CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

On India becoming independent from two hundred years of colonial rule, one of the main concerns of the people and their leaders was to bring about economic and social transformation. To achieve its objectives India adopted a Constitution which guaranteed certain Fundamental Rights to the citizens of India and enunciated certain Directive Principles of State Policy, in particular, that the State shall strive to promote the welfare of the people by securing and protecting as effectively as it may a social order in which justice, social, economic and political, shall inform all the institutions of the national life, and shall direct its policy towards securing, among other things:-

• that the citizens, men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means of livelihood;

• that the ownership and control of the material resources of the community are so distributed as best to serve the common good; and

• that the operation of the economic system does not result in the concentration of wealth and means of production to the common detriment.
Having regard to these rights and in furtherance of these principles as well as of the declared objective of the Government to promote a rapid rise in the standard of living of the people by efficient exploitation of the resources of the country, increasing production, and offering opportunities to all for employment in the service of the community the planning commission was established in 1950. Many development policies, plans and programmes were implemented so that India can develop. However these initiatives did not reach marginalized sections of the society especially women who constitute majority of the poor. The top down approach of development strategy had not accomplished the desired trickling down of the benefits of development to women. There was no significant improvement in the status of women. Further the changing social and economic conditions in the country, such as globalization, liberalization and privatization had created various new problems relating to the advancement of women. The traditional welfare programmes such as poverty alleviation schemes did not address the underlying structural factors that perpetuated the oppression, subordination and exploitation of women. The government realized that these changing needs of women were not represented and understood by the policy makers and administrators. It was from these roots that an alternative bottoms up approach emerged. The concept of participation and empowerment came to be used in the development discourse. It was during the Ninth five year Plan (1997-2002) that Empowerment of Women became the primary objective of the government. Empowerment becomes a buzz word in the current development
discourse used in a majority of the policy documents for poverty alleviation\(^1\). Since then almost all programmes targeting women are being described as programmes for women empowerment and women are looked upon as agents of change.

The concept of empowerment emerged from the critiques and debates generated by the women’s movement during the 1980’s when feminists, particularly of the third world which is also known as global south, economic south, were ‘growing discontent with the largely apolitical and economicistic models in prevailing development interventions\(^2\). By the beginning of the 1990’s empowerment was used by almost all development assistance agencies (multilateral, bilateral and private) and was applied in a broad range of social change processes, it was most widely used with reference to women and gender equality. Empowerment was used to mean people’s participation and women’s development. The term empowerment was first introduced by the policy maker following The Fourth World Conference held at Beijing in 1995. This conference impressed upon the governments of the Third World, the need to empower women. The Third world nations who were anxious to demonstrate their progressive approach to gender issues immediately took the catch phrase empowerment.


After the Beijing conference empowerment entered the gender equality arena in India, the feminists challenging patriarchal gender relations, the progressive government policy, and the aid agencies anxious to do something new made empowerment the objective of their work. Soon everybody concerned with women's issues and gender equality - state actors, aid agencies, development professionals and feminist activists and advocates - were using the term empowerment. A careful analysis of the policy documents reveals that there is no clear definition of empowerment of women in them. The concept has been so overused and misused that it has lost its core meaning, thus making it very complex and highly contested. Most programmes have no clarity as to how they will change existing power relations between men and women which is the root cause of inequality in social, economic and political spheres.

At the core of the concept of empowerment is power. In order to understand empowerment it is important we understand power. In social and political theory, power is a contested concept. There is no single agreeable definition of the concept of Empowerment. When we say that men are in a dominating position when compared to women it means that men are in a position of power over women. In social sciences and politics power is defined as the ability to control and influence the behavior of people. In Marxist tradition power operates around class and the relationships of power are created in the realm of economics. Marxist believes that political power in society is in the hands of those who control economic base. Italian communist, political leader
and activist Antonia Gramsci uses the term hegemony which refers to power that is social-political-economic-cultural all at once, rather than being limited to any one realm.\(^3\) Gramsci uses “hegemony” to theorize not only the necessary condition for a successful overthrow of the bourgeoisie by the proletariat and its allies (e.g., the peasantry), but also the structures of bourgeois power in late 19th- and early 20th-century Western European states.\(^4\) Gramsci’s “hegemony” refers to a process of moral and intellectual leadership through which dominated or subordinate classes of post-1870 industrial Western European nations consent to their own domination by ruling classes, as opposed to being simply forced or coerced into accepting inferior positions. The dominant class Gramsci is referring to is the bourgeois and the subordinate class is the proletariat. Hegemony here can be understood as a form control exercised primarily through society’s superstructure. These superstructures are used in three ways namely institutions, forms of consciousness which express a particular class view of the world and political and cultural practices.\(^5\) Gramsci hegemony power can also be used to analyze other power relations operating in society like gender relations or relations between the colonizer and the colonized and so on.

Michael Foucault a French Philosopher and historian parted with the Marxist interpretation of power relations, arguing that power is not essentially something that institutions possess and use oppressively against individuals and groups.

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\(^5\) Williams Raymond: 1985, Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society, Revised Edition, Oxford University Press, New York, pp.144-146.
Foucault is not concerned with the oppressive aspect of power but more with the resistance of those the power is exerted upon. He opines that “where there is power there is resistance”.\(^6\) According to him power is productive, causing new behavior to emerge, construction of 'new' capacities and modes of activity rather than through the limitation of pre-existing ones. Power is not something that can be owned but rather something that acts and manifests itself in a certain way, it is more a strategy than a possession. “Power is analyzed as something which circulates or as something which only functions in the form of a chain... Power is employed and exercised through a net like organization. Individuals are the vehicles of power not its point of application”.\(^7\) Foucault declares that power produces reality, or regime of truth. Power and truth are inextricably bound together, in that power both makes the world and induces the truth to be spoken. Various types of power enforcement are used by institutions with specific techniques and mechanisms to establish regimes of truth. This truth is expressed through language/discourse. Discourse according to Foucault is related to power as it operates by rules of exclusion. The dominant discourses crush, divert, and mute contesting voices and interpretations, presenting each of their own perspectives and voices at the grassroots level. These muted voices are referred to as “subjugated knowledge”. Discourse therefore is controlled by objects, what

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can be spoken of; ritual, where and how one may speak; and the privileged, who may speak. Power can manifest itself positively by producing knowledge and certain discourses that get internalized by individuals and guide the behaviour of populations. This leads to more efficient forms of social control, as knowledge enables individuals to govern themselves. Foucault further uses this notion of power to analyze Governmentality and Neoliberalism. In this case, the notion of Governmentality refers to societies where power is de-centered and its members play an active role in their own self-government. Individuals are regulated from 'inside'. In Neoliberal society market forces play an important role and the knowledge produced here allows the construction of auto-regulated or auto-correcting selves.

Steven Lukes, a Social Theorist is known for its most famous academic theory "three faces of power". This theory claims that governments control people in three ways: through decision-making power, non decision-making power and ideological power. Decision-making power is a behavioral attribute that applies to individuals to the extent that they are able to modify the behavior of other individuals within a decision-making process. The person with the power in a situation is the person who prevails in the decision-making process. Non decision-making power is to influence decisions by shaping the agenda and not merely by weighing in on existing decision points. For example assigning domestic responsibility to women is so deeply institutionalized in household rules.

and practices that it appears non-negotiable. The third and most important face of power is ideological power, which is the power to influence people’s wishes and thoughts, even making them want things opposed to their own self-interest. The best example for this is women supporting patriarchal society.

In most of these perspectives power is understood as domination, oppression, power over, subjection, control which is implicitly masculine connotations. This has led to feminist to reconceptualize power as a resource to be (re)distributed, as domination, and as empowerment\(^9\). Those who conceptualize power as a resource understand it as a positive social good that is currently unequally distributed amongst women and men. For feminists who understand power in this way, the goal is to redistribute this resource so that women will have power equal to men. Implicit in this view is the assumption that power is “a kind of stuff that can be possessed by individuals in greater or lesser amounts”\(^10\). The conception of power as a resource can be found in the work of some liberal feminists like Susan Moller Okin’s work *Justice, Gender, and the Family*. The power described by liberal feminist was critiqued by Iris Marion Young who argues that power is not a stuff to be possessed but is a relation and not a thing that can be distributed or redistributed. This led to a new perspective on power as a relation of domination. This relation is often referred to as

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oppression, patriarchy, subjection and other such terms and in all these terms power over relations/domination is a common factor.

It is this domination that various feminist approaches like phenomenology, radical feminism, socialist feminism, post-structuralism and analytic philosophy have attempted to conceptualize. In power as empowerment approach the feminist understanding of power is distinct from domination and is viewed as transformative power which aims at empowering those over whom it is exercised. Jean Baker Miller a practicing psychiatrist and psychoanalyst claims that “women's examination of power...can bring new understanding to the whole concept of power”. She defines power as “the capacity to produce a change — that is, to move anything from point A or state A to point B or state B”\(^\text{11}\). Sarah Lucia Hoagland is critical of the masculine conception of power with its focus on “state authority, police and armed forces, control of economic resources, control of technology, and hierarchy and chain of command”. Hoagland defines power as “power-from-within” which she understands as “the power of ability, of choice and engagement. It is creative; and hence it is an affecting and transforming power but not a controlling power”\(^\text{12}\). Similarly, french feminist Luce Irigaray, \(^\text{13}\) questions the definition of power in phallocratic cultures. According to them any change in the distribution of power, leaving intact the power structures in society is to accept the phallocratic order. If the phallocratic order has to be subverted then

\(^{13}\) For details, Irigaray Luce: 1985, This Sex hich is not one, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, New York.
masculine definition of power must be rejected. Another French feminist Hélène Cixous further argues that power is not about mastering or exercising power over others, but instead is a form of “power over oneself”.\textsuperscript{14} Along similar lines, Nancy Hartsock refers to the understanding of power “as energy and competence rather than dominance”.\textsuperscript{15} Hannah Ardent defines power as the human ability not just to act but to act in concert which is similar to feminist conception of power as empowerment.\textsuperscript{16} She focuses on communities or collective empowerment. This way of defining power as empowerment is more liberal and inclusive.

The different forms of power has been delineated by Jo Rowland as follows

- Power over: controlling power, this may be responded to with compliance, resistance or manipulations.
- Power to: generative or productive power which creates new possibilities and actions without domination.
- Power with: a sense of the whole being greater than the sum of the individuals, especially when a group tackles problem together.
- Power from within: the spiritual strength and uniqueness that resides in each one of us and makes us truly human. Its basis is self acceptance and self

\textsuperscript{14} Standford Encyclopedia of philosophy, www.plato.stanford.edu
\textsuperscript{15} Hartsock Nancy: 1983, Money, Sex, and Power: Towards a Feminist Historical, Materialism, Boston, Northeastern University Press, p.224.
respect which extend in turn, to respect for and acceptance of others as equal\textsuperscript{17}.

Having considered the meaning of power it is now the turn of the term empowerment. The review of various literature on empowerment reveals that empowerment of women is multi dimensional, which covers wide areas of personal, social, psychological, economical and political aspects. Understanding empowerment from feminist perspective is very crucial because in most of the recent development process empowerment of women is the main objective. But this is a difficult process as it takes policymakers out of their familiar conceptual territory of welfare, poverty and efficiency into the nebulous territory of power and social justice. Quantification and measurement of empowerment was also a difficult task. Various disciples use the term empowerment, so an agreeable definition of empowerment is difficult; also perceptions of being empowered vary across time, culture and domains of a person’s life. Oxford dictionary defines empowerment as to “Give (someone) the authority or power to do something”.

The World Bank defines Empowerment as a process of enhancing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. Central to this process are actions which both build individual and collective assets, and improve the efficiency and fairness of the organizational and institutional context which govern the use of these

\textsuperscript{17} Rowlands Jo: 1997, Questioning Empowerment, Working with Women in Honduras, Oxfam, United Kingdom & Ireland, p.13.
In the 1990s there was an increased appreciation for and understanding of women's pivotal role in the development process which has also been reflected in the goals and priorities of organizations and agencies in the United Nations system. In this regard, the United Nations Resident Coordinators are being called upon to play a key role in facilitating inter-agency cooperation on gender equality and equity and the empowerment of women, with particular emphasis on operational activities at the country level. The Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) stresses that the empowerment and autonomy of women and the improvement of their political, social, economic and health status is both a highly important end in itself and necessary for the achievement of sustainable human development. A common thread uniting each of the major international conferences of the 1990's is women's empowerment and it has been defined as follows. Women's empowerment has five components: women's sense of self-worth; their right to have and to determine choices; their right to have access to opportunities and resources; their right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; and their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and

18 www.web.worldbank.org
Internationally\textsuperscript{19}. According to Rowland Jo empowerment has three dimensions: personal, relational and collective.

- Personal: developing a sense of self and individual confidence and capacity and undoing the effects of internalized oppression.

- Relational: developing the ability to negotiate and influence the nature of a relationship and decision made within it.

- Collective: where individuals work together to achieve a more extensive impact than each could have had alone. This includes involvement in political

\textsuperscript{19} Task Force on ICPD, Implementation. www.un.org
structures, but might also cover collective action based on co-operation rather than competition\textsuperscript{20}.

According to Naila Kabeer ‘Empowerment is the expansion in people’s ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them\textsuperscript{21}. Choices mean alternatives which are made of Resources, Agency and Achievement and are inter-related. Resources mean land, equipment, finance, skill, knowledge which is necessary to enhance the ability to exercise choice. Resources are distributed through a variety of different institutions and processes and access to resources will be determined by the rules, norms and practices which prevail in different institutional domains. These rules, norms and practices give some actors authority over others in determining the principles of distribution and exchange within that sphere. Agency is the ability to define one’s goal and act upon them or individual decision making ability. Agency is controlled by the norms and rules which govern social behavior and ensures that certain outcomes are produces without the exercise of agency. Resource and Agency put together constitutes what Amartya Sen refers to as capabilities, the potential that people have for living the lives they want, of achieving valued way of being and doing. This particular way of being and doing is referred by Sen as Achievement which makes up the third part of choice. Another important dimension to understand choice is Structure. Structures

\textsuperscript{20} Rowland Jo, p.14.
operate through the rules, norms and practices of different institutions to
determine the resources, agency and achievement possibilities available to
different groups of individuals in a society.

However choices of individuals and groups can in turn act on structural
constraints, reinforcing, modifying and transforming them. Such a
conceptualization of empowerment suggests that it can reflect change at a
number of different possible levels. The levels of empowerment are

‘Deeper’ levels : Structural relations of class/caste/gender

Intermediate levels : Institutional rules and resources

Immediate levels : Individual resources, agency and achievement \(^{22}\)

It can reflect change at the level of individuals and groups, in their sense
of selfhood and identity, in how they perceive their interests and in their capacity
to act. It can occur at the intermediate level, in the rules and relationships which
prevail in the personal, social, economic and political spheres of life. And it can
occur in the deeper, hidden structures which shape the distribution of resources
and power in a society and re-produce it over time. However, for any such
change to translate into meaningful and sustainable processes of empowerment,
it must ultimately encompass both individual and structural levels.

\(^{22}\) Ibid, pp.20-22.
Srilatha Batliwala defines empowerment as process of transforming the relations of power between individual and social groups shifting social power in three critical ways: Firstly by challenging the ideologies that justify social inequalities (such as gender or caste); secondly, by changing the prevailing patterns, of access to and control over economic, natural and intellectual resources and thirdly by transforming the institutions and structures that reinforce and sustain existing power structures\(^{23}\) (such as family, state, market, education and media).

After a careful analysis of the various definitions of empowerment it can be summarized as an ability to transform the power relations between individual and groups and it is also about choices which are available for women. In order to achieve this change collective action of women has been emphasized. But in process of theory being adapted to practice the meaning of empowerment was altered. It is often used to envisage the individual rather than as collective, and focused on entrepreneurship and individual self-reliance, rather than co-operation to challenge power structures which subordinate women. Here it is important to note that empowerment has been understood to a large extent from a western free market perspective and has become popular alongside the increased focus on individualism and consumerism as development goals\(^{24}\). The


programmes with objective of empowering women were able provide access to certain resources like credit, education, skills etc but have not enabled women to question the structures which determine the unequal distribution of these resources and power in society. Since Empowerment of women is a bottom up approach, women must empower themselves and development agencies cannot claim to empower women. Development agencies only play the role of facilitators and ensure that women are able to analyze and voice their needs and concerns which must be converted into policy. Policy makers and planners will have to represent these voices from the grass roots and planning must cease to be a top down process.

The feminist of the third world have played a major role in bring empowerment of women into the main stream development discourse. The feminist movement in India has helped shape the development programmes which aim at eliminating the inequalities and poverty. It must be noted that the main objective of the feminist movement was ‘to achieve the goals of equality and/or liberation for women’\(^\text{25}\). It is in this context that we shall be looking for a relationship between development process and feminist movement and therefore it is important to map the contribution of the feminist movement in attempting to transform the social power relations of Indian Society. In the movement for equality of women in India, the contribution of social reformers and the freedom

struggle have very great significance. In the 19th century as a result of initiative taken by educated Indian intelligentsia organizations like Brahma Samaj, Prarthana Samaj were established and women of their own families were encouraged to be part of these organizations and lead their women’s wing. It was only in the Gandhian thinking that Feminist discourse took a definite form. He found that women’s qualities of self sacrificing nature were more suitable for his non violent struggle. Gandhi legitimized and expanded Indian women’s public activities by initiating them into civil disobedience movement against the British. In this way women began to be part of the national movement and gained a unique place in the struggle for independence. After independence the nationalist women were convinced that with independence the inequalities between man and women would be righted. In 1946 when the Constituent Assembly of India was formed 14 women were included as members. They were Ammu Swaminathan, Dakshayani Velayudhan, Durgabai Deshmukh, Hansa Mehta, Malti Chowdhury, Sucheta Kripalini, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, Purnima Banerjee, kamala Chaudhuri, Begum Aizaz Rasul, Sarojini Naidu, Begum Jahanara Shan Nawaz, Lila Roy and Begum Ikramullah.

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 on 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 affirmative discrimination in favour of women. Similarly, Article 16 provides for equality of opportunities in the matter of public appointments for all citizens, Article 39 stipulates that the state shall direct its policy towards providing men and women equally the right 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; and Article 51(A) (e) imposes a fundamental duty on every citizen to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women. To make this de-jure equality into a de-facto one, many policies and programmes were put into action from time to time, besides enacting/enforcing special legislations, in favour of women. Many women were pleased with the constitutional provision and legal reforms. Belonging to the upper and middle class of the society they were the beneficiaries of the new opportunity. There was no need felt by the women’s movement to press their demands as the new Indian state was a welfare state now.

In the early fifties, an attempt was made to reform and codify the Hindu Personal Law which was being demanded by the feminist since the 1930s. A committee was appointed under the chairmanship of B. N Rau who submitted the Bill in 1944. No action was taken and after independence under the chairmanship of B.R Ambedkar, the law minister a bill was submitted which raised the age of consent and marriage, upheld monogamy, gave women the rights to divorce, maintenance and inheritance, and treated dowry as stridhan, or women’s property. There was strong opposition from conservative sections of the society,
and some senior congress leaders, such as President Rajendra Prasad and Sardar Patel led to the bill being postponed, despite strong support from a majority of congressmen and from women activists and social reformers. Finally sections of the bill were passed in four separate Acts: The Hindu Marriage Act, the Hindu succession Act, the Hindu minority and Guardianship Act, and the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act. Nehru who was the prime minister was criticized for not pushing through a more radical civil code for the Hindus and for not passing a uniform civil code applicable to all citizens.26

In 1953 the government established a central social Welfare Board with a nation-wide programme for grants in aid for certain specific activities. Many of the prominent women social workers were associated with this organization either at the centre or in the state. The women's organization became institutionalized. They designed programmes to serve women, especially day care centers, hostels for working women, educational centers, and medical dispensaries. The approach of these organizations has been ‘Welfarist’. By mid 1960s people began to express their disillusionment with government development policies, the prevalent economic rights, land rights and price rise. This led to number of struggles and peasant movements in the early interesting to the 1970s. The communist women were the most vocal in expressing their dissatisfaction with constitutional provisions, five year plan, and government. A


series of locally organized and intense popular struggles broke out. What is particularly interesting for the women’s movement were the Shahada and anti price rise agitation in Maharashtra, SEWA and Nav Nirman in Gujarat.

The first of these was the Shahada movement in 1972 in the Dhulia district of Maharashtra, initiated by Bhil (tribal) landless laborers against the extortionate practices of local landlords, most of who were non tribal and treated the tribes as sub human. In 1972 the Shramik Sangathana was formed in Shahada and fought against land alienation. Women played the most militant role. They led demonstration, invented and shouted militant slogans, sang revolutionary songs and mobilized the masses. In the negotiations with the landlords they proved to be more adamant than men. As women were in the forefront of this movement women’s issues such as wife beating was raised making a public issue out of what is generally regarded as a private problem. Anti-patriarchal sentiments were expressed in this movement.

The first attempt at a women’s trade union was made with the formation of the Self Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) at the initiative of Ela Bhat in 1972 in Ahemdabad. Women involved in various trades in the informal sector were brought together by their shared experiences such as low earnings, harassment at home, harassment by contractors and the police, poor work conditions, non-recognition of their labour etc. Its aim was to improve the

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condition of poor women who worked in the unorganized sector by providing training, technical aids and collective bargaining.

The anti price rise agitation launched in Bombay in 1973 by Mrinal Gore of the Socialist Party and Ahalya Rangnekar of the CPI-M, together with others, mobilized women of the city against inflation. The movement grew rapidly becoming a mass movement for consumer protection. So many housewives got involved in the movement that a new form of protest was invented by women coming out in the streets and beating *thalis* (metal plates) with rolling pins. Soon the movement spread to Gujarat, becoming known as the Nav Nirman movement in 1974. This movement was originally a student’s movement against soaring prices, corruption and black marketeering, which became a massive middle-class movement joined by thousands of women²⁹.

Besides involvement in political and economic issues it was also concerned with those issues which were considered private such as family violence, domestic roles and challenged patriarchal stereotypes. The methods of protest ranged from mass hunger strike, mock funerals and Prabhat pheris. The Anti price rise movement and the Nav Nirman movements involved thousands of women in public action which is in itself significant. The movement soon declined.

The Chipko movement got its name from the Hindi word ‘*chipko*’ which means to cling. This clinging to trees was a particular action people used to save

²⁹ Ibid, p.103.
trees, which were crucial to their lives, from being felled. The movement began in 1973 in the small hilly town of Gopeshwar in Chamoli district when representatives from a sports factory came to cut trees. Women joined the movement in 1974 and with their united strength prevented the contractor from cutting trees. It became famous as the first major movement for saving the environment and gave rise to the understanding that women had a special nurturing role towards nature, and that environment issues were very often women’s issues because they suffered most from its deterioration, as when forest disappeared and they had to walk for miles to collect fuel wood, fodder and water. It was the women of Chipko who brought to public attention the importance of trees and the need to protect the environment.

Contemporary Women’s Movement in India must be seen in the context of the broader canvas of the international Women’s movement which spread across the world through the 20th century and with which the Indian women’s movement has built solidarity. These links developed with exchange of ideas and experiences in international platforms such as the World Conference on Women held by the UN in Mexico in 1975. It declared 1975–1985 as the International Decade of the Woman. The World Plan of Action formulated during the Conference stressed the need for research, documentation and analyses into processes in society that create structures of gender inequalities. There had

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been an internal demand for such a document in India as well, but the actual timing was in response to a United Nations request to all countries to prepare reports on the status of women for International women’s Year scheduled for 1975. In India, the National Committee on the Status of Women had been set up to examine the status of women in the country and to investigate into the extent to which the constitutional and legal provisions had impacted on women’s status including their employment and education. The Committee was the first major attempt to review and evaluate data on various aspects of women’s status. It was also empowered to comment on the directions of change in women’s roles, rights and opportunities due to development.

The Committee submitted its report called Toward Equality in 1974. The Authors of this report charged that woman’s status had not improved but had, in fact declined since independence. The report revealed the deplorable condition of women in the country evident from demographic data, an analysis of the socio-cultural conditions prevalent, the legal provisions and safeguards, economic role played by women in all sectors, women’s access to education, political participation, the policies and programmes for welfare and development, the impact of mass media, etc. But the main point of the report, that millions of Indian women have not benefited from “modernity” whether it be economic, technological, political, or social, remains true even today. The report also made

several recommendations which included stressing the important role of the State and the community in the achievement of ‘gender equality’. It highlighted the need for a concerted effort to eradicate oppressive practices such as dowry, polygamy, bigamy, child marriage, ostentatious expenditure on weddings, and it emphasized the need for a campaign on legal awareness, the provisions of crèches, better working conditions for women including equal remuneration for equal work, the compulsory registration of marriages, law reform on aspects concerning divorce, maintenance, inheritance, adoption, guardianship maternity benefits, the universalisation of education, etc. But many of these recommendations were not implemented but the research made to bring out this report provided the intellectual foundation for a new women’s movement.

This revelation led to the emergence of the contemporary feminist movement in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Many women’s groups who were dissatisfied with their marginalization and the hierarchy and bureaucracy in the organizations in which they were affiliated earlier, began to look for alternatives. The result was many autonomous organizations were started which rejected formal hierarchical structure and traditional leadership styles and they experimented with leaderless collectives with decision making by consensus, a volunteering of tasks and rotation of responsibility. Among the earliest of these was the Progressive Women’s Organisation (POW) in Osmania University in Hyderabad in 1974. It worked towards organizing women against gender oppressive structures in society, namely, the sexual division of labour and the
culture that rationalized this discrimination. The organization promoted the ideology of ‘equality’ and opposed the economic dependence of women on men. Influenced by the POW the Maoist women in Pune formed the Putrogami Stree Sangathana and the Maoist women in Bombay formed the Stree Mukti Sangathana in 1975. Another important organization that was formed during this period was the Mahila Samta Sainik Dal, this was movement started by the Dalit women. According to them religion was the main agent of oppression of women and the dalits, and the caste system as the source of inequality in India. The Mahila Dakshata Samiti the women’s wing of the Janata Party, The Janawadi Mahila Samiti the women’s wing of the CPM, the All India Democratic Women’s Association of the CPM were all party affiliated organizations which also came into existence in the same period. These organizations began to bring family into the public arena with issues like dowry, female foeticide, wife battering, rights of women within the family etc.

The UN had declared 1795 as International Women’s year and the women’s organizations in India began to celebrate March 8 as International Women’s Day. Many women’s issues such as dowry, devadasis (prostitution sanctioned by religion) and the practical needs of women in their daily lives were taken up by these organizations; which brought the women’s organization together to form the United Women’s Liberation Struggle conference in Pune. This was followed by others such conferences in different parts of India. The most important aspect about these conferences is the class diversity and the
breadth of issues under discussion. The women’s movement continued to play a major role in awakening a new consciousness about women’s problem. This women’s movement continued to focus on traditional practices, beliefs, and institutions as the source of oppression. It also addressed Violence against women, gender differences, and the impact of the economic situation on the day to day lives of women. In the 1980’s women groups started to protest against the rising incidents of dowry deaths especially in Delhi which had the highest dowry related deaths. The Mahila Dakshata Samiti was the first women’s organization in Delhi to take up the issue of dowry. The Stri Sangharsha Samiti and other women’s groups held demonstrations in Delhi. The women’s organizations came out with evidences linking death –by –fire to dowry harassment and many suicides in official records were actually murders. They raised their voices against this situation and insisted on reforms in the police procedures. Finally due to the efforts of organizations like the Mahila Dakshata Samiti, The Janawadi Mahila Samiti, and the All India Democratic Women’s Association an amendment to the Dowry Prohibition Act (1961) in 1984 was made. Apart from these organizations many women centers were established to provide legal aid, counseling and shelter to dowry victims. Saheli in Delhi was one such center which was established to address domestic violence and harassment. Dowry deaths have been reported from all cities and towns in India.

32 Ibid. p. 249
and continue to exist even to this day. The research and publications have pointed out the demand for dowry as product of consumerism being promoted by the capitalist society which has led to exploitation of women.

Another major campaign that emerged in 1980 was rape especially custodial rape. The Rameeza Bee case in 1978 in Hyderabad, the Mathura case in Maharashtra and the Maya Tyagi case in Western U.P in 1980 brought many women’s groups all over India to demonstrate. Many political parties also joined the campaign. Finally a bill was introduced to amend the Evidence Act, the Criminal procedure Code and the Indian Penal Code and introduced the category of custodial rape and was considered the most heinous crime than other forms of rape. Many issues like Burden of Proof and problems related to acquiring evidence and the kind of social sanction accorded to rape are still under discussion and are not resolved.\textsuperscript{33}Another important issue was when communalism started dictating the agenda for women’s rights as in the Shah Bano case in 1985. The Supreme Court granted Shah Bano, a 75 year old divorced Muslim woman, the right to financial support from her former husband under section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Code that requires husbands with means to support destitute ex-wives. This issue soon became communal and the Muslims considered it violation of Muslim personal law and challenged the right

\textsuperscript{33} Kumar Radha: p.128-136.
of the court to interfere in their law. Throughout India, conservative Muslims argued that this decision was an attack on their identity as a religious minority\textsuperscript{34}. In 1985 Muslim Women’s (Protection of Rights in Divorce) Bill denying women redress under section 125 and naming the natal family responsible for support in case of destitute was introduced. Over one lakh demonstrated in support of this bill and only a few hundred demonstrated in favour of the judgment. More over during the 1980s there was a steep rise in communal violence all over India. There was immense pressure on the Congress government to pass the Muslim Women’s bill. In this case the problem and needs of women were given up and religious identity gained prominence.

In September 1987 the death of Roop Kanwar, an 18 year old woman committed Sati in the village of Deorala in Rajasthan. Very soon the site of immolation became a pilgrim spot. Roop Kanwar’s father -in- law along with other prominent men from the village formed a trust called the Sati Dharm Raksha Samiti. Number of stalls sprang up selling photographs and souvenirs, food stalls and accommodation for pilgrims began to be organized. This incident sparked of a campaign which gave rise to a debate pitting modern against tradition, urban against rural, the state against spiritualism, and religious communities. The government reacted with legislation Sati Prevention Bill which outlawed its

\textsuperscript{34} Hasan Zoya; 1993, Communalism, State Policy and the Question of Women’s Right in Contemporary India, Bulletin of Concerned scholars, 25 No., 4 (October-December), p.11.
glorification. The police arrested around 45 people for murdering Roop Kanwar and around 11 people including politicians were arrested for glorifying sati but were acquitted by the court for lack of evidence in 2004\textsuperscript{35}.

The political development such as the growth of Globalization and the New Economic Policy reforms in India have showed positive as well as negative impact on women in general and rural women in particular. On the one hand globalization as opened up better facilities and opportunities to a privileged few women in urban areas on the other hand a large group of working women of India is in the rural and unorganized sectors are in a disadvantaged position. Agriculture production has undergone a drastic change. Subsistence farming gets displaced by market-linked production and farm lands are taken over for SEZs and mega development projects, the forest based resources are centralized and subsequently set up for private commercial interests who have displaced the existing subsistence use, women continue to be at the receiving end, negating the role of women as producers while foregrounding them as consumers\textsuperscript{36}. Even within projects of urbanization and industrialization, it is the women who bear the brunt. The labor laws have been dismantled and the growth of unorganized sector where large number of women work, has increased women’s economic vulnerability. The state has withdrawn its services in the public distribution system and the social sector. Since globalization has suddenly

\textsuperscript{35} Rajalakshmi T.K: 2004 February28- March 12, Sati and the verdict, Frontline.

\textsuperscript{36} Prabeen Singh, The Problem , Seminar 583, Unequal Status a Symposium on New Challenges before the Women’s Movement.
opened up in the Indian economy at a very high speed without the required economic and social policies to provide the much required safety net, women who have been involved with production in the traditional ways, have to cope with numerous problems and yet try to avail of the opportunities which an open economy promises. It is in this background that role of women’s movement should be analyzed.

Women’s movement during this period has confronted patriarchy and social values such as authoritarianism, aggression, competition and hierarchy in the family and society, and the oppression and exploitation imposed by dominant class, caste and patriarchal rule. Due to the untiring efforts of the women’s movement, the country amended and enacted women-related legislations during the Tenth Plan. The Married Women’s Property Act (1874), the Hindu Succession Act (1956) was amended and the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA) (2005) was passed.

Unlike the other parts of India, Karnataka witnessed very few social movements. During the British rule a few sporadic peasant or farmers revolted against the British and later in the nationalist movements people of Karnataka participated in Forest Satyagraha, Civil Disobedience and Non-Cooperation etc. Women in Karnataka like in the rest of India were part of these movements. After independence Karnataka witnessed Ecology Movements, Farmers Movements, Dalit Movements and Tribal Movements. One important issue that received much attention in environment, during 1980, was of social forestry. Social Forestry
were supposed to provide fuel, fodder, timber, manure, fruits, oil, fibers and rate material for the rural people. But the transformation of social forestry into a monoculture had multiple effects on the ecology. It transformed a self sufficient economy into a market oriented deficit economy. It is a well established fact that the environment issue was women’s issue as it would directly affect them. Large number of women participated in it. Another important movement is the farmer’s movement. Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha (KRRS) is an Indian peasant farmers’ movement, created in 1980 to address the growing problems facing farmers caused by the globalization of world trade. It was the first peoples’ movement in India to mobilize massive demonstrations against GATT, and under the leadership of Professor Nanjundaswamy, a Gandhian socialist, and membership of the KRRS has reached about 10 million farmers, over one sixth of Karnataka’s total population. The members are mostly small farmers (5-20 acres) and peasants, who find it difficult to compete with aggressive multinational corporations (MNCs). This movement also addresses issues concerning women. It aims to challenge patriarchal structures and calls for a mandatory ratio of parliament seats to be reserved for women. It also opposes the caste system, seeing it as one of India’s key social injustices. The other movements in Karnataka are the Dalit Movement and tribal movements which fights for justice and equality. Women are being part of these movements but are still vulnerable. Any attempt to assert their rights they face opposition ranging from abuse to serious atrocities like rape and boycott. The best example is of the boycott of 80
Dalit families in Kodkol village\textsuperscript{37} in Bijapur district in 2006 and of the Kambalapalli incident\textsuperscript{38} in Kolar district in 2000 where seven dalits were burnt alive. These incidents only reflect that violence against Dalit women becomes a caste issue. Most often Dalit women will have no voice in such matters which curtails Dalit women’s representation in these movements.

The process of development which impacted the Indian nation penetrated all regions within it. Karnataka which is one of the units in the Indian federal system has a long history of development which can be traced back to the days of the British rule. The Princely state of Mysore where Kannada speaking people were in a majority had achieved considerable progress due to the foresighted policies of its Dewans like Seshadri Iyer, Sir M Vishveshwariah and Sir Mirza Ismail. The Princely State had invested its funds in irrigation, dams, roads, electricity generation, free Public health and education and in public sector industries which put Mysore on the path of development before independence itself. In 1947 the Princely State of Mysore got integrated into the Indian Union and was considered Part B State of the Indian Union and did not receive any central financial assistance. But there was a demand from Kannada speaking people who were minority in other region to be united into a single political unit. This movement for unification led to the merger of five territories where Kannada was the language of the people.

\textsuperscript{37} The Hindu: 2006 October 23, Ostracised Kodkol Dalits want to be rehabilitated elsewhere.
\textsuperscript{38} The Hindu: 2007 May 14, I will tell all if given protection says Kambalapalli witness.
a) Four districts of the erstwhile Bombay state

b) Three districts of the erstwhile princely state of Hyderabad

c) Two districts and one taluk of the former Madras state

d) The state of Coorg (Kodagu) and

e) Nine district of the former princely state of Mysore

The New State was initially known as Mysore came into being as a state of the Union Of India on November 1, 1950, but subsequently in 1973 it was renamed Karnataka, thereby fulfilling a long standing demand of the people of the State. At the time of Reorganization of the State there were 19 districts but over the time more districts have created. For administrative purpose the state is divided into 30 districts.

The plan of development outlined by the Planning Commission was implemented through the Five Year Plans. The First Five year plan of Karnataka was confined only to Mysore State and Bellary District. Being an integral part of the aggregate national plan the Karnataka state plans have been devised on the lines of broad objective of national development. It must be remembered that most of the development policies were formulated by the central government and the state were only expected to implement them. The required compliance was induced by carrot and stick Policy. Financial assistance for State Plans was extended depending on the party that ruled both at the centre and at the state level. This state of affair continued for almost 20 years after independence. From the 1970’s onwards the Governments in Karnataka stated to take initiatives for
the development of the state and many industries were encouraged by giving them incentives and subsidies. Though the overall growth rate of the State was reasonably good certain sectors like agriculture suffered. It must me noted that majority of the state’s population were dependent on it. Some regions in the state and sections in the society continued to be backward. In order to address these issues the state has taken up many measures, but the focus here is on the initiatives for the development of women in Karnataka.

Women and child welfare in Karnataka during this period was under the Directorate of Social Welfare Department and most schemes implemented were welfare oriented such as opening Balwadis (Community Crèches and Pre Basic Schools) Maternity and Infant Health Services, Social education for women, Art and crafts Centers and some general cultural and recreational activities. This welfare approach in the state continued till the Fifth five year plan (1978-83). The Fifth five year plan marked a change in the strategy. A separate Directorate for Women and Child Welfare was started during this period. In the national plans Women now were seen not as targets of welfare but as actors in development which was reflected in the states plans also. Efforts were made by the Department to alleviate the suffering of women and children by giving them facilities of care, protection health services, nutrition, formal, non-formal and vocational education and introducing innovative schemes to enable women to supplement their family income and to better their standard of life. Thus women were now made to contributing for development. From the Ninth plan onwards
the issue of empowerment of women and engendering the development objective has occupied prominence in Karnataka. Taking into account the needs of women in different stages of their life many programmes have been implemented with empowerment as the main objective. In Karnataka the most popular and wide spread programme is the Stri Shakti. The main objective is to make women self reliant by inculcating the habit of saving and proper utilization of financial resources. To empower women socially many health and educational schemes such as the National Rural Health Mission, Sarva Siksha Abhiyan, etc. are in progress so has to reach out to the poor women. Reservation of seats for women in the Panchayat is another major step towards empowering women politically. An attempt is made to analyze all the programmes and schemes implemented by government of Karnataka to empower women. In the subsequent chapters these programmes to empower women are analyzed. An attempt is made to understand the extent to which these programmes were able to penetrate into the structures of society in Karnataka which are responsible for disempowerment of women.

The challenges that the women’s movement is facing at present stems from the vast diversities within India. Women are not a homogenous group and are divided along class, caste sexuality and disability and as parts of India develop at a faster rate, increased social and economic inequalities is giving rise to new problems like sexual harassment at the work place and in public transport. While changes are taking place in economic parameters, social
parameters are not keeping pace with this transformation. These conditions have
given rise to strange volatility in the social system and thus are affecting women.
There have been several incidents of molestation being reported recently by the
media and has raised a crucial question of safety of women in public places like
city streets, public transport, or in their own neighborhood. Violence and fear of
violence have become an integral part of women’s experience of public spaces in
India. Traditional and conservative forces are trying to enforce a moral code of
behavior on women in public places and moral policing by self appointed moral
police have led to several attacks on women in public. The civil society and
women’s groups have a major role in finding solutions to this problem. But the
solution has to emerge from consultative process where the voices of all people,
especially vulnerable population, are heard and given value.

The Indian State over the last few decades has responded to the
demands of the women’s movement in many ways. The state has co-opted the
ideas and language of the women’s movement to acquire legitimacy.
“Empowering women” through special development programmes and granting
reservations in local self governments, have not matched by changes for women,
either at the grass root level or at various levels of the political system such as
the government and political parties\textsuperscript{39}. Women’s movement is now challenging
the states projection of self help groups as a panacea for women’s empowerment
and poverty reduction, because the ground reality is that they fail to address the

\textsuperscript{39} Kalpana Mehta, Women’s Movement in India, Seminar 583.
root of women’s subordination and place the onus of poverty redressal on the poor, especially women. Women’s participation in the Panchayat Raj Institutions is also been viewed critical as the voices of the poor women are not converted into policies.