PREFACE

In the past sixty seven years India has transformed from a colonial agrarian economy into a modern, industrialising, knowledge based economy. This development process has benefited only certain sections of the society. Marginalised sections in society especially women are unable to take advantage of the development process which has led to gender inequality and is clearly visible in economic, political and social spheres. In order to build gender equality into the process of development the policy makers in the last few decades are giving priority to gender issues. Many Plans, Programmes and Policies have been implemented for the advancement of women in different spheres.

The most popular and widespread approach to gender issues in development is the Empowerment Approach. Almost all Programmes targeting women are being described as Programme for women empowerment. It has become an important concept affecting the life of large number of women. Women have to meet on the one hand the developmental needs which the government and other developmental agencies have imposed on them and on the other hand they have to perform their gender roles which are defined by the patriarchy, culture and traditions. In this context cleavages of caste, assault of the late capitalist and neo-colonial process of governance facilitated /forced by globalization are taken into consideration as this influences the structures in society and constantly inform the very world in which women live at their receiving end. An attempt is made in this thesis to understand Empowerment as used in the current
development discourse and analyses the various strategies adopted by the Government of India and the State of Karnataka in particular for the advancement of women. A conceptual and theoretical engagement with the concept of empowerment is undertaken in this study, while at the same time the study critiques the empowerment strategies in the state of Karnataka.

**Objective of the Study**

The study focuses on Women in Karnataka and attempts to understand empowerment as used in the development discourse. For this purpose the current development agenda is situated in a larger context and various global trends and their influence on the developmental Plans Policies and Programmes are considered. As the term Empowerment is very complex and highly contested, an attempt is made to understand empowerment by analyzing the various definitions of empowerment given by those working in the field of development. The study critiques the empowerment approach adopted by the Governments at the centre as well as in Karnataka and analyses the impact it has had on the lives of women.

**Area of Study**

This study focuses upon women’s situation during the postmodern times. The Plans, Polices and Programmes formulated for the development of the nation and the empowerment approach adopted to empower women socially, politically and economically is studied. The strategies to empower women after the decentralization and liberalization have been taken into
cognizance. The undercurrents beneath the rhetoric of women’s empowerment are examined taking into account the success and failures of the programmes and in identifying the problem areas. But for a few research papers, articles, and books on empowerment in general there has been no in depth study to understand empowerment as used in the current development discourse and the effectiveness of the empowerment approach in Karnataka is examined.

**Review of Literature**

For the study undertaken Primary and Secondary sources have been extensively availed. The primary sources for the research study are Reports published by the Government, Reports published by International Agencies like World Bank, United Nations Organization etc. Manuals of Administration published by the Government of Karnataka, Census Reports, Constitution of India, Indian Penal Code, Acts, Regulations and Ordinances in force in the State of Karnataka. Report of the National Committee1975, Survey Reports, Policies Programmes and Plans of various Departments of Government of Karnataka such as Department of Women and Child Development, Karnataka State women’s Development Corporation, Karnataka State Commission for Women, Karnataka State Welfare Board have been consulted.

Extensive Field work was carried out for the study. Visit to villages in several districts in Karnataka have been undertaken. Members of various Panchayat Offices and Banks which are aiding Self Help Groups have been
consulted. Interviews and Focus group discussions with elected women representatives, members of Self Help Groups was carried to record their experiences. Interaction with Non Governmental Organisations and Women's Organisations has helped in understanding of the ground reality.

Visit to repositories has helped in accessing information from several secondary sources. Besides Periodicals, journals, including online journals and magazines have been consulted on an extensive scale.

**Chapterisation**

Empowerment of women is the buzz word in Gender—Development debate and is used by almost all programmes and policies which target women. This work is structured into six chapters besides the preface.

In the introductory chapter an attempt is made to explore the concept of empowerment. Various definitions of power are examined and from that base the meaning of empowerment as used by different writers is considered as a background for the thesis. Also the contemporary women’s movement in India is mapped and the role it has played in challenging the gender power relations is discussed.

Chapter 2 traces how empowerment approach had risen from the attempts of the Third World countries to develop. The various approaches made by the Government of India since independence to put the nation on the path of development is discussed.
Chapter 3 critiques the practical ways of social empowerment of women in Karnataka. It takes into account Health, Education and Violence against women and analyses the various policies and programmes formulated by the Government of Karnataka.

Chapter 4 traces women in decision making position in Karnataka and a specific contextual account and description of women in Panchayat Raj Institutions in Karnataka are discussed to analyse political empowerment of women.

Chapter 5 discusses various policies and programmes formulated by the Government of Karnataka for the economic empowerment of women. The Self Help Group Strategy in Karnataka is discussed as a case to examine the effectiveness of this strategy to empower women.

In the concluding Chapter summarises the attempts made by the Government of Karnataka to empower women socially, politically and economically suggests that power to be the focus of all empowerment strategies if empowerment has to be truly meaningful.