The Millennium Declaration guarantees the international community and member-states of the UN to the achievement of the following eight major goals.

- Eradication of extreme poverty and hunger.
- Achievement of universal primary education.
- Promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women.
- Reduction of child mortality.
- Improvement in maternal health.
- Combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.
- Ensuring environmental sustainability.
- Developing a global partnership for development.

**2.4 Women Empowerment**

Empowerment of women is a multidimensional process and involves many things economic opportunity, property rights, political representation, social equality, personal rights and so on.

According to A.P. J. Abdul Kalam “Empowerment of women is prerequisite for creating a good nation, when women are empowered, society with ability is assured. Empowerment of women is essential as their thoughts and their value systems lead the development of a good family, good society and ultimately a good nation.”

The Women’s Empowerment means greater control over finance, knowledge, information, technology, skills, training, political power, economic resources, etc. it is to improve the quality of women’s education with a view to making women active participant in the process of change and more importantly inculcating in them sufficient critical and questioning a spirit to question the institutions and values leading to injustices and inequality.
There are different types of empowerment such as economic empowerment, political empowerment, educational empowerment, cultural empowerment and social empowerment. *UNICEF (1993)* provides a women empowerment framework, which argues that women’s development can be viewed in terms of five equality, of which empowerment is an essential element at each level. The levels are welfare, access, conscientisation, participation and control.

*Batliwala (1994)* defined empowerment as “the process of challenging existing power relations and of gaining greater control, over the sources of power”. According to her women’s empowerment is seen as ‘the process and the result of the process’ of:

- Challenging the ideology of male domination and women’s subordination;
- Enabling women to gain equal access to and control over resources (material, human intellectual); and
- Transforming the institutions (family, education, religion, media and so on) and structures (legal, political, economic and social) through which the ideology and the practice of subordination is reinforced and reproduced.

*Sinha (2004)* refers to the Empowerment of women as 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 of women will enable a greater degree of self- confidence, a sense of independence and capabilities to resist a discrimination imposed by the male dominated society. Women Empowerment challenges the traditional ideas of male authority and supremacy (*Ambrao Uplankar: 2005*).

Since the passing of 33.3 percent reservation seats of women in Panchayat elections it has been very encouraging with the millions of women being elected to the Panchayats in the country every five years and further the Women's reservation Bill passed by the Rajya Sabha on 9 March, 2010 another step towards women empowerment and solving women discrimination.
“Gender Budgeting is a recognized socio-economic tool for empowering women that ensures gender equity in the development process and lays a strong emphasis on engendering public expenditure and policy” as said by Anjali Goyal, Director, Finance in the Department of Women and Child Development. The gender budgeting exercise has mostly focused on provision of resources and programmes for women in the social sector like education, health, nutrition, employment etc. which would help strengthen their economic identity (http://wcd.nic.in).

**Indicators of Women Empowerment**

According to Kumar (2009) indicators of women empowerment are:

**At the Individual level**: Participation in crucial decision-making process, ability to prevent violence, self-esteem, improved health and nutrition conditions and

**At the Community level**: Existence of women’s organisations, increased number of women leaders, involvement of women in designing development tools and application of appropriate technology, etc.

**At the National level**: Awareness of her social and political rights, adequate representation in legislative bodies and integration of women in particular in national development plans.

**Other indicators**: Declining the acceptance of patriarchy such as dowry, child marriages, widowhood, desertion and other social evils; fighting against oppressive actions, human rights violation inflicted upon girl children such as foeticide and infant mortality; increase in marriage age of girl child, fewer children in family, enhancement in education of both the male and female child together; intensive healthcare programmes that increase women’s awareness; increase of women’s decision making efforts both to decide on the number of children in family, their nutrition requirements and the choice of contraceptive practices which each of them desire.

**The Approaches for empowerment of rural women can be divided into four broad heads**:

**Educational Empowerment** Education enables rural women to acquire new knowledge and technology required for improving and developing their tasks in all fields.
**Social Empowerment** Empowering the women helps in the social development process through the rise in the status of women, removing gender biases, improving in the health and nutrition of women.

**Economic Empowerment** Empowering women with economically productive work will enhance their contribution to agricultural development with the help of access to resources, micro-credit programmes, access to co-operatives and local Women’s.

**Technological Empowerment** In rural areas, women are involved in almost all agricultural operations, still they have poor work efficiency and labour. Hence technological empowerment through capacity building, exposure to mass media, appropriate training programme and appropriate technology for women is the need of the hour.

**Tools for Empowerment**

a) **Education**

Education is the most important tool for empowerment. Swami Vivekananda has emphasized, “If you do not raise the women who are living embodiment of the divine mother, do not think that you have any other way to rise”. Nehru has rightly remarked that in order to awaken the people it is the woman who has to be awakened. “Once she is on the move, the house hold moves, the village moves and the country moves and through the woman her children are brought into the picture and given the opportunity of higher life and better training. Thus, we give the opportunity of women today we build the India of tomorrow.”

He further said, “Education of a boy is the education of one person, but the education of a girl is the education of entire family.

**Problems of Women Education in India**

The various committees on the development of women such as the Committee on the Status of Women in India, National Plan of Action for Women, National Policy on Education (1986) and National perspective Plan (1990) analysed that the major problems related to poor women education in India are: domestic duty, helping in the fields, death in the family, social problems, inadequate facilities, sex bias in curricula and policies, economic problem,
dropouts, inadequate school facilities, lack of qualified female teachers, teacher’s unfair behaviour, lack of transport facilities, lack of hostel facilities if girls, fear of sexual harassment, fixed schooling hours and a popular perception in rural areas that educating a girl child is a waste of money and resources as there is no immediate gain from education.

Schemes for Education

Sarva Siksha Abhiyan, the programme for compulsory of elementary education has special focus on disadvantaged groups including the girl child. Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas, Pratibha Vikash Vidyalyas in every district of the country with fair representation for girl child would contribute enormously in national development through women education. In addition, the mid-day meal scheme has also improved girl’s enrolment and retention in primary school. “Mahila Samakhya”, a woman’s education and empowerment programme being implemented in about 9000 village in six states mobilizes and organizes women in groups called “sanghas” and through education makes them aware of their rights. The Government of India has set up 750 Kasturba Gandhi Swatantrata Balika of residential schools for girls in rural remote areas to support universalisation of elementary education for girl child. The National Council of Women’s education emphasized the potential significance of the mass media to generate public opinion in rural areas in favour of girl’s education.

b) Economic Participation

“Karl Marx had opined that female employment would largely free women from economic dependence on their husbands and so from male dominance within the family.” The UNDP development Report, 1995 points out that 78% of the women in the country are engaged in agriculture, putting 12 hours of labour then their male opponents. But still their labour is not counted at all. So the Women in Development (WID) and Gender and Development (GAD) promised to achieve the genuine mainstreaming of woman. (Singh: 2005)

Women Employment Scenario

Indian women have outshone men at work. The employment ratio among women has increased from 3.35% between 1998 and 2004 against a fall of about 8% in the case of men.
(Assocham, an industry body: 2007). Keeping pace with the growth in GPD, the number of women employed in public and private sector has increased to 49.34 lakh in 2004 from 215.09 lakh from 233.92 lakh during the same period, reveal the finding. According to Assocham, the public sector has been hiring women much more aggressively than the private sector. The number of women employed in public sector has risen 4.6% to 28.9% lakh in 2004 from 27.63 lakh in 1998 while women staff in the private sector has grown 1.64% to 20.44 lakh.

**Rural Development Schemes for Women**

The Ministry of Rural Development has several schemes for providing better opportunities of employment to the women in rural India. Such as:

**TIWA** – A special scheme to provide technical training to women farmers in agriculture and allied areas and entrepreneurial skills.

**DWCRA** – Development of women and children in rural areas to provide credit and employment opportunities to women.

**NREP** – National Rural Employment Programme.

**RLEG** – Rural Employment Guarantee Programme.

**Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY)** - Under JRY wage employment programmes 30 percent of the employment opportunities are reserved for women.

**Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) and Training of Rural Youth in Self Employment (TRYSEM)** – Within the Poverty Programmes 40 percent of the total assistance benefits are reserved for women under IRDP and again 40 percent of women trainees under TRYSEM.

**Indira Awas Yojana (IAY)** - Under IAY priority widows and unmarried women are allotted houses.
**Micro Credit Finance** - To enhance women’s access to credit for consumption and production, micro-credit mechanisms and micro-finance institution are established. Other supportive measures would be taken to ensure adequate flow of credit through extant financial institutions and banks, so that all women below poverty line have easy access to credit.

**Other Schemes available** - National Credit Fund for Women (Rashtriya Mahila Kosh), NABARD, Swashakti, Swayamsidha, Streeshakti, Balika samrudhi yojana and Mahila Samriddhi Scheme in rural areas providing a special enhanced interest rate for women to open savings accounts in post offices. (http://wcd.nic.in/empwomen.htm).

c) **Political Participation**

India is a democratic country where right to equality, fundamental rights and right to vote under Universal Adult Franchise in the constitution of 1950 are granted so that any Indian woman can come and participate in the field of politics. But it is at the dismay of India that women are not independent voters, majority of them make their choices on the suggestions from their male counterparts and are mostly illiterate. Prof. Sheela Kaushik remarks “But this awareness in order to be translated into a political exercise like voting needs tremendous mobilization. This is all the more in case of women, as poverty and daily work, household work and care, patriarchal and family norms act as great disincentives. Distance of booths, possibility of violence, health and other factors further discourage them”.

Women’s participation in the political chores spun back to the date of early 20th century when organization such as the Women’s India Association (WIA) in 1917, the National Council of Indian Women (NCIW), 1926 and the All India Women’s Conference (AIWC), 1927 were formed.

Indian women have always proved whether from the past or from the present day, that given them the opportunity and condition, they can excel and achieve in any field. Once we look back in our history, we find Rani Lakshmi Bai, fight the freedom struggle of movement against British in our country or Muslim Princess such as Razia Sultana, Hazrat Mahal,
NurJahan, Gulbadan. Then there are other such eminent personalities such as Sarojini Naidu, Nellie Sen Gupta, Dhanwanthi Rama Rao, etc and one of the most eminent personality is Indira Gandhi, the second women prime minister in Asia. One also cannot forget the role of the Uttar Pradesh chief minister, Sucheta Kriplani who despite of her major heart attack campaigned for the party and solved the problems and sufferings of the poor in the large and diverse Uttar Pradesh. At present, we see many successful women politician such as Sonia Gandhi, Mayabati, Mamta Banerjee, Vasundara Raje, Jaya Lalita, Vindra Karat, Ambica Soni and many others who are actively involved in politics, hold portfolios and are involved in making important decisions for the country. Even our Head of the Constitution and our President, Pratibha Patil is a woman. Vijaya Rajlaxmi perceived ‘An enormous disparity exists between women’s formal political equality and their meaningful exercise of political power’.

As per the data of the Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU), India stands at 99th place among the 187 countries as far as representation of women in the respective legislatures is concerned. (www.deccanchronicle.com).

With the historic effect of the 73rd constitutional Amendment Act on 24th April 1993 a new dimension was created by the setting up of the 3 tier system of Panchayati Raj is to ensure participative democracy with the active participation of the women at the grassroots level. Again, the Women's Reservation Bill is an achievement in the increased political participation of women which would help them fight the abuse, discrimination, and inequality they suffer and would lead to gender equality in Parliament, resulting in the empowerment of women as a whole (http://www.csrindia.org/). Furthermore, Bihar, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh has already implemented 50% reservation of women in the Panchayati Raj Institutions as per the Union Cabinet’s amendment bill of Article 243 (D) of the Constitution to reserve 50% of the total number of seats in 3-tier panchayats and urban local bodies for women.

**d) Health and Nutrition**
Health and Nutrition are two vital needs for empowerment of the rural women. To achieve genuine and fast development in health sector, a broad and intensive “Health Education and Awareness Campaign” (HEAC) needs to be given topmost priority and it should mainly stress on nutritional education, benefits of immunisation, family planning, etc. (Bipin: 2009)

Women’s health issues have gained worldwide attention for their infant mortality and maternal mortality, morbidity rates. Sexually transmitted infections including Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS) and such other sexual and reproductive health problems, along with endemic, infectious and communicable diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis, diarrhea, waterborne diseases chronic non-transmissible diseases as well as non-communicable diseases such as hypertension, cardio-pulmonary diseases and degenerative diseases remain among the major causes of mortality and morbidity among women.

Women face high risk of malnutrition and disease at the three critical stages viz., infancy and childhood, adolescent and reproductive phase. Household discrimination between the male and female child also leads to such malnutrition problem. A lack of access to clean water, adequate nutrition, safe sanitation, of gender-specific health research and technology, insufficient gender sensitivity in the provision of health information and health care and services, including those related to environmental and occupational health hazards affect women in developing and developed countries. Poverty and the lack of development continue to affect the capacity of many developing countries to provide and expand quality health care (http://wcd.nic.in/bej5plus.htm).

There are Mahila Swasthya Sanghs where these women's groups help to assist the ANMs to obtain support for the welfare of women and children and providing a forum for discussion and implementation of family welfare programmes like immunization, Oral Rehydration Therapy (ORT), popularization of spacing methods, etc. Again under the Indira Mahila Yojana the village health system remain accountable to the local self help group of women. In this 12th five year plan most importance is given to women education and health.
2.5 Gender Violence

Women and girls are prone to many forms of violence, such as physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non spousal violence and violence related to exploitation.

According to Bipin (2009) the feminists have drawn attention to seven forms of violence. They are:

- Domestic Violence, murder, rape and battery by husbands or other male partners;
- Genital mutilation, “female circumstance” or even more euphemistical “tradition practices”.
- Gender-based violence by police and security forces including fortute of detained women;
- Gender-based violence against women during armed conflicts;
- Gender-based violence against women refugees and asylum seekers;
- Violence associated with prostitution and pornography;
- Violence in the work place including sexual harassment.

The factors responsible for increasing trend of violence against women are: mainly cultural conditioning, perceptual discrepancy regarding the status of women, instructional structure of the society, traditional practices, preference for male child, dowry system, early marriage, poor education, economic dependence, limited political power, negative perception and to some extent women themselves.

The term “violence” is used for the extreme forms of aggressive behavior that are likely to cause significant injurious to the victim. Violence against women (VAW) is a phenomenon that cuts across boundaries of culture, class, education, ethnicity and age.
In the 1980s, the incidences of ‘dowry death’ were steadily rising in India, so women’s organisations across the country pressurised the Criminal Law Amendment Committee (1982) and urged the government to provide legislative protection to women against domestic violence and dowry, so that the victim gets justice while she is still alive. This led to the introduction of the amendment under Section 498A in the Indian Penal Code (IPC). This was the first time that an attempt was made to consider domestic violence against women a criminal offence (Ruhela: 1999).

Although many of these practices are found in all countries, many expressions of VAW are particular to the Indian socio-cultural context. The institution of dowry, despite its illegality, is an ever present spectrum, and whilst it remains, the problem of son preference and the embedded ideas of gender inequality will pervade.

**Crimes against women:**

Women has always been subjected to harassment, humiliation, exploitation, violence, etc at one point of time or the other at various places whether it be at home, office or local surrounding, which makes one live constantly in an atmosphere of apprehension. Due to all these reasons Indian women has been referred to as ‘underdogs’ of a society, as though they are empowered with the law of equality and considered at par with man theoretically, but in the real fact is men are always powerful and authoritative over women. Some of the important crimes against women that hinder women socially, morally, mentally and physically are:

1. **Sexual harassment:** Mishra (2006) revealed that in the year 1990 half of the cases reported against women were on molestation and sexual harassment. A study of women has revealed that even women in civil services are also harassed at one point of the time or the other either mentally, physically and sexually, verbally or by even spreading slanderous gossip about the lady officer. The Supreme Court of India has taken a strong initiative against Sexual harassment of women in workplace in 1997 and further defined Sexual harassment as ‘unwelcome sexually determined behaviour (whether directly or
by implication) including physical contact or advances or demands or request for sexual favours, sexually coloured remarks, showing of pornography and other unwelcome physical, verbal or non verbal conduct of sexual nature.’

2. **Polygamy:** In 1955, Hindu marriage Act introduced the principle of monogamy. According to the survey, conducted in 1961 on a total sample of nearly 1 lakh marriages, 5911 marriages were polygamous. The rate of incidence was high in tribal communities (15.25%), Buddhists (7.0%), Jains (6.72%), Hindus (5.8%) and Muslims (5.7%). Some of the social causes behind polygamy are infertility of woman, prolonged sickness of woman, lack of son and at some times communication or education gap if it is child marriage and the husband has gone on to pursue higher education which leads a cultural gap and the latter marry a second girl. In many cases second marriage by the husband is more accepted than the divorce as the women would at least have some financial security or rights in her in laws but by the way of divorce she would be deprived of all this. The government reviewed legislation on marriage and passed the Indian Divorce Amendment Act during 2001, the Act has been criticized as being biased against women. The act placed limitations on interfaith marriages and specified and penalties such as ten years imprisonment, for clergymen who contravened its provisions.

3. **Rape:** Section 375 of the IPC describes rape as sex with a woman against her will or without her consent or with her consent obtained by putting her in fear or death or hurt or with her consent when the man knows that he is not her husband but she believes him as her husband or with or without her consent when she is under sixteen years of age. A rigorous punishment should be enforced for the crime against women rather than merely giving fines and imprisonment. According to MAVA (Men Against Violence And Abuse) and National Crime Records Bureau in every 29 minutes one Rape occurs. In every 15 minutes Molestation, every 53 minutes sexual harassment, every 16 minutes murder, every 9 minutes cruelty act and every 77 minutes dowry death. Many organizations like MAVA and National Crime Records Bureau had held seminars for woman and their families. They teach woman how to react, how to fight. They have one
day workshops on self defense for woman. And a large percentage of rape cases are left unreported. (www.talkgirly.com)

4. **Kidnapping and Abduction**: Section 361 of the IPC describes kidnapping as the taking or enticing away of a minor- a female of less than 18 years and a male of less than 16 years of age without the consent of the lawful guardian. Section 366 of the IPC describes abduction as the forcibly, deceitfully taking away of a women with an intent of seducing her to illicit sex or compelling her to marry a person against her will.

5. **Dowry**: It is one of the most sensationalized forms of violence against women in India represented by media. This is one of the reasons for women harassment after marriage or even to the death of the bride. Though under Dowry Prohibition Act 1961, the government bans dowry but in reality it has always existed in the society. According to the NCRB, from 1998 to 2001, their 6851 reported dowry related deaths in the country. In August the Government announced the defendants under the Anti Dowry Act would be able to be released on bail. For example in August Nisha Sharma filed a complaint with police when her father was more dowry few munities before she was to be married. The groom was detained for fourteen days while formal charges were filed for violating the country’s laws for dowries.

6. **Women Trafficking and Prostitution**: The majority of the women who are into prostitution are swayed by poverty, economic crisis or sometime by compulsory trafficking. “Estimates suggest that more than 2 million women participate in commercial sex work and 25% of the women are below 18 years. At least 25,000 children are engaged in prostitution in major cities: Bangalore, Delhi, Hyderabad, Madras and Mumbai. According to sources, 500,000 girls younger than 18 years are victims of trafficking in India. It is note worthy that 61% of commercial sex workers in India belong to the under privileged, scheduled castes and tribes” (Mishra: 2006). Many females who are engaged in commercial sexes have no other alternative for survival.
Women and girl children in particular are vulnerable to trafficking within and outside India due to the adverse sex ratio which is creating a deficit of women in certain regions. It is estimated that every year 5000 to 7000 Nepalese girl children are trafficked to India alone. Regions such as Punjab and Haryana are the destinations for many women and girls, trafficked from poorer states such as Assam, Jharkand and West Bengal. They are enticed by the prospect of employment or sold by their own families, they are sentenced to a life of bonded labour, forced marriage or forced prostitution. Furthermore dedication of girls as Jogans or Devadasis to temples for sexual abuse of the female child in the family and neighbourhood environment also leads to prostitution (Dube: 1990). This deprives them further of education, of their right to bodily integrity and general rights.

7. Female foeticide: Sex examination tests through techniques such as ultrasonography and amniocentesis are banned in India, but still female child is often killed in some regions where a preference for son is imbibed in the culture. As a result, the government says around 10 million girls have been killed by their parents either before or immediately after their birth over the past 20 years. The National Maternity Benefit Scheme (NMBS) provides for 100% central assistance to the states/ UTs for extending financial benefit for first two live births to women who belong to households below poverty line and have attained nineteen years of age and above. One of the most shameful failures of legislation relates to the practice of sex-selective abortion and female infanticide in India and China. Originally believed to be a characteristic of impoverished rural communities, recent disclosures suggest that over 10% of female pregnancies in middle class New Delhi are aborted. In China, 118 boys were born in 2005 for every 100 girls. This is the most explicit illustration of the strength of cultural norms to attribute low status to women.

8. Bride Burning: According to NGOs, approximately seven thousand deaths in the country are from dowry related burnings each year. All though most dowry deaths involved lower and middle class families, the phenomenon cross both cast and religious lines.
9. **Women Illiteracy:** The former UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, once said that “there is no tool for development more effective than the education of girls”. In India, 20% of school-age girls are not in school. With a national population exceeding 1 billion, this means that 27.7 million girls (ages 7-14) are not receiving formal education (Census of India 2001). Of the nearly 50 million children 7-14 years old not enrolled in school in India, 55 percent are girls. This illiteracy has led to low paid stereotype jobs in comparison to their male opponents, and sometimes even led to work in brothels or come to the field of prostitution as this poor illiterate mass of women has no other option to feed and stand their family (R.C.Mishra:2006).

Some of the major factors for the backwardness of women’s education are: Poverty, unhealthy attitude towards girl’s education by the society, household chores, community pressure, distance of school from home, the unattractive environment of schools, lack of lady teachers, lack of segregated, child marriage, single teacher schools and lack of parental involvement (www.globalissues.org).

10. **Domestic violence:** At least one in seven of married and divorced women have suffered injury as a result of spousal violence. On 23rd June 2005 the cabinet approved the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence through a new civil law on domestic violence under Section 498A of the IPC, which provides immediate emergency remedies for women facing violence. These includes: protection orders; non-molestation orders; and the right to reside in the shared household.

The definition of domestic violence has been extended to include physical, sexual, verbal, economic and economic abuse. It also covers for the first time single women in live-in relationships and women living in joint families and its most empowering clause relates to women's right to residence in shared households. It is legislation available to women in India that aims to provide justice to the victim while she is still alive.
11. **Gender Discrimination:** Rohini Pande (2003) on her study on Selective Gender Differences in Childhood Nutrition and Immunization in Rural India, examines the role of the sex composition of surviving older siblings on gender differences in childhood nutrition and immunization, using data from the National Family Health Survey, India (1992-1993). The results show selective neglect of children with certain sex and birth-order combinations that operate differentially for girls and boys and the preference for sons persists and especially the boys born after multiple daughters are preferred most. Gender differences in child mortality exist in most regions of the developing world, with particularly severe female mortality rate in India and other parts of South and East Asia. Gender discrimination in hiring and promotion and related to pregnancy including through pregnancy testing, and sexual harassment in the work place persist.

12. **Gender Participation:** Majority of the women in the rural areas works in the field but equal pay for women and men for equal work has not yet been fully realized. Most of the Indian women have worked throughout their life time but among them only 22% of rural women in India are recorded as workers in 1997. The National Sample survey calculates that as 17% of rural women and nearly 6% of urban women are incorrectly recorded as ‘non workers’. A survey conducted for the national commission for Women in July 1998, covering over 1200 women in both the organized and unorganized sectors, found that nearly 50% had experienced gender discrimination or physical or mental harassment at work. But still only 11% of women have heard about the Supreme Court law and 85% had not (Mishra: 2006). Many of our plans and programmes have been gender-blind resulting in the neglect of valuable “women resource” of our nation (Ruhela: 1999).

13. **Gender and Occupational Segregation:** Occupational segregation occurs when different people are in different kinds of occupation and there exists rigidity in the mobility of groups or people from one occupation to another. During jobs often the male and female categorization is there which is to exclude the women from male jobs and males are preferably not preferred in female jobs. This occupational segregation if persist longer sets in a process of gender stereotyping.
14. Women and Poverty: Sinha (2004) says that poverty and inequalities in development and income are underlying factors that causes aid and abet trafficking all over the world. Globalisation hits more to the poor and women are the worst sufferers. This poverty leads to the sexual exploitation of women through prostitution. It is not directly proportional to poverty, but there are other factors also that contribute to prostitution. Empowerment is an important factor that plays important role for women against violence Gender inequalities and disparities in economic power-sharing, unequal distribution of unremunerated work between women and men, lack of technological and financial support for women’s entrepreneurship, unequal access to and control over capital and resources, particularly land and credit and access to labour markets, also harmful traditional and customary practices have constrained women’s economic empowerment and worsen the feminization of poverty. (http://wcd.nic.in/bej5plus.htm)

15. Women and Armed Conflict The Beijing Platform for Action highlights the special impact of armed conflict on women pointing out that although all sections of society are affected…..“Women and girls are particularly affected most because of their status in society and their sex”. It highlights that “The impact of violence against women and the violation of human rights of women in such situations is experienced by women of all ages, who suffer displacement, loss of home and property, loss or involuntary disappearance of close relatives, poverty and family separation and disintegration, and who are victims of acts of murder, terrorism, torture, involuntary disappearance, sexual slavery, rape and sexual abuse and forced pregnancy in situations of armed conflict, especially as a result of policies of ethnic cleansing and other forms of violence. This is compounded by the long social, economic and psychological traumatic consequences of armed conflict and foreign occupation and alien domination.”

One of the famous cases of armed violence is of Thangjam Manorama. Manipur had been declared a ‘disturbed area’ in 1980 and the Armed Forces Special Power Act (AFSPA) 1958 was imposed in the state on 8 September, 1980, which continues to be in place. The implementation of this Act resulted in the State witnessing an unprecedented civic uprising, including the infamous “mothers’ nude protest” against the Act in July
2004 on the discovery of the mutilated body of Thangjam Manorama, after she was picked up by the Assam Rifles and later found dead. The AFSPA is still embroiled in controversy and the people of Manipur are continuing their protest against the Act.

On Nov, 2000, after the Malom massacre where 10 civilians were gunned down by the Armed Forces, Ms. Irom Sharmila Chanu, a Manipuri poet commenced her protest by hunger strike demanding the repeal of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 (AFSPA).

16. Wife Beating: It is a problem that not only exists in weaker sections of the society but also among the higher and educated section of the society where husband beat their wife after drinking. It is only economic independence that can give woman the self confidence to fight the situation.

17. Honour Killing: Human Rights Watch defines "honor killings" as follows: Honor killings are acts of vengeance, usually death, committed by male family members against female family members, who are held to have brought dishonor upon the family. A woman can be targeted by (individuals within) her family for a variety of reasons, including: refusing to enter into an arranged marriage, being the victim of a sexual assault, seeking a divorce—even from an abusive husband—or (allegedly) committing adultery. The mere perception that a woman has behaved in a way that "dishonors" her family is sufficient to trigger an attack on her life. For example, in June 2007, Manoj and Babli, married couple who are residents of Kaithal in Haryana, were killed after they married on the basis of their own choice and ran away from their village. They were blamed of breaking the village exogamy and gotra rule imposed by the khap panchayats. According to this rule the boy and girl of same village and same gotra can not marry as they are in "brother and sister" relationship. When Manoj and Babli eloped and married, a false complaint against Manoj was lodged that he had kidnapped Babli. Thus, they had to come out in public and had to appear in front of the district magistrate to whom Babli explained that she had married Manoj at her own will. After this, the magistrate ordered proper police protection for the couple. But still while
they were returning home, their bus was stopped; they were abducted and later killed. Such cases of honour killings has not receive due attention from the national media.

18. **Widowhood**: It often changes the social and economic roles of women in the household, community and the structure of the family. The impact of widowhood differs between cultures and religions. However, it can affect the physical safety, identity and mobility of women. Widowhood can also affect their access to basic goods and services necessary for survival and their rights to inheritance, land and property, in addition to the wider impact it has on the community.

19. **Migrant or Refugee Women**: Migrant or refugee women are often faced with specific abuses from which they need protection. The most pervasive and widespread are rape, sexual abuse, sexual extortion and physical insecurity in places of refuge. These problems have no geographical boundaries, they exists wherever refugees are displaced.

20. **Women and Working Conditions**: Women have to face problems simply because they are women in different forms. Working women means women hired in paid employment. A gender bias creates an obstacle at the recruitment stage itself when they are hired with the conviction that women are capable of less work than men or less efficient than men. The male superiority over women creates several hurdles for women at their place of work. At times many women also have to face sexual harassment in their work place, from their colleagues and seniors, even for promotion also.

2.6 **Government Policy on Women and the National Machinery**:

Government policy towards women in the immediate post-Independence era was basically welfarist in orientation. Mahila Mandals were set up for the Community Development Programmes featured child nutrition programmes and income generating activities. In 1974, the Committee on the Status of Women, comprising leading feminists as well as technical experts, drafted the report “Towards Equality” for the 1975 UN Women’s Conference under the aegis of government, This report is a founding text of the Indian feminist movement. It said that, excluding the gains made by a minority of middle-class women who
had found employment in the expanding public services sector, the situation of women had worsened in many respects, in spite of two or three decades of planned development.

Government policy underwent a shift to a typically WID approach with the Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-85), which recognised for the first time women’s central role in the economy and incorporated a number of the demands of women’s organisations. In the seventh Plan (1985-90) the basic approach was to inculcate confidence among women and bring awareness of their potential. The seventh Plan commits the media to bring a vehicle of education and extension to narrow gaps faced by different groups (Gandhi: 1995). In 1993, the National Human Rights Commission was set up with a mandate to investigate violations of women’s rights. The ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) provides a further tool to make state policy accountable and to hold specific departments responsible for their functions in relation to women and development

As many as 18,000 voluntary associations are registered with the government of India; including several thousand non-government development organisations (this does not include grassroots local groups, of which there may be over 100,000, of whom half are probably women’s groups). The Government of India and the UNICEF decided in 1982 to use radio in support of mother-child care programmes under Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS).

Other efforts at National Level for raising the education Status of women are:

- The National Policy of Education (NPE-1986)
- National Literacy Mission (NLM)
- Functional literacy for Adult Women
- Condensed Courses of Education and Vocational Training for Adult Women
- Mahila Mandals
- Border Area Projects
- National Commission for Women (constituted on 31st January, 1992)
Constitutional Provisions for Women to solve the Discrimination:

- The Hindu Married Women’s Separate Maintenance Act, 1946 for the maintenance and live separate from their husbands under certain circumstances.
- Special Marriage Act, 1954 to provide special marriages and divorce.
- Hindu marriage Act, 1955 was passed to legalize inter-caste marriage, abolition of polygamy and initiate monogamy and improvisation of the divorce laws.
- Indian Divorce Act, 1956 which also gives power to women to demand for divorce in two conditions if the first wife of husband is alive and if the husband is accused of rape, sodomy or bestiality.
- Hindu Succession Act, 1956 which confers those rights upon widows which their husband possessed and daughters are also given equal rights to inheritance in the property along with the son and the women also has the right to sale, use and mortgage the property received through inheritance.
- Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act, 1956 was passed for the custody of the child under three with mother and natural guardian to be first the father then the mother.
- Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956 was passed to legalize the adoption of girls.
- Suppressions of Immoral Traffic Act, 1956 was passed and further amended first in 1978 than in 1986 and rechristened as Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1986 to include all persons, whether male or female, sexually exploited for commercial purposes.
- The Maternity benefits Act, 1961 further amended in April, 1976 to include women who are not within the scheme of the Employee’s State Insurance Act, 1948.
- Medical termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971 was passed to legalize abortion by a qualified doctor on humanitarian grounds; this was measure to protect the health of women.
- Factories (Amendment) Act, 1976 was passed to provide establishment of crèches where 30 women were employed (including casual or contract labour).
• The Equal Remuneration Act was passed in 1976 which was further amended in December, 1987 to provide for the payment of equal remuneration to men and women for the same type of work and to prevent discrimination on ground of sex against women in employment.

• Child Marriage Restraining (Amendment) Act, 1978 was passed to enhance the age of girls from 15 to 18 and for boys from 18 to 21.

• The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986 was passed in the parliament to prohibit publication or arranging or participating in the publication or exhibition of any advertisement which contains indecent representation of women in any form.


• In order to check the determination and disclosure of the sex of foetus before or after conception, Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act, 1994 was passed on 1 January, 1996 which was further amended by Amendment Act of 2002 and called PC & PNDT Act (Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act. The violation of the Act is punishable with imprisonment up to five years and fine up to Rs.1.00 lakh apart from cancellation of registration and license.

• Criminal law against Domestic violence under Section 498A of the IPC.