INTRODUCTION

In our social fabric, women are neglected a lot but it cannot be denied that they have a defined and definite role to play in the society in general and family in particular. After independence, our elected governments have devoted enough attention to the problems of women, resulting into numerous reforming steps and framing of laws, however, the practical output has not been satisfactory, at all (Majumdar, 2004). The casualty has been the veracity of her existence. At one juncture she was put on a very elevated pedestal and at another juncture she was thrown into the pits of filth and guilt. It is only recently that society has started realizing that education is the fundamental requirement for human development and for human betterment, it is essential to understand about the growth of women and girl child. The last decade has witnessed quantum jump in female literacy rate due to literacy campaigns and the Mahila Programmes. However, the gap between the male literacy rate and female literacy rate is still not very encouraging.

Increasing women’s education is a central policy aim of the international development community and most of the developing country governments. Gender equality in education is a critical element of the millennium development goals. This international commitment
is, in part, founded on a large literature that establishes the positive effects of women’s education on a broad range of development outcomes from, reductions in fertility and child mortality to increased productivity and economic growth (World Bank 2001).

Women education is a big catalytic agent, as it imparts exposure and creates new ideas of thinking and triggers demand for a change. Education is both an important instrument for increasing and improving the chances of women’s employability and for empowering women as they learn to think for themselves, become confident and also develop the capability of recognizing more acutely the areas of exploitation. (National Commission on self employed women and women in the informal sector, 1987-88)

Today the whole world has emphasized and is convinced about the important and empowering role of education. It is considered that only education can raise women’s status in the society and it is the only key which can open the door of healthy and better life for women. There has been a drastic increase in the education as well as position of women in recent decades in rural and urban areas.

Though in our society the notion of man being the primary earner is still embedded in the cultural value system of middle class, yet women’s right and need to pursue their study and career and to
have begun to be accepted and respected even by the middle classes. As Nath (1961) found in his research that increase in the number and proportion of girls at different levels of education and tremendous drop in dropout rates indicate a strong trend in education of girls not only as a social obligation, of getting educated grooms, but with a long term need for their developing into empowered human beings.

Today our modern Indian woman is at par with men in all kinds of jobs like reaching the moon, conquering Mount Everest and participating in all fields and this is only because of education and its impact on women. Scientific technology has entered the environment of our day to day life and culture. A woman or girl can be called modern only when she is well educated and has more rationality in her attitude towards life. Today upper middle class and lower middle class women with good qualification are better handling at their home, society and occupation. Woman is the pivot around which the whole family moves.

“Women’s participation in decision making in the government, taking the I.A.S, I.P.S and I.E.S, services into account has also increased from 379 in 1985 to 565 in 1992 showing an increase of 49.1 percent (H.R.D Govt. Of India, 1995).
“Indian women are playing a crucial role in a number of fields and professions over the years as our nation progresses on the path of development and they play an important role in our efforts for inclusive growth. The education of women and the girl child is a very important tool for this effort, so that they can contribute towards development”. (IANS, 2011: New Delhi)

The benefits of educating girls and women are well understood, education of girls remove many evils such as female foeticide, child mortality, dowry etc. Primary and secondary education for girls and women is necessary but higher education gives them a greater voice in taking decisions related to their family, society and country also. If a woman gets higher education only then a women’s well being and high position can be achieved. Women’s education is greatly influenced by the social context in which they live and economic condition of their family.

A recent literature “Impact of investments in female education on Gender equality” (ICRW, 2003) shows that education is a necessary but not sufficient investment to achieve gender equality or improve women’s well being. In most cases, only secondary or higher levels of schooling lead to improved options, opportunities and outcomes for women.
Though the scientific technology and advanced studies have entered in our day to day life still most of the women are illiterate and deprived of getting advantage of present development of our country. The reason behind it is ignorance, lack of education and lack of self confidence. Great social scientist Swami said, “Educate your women first and leave them to themselves, then they will tell you what reforms are necessary for them.”

“Our university system is, in many parts, in a state of despair… in almost half the districts in the country, higher education enrollments are abnormally low, almost two-third of our universities and 90 percent of our colleges are rated as below average on quality parameters… I am concerned that in many states university appointments, including that of vice-chancellors, have been politicalised and have become subject to caste and communal considerations, there are complaints of favoritism and corruption”(www.pmindia.nic.in/speech/content. 2007)

**Educational and social status of women in ancient India**

Education has been recognized as an important factor for social change in the society. In early ancient India, women got less education than men as well as low status in the society but later in the Vedic period women had much access to knowledge. They occupied equal status with men in almost every field of life. They were able to Vedas
and Upanishads. There were many poetesses and women scholars in Rigvedic time. There was Upanayana Sanskar Vedic initiation for girls as that for boys. Gargi Maitreyi, Attreyi, Kausalya, Draupadi etc. were highly learned women of Vedic time. Girls were free to learn every skill and study Vedas and other subjects.

In Atharva Veda it was declared that a woman was not considered to marry till she had not completed her student life. They used to go through a regular course of education. They were regarded as the most useful and respectable member of society. Women participated in discussion of political philosophical nature with male scholars.

In Mahabharta, the wife was called the better half of the husband. No religious duty was performed without husband or wife. The great statue of Ardhanarishwar (situated in Eliphanta caves, Maharashtra) depicted God as half men and half women, is a concrete example of equal status of men and women enjoyed in that time. This is the fact that ancient India was permissive for woman. Widows could remarry, divorce was permitted, women and girls had freedom to choose their life partners. Thus women played a liberal social atmosphere in late ancient era or in early Vedic period. While marriage was considered as religious and social duty, but it was not a
compulsory duty for every woman and there was no limitation for the age of marriage. Often girls were engaged in marriages called Gandharva Vivaha. There was no Parda Pratha at that time.

As regards property rights, both husband and wife were joint owners of property. Women had similar education as men. She took part in philosophic debates like man. This shows that women were enjoyed equal and important status in educational and social culture of early Vedic era.

**Educational and social status of women in medieval period**

Approximately around five hundred B.C. the educational and social status of women began to decline. With the Islamic invasion of Babar and Mughal Empire, women’s freedom and rights were deteriorated. Percentage of literacy among women went down very rapidly. Medieval India was considered ‘dark age’ for women. Woman was considered sole property of her father, brother or her husband. Due to fear of Muslim invaders women were not allowed to move freely, they started to cover their face and veil their body and thus their freedom started to deteriorate, though very young girls had some education and schooling wherever possible. During this time, education was not considered compulsory for them. There were no differences between girls and boys in getting primary education only
but higher education was not permitted to girls because in higher institution there were boys only and no system for co-education. Noble families gave higher education to their daughters at their home. Girls of royal families obtained historical as well as religious education at their homes. There was some Muslim princess who got war education for example: Hajrat Mahal, Razia Sultana, Gulbadan, and NoorJahan Begum. Although women’s status was going down, there were so many social evils at that time such as child marriage, parda pratha, ban on widow remarriage, sati pratha etc, some women got important places in the fields of art, literature, education and in administration for example: Princesses Jahanara and Zebunnissa who were well known poets, Shivaji’s mother Jijabai was also a great warrior and administrator.

On the other hand there were very few Muslim rulers who paid attention to girl's education like the great King Akbar opened a Madarsa for women at Fatehpur Sikri. Gradually the Bhakti movement tried to improve women’s status. Mirabai a Saint Poet was one of the important Bhakti movement figures. Some other female saint poets as Akka Mahadevi, Rami Janabai who openly advocate equal status and education for girls.
Educational and social status of women during British period

When Christian missionaries entered India, the efforts for girls’ education were initiated. Many European scholars and Indian reformers as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, and Jyotirao Phule etc. fought for the upliftment of girls and women. In 1850 the stage was set for women’s education. An English social reformer Miss Mary Carpenter, wife of Martha Maultnee and her daughter Eliza Caldwell rightly forced for girls education and training. In 1870 the first training college for women primary teachers was established. In 1883 Calcutta University granted the University degree to a first Indian lady. One important development during this time was the opening career in medicine for girls. The lady Differing fund was developed for the medical progress of women.

The establishment of an Indian women’s University in 1916 in Bombay (S.N.D.T. University) was a great indicator of women’s education.
Table 1.1
Educational statuses of women during British Period (1901-1941)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census Year</th>
<th>Females (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>0.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>1.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>2.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


From 1921 to 1941 the number of girls receiving education increased. In spite of these changes very few women enjoyed the benefits of training and education as men were considered the sole bread winner and all decisions were in the hands of husbands or male members of the family.

Women also played a great part in India’s independence struggle. Some of the famous freedom fighters were: Annie Besant, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, Aruna Asaf Ali, Sucheta Kriplani etc.
Educational and social status of women during post independence period

After independence the role of women had been changed. They began to enjoy economic independence and more dignity and equality than before. Various policies, commissions and committees were set up for education and social upliftment of girls by the government of India.

Table 1.2
Percentage of girls in total number of students enrolled
1950-51 to 1997-98

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Primary Stage</th>
<th>Middle Stage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Class I-V)</td>
<td>(Classes VI-VIII)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950-51</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>06.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960-61</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>23.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970-71</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>29.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-81</td>
<td>38.6</td>
<td>32.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-91</td>
<td>41.5</td>
<td>36.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997-98</td>
<td>43.6</td>
<td>40.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Department of Education (various year) MHRD Government of India (From Nayar Usha 2002 ‘Education of Girls in India: An Assessment’ in (ed) Govinda R. India Education Report: A Profile of Basic Education’ Oxford University)

The five year plan period was formulated for education and training. The first five year plan period was organized in 1951-55. The constitution adopted in 1950 directed the state to impart free and
compulsory education to children up to the age of fourteen; though at that time enrollment of girls at primary school was very low. Many steps were taken to increase the girl enrollment by motivating the parents to send their daughters to coeducational schools. The five year plans emphasized the need to provide greater education to girls. In 1958 the government of India appointed a National committee on women’s education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census Year</th>
<th>Females (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>9.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>12.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>18.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>24.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>32.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>53.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>65.46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In 1959 National council for women’s education was set up and was reconstituted in 1964. Women of India are now uplifted and are given equal status with men in all walks of life, political, social educational and domestic. In free India they are allowed to join any service or any profession, Women in India, now participate in all activities such as sports, politics, media, art and culture, science and
technology etc. Smt. Indira Gandhi served as a Prime minister of India for fifteen years, the world’s longest serving woman prime minister. But due to several socio-economic factors girls and women are not able to get these opportunities. Some of the major reasons are poverty burden of domestic work on girl child, the prevailing notion that women should look after home and children, etc.

**Educational and social status of women in modern India**

At present there are women with different degrees of achievement as highly qualified, professionally well settled dynamic, pushy and independent. On the other hand our modern India also has middle class women with reasonably low education and women who are 50% illiterate or semi illiterate. Women organizations are now working in different spheres-Balwadi, health care, nutrition, training and skill development and for availing governments income generating and welfare programmes. Mahila Mandals, Non-Government organizations are the indicators of women’s ability to play powerful and creative roles in society. Self help groups and NGOS such as Self Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) have played a major role in women empowerment. Many women in India came out as leader of local movements for example Medha Patkar in Narmada Bachao Andolan.
The government of India has recently launched the ‘Sakshar Bharat Mission’ for female education and spread awareness in rural as well as urban parts of the nation. On March 9, 2010, Rajyasabha passed women reservation bill, a day after International women’s day, ensuring 33 percent reservation to women in parliament. Current Indian society is now proud of outstanding women as Kalpana Chawla, Sania Mirza, Barkha Dutta, Shabana Azmi and many more in different fields.

Today women play a role much more than just a mother, wife or daughter. Globalization and development of industries are providing so many opportunities for accelerating women’s involvement in decision making and economic independence.

Since women organizations help for the empowerment of women, there is a need for sincere efforts from government to enhance decision making power and economic independence. The matter is not only to make them able to take decisions but to get these decisions accepted by those concerned. A major problem in Indian system of decision making is that there is no effective machinery to measure or assess its implementation.

Bhartiya Shishu Evam Mahila Vividh Vikas Samiti with the Times of India have planned one month life skill training in four
different states of India targeting 300 women for receiving non formal basic education to remove illiteracy and enable women to earn themselves and strengthening their self esteem.

**Root causes for low literacy among women in India**

There is no doubt that illiteracy creates a barrier to the liberation of women. No single factor is responsible for illiteracy among women in India. The factor responsible for low literacy and illiteracy are:-

- Lower enrolment of girls in school
- Girl child as second mother
- Bonded labour system specially in rural areas
- Caste system as a barrier
- Dowry as curse
- Poverty
- Early marriage
- Lack of female teachers in schools

**Remedial measures for improving the literacy level of woman**

The ministry of education both at centre and state level should plan strategic steps to prevent drop outs among girls. The enrollment can be made even mandatory for every girl.
- Bonded child labour practice must be banned.
- The midday meal scheme and other supports like free text books, note books, free uniform etc.
- Social evils like dowry, child marriages should be erased.
- Government voluntary sectors should come forward to provide free education for poor girls.

Government interventions for eradication of illiteracy

Government of India first introduced National Adult Education programmed (1978) with a target to educate 100 million people. This was implemented through the Rural Functional Literacy Project (RFLP) sponsored by the Central Government State Adult Education Programme (SAEP) by the state government and adult education through voluntary agencies by central scheme of assistance to voluntary agencies. National literacy Mission (NLM) was launched in 1988 with the objective of imparting functional literacy to 80 million adult illiterate persons in the 15-35 age groups by 1995.

The National policy document on education (1986) gave thrust to women’s education to remove gender disparities. The programs of action included elementary education for girls. The main objective of intervention is to increase the self confidence of women, increase their decision making power, faster their economic development.
Mahila Samakhya (education for women’s equality) was launched in 1989 and implemented in 6877 villages in 51 districts of eight states. It lays the foundation for women’s empowerment at the grass root level to make strategic interventions to support education of women.

District primary education programme was launched in 1994 to achieve the objective of universalization of primary education. The national plan of action approved by the government of India for the SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Corporation) decade of the girl child (1991-2000) includes the following interventions on the educational front for male- female parity in education.

a) Opening of primary schools in every village

b) Free primary education

c) Provision of women teachers

d) Vocationalisation of secondary education

Despite these interventions enrollment of girls in primary education is very low.

**EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN**

The first aspect to empower women is to make them literate and educated. Education is considered as an important tool in the
emancipation and empowerment of woman. Education is the single factor which can improve the status of a woman in the society. The society has recognized the vital importance of education as a main tool to empower women.

Empowerment strategies refer to those strategies which enable women to realize their full potentials. The link between female education and empowerment is obvious. Education for a long time was connected with the idea of gaining wealth of knowledge, providing moral values and to build character of the individual. It was not viewed that women’s education is a contributory factor to the development of the nation only, but today we understand the value of women’s contribution in every field. In the modern context women are getting admission in large number in medicine, engineering, army, air force and management and are exhibiting to the world that they could serve equally important role as men in nation building. There is no denying that education empowers women.

UNESCO Conference (1962) underlined the importance of the access of girls and women to technical and vocational education for economic and social development. One can not teach empowerment and can not provide self confidence and self esteem; one must provide the conditions in which these can develop.
Table 1.4   Women’s Autonomy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% not Involved In any Decision Making</th>
<th>% Involved in decision making about</th>
<th>% who do not need Permission to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cooking</td>
<td>Own Health care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jammu &amp; Kashmir</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerala</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delhi</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gujarat</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goa</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haryana</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sikkim</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Himachal Pradesh</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The position of women is still facing many ups and downs, but the last quarter of a century has seen tremendous improvement in their status through progress in education and entry into jobs in the organized sectors and this improvement is due to education, it creates awareness about individual rights and is thus empowering at the individual level. The government has taken several laws, measures and policies to empower women socially, economically and politically.

A woman may said to be powerful when she has control over a large portion of power resources in society. Mukherjee and Mukherjee (1997) explained that “The concept of women’s development has been talked about and explained by different people in different ways, but the essence of it is that it aims at change and development in the position of women, specially in terms of education, employment and making them self reliant in such a way that they recognize their roles and perform them as equal partners in life both in their families and in society”.

Educated mothers always acquire modern practices in child rearing and give equal and the best education to their daughters as well as sons. Educated and economically empowered mothers wish that their daughters should be more educated and well settled in their career.
than them. While on the other hand some illiterate and unemployed women maintain a difference between son’s and daughter’s education because it is thought that girls are to be married off and after marriage they will not support the family. Apart from this, there are so many economic reasons behind backwardness of girls in our society but this is a fact that only education transforms the attitudes and self image of a woman and imparts economic and social empowerment to women.

As political philosophers Plato and Aristotle phrased “As is the state, so is the school”, or “What you want, if the education enhances the chances of employability and make women able to take decisions independently.” Thus economic independence and decision making are the two main indicators of empowerment.

Employment is the base for economic independence. It encourages women to move outside, express their ideas and to solve their problems. Education increases the chances for employment and makes women financially strong and it also develops the capability of recognizing more accurately the area of exploitation. Economic independence is the major mean of empowerment of women. Economic independence refers to a condition where individual women and men have their own access to the full range of economic
opportunities and resources in order to shape their lives and can meet their own needs and those of their dependants.

Unless the economic security of women is strengthened, society will not be able to eliminate poverty and cannot achieve development goals related to women empowerment. The Human Development Report has noted that the gender equality is essential for empowering women and for eradicating poverty(UNDP,1997:oxford university).

If women are earning and have control over their income then they will be called truly economically independent. There are so many ladies who are earning but their income belongs to their husbands and to parents in law and they have no control or right over their money or property assets. On the other hand there are very few job opportunities for women and they are paid less, low level jobs are being offered to them or jobs are not according to their educational status, except these women have to face challenges on both the fronts (home and occupation). Verma (1992) stated in her study (1992) that today the role of contemporary woman is more and more challenging on both the fronts. She has to maintain a balance between the two worlds in shouldering more and more responsibilities. She feels perplexed at her self created plight.
In developing countries female entrepreneurs are successful in attaining the full economic independence. Simultaneously self-employment provides a medium to female entering into mainstream and thus they come into centre rather than being into periphery in nation building activities.

Women having sound educational status are generally given low salary and hence the progress of well qualified women is hindered. Only few women occupy the managerial or executive position then self-employment may be an attempt to tackle subordination. For ex. Shri Mahila Grih Udyog the maker of Lizzat Papad, Kiran Majumdar Shaw (2006), who started Biocon one of the India’s best pharma companies, were rated India’s richest women. Lalita Gupte & Kalpna Morparia both are India’s most powerful business women and run India’s second largest bank, ICICI Bank.

Goffee and Scase (1985) concluded that there are two major ways through which women can tackle subordination i.e. through the pursuit of career and through business. Thus for raising the female earning power there is a need to increase the demand for education which is necessary for improving the position of women to a great extent.
The Panel document adopted at the fourth world conference on women stated “In order to ensure women the right to work it is especially necessary to eliminate unemployment and enable them to have access to every profession, and to eliminate illiteracy through the establishment of functional literacy”.

Only economically independent woman can not be called fully empowered until she does not participate in decision making process of family, society and of country. Their control over resources, related to knowledge, education, properties etc. is a must. Woman is an integral part of family and vital force in the progress of a nation.

Decision making process is influenced by the level of knowledge. Generally women with higher education are more capable of taking decisions firmly because education and further job improves their awareness. Now a days, girls and women are keenly interested in being economically independent. The qualified woman is taking her own decision and she cannot remain confined to the home and kitchen only. She accepts the challenges and handles professional life and children very well. Women’s full participation in the decision making power constitutes the basic conditions for achieving the objectives of equality and development. Increased income control by women imparts in them self confidence, to obtain a voice and vote.
Our history has records that traditional Indian families were completely patriarchal in nature. Women were restricted from taking part in decision making process. It was thought that women were incapable of making proper decisions. As written by Manu’ [Laws of Manu V. 147-149] “By a girl, by a young woman, or by an aged one, nothing must be done independently, even in her own house. In childhood a female must be subject to her father, in youth to her husband, when her lord is dead, to her sons, a woman must never be independent. She must not seek to separate herself from her father, husband or sons; by leaving them she would make both herself and her husband’s family contemptible.”

But today most of the women are breaking the barriers and are taking decisions confidently because status of education of women has gone up and they strive for their rights among them has also gone up. Gaur (2004) stated that educated and economically independent women take all decisions effectively. Though education and awareness have greater impact on decision making, it makes them financially strong and imparts decision making power. Khanna and Verghese (1978) concluded “As the status of woman changes by their being more educated and getting employed, they are made to play a greater part in decision making”.
Thus education as well as economic independence both are necessary and have greater impact on women’s decision making power. However, things seem to be changing slowly. Indian women are marginalized in taking decisions related to family and outside the family. Even in the decision making process related to their personal life i.e. related to reproductive behavior, choice of contraception means, women are rarely consulted.

In our rural as well as urban society there are so many women who do not freely caste their vote during elections, actual reasons are ignorance, illiteracy and lack of interest in politics or sometime they are dependent on other members or male members of the family to take decisions related to voting.

In this context statistics prepared by Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU) (1993) reveals that 89 percent of the world parliamentarians were men out of a total of 35,886 parliamentarians for whom data was available, only 3626 or a bare 10 percent were women”.

On the other hand, In spite of being economically independent, women are not consulted in case of big investment and business matters for example purchasing of costly jewellary, property or starting of new business. On all domestic matters the woman can take decision but in case of big investment husband or
other members exclude women from decision making process. And if wife takes decision, her decision is generally compared with her husband’s decision and is not allowed to take decision independently she will not take decision indigently. Nandlal (2005) stated in this study “In spite of women’s contribution towards family income, their position in the family hierarchy mostly remains subordinate”.

The Indian women generally enjoy a low status in households because decision related to finances, kinship, and selection of educational field, selection of life partner are made by the male members and women are rarely consulted.

The decision making and women empowerment literature largely focuses on the decision making choices reported by the women in order to measure the degree of her participation in household decisions. Women, indeed have come a long way in all fields. However the Human development report has revealed the myth that women have come a long way, but the truth is that women have to accomplish a long journey in such crucial areas of decision making. Woman’s participation in decision making process is vital for the betterment of their human right conditions.

It should be realized that woman’s upliftment depends on two prerequisites-self reliance and economic independence. This should be
possible only and only when the women will be educated. Education will broaden their outlook and make them aware of their rights, duties and responsibilities in the society.

**KEY TERMS USED: MEANING**

In the following lines an attempt has been made to give the meaning of the key terms used in this study.

**Education:** - Education is the ability to judge and imbibe what is good in the changes taking place due to modernization.

**Empowerment:** - Empowerment means a process of awareness and conscientization, of capacity building learning to greater participation, effective decision making power and control leading to transformative action.

**Economic Independence:** - Economic independence or access to an inherited or self generated income is considered the major means of employment of women.

**Decision Making:** - Women’s decision making power is defined as how much influence women have over external actions that matter to their welfare.
PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

In order to make women aware about their influence on society, nation and for attaining their respectable status within the family the present study was undertaken. Rights should be given to women to make decisions regarding various aspects in the family. Women face numerous difficulties to access education and training at all levels. It is a fact that women including those who complete their schooling as well as training do not get equal access to employment opportunities and those who are well qualified but they have no right over their income and are not involved in any household decision making. But now there is a growing realization that the women education is of great importance to the healthy development of society. The pressing economic demands make it obligatory for women to be economically independent and powerful decision maker. This study highlights the role of education and its relationship with the two indicators of women empowerment; economic independence and decision making power.
OBJECTIVES

1. To study socio-economic and demographic profile of the selected sample.
2. To study educational level of selected sample.
3. To assess the economic Independence.
4. Decision Making and educational empowerment of the selected sample.
5. To analyze the relationship between economic Independence and educational empowerment.
6. To analyze the relationship between decision making and educational empowerment.

DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. The research is confined to urban area of Saharanpur district of Uttar Pradesh.
2. The study is directed towards the women of 30 to 41 years of age.
3. The study is directed towards the married women who are living with their families.
4. The sample is collected purposively.