

A DECADE OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT
THROUGH
LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN INDIA
(October 20 –21, 2003, New Delhi)

*State Initiatives in Gender Empowerment:
A Study of Uttar Pradesh*

Artee Aggrawal
ICSSR Doctoral Fellow
Giri Institute of Development Studies
Lucknow-UP-India



Institute of Social Sciences



South Asia Partnership Canada



International Development Research Centre

Indian Women's Empowerment is India's Empowerment

Prime Minister Shri Atal Behari Vajpayee
[at a discussion on National Policy for Empowerment of Women]

Women and children represent more than two-thirds of the country's population. Therefore, the need to bring women into the mainstream of the development is the prime concern of the country today — i.e., because they are the principal providers of 'care' and 'support' to infants and children. Thus, investment towards women's capacity building and empowering them to exercise their choice is not only valuable in itself, but is also the surest way to contribute to economic growth and overall development of society.

Dramatic changes have taken place in the legal, political, educational and social status of women since independence. This was not unexpected, since the question of the improvement of the position of women had been at the heart of social reform movements from the first quarter of the 19th century, when Raja Ram Mohan Roy started his questioning of social orthodoxy. Besides, the freedom struggle since the 1920s, and especially since the 1930s, had partaken amply of the creative energies of Indian women. Gandhiji's statement in the mid-1930s to Mridula Sarabhai — a valiant fighter in the context of women and freedom — "I have brought the Indian women out of the kitchen. It is up to you (the women activist) to see that they don't go back", was no empty boast and no thoughtless exhortation.

In order to improve the well-being of women and children in society, the government has made a significant shift in the approach from 'welfare during the '50s, to development during the '70s, and to empowerment during the '90s'. During the 1990s, the major thrust with respect to women was to make them economically independent and self-reliant. For children, it was to ensure their survival, protection and development, with a special focus on the girl child and adolescent girl.

Many programmes and schemes have been launched by central government to develop the women 'human resource'. State governments have also made efforts to raise the social, economic and political status of women. Still, the empowerment of women is an uphill task to be achieved.

The present paper is an effort to analyze governmental efforts in the direction of women's empowerment. The paper is broadly divided into three sections: the first deals with the conceptual clarity of the term 'empowerment', as the term itself is still debated; the second section deals with governmental efforts in that direction; and, the third section is focused on recent socio-economic and political change in the status of women in Uttar Pradesh. It then moves on to conclusions and recommendation. The data is collected largely from secondary sources.

EMPOWERMENT: THE CONCEPT

'Empowerment' is the new buzzword in development dialogue today. At the World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen in March 1995, empowerment featured prominently as an objective. The Draft Declaration of the Third Preparatory Committee in New York, adopted by the heads of states and governments, asserted that, "the most productive policies and investments are those which empower people to maximize their capacities, resources, and opportunities". The same document

in Point 23.0 emphasized that the main objective of development is to empower people to maximize their capacities. While initially 'emancipation' was the main objective, today the goal of national and international policies, development programmes and non-governmental organization (NGO) activity seems to have shifted to achieving 'empowerment'. [Dehmukh and Ronadie: 2003] Different scholars conceptualized empowerment in different ways. It has been defined as economic independence, social transformation, a process, a means and an end. [Abidi: 2003]

Empowerment is derived from the word 'power', which is "the chance of a man or a number of men to realize their own will in a social action even against the resistance of others who are participating in the action". [Weber: 1978] It can be defined as "Shifting of power from powerful to the powerless" to bring social equality. Equality is not just a redistribution of power, it is also a question of change in values. [Beteille: 1999] Hence, a change in values and attitudes is needed, along with redistribution of power, to achieve gender empowerment.

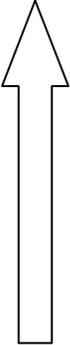
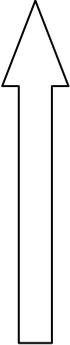
The ultimate goal of empowerment is to ensure that women fully participate in the political and social decision-making process at the local, regional and national level, with a view to achieving political empowerment and gain over household resources. But it is not as simple as it sounds. Empowerment is not something that can be transferred from one segment to another segment of society. It is to be acquired and, once acquired, it needs to be preserved, exercised and sustained. [Grover and Grover: 2002; Pillai: 1995] It is the women themselves who have to realize their capacity and capabilities to get empowered at all socio-economic and political levels. Laws, policies and technologies can only provide an environment to facilitate their empowerment.

'Woman' in Indian mythology is believed to represent 'power' in her various religious manifestations of goddess (as Durga, Kali, Chandi, etc.), which evoke both fear and reverence. [Dube: 1990] In contrast, there has been the 'deprived majority' of women, who struggle hard for empowerment, even today. From years, women in India have been suffering silently behind the veil of silence in the name of cultural norms and values.

It was after the 1920s that the ruling elite started talking about the welfare of women and people's movement through participation in the freedom struggle. Gradually women started entering into the mainstream of politics and development. But this development is primarily concentrated in socio-economic relief to women, which proves of no use in raising their status and condition in society. Then during the 1990s, it was realized that until or unless women play an effective role in decision-making and policy-making, their status cannot be improved. Thus the focus shifted from 'welfare' to 'development' and from 'development' to 'empowerment'

Women's development is primarily socio-economic, while women's empowerment is essentially political. [S.L.Sharma: 1999] Clearly, a women's empowerment perspective is different from a women's development perspective in some very important ways. Empowerment mainly emphasizes gender equality. The Harvard framework for women empowerment, which is based on Sara Longwe's formulation, entails five levels of gender equality:

Figure I: Women's Empowerment Framework

Levels of Equality	Increased Equality	Increased Empowerment
Control		
Participation		
Conscientization		
Access		
Welfare		

[As quoted from S.L. Sharma: 1999]

Sharma [1999] considers conscientization as the key element to women's empowerment. Conscientization implies acquisition of critical awareness about the structure of discrimination, exploitation and oppression in which one is placed. It has three aspects:

- awareness generation about gender gap among women;
- debunking of the belief that these gender gaps are God-given; and,
- organization and mobilization of women to meet the end of gender equality

Thus it is awareness about discrimination that needs to be generated first, and then the organization and mobilization of women to fight against this discrimination, to get equality in all walks of life and hence empowerment. According to Usha Sharma [2003], there are seven major areas of discrimination against women in India:

- +
- malnutrition;
- poor health;
- lack of education;
- overwork;
- lack of skills;
- mistreatment; and,
- powerlessness.

So, to abolish this discrimination some of the indicators of empowerment of women could be:

- enhanced political participation;
- enhanced economic participation;
- enhanced social participation;

- eradication of all forms of violence against women;
- enhanced concern about hygienic living;
- enhanced cooperative attitude of males; and,
- raising self-confidence

On the basis of above, we shall now analyze government efforts to achieve the goal of women's empowerment.

EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN: GOVERNMENTAL EFFORTS

The principles of gender equality and justice, and protection of women's rights, have been prime concerns in Indian thinking from the day of Independence. Accordingly, the country's concern in safeguarding the rights and privileges of women found its best expression in the Constitution of India. While Article 14 confers equal rights and opportunities both to men and women in the political, economic and social spheres, Article 15 prohibits discrimination against any citizen on the grounds of sex, religion, race, caste, etc., and Article 15(3) empowers the State to make any special provision in favour of women and children. Article 16 provides equal opportunities in the matter of public appointments for all citizens, and Article 39 mentions that the State shall direct its policy towards providing to men and women equally the rights to means of livelihood and equal pay for equal work. Article 42 directs the State to make provisions for ensuring just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief.

Certain legislation, related to safeguarding the interests of women and girls, has also come about in recent times. For example: Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961; The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929 (as amended in 1986); The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956 (as amended and retitled in 1986); and, Indecent Representation of Women (Prevention) Act, 1986. The landmark achievement of both the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments in 1992 have also empowered women through participation in the grassroots democracy as represented by the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and local bodies.

The 73rd and 74th Amendments of the Indian Constitution, relating to Panchayati Raj, which ensures that women shall constitute at least one-third of the total number of Panches, is a step in the right direction. These women Panches can act as intermediaries between the government and the public, and can serve as the vanguard of the movement opposing crimes against women. They can also: work for the proper implementation of existing laws in the rural areas where they operate; play a great role in enlightening women on the existing laws protecting women's interest, as well as on their rights under the Constitution; and, work to bring about self-confidence.

Gender equity and women's development were being given newer dimensions on the international stage after the Beijing Conference in 1995. Being a signature to the Non-Aligned Summit, India had to commit to these issues, and some programmes were specially framed for women. It was realized that there are five different modes for uplifting women:

- Welfare mode;
- Equity mode;

- Antipoverty mode;
- Efficiency mode; and
- Empowerment mode.

Realizing the goals of uplifting of women, 2001 was observed as **Women Empowerment Year** by the Government of India, and a **National Policy for Empowerment of Women** was announced on 20 March 2001. Women's Empowerment Year was celebrated with the following objectives:

- To create and raise large-scale awareness of women's issues, with active participation and involvement of all women and men.
- To initiate and accelerate action to improve access to, and control of, resources by women.
- To create an enabling environment to enhance self-confidence and autonomy of women.

[As quoted in Pandey: 2002]

An integrated programme for women's empowerment, named **Swayamsidha** was launched in September 2001. The long-term objective of the programme was the all round empowerment of women — especially social and economic — by ensuring their direct access and control over resources through a sustained process of mobilization and convergence of all ongoing sectoral programmes. To provide economic support and to develop entrepreneurship capabilities among women, **Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK)** was launched in 1993, which extends credit facilities to women through Intermediate Micro Credit Organizations who also lend money to Self Help Groups (SHG) of women. **Swadhar** was a programme started to address to the needs of women in difficult circumstances, who are not covered by other schemes (e.g., widows, destitute women, women prisoners, migrants).

A **Women's Economic Programme** was launched in 1982, with assistance from Norwegian Agency for Development Corporation (NOPAD). Under this programme, grants are given to Voluntary Women Organizations to train poor women. Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (**STEP**) was launched in 1987, to provide new knowledge and update the skills of poor and asset-less women in traditional sectors such as agriculture and animal husbandry.

At the legislative level, the **Domestic Violence Against Women (Prevention) Bill, 2000** has been drafted, in consultation with NCW, and is still waiting to be introduced in the Parliament.

Along the same lines, the state governments resorted to several women development programmes. For example: the Haryana Government started **Our Daughter Our Wealth Scheme** for SC and ST girls in 1994; **Kunwar Bai Nu Mameru Yojna** in Gujrat; **Kamdhenu Yojna** in Maharashtra; **Balika Sanrakshan Yojna** in Andhra Pradesh; and, **Panchdhara Yojna** in Madhya Pradesh. Similarly, in Uttar Pradesh, the centrally-sponsored **Indira Women Scheme** was launched in August 1995,

and the World Bank-aided **ICDS-III** training programme was launched to train rural as well as urban poor women. However, despite these rigorous efforts, Indian women are still facing severe problems.

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND EMPOWERMENT

The right to development is a universal and inalienable right, and an integral part of fundamental human rights. [Tapan: 2000] All human beings are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature. Countries should ensure that all individual are given the right to opportunity to make the most of their potential. UNDP's Human Development Reports (HDRs) have repeatedly pointed out that people are the real wealth of a nation. Table1, based on UNDP Human Development Reports, indicates the respective position of India vis-à-vis a few developed, developing and least-developed countries.

Table 1

Country	HDI Rank (2000)	HDI (2000)	GDI (2000)	GEM (2000)
Norway	1	0.942	0.941	0.837
China	96	0.741	0.737	0.274
India	124	0.577	0.560	0.240
Nigeria	172	0.277	0.263	0.119

HDI = Human Development Index.

GDI = Gender Development Index.

GEM = Gender Empowerment Index.

[Source: Table 10.4, p.211, Economic Survey, 2002-2003, Government of India]

India falls in the lowest one-third category by HDI rank. Improvement in empowerment is even lower than that in human development as indicated by the wide gap prevailing between GDI and GEM observed in Table 1. The distinction between human development and empowerment is that empowerment encounters resistance from the group who has to share power with the group striving for empowerment. We will presently see how this factor impedes empowerment of vulnerable groups in India.

Table 2: Human Development Index in Some States of India

States	1981	1991	2002
Rajasthan	0.256	0.347	0.424
Orissa	0.267	0.345	0.404
Madhya Pradesh	0.245	0.328	0.394
Uttar Pradesh	0.255	0.314	0.388
Bihar	0.237	0.308	0.367
All India	0.302	0.381	0.472

[Source: National Human Development Report, 2001]

The states included in Table 2 are known as BIHARU states, owing to their chronic backwardness. The BIMARU states account for a significant proportion of India's population. Tables 1 and 2 bring out well the preparatory ground that needs to be covered to promote human development before looking forward to make a major advance towards the goal of empowerment of the poor and marginalized.

Gender Disparity Index

The HDR 1995 draws attention to the persistence of severe gender disparities in human development. The central message of the report is that human development is not engendered but endangered. And there is a long way to go in terms of equalizing opportunities between men and women. According to the report, women still constitute 70% of the world's poor and two-thirds of the world's illiterates. The Gender Disparity Index — estimated as the proportion of female attainment to male attainments for a given sets of variables — differs from HDI since it uses worker–population ratio to capture economic attainment, while HDI uses per capita monthly expenditure (adjusted for inequality of the 32 states and Union Territories for which the GDI was calculated and ranked). Uttar Pradesh ranked 29th in 1981 and 31st in 1991. Clearly the level of gender disparity is very high in that state, and in relative terms it is performing badly.

Table 3: Gender Disparity Index in Some States in India

States	Value	Rank
Bihar	0.469	32
Uttar Pradesh	0.520	31
Madhya Pradesh	0.662	28
Rajasthan	0.692	16
Orissa	0.639	27
All India	0.676	

[Source: National Human Development Report, 2001]

Table 4: Inter-State Comparison of Status of Women

	Bihar	Uttar Pradesh	Madhya Pradesh	Rajasthan	Orissa	All India
Total Population (2001)	82878796	166052859	60385118	56473122	36706920	1027015247
Male (2001)	43153964	87466301	31456873	29381657	18612340	531277078
Female (2001)	39724832	78586558	28928245	27091465	18094580	495738169
Sex Ratio	921	898	920	922	972	933
Decadal Growth Rate (2001)	28.43	25.86	24.34	28.33	15.94	21.34
Female Life Expectancy at Birth (1993-97)	58.4	56.9	55.2	60.1	57.0	61.8
Female Infant Mortality Rate (1999) Per 1000 Live Births	62.3	83.5	89.5	83.9	96.0	70.8
MMR (Per 1000 Live Birth) (1998)	452	77	498	670	367	407
Female Literacy Ratio (2001)	33.57	42.98	50.28	44.34	50.98	54.16
Female Work Participation Rate (2001) Census of India 2001	18.84	16.80	33.10	33.48	24.62	25.68
Woman Participation in Polls in Percentage (India Votes, 1998)	56.79	50.19	55.95	55.27	53.18	58.02
Percentage of Women Elected as M.P. (1998)	7.41	10.59	10.00	12.00	4.17	7.95
Percentage of Women Elected in Rajya Sabha (2000)	9.09	2.94	6.25	10.00	6.25	9.02
Rate of total Cognizable Crimes against Women (1998) per million National Human Development Report 2001	73.00	107.00	205.00	234.00	126.00	135.00

[Source: National Human Development Report, 2001; Census of India, 2001; Statistical Abstract, 2001; ISID References, India Voters.]

Decadal Changes in the Status of Women in Uttar Pradesh

To evaluate the status of women, we have to take an overall view of the development process. But to make it more pinpointed, women's development must be viewed in different sectors, such as health, nutrition, education and employment. Their actual situation in Uttar Pradesh can be judged under the following parameters.

Table 5: Decadal Changes in Status of Women in Uttar Pradesh

	1991	2001
Population (in Crore)	13.91	16.61
Male Population (in Crore)	7.40	8.75
Female Population (in Crore)	6.51	7.86
Sex Ratio	876	898
Sex Ratio (0 – 6 Years)	927	916
Life Expectancy at Birth (Male)	50.2	57.1
Life Expectancy at Birth (Female)	46.9	55.4
Infant Mortality Rate	104	83.5
Maternal Mortality Rate	-	707
Mean Age at Marriage	18.10	19.4
Literacy Ratio (Male)	54.82	70.23
Literacy Ratio (Female)	24.37	42.98
Female Work Participation Rate	12.32	16.80

[Source: Census of India, 1991 and 2001; National Human Development Report, 2001]

Demographic Profile

The 2001 Census counted 7.36 crore females against a total population of 16.61 crore, constituting 47.3% of the state's population. Female population in the state grew at a rate of 27.5% during the decade 1991-2001 against a growth rate of 25.8% in the total population.

Sex Ratio (Gender Imbalances)

The declining sex ratio in Uttar Pradesh made an upturn in 2001. The sex ratio, which was 876 in 1991, had increased to 898 in the 2001 census. But it is still far below the national average of 946 in 2001, and is lower than Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. But, the upswing is indeed noteworthy.

While the overall sex ratio is increasing, there has been a decline in the sex ratio in the age group 0-6 years. It was 927 in 1991, and had declined to 916 in 2001. Some of the important reasons for this decline include:

- neglect of the girl child, resulting in higher mortality at younger ages;
- high maternal mortality;
- sex-selective female abortions; and,
- female infanticides.

Clearly this is cause for concern, both about sex selective abortions as well as neglect of female infants in the state, if the sex ratio in the 0-6 years is declining.

Female Life Expectancy at Birth

Life expectancy at birth in Uttar Pradesh went up from 50.2 for males in 1981–85, to *57.1 in 1992–96. For females, it increased from 46.9 to 55.4 over the same period. There is no denying the fact that these are marked improvements. Yet they fell short of the national average, and the gap in female life expectancy levels between Uttar Pradesh and the national average is still large. Also, it is noteworthy that while general female life expectancy is higher than males in the state, female life expectancy at birth is lower than male life expectancy.

Female Infant Mortality Ratio (IMR)

Female IMR in Uttar Pradesh, which was 104 in 1991, had declined to 83.5 in the 2001 census, but this was still quite high as compared to the average nation female IMR of 70.08. Although Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan have comparatively higher IMR than Uttar Pradesh, the situation in this state is still a cause for concern.

Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR)

It is this high IMR, coupled with the high maternal mortality rate, which signifies women's severe health deprivation in Uttar Pradesh. MMR in Uttar Pradesh is the highest in the country — 707 per 100,000 live births in the age group 15-49 years. Although Madhya Pradesh had a high IMR, its maternal mortality rate is 670. Bihar is much better than UP as its MMR is 452, while for the country as a whole the MMR is 407. So we can see how far Uttar Pradesh deviates from the national average. This may be due to the fact that about 49% of women in the reproductive age group were suffering from some form of anemia. Along with this, another important factor contributing to maternal deaths is the fact that for about 43% of live births, no trained medical attention was received by the mothers. [Tenth Five Year Plan, Vol. I, Part 1, Uttar Pradesh] NFHS II results of the state shows that although almost two in every five currently married women report at least one reproductive health problem that could be symptomatic of a more serious reproductive tract infection. Three-quarters of them bear the problem silently without seeking advice or treatment.

Educational Profile

Women's empowerment really starts with education. Gandhi aptly said that a man's education is the education of an individual, but a women's education is the education of the family. Even then, only 39% of the women are literate, as compared to 67% male literacy in India after more than 50 years of planned development.

Census data indicates that the difference in male and female literacy rates was nearly 15.10 percentage points in 1951, and that it had increased to 27.25 percentage points in 2001. The Female Literacy Ratio of Uttar Pradesh — according to Census 2001 — is 42.98, while the national average female literacy rate is 54.16. Clearly Uttar Pradesh is lagging far behind in the educational attainment of women. Although Bihar is at the lowest level with a literacy ratio of 33.57, Madhya Pradesh (50.28), Rajasthan (44.34) and Orissa (75.95) are all doing better than Uttar Pradesh.

The ratio of females in higher education (28.61) and the ratio of female enrolment in technical colleges (4.14) in Uttar Pradesh are also quite low as compared to other states

and the national average. This clearly indicates a persistent gender gap in educational attainment. A study exploring this gap in Uttar Pradesh cited the main factors influencing educational attainment of women as parental background, wealth and opinions, individual ability, age at marriage, and the quality of primary school attended. [Kingdon: 2002]

Economic Profile

The most important factor in determining empowerment of deprived and marginalized sectors is their participation in economic activities. Economic independence is one of the most important factors that can raise the status of women in society, since the division of labour on the basis of sex is the root cause of prevailing patriarchy and discrimination against women. The female work participation ratio at state as well as national levels is on the rise — i.e., in the 1991 Census it was 12.32 in Uttar Pradesh, then subsequently rose to 16.80. But this is still very low as compared to the male work participation ratio.

The number of female workers in Uttar Pradesh fell sharply from 71 lakhs in 1951 to 28 lakhs in 1981, and then increased to 49 lakh in 1991. The following data reveals that employment in organized public and private sectors, the rate for women has remained constant in both sectors from 1997 to 1999.

Table 6

	Public Sector			Private Sector		
	1997	1998	1999	1997	1998	1999
Uttar Pradesh	184.4	184.9	184.4	53.5	53.6	54.0
All India	2727.6	2762.7	2829.1	1909.4	2010.9	2101.8

[Source: Women and Men in India, 2000, CSO]

According to some studies the female work participation rate is generally higher in states with a larger share of tribal and scheduled caste populations, where female work participation is not looked down upon. Generally, FWPR follows a ‘U’ pattern, so it cannot be taken as an unambiguous indicator of women’s status. [Srivastava: 2003]

Political Profile

A vibrant democracy implies people’s participation in governance; in decision-making and in matters that touch their everyday lives. In India, unlike the West, women did not have to wage a protracted struggle for the right of vote. However, this freedom to exercise their franchise did not translate into an exercise of political power. The first Legislative Assembly had 13 women. This increased to 29 in 1957, and to 30 women in 1985. The number of women reached a low of 10 in 1991, but rose to 14 in 1993. In the Assembly Elections of 1996, 19 women were elected.

The decentralization of governance through the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments has shown a remarkable increase in women participating in local government. The Indian rural local government comprises 232,278 village panchayats, 5,905 intermediate panchayats and 499 district panchayats, for a total of 238,682 at all three levels (9.2 lakh women representatives were elected to village panchayats). [Subrahmanyam: 2002] The reservation of 33% for women brought out an overwhelming response from women in Uttar Pradesh, resulting in their election to various posts. See Table 7.

Table 7

Post	Percentage
Chairperson, Zilla Panchayat	53.62
Member, Zilla Panchayat	37.06
Chairperson, Kshetriya Panchayat	36.71
Member, Kshetriya Panchayat	35.82
Chairperson, Gram Panchayat (Gram Pradhan)	35.32
Member, Gram Panchayat	37.95

[Source: Tenth Five Year Plan, Vol.I (Part-I), Uttar Pradesh]

Still the participation of women in the political sector is quite low. Mehta [2002] cited the roles and influences of political parties, power distribution and the group of people formed on the basis of caste, and most important, the influence of male members, as the main reasons for the low proportion of women in Village Panchayats.

Women's Security

The basic human right of women to live with dignity and freedom from fear is under threat from many quarters — i.e., the family with its unequal and patriarchal relationships, divisive communal politics and a fractious caste system. Across the state, violence against women takes many forms — i.e., female foeticide and infanticide, sexual abuse, incest, molestation, sexual harassment by various elements of the society, marital rape, kidnapping, murders and domestic violence (which itself can take many forms). Trends in crimes against women can be best explained from the following table.

Table 8: Incidence of Cognizable Crime (IPC) under Different Crime Headings in Uttar Pradesh

Crime Headings	1996	1997	1998
Rape	1854	1457	1605
Kidnapping and abduction of women	2501	2460	2882
Dowry death	1983	1786	2229
Molestation	2526	2023	2423
Sexual harassment	118	105	2511
Cruelty by husband and relatives	3989	3393	5113
Other IPC Crimes	58944	51270	64088
Total Cognizable Crime under IPC	172480	152779	184461

[Source: Crime in India, 1948, NCRB, New Delhi]

Despite all efforts, crime against women is still on the rise in the state. Besides which, 80% of girls in the state are married below the age of 18, of which 50% are married by the age of 15. Eighty-eight percent of married women need permission to visit friends and relatives, and 49% of women have access to money in the household — compared to Bihar at 67% and Haryana at 71%. [NHFS-II]

CONCLUSIONS

The following indicators clearly show the prevailing discrimination against women, although there is a rise in the women's component performance in the state during last decade. But more efforts are needed for gender empowerment from government, as well as the public. Women are still lagging far behind the men in the state, which is highly patriarchal in structure and thus oppresses and suppresses women in different ways. This fact, however, does not imply that men in Uttar Pradesh have complete access to all factors affecting quality of life. They are deprived only to the extent of the non-availability of resources, whereas women are deprived on the grounds of their sex and it is this discrimination which has to be eradicated.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT POLICIES

(1) Awareness generation programmes should be launched to create awareness about general health, hygiene, sanitation, purity of drinking water, use of modern contraceptives and information about the legal age of marriage, etc.

(2) NGOs, private sector and corporate sector should be involved in implementing innovative, reproductive health programmes by giving them financial assistance.

(3) Efforts should be made to universalize primary education for girls and to retain girls in schools up to the secondary level.

(4) Efforts should be made for the formation of Self-Help Groups exclusively for women.

(5) Efforts should be made for enhancing women's income-earning opportunities through improved access to credit, training, technology, market support, etc.

(6) Panchayati Raj Institutions should be strengthened to work exclusively for women and children.

(7) Policies and laws should be made to eradicate all forms of violence against women.

END NOTE

Empowerment is still a distant dream for the adolescent girl forced into early marriage and child bearing at the cost of her own physical and mental development. The removal of sex imbalance is also an important factor in gender empowerment. To tackle the growing violence against women is necessary to help them develop.

Governments may offer welfare schemes for women. They may float anti-poverty programmes. They may launch projects for their improvement. They may enact legislation to safeguard women's rights. Government policies can only facilitate the process, reduce the hurdles, and create an atmosphere conducive to transformation. But it is the women who have to empower themselves. Unless they themselves become conscious of their oppression and slow initiative, and seize the opportunities, it will not be possible to change their status.

Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru once said: "To awaken the people, it is women who must be awakened; once she is on the move, the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves". Therefore, declaring Year 2001 as 'Women Empowerment Year' and celebrating 8th March as 'Women's Day' will not do anything, unless real efforts are made for women's empowerment through access to basic needs, so that their minimum quality of life is improved.

References

Abidi, N.F. (2003), "Empowerment of Women: The Developmental Perspective", Paper presented at National Seminar of U.P. Sociological Society at Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh.

Beteille, Andre, "Empowerment", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.XXXIV, Nos.10&11, 1999.

Deshmukh, J. and Ranadive (2003), "Placing Gender Equity in the Family Centre Stage", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.38, No.17.

Dube, S.C., *Indian Society (India: National Book Trust, 1990)*

Grover, I. and Grover, D. (eds.) (2000), "Empowering Women", Udaipur Agro-Tech Pub. Academy.

Kingdon, G.G. (2002), "The Gender Gap in Educational Attainment in India: How much can be explained?", *The Journal of Development Studies*, Vol.39, No.2, December.

Krishnaraj, M., Sudarshan, A. Shariff (1998), "Gender Population and Development", Oxford University Press, Delhi.

Mehta, G.S. (2002), "Participation of Women in the Panchayati Raj System", Kanishka Publishers, New Delhi.

Pandey, A.K. (2002), "Emerging Issues in Empowerment of Women", Anmol Publications Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi.

Pillai, J.K. (1995), "Women and Empowerment", Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi.

Sharma, S.L., *Empowerment Without Antagonism: a case for reformulation of Women's Empowerment Approach*, *Sociological Bulletin*, 49(1) March 1999.

Sharma, U. (2003), "Employment, Empowerment and Human Development", Authors Press.

Srivastava, Achala (2003), "Socio-Economic Status of Women Across States in India", Paper presented in National Seminar on Deprivation and Inclusive Development, Giri Institute of Development Studies, Lucknow.

Subrahmanyam, K.S. (2002), "Empowerment of Women and Marginalized Groups in Panchayats", Kurukshetra, May.

Tapan, N. (2002), "Need for Women Empowerment", Rawat Publications, Jaipur.

Weber Max, "Economy and Society", University of California Press, Berkley, 2 Vols., 1978.