

Gender development perspective: A contemporary review in global and Nepalese context

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For the empowerment of women several international meetings, conferences and seminars have been taking place globally. Consequently, women are becoming stronger in social, economic, and political sectors. The numbers of women state heads have revealed that internationally women are being empowered politically. Women's struggle in Nepal has also brought a remarkable change in establishing women rights in social, economic, and political spheres. After democratic restoration, few efforts have been made for their empowerment. Still the Human Development index of women is not so encouraging. However, they have been involved in multi sectoral activities such as household economy, environmental conservation, social functions, and infrastructure development. After 1990, political parties have involved women in their political organizations and have provided opportunities to be elected and nominated in the national legislature, executive and judiciary. Few of them have already got chances to be Minister and Member of Parliament. Similarly, women have been working as District Development or Village Development Committee chairperson. In the inaccessible remote areas still they are not much empowered and their involvement is less. It is necessary to make them empowered.

Keywords: Women; participation; household economy; social service; environmental conservation; infrastructure development; Nepal

Introduction

Women's history in the world is full of sorrow, disdain, oppression and contempt in every dimension of their life. They fought a long battle against various kinds of social

brutality, economic exploitations and different systems of discriminations. Still the battle is incomplete; rather some new methods of deprivations are adopted within the society (Gabriele&Thomus, 2007). Now the freedom and prosperity of the women has been the exciting slogan in the world, but no concrete commencement has seemed to have been implemented in practice. There are laws or the legal provisions outburst in the law making procedures of the countries, and several international conventions are taken place frequent. The member countries of UN have signed various international treaties on women's rights, child rights, and other several dimensions of human rights but they are not translated into practice. Women are employed but their contribution is devalued or their works are not taken as the works equally important with that of male workers. Wage level is highly different between male and female workers in the works of the same nature and weight. Male workers get almost double wage than female workers (Dahal, 2001). But the evaluation of the quantity and quality of works done by both sexes envisages almost equal or still more qualitative of the women workers than that of male. In terms of the responsibility and sincerity towards the works women pose an absolute worthiness indeed. Prejudices between men and women envisage everywhere in the society or family or the community and the nation.

In Nepalese context, it is more acute in the common life of the people everywhere in the rural or urban areas. Rural areas are still more backward in this gender issue where the people don't agree with the modern thought of gender equality and equity particularly for the freedom of the women in every spheres of their life equally to those of the male members. Therefore, the role of women in the local developmental contexts in Nepal, particularly in the rural areas is very much destitute because the word gender is not understood appropriately in our society.

The word 'Gender' doesn't mean 'sex', rather it covers a wide concept of sex and related feelings and behaviors including the physical structure, and inequalities generated by that structural differences, and even the problems caused by such inequalities (Wikipedia, 2017). Therefore, gender needs a wide definition of wrapping up all such sex related problems, inequalities, differences and behaviors.

Our social pattern in living style astonishingly guided by traditional norms and values, our beliefs and attitudes are extremely related with our social consciousness and surrounding environment. Women and men are the two sides of a single coin and have been evolving historically with the modern development processes of reciprocal contradiction between both sexes. Positive transformation of the society needs an equal inter-relationship and equal participation of both sexes that is absent in our patriarchal

society of male domination. Such unequal socio-cultural status of male and female has been obstructing socio-economic and political development of our society where women are obliged to launch various kinds of social struggles from international, national and local level. It is in this context that this paper discusses on the contemporary perspectives and participation of the women in both global level and in the context of Nepal. This is a review work. Books, reports, and articles, are the sources of information used here.

Results and discussion

Gender perspectives in global context

Women's rights are now, the most important universal subject of human rights. There are several international laws, declarations, conventions and protocols formulated and signed by the member countries of United Nations Organization in favor of women's socio-cultural, economical, and political rights. Although women are the poorest segment of the society who don't have the equal access on education, health, employment, skill trainings, public offices, decision-making authority, freedom and control over their own body and life. Any kinds of social values, laws and political philosophies developed in the world are found success for the emancipation of women from the complications of traditional attitudes, norms and values of child bearing and rearing (UNO, 2014), "Indeed, Aquinas revived Aristotle's misogynous perception of women as 'misbegotten man' and wondered why God would create woman a defective creature in the first production of things"; such an ancient gender perception prevailing in Europe reveals a strange and much ferocious status of women (Maggee, 2015). Coming in the modern time, several new philosophers or the progressive thinkers have focused on concept of equity and equality of gender as a social problem. But the efforts are not still satisfactory. Jean Jacques Rousseau, a progressive philosopher had advocated on the political freedom and rights of the women, but could not accept the notion of equality of the sexes. French declaration of the rights of men and citizen [1789] articulated satisfactorily but could not be succeeded to emancipate women from the prevalent culture of sexism (Foster, 2015). Pamela Nevertheless, French playwright and essayist Olympe de Gauges (1748-1798) and English Philosopher Mary Wollstonecraft [1759-1797] raised their objections and defended women's rights by issuing the declaration of the rights of women [1791] and vindication of the rights of women [1791] respectively (UN, 2008a). The first women's liberation movement is the French revolution-1789, formed the first "revolutionary women's club", and declared 'Men's and women citizen's rights' empowered women's organization to end all kinds of exploitations, oppressions, subordinations, and discriminations over the past two hundred years (UN, 2008b).

Yet gender bias prevailed throughout the 20th century. Human rights commission members also could not abandon the feeling of biasness towards the word ‘man’ in reference to the holder of the rights which was not accepted by the Soviet Delegate Vladimir Koeretsky. For some time, game of the words was playing in the field of gender equality and equity. The final draft mostly employed the gender-neutral terms of ‘human being’, ‘everyone’, and ‘person’. Preamble of the declaration included the principle of “equal rights of men and women” in the regular efforts of Hansa Mehta of India, and Minerwa Bernardino of the Dominican Republic (UN, 2008c).

Gender gaps were not prevailed only in some countries; it was visible even in the UN where women were not in high posts as they were employed in clerical and low paying jobs (UN, 2008a). The UN general assembly resolution of Dec. 1972 declared “International women’s years” in 1975 was the most important effort in gender equality. The first world conference on women held in Mexico City declared 1976 to 1985 as the UN decade for women. Yet the results of such world attempts for women’s emancipation and equal status of both sexes are not positive. Majority of the women among the total world population living in the rural areas are suffering from poverty (UN, 2008c). In political field women’s participation is very low in the world as shown in Table 1. Still there is male domination in political field.

Table 1. Women head of the states in the world since 1990 to 2017

Years	Numbers
1990	4
1999	7
2001	7
2010	14
2011	14
2012	16
2013	14
2014	19
2015	18
2016	19
2017	17

Source: Wikipedia, 2017

There are 17 women as head of the state at present in the world. This number was 4 in 1990 and 7 in 1999 and 2001 whereas it was only 14 in 2010 which is double as compared to that of 2010. After 2010 the number of women head of the state has notably increased. But it is very nominal in number as compared to that of men. Number of total women Prime Ministers at global context reaches to 43. Similarly total number of women presidents till to date reaches to 36. The number of women queens as head of the state is 4. This kind of political scenario gives us a message that women representation in political field has been increasing after 2001(Wikipedia, 2017).

Several countries in the world are now, deeply concerned in gender issues. They have included women in policy formulation and development planning. In Kenya, Maldives, and Tunisia governments have committed to involve women into their national development plans. Philippines and South Africa have also adopted Australia's model of gender budget; in the same way international community is now fully convinced that without women's participation sustainable development cannot be achieved. They realized that women have a key role to preserve environment and natural resources that contribute sustainable development. The 4th world conference on women in Beijing 1995, also identified needs for the active involvement of women in environmental decision making at all levels (UN, 1995).

Gender perspectives in Nepalese context

Nepal has patriarchal type of society having gender discrimination and has just realized the needs of women's involvement in the overall development programs and strategies. The history of the efforts made by the Nepalese society for the gender equality and equity is not so long. During Rana regime nobody could raise the voice in this matter. When political parties were established in the country as the underground political organization against Rana rule raised the voice of women's emancipation in Nepal. Nepal Women's Association, All Nepal Women's Association and related political organs of political parties started their mob for the liberation of women from the traditional feudal oppression after political parties included this agenda in their manifesto. After 1950, when people removed Rana autocracy from the rule and established parliamentary system, a change in women's social status started. They got a chance of reading and writing and have any kinds of services in the different sectors of the government or non-governmental organizations. They took part in parties in different levels and women's leadership slowly established. But the influence of change did not approach to the rural women. Majority of the women living in the village could not enjoy the freedom due to poverty, illiteracy, and traditional customs. Again in 1990 after the down fall of

panchayat, women's associations became legal and started to carry out struggle within their party and outside the parties, and within families and society against the gender discrimination. Focusing to the equal rights to women in ancestral property, Nepalese Women's Associations organized several national and international conferences on women's rights. In Nepal, All Nepal Women's Association (ANWA) played a vital role. The 3rd national conference in Butwal (2002) passed a resolution for equal rights of sons and daughters on family property with the slogan "Equal property to equal children". It was the national campaign launched all over the country. (Gabriele, 2007). The glorious history of Nepalese women's movement has several declarations, treaties, constitutional provisions, policies and laws that have been adopted. But the efforts remained in the paper and not effectively implemented into practice during Panchayat system.

In the sixth five years plan (1980-85) Nepal focused the need for integrating the women's development program into the overall development strategies. The 7th plan (1985-90) recognized that women constitute half of the work force in rural areas and gave more recognition than before and equipped with skills to operate on their own (Joshi, 1987).

Nepal's women's year 1975 initiated deep concern for women's recognition or identity. In the same year Women's Services Co-ordination Committee was established which launched several programs in agriculture, education, health, social services and law (Joshi, 1987).

After 1981, effort to develop Human Development Indices (HDI) were started to take for the measurement of human individuals and society in the member countries of United Nations Organization (UNO) in the world. It shows Nepal's HDI of 0.325 which is almost lowest in the world. It increased in the preceding decades and became 0.416, 0.499, and 0.526 in 1991, 2001, and 2005 respectively (Acharya, 2007). Gender development index was lower than those human development indices. HDI is the combined indicators of Per Capita Income, Life Expectancy, and Educational Attainment. In all these three indicators there was a vast difference between male and female population. Per Capita Purchasing power (PPP) of male was \$ 1776 whereas it was only \$ 891 of female (Acharya, 2007).

Participation of women in multi-sectorial activities in Nepal

Women are involved in several activities such as contribution in household economy, conservation of environment, development of infrastructure and strengthening of social justice and harmony. These are briefly discussed below.

Household economy

Farm, forest and fisheries are the main areas of employment in rural areas where women's involvement is higher than that of male (Table 3). More than 92 percent women are engaged in farm, forest and fisheries. This is mostly the agriculture field including forest related activities such as firewood collection, collection of grass and tree branches, grazing of animals etc. Fisheries in the rural areas are not notably found in spite of those areas where traditionally local communities are fishing in the river. There is a huge gap of women's in the employment pattern between rural and urban areas. In urban areas women are educated and they have a lot of opportunities of employments whereas in rural areas there is no alternate employment of traditional agriculture and they are back in education, health and other modern facilities. Women in such rural areas are mostly engaged in agriculture and internal home affairs.

Table 2. Occupational structure of Nepalese women, 1991 (in percentage)

Major Occupational Group	Rural		Urban	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Farm, Forest & Fishery	80.2	92.7	19.4	14.7
Non-agriculture:	19.5	7.0	80.0	61.5
Professional and Technical	2.3	0.4	5.1	7.4
Administrative and Related work	0.2	0.0	3.4	1.2
Clerical	1.0	0.1	7.5	4.4
Sales	2.5	1.2	17.6	11.6
Services	6.8	3.3	17.7	16.7
Production	4.4	1.4	19.5	14.7
Others	2.3	0.6	9.2	5.4
Not Stated	0.3	0.3	0.6	0.6

Source: Population Monograph, CBS, 1995

Women contribute substantially to sustain the subsistence household economy. Table 2 shows the time devoted by women and men in income generating activities. It shows that almost 50% time is devoted by women, 44% by men and 6% by children in household income generation (Joshi, 1987).

Table 3. Average time devoted by men and women in household income generation (hrs/day)

SN	Time allocation	Men	Women
1.	Conventional economic activities (agriculture, animal husbandry, manufacturing etc.	4.62	5.81
2.	Only in Agriculture	1.73	2.79
3.	Household affairs (food processing, water fetching, fuel collection)	2.16	0.91
4.	Daily productive activities	6.71	6.72
5.	Whole household activities	50.02	49.04
6.	Domestic work	4.04	0.79
7.	Total daily work burden	10.01	7.51

Source: Joshi, 1987

Environmental conservation

Women in our society are closer to those activities related to forest, water, sanitation or cleanliness. These are the important elements of environment. Women are responsible to protect these environmental resources that help to protect biodiversity through healthier environment. From early in the morning up to the late night they are busy in collecting, processing, bowing, planting, harvesting, cooking, cleaning and servicing etc activities. Such works are directly and indirectly related with environment conservation. They collect fuel woods, grasses; cut branches of the tree and bushes, and graze their animals. Women are active in tree plantation, take care of planted trees, cultivation of herbal plants and preserve them.

Now women are active in the conservations of environment through user's group formation. But in the remote areas, women's involvement to keep home and surrounding environment safe and clean is not found so active. Therefore Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) and International Non-governmental Organizations (INGOs) are actively working for awareness creating activities. For example, "SAGUN", a program launched by CARE Nepal, has been supporting women to make them aware and trained in different environment protection activities. SAGUN has supported to community forestry program and good governance in a dalit settlement of Malakheti VDC -3 of Kailali district where 90% population out of total is very poor. People in this settlement have been facing an acute problem of health and sanitation. SAGUN program provided support to make toilets in the village and also trained them about local community forest protection and its commercial use to earn money. They became conscious to protect bio-

diversity and patrol forests to control illegal hunting activities. Other examples are the works carried out in the buffer zone areas of Lantang National Park and Kanchanjangha National Park. SAGUN carried out activities for the protection of forest. Now, people are actively involved in the protection of forest and wildlife. The Anti-poaching Operation Units are actively working in the preservation of bio-diversity where the active role has been played by women (SAGUN, 2008).

Social justice and harmony

Nepalese women are widely participating in social services in these days but there are still some remote areas where women are the poorest and illiterate segment of the society. They are suffering from double discrimination of social backwardness and gender inequality. Women rights are written in the constitution but the discrimination adhered with, and hence social, cultural, and individual behavior have not been changed particularly in those remote villages. In the urban or developed society women's social status has been improving day by day because they are conscious and active to utilize their rights in the social sector. After 2005/06 when Republic set up of the country accomplished, government has formulated different policies and laws of guarantying 33% involvement of women in social and political sectors. Every social organization, NGO and INGO should have 33% participation of women. In education, government jobs and other socio-economic sectors women are reserved certain seats. Still there are some traditional practices of kitchen works and other internal home affairs which are being obstructions in the development of women in social, economic and political sectors. First of all they have to come out from kitchen and internal home affairs.

Women's responsibility in social sector is to fight against women's violations. In rural areas due to lack of education women are dominated by men. Women are fighting against such dominations and violations which are happening within families and in the society. Some of the NGOs and clubs are actively working in empowering women to fight against the violations. An example of action taken against violation is given in box below

Barapak village of Gorkha, a remote village inhabited by the poor and illiterate people, a husband [kanchha] disgraced his wife [kanchhi] and started to chase from the house. The advocacy forum discussed over the case and decided that kanchha should give NRs 200000 to his wife as the compensation and have divorcé between them. Kanchhi took the money and divorced with her husband.

SAGUN has been supporting in such activities happening in the society in favor of women. Women are struggling in rural areas against social taboos like over drink of alcohol. It has been the serious problem for women in their family and society. Advocacy forum provide supports to the women who fight against the drunkard husband within their family and tries the best to bring compromise between husband and wife. Advocacy forum inspires women's clubs or mother's groups to provide different kinds of helps to the poor women in the time of delivery and other health problems. Women in some rural areas are found active against domestic violence like *chhaupadi*.

Infrastructure development

Not only social services and environment conservation, women are equally active in infrastructure development. They are involved in the development of roads, bridges, buildings, drinking water supply etc. Due to acute starvation problem in Karnali region many men and women were involved in the road construction through "Food for Work" program where Women were working as petty contractor. Another example of women's work in infrastructure development is from Dhamilikuwa VDC 2, Garambesi of Lamjung district by 2007/08 when Mid Marsyangdi Hydro-project was being constructed. SAGUN Program supported by CARE/ Nepal was helping in those VDCS influenced by the Hydro-Project. Women constructed a temporary wooden bridge over a small stream near by the Marsyangdi River which is rested on the stone wall. The bridge shortened the road that passes through a dense forest. The previous round about long trail had frightened local and outside commuters by frequent robbery. Mostly women pedestrians were harassed by such robbery where money and jewelries of them would be looted. In the remaining part of forest along the present short road women cut down the trees and bushes 10 meters either sides of the road and made open so that it could reduce the robbery over pedestrians. It reveals that "women can do everything whatever men do" the statement is being justified.

Another important thing is the participation of women in budget allocation and development planning in local, district or in central level. As an important context we can take another example of Lamjung district where the women of 15 literacy centers jointly requested VDCs to allocate budget for the women's empowerment programs. Accepting the request of women's groups VDCs allocated budget of NRs 5000 to 388000 for one year. Likewise in Gorkha district the women representatives of Gairi Women's Community Forest User's Groups visited headquarters to observe women's programs running through the support of DDC and all other development line agencies and suggested to allocate development budget for women's participation. Such types of

combine efforts of the women have brought a change in budgeting pattern of Village Development Committee (VDC) and District Development Committee (DDC).

Conclusion

Gender perspective has been a global issue at present. Several international meetings, seminars and conferences frequently and regularly organized in different countries on different issues of women. UNO has also been taking deep concern on it. Several international laws and protocols in gender issues have already been prepared and signed by the member countries of UNO. Still the women in the world are back in social, economic and political spheres. It is reflected in the representation of women in different social, economic and political sectors. The number of women as head of the state, prime minister, presidents and queen reveals that women are remarkably back in politics. It means that they are still not empowered and are dominated by men in different sectors of development.

In the Nepalese context status of the women is not encouraging. After democratic set up in 1990 perhaps a change has been experienced in this issue. Women are being empowered and have been involving in different sectors like household economy, environment conservation, infrastructures development and social sectors. Nepalese women are actively working against women's violation.

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