Introduction
CHAPTER-I

"Freedom depends on economic condition even more than political. If a woman is not economically free and self-earning, she has to depend on her husband or son or father or someone-else and dependents are never free"

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru.

INTRODUCTION

"Kirtih srir vak ca narinam smritir medha dhrrih ksma (Bhagavathgeetha -X- 34)

Among the feminine qualities, I am fame, prosperity, speech, memory, intelligence, firmness and forgiveness.

Seven virtues among women are mentioned by the Lord Sri Krishna, where these virtues are, either in men or women, equal and qualified for the highest realization. Women are not weak; they have also in them the divinity that lifts them up to the plane of spiritual realization. The point to note is that where these qualities are found, there the Lord is.

This verse is an inspiring call to women to give up all superstitious notions about their weakness or lowness, and stand up to realize what is their birth-right along with men and Gods.

The status of women in India has been subject to many great changes over the past few millennia. From equal status with men in ancient times through the low points of the medieval period, to the promotion of equal rights by many reformers, the history of women in India has been eventful. In modern India, women have adorned high offices including that of the President, Prime Minister, Speaker of the
Lok Sabha, Leader of opposition, etc. In fact its credit goes to Mahatma Gandhi. In India he involved women in Political movement like Satyagraha. An attempt is made in the present paper to understand Gandhi’s views on women in the context of social, economic and political issues. But main focus is on Political issue.

Women constitute half of the humanity, even contributing two-thirds of world’s work hours. She earns only one-third of the total income and owns less than one-tenth of the world’s resources. This shows that the economic status of women is in pathetic condition and this is more so in a country like India. Women are regarded as the “better half” of the society and at par with the men. But in reality, our society is still male dominated and women are not treated as equal partners both inside and outside the four walls of the house. In fact they are treated as weak and dependent on men. As such Indian women enjoy an unfavorable status in society. Rural women in India constitute half off of the female population. They share abundant responsibility and perform a wide spectrum of duties in running the family, maintaining the household activities like rearing, feeding, attending to farm labour, tending domestic animals and the like, even then they suffer from being both economically and socially invisible.

The word women empowerment essentially means that the women have the power or capacity to regulate their day-to-day lives in the social, political and economic terms—a power which enables them to move from the periphery to the centre stage.
Empowerment is a multi-dimensional process, which should enable women or group of women to realize their full identity and power in all spheres of life. It consists of greater access to knowledge and resources, greater autonomy in decision making to enable them to have greater ability to plan their lives, or to have greater control over the circumstances that influence their lives and free from shocks imposed on them by custom, belief and practice. Generally development with justice is expected to generate the forces that lead to empowerment of various sections of population in a country and to raise their status especially in case of women.

In the present century the terms women empowerment, women welfare, gender justice have come to light in the social, economic and political development perspective of both developed and developing nations. Traditionally women in almost every society have remained a second grade citizen. Hence, neither they are allowed to get themselves educated nor they were given legal rights in the property, government and in administration.

**Meaning of Empowerment**

The concept of women’s empowerment is the outcome of several important critiques and debates generated by the women’s movement throughout the world, particularly by the third world feminists. Its source can be traced from the interaction between feminism and the concept of “popular education” developed in Latin America in the 1970’s (Walters; 1991). The concept of women’s empowerment has its roots throughout the world in women’s movement.
According to Chandra Shanty Kohl (1997), “empowerment” in its simplest form means “the manifestation of re-distribution of power that challenges patriarchal ideology and the male dominance”.

According to Adams (1996), “empowerment is the means by which individuals, groups and communities to take control of their circumstances and achieve their own goals, thereby being able to work towards helping themselves and others to maximize the quality of their lives”.

“Becoming powerful” the liberal meaning of the term “empowerment” is being used today in all spheres of life as a process to strengthen the elements of society. It is both a process and the result of the process. It is transformation of the structures or institutions that reinforces and perpetuates gender discrimination. It is a process that enables women to gain access and control of material as well as information resources.

While discussing empowerment Jo Rowlands (1997) has identified four different forms of powers as follows:

1. **Power Over** - control or influence over others which is an instrument of domination,

2. **Power to** – generative or productive power which creates new possibilities and actions without domination,
3. **Power with** – a sense of the whole being greater than the sum of the individuals, especially when a group tackles problems together, and

4. **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-respect which extend, in turn, respect for and acceptance of others as equals.

Through the interpretation ‘power to’ and ‘power with’ empowerment is concerned with the process by which people become aware of their interests and how those relates to the interests of others but also participates in decision making and influence such decisions.

It is difficult to measure empowerment. There is no single method for measuring and should be understood and defined through indicators. Indicators of empowerment should encompass personal, social, economic and political changes. Empowerment is a term generally used to describe a process by which powerless people and conscious of their own situation, and organize collectively to gain greater access to public service or to the benefits of economic growth.

Empowerment is also the process of challenging existing power relations and of gaining greater control over the sources of power. The goals of women’s empowerment are to challenge patriarchal ideology to transform the structures and institutions that reinforce and perpetuate gender discrimination and social inequality and to enable poor women to gain access to and control of both material and
informational resources. It can change existing power relations by addressing itself to the three dimensions of material, human and intellectual resources. Empowerment cannot occur as a revolution but only as evolution.

**Types of Empowerment**

As stated already, there are several aspects on which women need to be empowered. Among them four key aspects are identified. These are Economic Empowerment, Social Empowerment, Political Empowerment and Self Empowerment. An attempt is made here to define these concepts in brief.

**Economic Empowerment:** Economic empowerment demands changes in two major aspects. Firstly, it demands changes in the women’s labour pattern and secondly, the changes in women’s access to and control over resources. The women who were engaged in traditional low paid activities such as agricultural labour, non-agricultural labour, sweepers, servant maids, unclean professions such as scavengers should transform themselves and should take up non-traditional and high paid jobs or activities. Economic empowerment also necessitates greater access to income and income yielding assets such as agriculture land so as to stand on their own legs. Thus Economic empowerment is sought to be achieved through promotion of employment and income generation activities.

**Social Empowerment:** Achievement of Social empowerment demands changes in women’s mobility and social interaction. Women who had hitherto lived a
secluded life confining to their homes should come out and should move out to outside world to carry out activities without any assistance from their farther/husbands/ward. They should have interaction with other members of the society to take up development activities not only for themselves but also for the society. They should be involved in making crucial decisions within and outside the family. They should fight against crucial issues such as dowry, domestic violence, child marriage and labour. The women should know their rights and have access to information through removing all the persisting inequalities, disparities and other problems besides providing easy access to basic minimum services. These require access to education and basic minimum services. These require access to education and basic health services.

**Political Empowerment:** Social empowerment demands changes in women's control over decision-making at local, mandals district, state and national level political and administrative organs. Women who had hither to be excluded from politics and administrative powers where policy making and implementation are done. Reservation of women in the rural and urban local bodies through 73rd and 74th Amendment to the Indian Constitution had enabled representation of nearly a million women at the grass root level political organization. These women play a very important catalytic role in transforming society. Similar representation in State Legislature and Parliament would further strengthen the process of empowerment of women. Experiences since the 73rd amendment have demonstrated that when
women gain voice in decision making in their villages or towns, they address issues that are critical to meeting basic needs of the villages/towns. They take action against dowry, domestic violence, child marriage and child labour. Women in position of leadership begin to transform gender relations and call into aversion the deeply entrenched patriarchal system. They help other women to gain knowledge over their rights and responsibilities.

**Self Empowerment:** Self Empowerment is defined as a cognitive state characterized by a sense of perceived control, perceptions of competence, and internalization of the goals and objectives of the society to which she belongs. Self empowered women do much more proactive work contributing to the overall development of the society. Self empowerment, measured in any scale, would be inversely related to centralization of decision making and decentralization of these powers. The inclusive Decision making involving women at all levels would ultimately in inclusive growth.

**Components of empowerment**

The components of empowerment are as following:

- Internal strength and confidence to face life,
- The right to make choices,
- The power to control their own lives within and outside home, and
- The ability to influence the direction of social change towards the creation of a more just social and economic order nationally and internationally.
Stromquist (1995), in her article on educational empowerment for women, interprets empowerment as a "socio-political concept that goes beyond formal political participation and consciousness rising". She argues that a full definition of empowerment must include cognitive, psychological, political and economic components. She explains it as follows:

- The cognitive component refers to women having an understanding of the conditions and causes of their subordination at micro and macro levels. It involves making choices that may go against cultural expectations and norms.

- The economic component requires that women have access to and control over productive resources. Thus ensuring some degree of financial autonomy. However, she notes that changes in the economic balance of power do not necessarily alter traditional gender roles or norms.

- The political entails that women have the capability to analyze, organize and mobilize for social change, and

- The psychological component includes the belief that women can act at personal and social levels to improve their individual realities and the society in which they live.

Empowerment as a process of a community or a group there of gaining autonomy and control over one’s life. As a result of the empowerment, the empowered should become agents of their own development, exercising choices,
selecting their own agenda and changing their status in the society. In the context of
gender and development, empowerment should be viewed more as a process than as
an end product. It is a process method than as an end product. It is a dynamic process
changing according to circumstance. It applies to the individual as well as the collective. At the individual level,
empowerment involves building up the self-image and their self-confidence as well
as the critical faculties to think decide and act. On a collective plan, empowerment
means enabling women collectively to take control of their own lives, to set their
own agenda, to organize each other and make demands on the state and the society
for change.

Process of empowerment

Empowerment is a long process. It has to pass through different stages. In the
first stage, women should be trained to look into the situation from a different
perspective and recognize the power relations that perpetuate their oppression. At this
stage, the women share their feelings and experiences with each other and build a
common vision and mission. In the second stage, the women tried to change the
situation by bringing about a change into the gender and social relations. In the third
stage, the process of empowerment makes them more mature to realize the
importance of collective action.

As empowerment seeks to alter the gender and power relations, there could be
a certain social or gender conflicts. The process of empowerment could also face
certain obstacles emanating from the patriarchal system, traditional beliefs and political system. The results of empowerment, however, will not be confined to women. The other member of the families will also benefit from the empowerment process.

Significance of empowerment

The term ‘empowerment’ has gained significance and prominence recently among policy makers and researchers. In the field of women’s studies and social work it is viewed with a holistic perspective and it can be classified as social, educational, economical, and political and psychological empowerment. To quote Thomas and Pierson, empowerment referred to user participation in services and to the self help movement generally; in which groups take action on their own behalf, either in cooperation with or independently of the statutory services. Empowerment is concerned with how people may gain collective control over their lives, so as to achieve their interests as a group and a method by which social workers seek to enhance the power of people who lack it.

Strategies of empowerment

Empowerment can be activated by five strategies. Education to promote the level of awareness, knowledge, information and skills of a woman is an important part of the strategy. Awareness is a pre-requisite for challenging the forces of oppression statuesque. It results in greater participation of women in decision making
within and outside the family. The economic approach to empowerment seeks to alter the economic status of women by attacking the forces which cause gender division of labour, gender gap in wages, and lack of control for women over their material resources etc. The economic approach emphasizes development of women's skills, promotion of their savings and investment and enlarged economic opportunities. The third approach namely, development approach attributes poverty to their powerlessness and the lack of adequate access to health care, education and services resources. Yet another approach believes that women's empowerment required awareness of complex factors causing disempowerment of women. This approach advocates collective organization of women as well as gender sensitization-political approaches to empowerment believe that women can be developed on par with men, if politics are purged, of violence, electoral malpractices, unscrupulous struggles, etc., and were made value based. This would, however, require greater participation of women in active politicson, gender planning and strategy and consciousness raising activities. More recently, an organizational approach has been advocated which believes that organized women can alter the gender and social relations in favor of women both in public and private lives. Finally,

Empowerment could take place at two levels, individual and collective. Individual empowerment is a process of personal empowerment involving self-esteem, dignity, self-respect and self-perception. But the problems affecting the collectivity of women require collective empowerment. Restructuring power
relations, changing social values and norms require intervention at the collective level. Collective empowerment aims at transforming collective conciseness, values and attitudes. The problem of securing better access to education, skills and employment, material resources and political power can be tackled. Only at the collective level, this requires effective organization among women, mutual help and a certain amount of sacrifice.

Indicators of Development

(a) Qualitative Indicators

- Self-confidence understands what she wants expresses it and tries to get it, feels proud of herself has positive self-image

- Articulation

- Awareness about health, nutrition, legal rights, political activities, government policies and programmes.

- Less burden of work and more leisure time

- Changing role and responsibilities within the family

- Decrease in violence within the family.

- Changing attitudes towards tradition and customs like child marriage and dowry
• Physical mobility—walk freely with in the village go to city or town, to banks, post office, go for shopping, cinema, exhibition and visit relatives

• Become member of women’s group or any other people’s organization

• Self-identity—identities herself positively

• Decision making power within the family regarding number of children

• Education of children, marriage of children, budgeting of the family, income and purchase or sale of family property

• Changed attitudes towards women’s participation in politics and willingness to participate in the politics

• Control over individual and family income

• Access to resources like land, house, jewelers, house site, etc.

• Access to information, knowledge and skills.

(b) Quantitative Indicators

• Increase in age at marriage

• Reduction in fertility rate or number of children

• becoming beneficiaries of development programmes

• Visible changes in physical status/nutritional status

• Improvement in literacy level; and
• Becoming member of a political party or local self-government. Thus, the concept of Self Help Groups is one of the components of development in India. Women have become center point in the implementation of programmes of development or welfare. In the process of development, in the beginning, the women were not considered and as a result of failure of the other programmes of development the shift has been taken place. Therefore, the present Self Help Groups programmes is a boon for the development of the India society.

The empowerment of Women Empowerment through Self Help Groups (SHGs) would lead to benefits not only to the individual women and women groups but also for the families and community as a whole through collective action for development. These groups have a common perception of need and impulse towards collective action. Empowering women is not just for meeting their economic needs but also through more holistic social development thrift societies.

**Individual and Collective Dimensions of Empowerment**

Empowering participants at an individual level is mainly concerned with bringing about personal change and development. It is also about providing people with the resources (information, confidence and skills) to tackle the consequences of exclusion at a personal level. There is also a collective dimension to empowerment. This stems from the recognition that the causes of social exclusion are not to be found at the level of individuals. Therefore, empowering people to tackle the
political, social and economic causes of exclusion has a collective dimension. This is reflected particularly in the work of projects seeking to develop the capacities of organizations working on the issue of social exclusion. In practical terms this can involve providing training to local people and to paid and unpaid workers in local and community based organizations.

Efforts to empower women (and other disempowered groups) have, to date, focused on ways and means to improve their effectiveness at the local level. In the era of globalization, however, such an approach has limitations since even the most marginalized groups are increasingly affected by development trends taking place at national and global levels and their interaction with local processes. Global forces, whether economic, political or cultural, marginalize some groups and enhance the power of others. Globalization has therefore to be taken into account in situational analysis in order to understand the impact of global forces on gender power relations at all levels, and in all domains, of society. This is particularly an urgent need in the face of rapidly growing international labor migration - both legal and undocumented, increased mobility of other production factors and, consequently, growing vulnerability of all the social groups to external shocks. The global dimension should therefore be incorporated into both the concept of empowerment and policies and programmes aiming to expand women’s capabilities and opportunities.
Self-Help Groups and Empowerment

The empowerment of women through Self Help Groups would lead to benefits not only to the individual women and women groups but also for the families and community as a whole through collective action for development. These groups have a common perception of need and impulse towards collective action. Empowering women is not just for meeting their economic needs but also through more holistic social development.

Self-help groups (SHGs) and women’s self-help groups (SHGs) in particular, represent a form of intervention that is a radical departure from most current programmes. They are an effective strategy for poverty alleviation, human development and social empowerment. They offer grassroots participatory implementation that is demand driven by ‘beneficiaries’ who, in other projects, often find themselves receiving goods or services in a manner that is opaque and impersonal. Most SHG-based programmes are implemented by the government in partnership with NGOs or by NGOs and donor agencies. SHGs also have the potential to transform themselves into vibrant civil society organizations.

The concept of empowerment is defined as the process by which women take control and ownership of their choices The core elements of empowerment have been defined as agency (the ability to define one’s goals and act upon them), awareness of gendered power structures, self-esteem, and self-confidence (Kabeer, 2001). Empowerment can take place at a hierarchy of different levels — individual,
household, community and societal – and is facilitated by providing encouraging factors (e.g. exposure to new activities, which can build capacities) and removing inhibiting factors (e.g. lack of resources and skills). In this connection Micro-finance with Self Help Groups play an effective role for promoting women empowerment. It is not only an efficient tool to fight against poverty, but also as a means of promoting the empowerment of the most marginalized sections of the population, especially women. According to Ellie Bosch it is just old wine in a new bottle (Bosch, 2002). It consists of a group of people of three to eight persons on the condition that each of them would be assuming responsibility for the development of all. Micro Finance institution started in India in 1980s through Self Help Groups (SHGs) model. It is the Graeme replication model of Bangladesh. There is nearly 3, 00,000 SHGs working whole over India. It is true that the concept of microfinance is yet to spread its wings all over India, but at the rate in which it is expanding its branches, very soon it would be reaching at the doorsteps of the poor houses. The most successful region for microfinance is the Southern part of India; Andhra Pradesh has become the example for the other states in this case.

Effects of Women Empowerment

Empowerment has become the key solution to many social problems like high population growth rates, environment degradation, and low status of women. The women’s empowerment appears to be the end result of a number of important critical
discussions, dialogues and debates generated by the women’s movement throughout the world and particularly by Third world feminists (Apke 1995)

Factors Affecting Empowerment of Women

For empowerment, women need to have a voice in decision making and planning through adequate representation. There are several factors that affect empowerment of women. The most important ones are education, health, work force participation, income, social status, political and administrative powers, campaigns, networking, training etc. The effective means of empowerment process in the long run is education and training. Educated women have the ability to understand the problems and plan for solutions. For example child care; the educated women provide better care and nutrition for themselves and for their children. Such a behavior reduces the probability of disease and increases the health and betterment of children.

At the individual level, women empowerment indicates participation in crucial decision-making process, ability to prevent violence self-reliance and self-esteem, improved health and nutritional conditions. At the community level, it indicates the existence of women’s organizations, increased number of women leaders, involvement of women in designing development, tools and application of appropriate technology etc. At the national level the indicators are awareness of about social and political rights, adequate representation of women in national development plans etc.
In the Indian society, as a patriarchal system, women's position within the structure of the family had duties to precede their rights as individuals. Many who argue for empowerments of women do so either with or without a full understanding of the conflicts between the historical and contemporary status of women in the patriarchy and the goals of empowerment. Certainly one may rack a great many changes that have occurred in the direction of change in the status of women in India but women have yet to achieve or realize many of the ideal stages of social, psychological economic and political empowerment. Hence it is certainly more appropriate to define empowerment as a process rather than an end point.

Empowerment by means of education, literacy or modest income generating projects is clearly insufficient to amplify the prospects for a higher quality of life for women. The process of empowerment is taking place at so many levels that it is quite difficult to gauge the actual nature and extent of empowerment in improving status of women. Certainly the process is entangled in the struggles of civil society against the state, and under the weight of historical practice and ongoing debates over the appropriate role of ideologies.

The modern world has been witnessing a positive trend in the empowerment of women despite their shortcomings in education and literary, health and nutrition, training and awareness generation legislative and judicial reforms. However, the empowering strategies need substantial fine-tuning to ensure that they are effective and result-oriented. The vision for the future should be built on gender perspective
hence there is a need for a comprehensive and holistic policy for women. This would enable the country to fulfil the constitutional mandate of women's equality and the objective of women's total involvement in the development of the nation.

Women need to be viewed not as beneficiaries but as active participants in the process of development and change. Their capacity to work, knowledge and skills are often the sole source of survival among the poor. Thus women are more crucial in the process of reducing the level of poverty. It is believed that the earnings of poor women's are mostly spent on the basic needs of life as compared to the earning generated by men. Realization of this fact would bring women to the focus of development efforts.

It is no surprise that the elevation of women's status has been one of the prime objectives of development planning in India since independence and the concept has been witnessing an evolution from plan to plan as discussed above. Moreover, the 73rd Amendment of the constitution of India makes villages as the focus of development efforts and gives special importance to local communities in deciding priorities and programmes. The fact that one third of the elected representatives at village, block and district levels are women provides the right opportunity for decentralized planning and programming as well as community participation in making an effective assault on poverty among Indian women.
The National Policy for Empowering Women

The Government had declared 2001 as women Empowerment year. The national policy of empowerment of women has set certain clear-cut goals and objectives. The goal of this policy is to bring about the advancement development and empowerment of women. The policy has been widely disseminated so as to encourage active participation of all stakeholders for achieving its goals specifically, the objectives of this policy.

The following are the specific objectives of National Policy on Empowerment of women in India

i. The du-jure and de facto enjoyments of all human rights and fundamental freedom by women on equal basis with men in all political, economic, social, cultural and civil spheres.

ii. Ministering a gender perspective in the development process.

iii. Equal access to women to health care, quality education at all levels career and vocational guidance, employment, equal remuneration, occupational health and safety, social security and public life etc.

iv. Creating an environment through positive economic and social policies for full development of women to enable them to realize their full potential.
v. Building and strengthening partnerships with civil society, particularly women’s organizations.

Enhancing women’s economic productivity is an important strategy for improving the welfare of 60 million Indian households living below the poverty line (Dwarakanath, 1999). The existence of women in a state of economic, political, social and knowledge disempowerment is known to be a major hindrance to economic development. The position of women in any society has been the subject of many inexpert opinions and guesses and has often been misrepresented by stereotypical portrayal. A more balanced and scientific way to assess women’s position has been given by Anthropologist J. Cooper “Status of women in any society depends on her recognized rights, duties, liberties and opportunities – chiefly in the domestic, economic, social, political and religious spheres”.

Empowerment of rural women through income generating activities Income generating activities are considered as those initiatives that affect the economic aspects of people’s lives through the use of economic tools such as credit. It is being increasingly realized that women’s income in a family is very important in relation to the nutritional, economic and educational uplift of the family.

Consequently, the access of women particularly those belonging to weaker sections including Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes/ Other backward Classes and minorities, majority of whom are in the rural areas and in the informal, unorganized
sector – to education, health and productive resources, among others, is inadequate. Therefore, they remain largely marginalized, poor and socially excluded.

**Goal and Objectives of women empowerment**

The goal of this Policy is to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women. The Policy will be widely disseminated so as to encourage active participation of all stakeholders for achieving its goals. Specifically, the objectives of this Policy include. Creating an environment through positive economic and social policies for full development of women to enable them to realize their full potential

I. The *de-jure and de-facto* enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedom by women on equal basis with men in all spheres – political, economic, social, cultural and civil

II. Equal access to participation and decision making of women in social, political and economic life of the nation

III. Equal access to women to health care, quality education at all levels, career and vocational guidance, employment, equal remuneration, occupational health and safety, social security and public office etc.

IV. Strengthening legal systems aimed at elimination of all forms of discrimination against women
V. Changing societal attitudes and community practices by active participation
and involvement of both men and women.

VI. Mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development process.

VII. Elimination of discrimination and all forms of violence against women and the
girl child; and

VIII. Building and strengthening partnerships with civil society, particularly
women's organizations.

**Decision Making**

Women's equality in power sharing and active participation in decision
making, including decision making in political process at all levels will be ensured
for the achievement of the goals of empowerment. All measures will be taken to
guarantee women equal access to and full participation in decision making bodies at
every level, including the legislative, executive, judicial, corporate, statutory bodies,
as also the advisory Commissions, Committees, Boards, and Trusts etc. Affirmative
action such as reservations/quotas, including in higher legislative bodies, will be
considered whenever necessary on a time bound basis. Women-friendly personal
policies will also be drawn up to encourage women to participate effectively in the
developmental process. It is also noticed that women participation in decision making
in child's marriages, savings, financial front and other aspects.
Perspective in the Development Process

Policies, programmes and systems will be established to ensure mainstreaming of women's perspectives in all developmental processes, as catalysts, participants and recipients. Wherever there are gaps in policies and programmes, women specific interventions would be undertaken to bridge these. Coordinating and monitoring mechanisms will also be devised to assess from time to time the progress of such mainstreaming mechanisms. Women's issues and concerns as a result will specially be addressed and reflected in all laws concerned, sectoral policies, plans and programmes of action.

Poverty Eradication

Since women comprise the majority of the population below the poverty line and are very often in situations of extreme poverty, given the harsh realities of intra-household and social discrimination, macroeconomic policies and poverty eradication programmes will specifically address the needs and problems of such women. There will be improved implementation of programmes which are already women oriented with special targets for women. Steps will be taken for mobilization of poor women and convergence of services, by offering them a range of economic and social options, along with necessary support measures to enhance their capabilities.
Micro Credit

In order to enhance women's access to credit for consumption and production, the establishment of new and strengthening of existing micro-credit mechanisms and micro-finance institution will be undertaken so that the outreach of credit is enhanced. Other supportive measures would be taken to ensure adequate flow of credit through extent financial institutions and banks, so that all women below poverty line have easy access to credit.

*Women and Economy*

Women's perspectives will be included in designing and implementing macro-economic and social policies by institutionalizing their participation in such processes. Their contribution to socio-economic development as producers and workers will be recognized in the formal and informal sectors (including home based workers) and appropriate policies relating to employment and to her working conditions will be drawn up. Such measures could include:

*Globalization*

To add more to women empowerment, Globalization has presented new challenges for the realization of the goal of women’s equality, the gender impact of which has not been systematically evaluated fully. However, from the micro-level studies that were commissioned by the Department of Women & Child Development, it is evident that there is a need for re-framing policies for access to employment and
quality of employment. Benefits of the growing global economy have been unevenly distributed leading to wider economic disparities, the feminization of poverty, increased gender inequality through often deteriorating working conditions and unsafe working environment especially in the informal economy and rural areas. Strategies will be designed to enhance the capacity of women and empower them to meet the negative social and economic impacts, which may flow from the globalization process.

Women and Agriculture

On the basis of critical role of women in the agriculture and allied sectors, as producers, concentrated efforts will be made to ensure that benefits of training, extension and various programmes will reach them in proportion to their numbers. The programmes for training women in soil conservation, social forestry, dairy development and other occupations allied to agriculture like horticulture, livestock including small animal husbandry, poultry, fisheries etc. will be expanded to benefit women workers in the agriculture sector.

Women and Industry

Further, the important role played by women in electronics, information technology and food processing and agro industry and textiles has been crucial to the development of these sectors. They would be given comprehensive support in terms of labour legislation, social security and other support services to participate in
various industrial sectors. It has been policy for women that at present cannot work in
night shift in factories even if they wish to. Suitable measures will have be taken to
enable women to work on the night shift in factories. This will be accompanied with
support services for security, transportation etc.

Support Services

The provision of support services for women, like child care facilities, including
crèches at work places and educational institutions, homes for the aged and the
disabled will be expanded and improved to create an enabling environment and to
ensure their full cooperation in social, political and economic life. Women-friendly
personal policies also be drawn up to encourage women to participate effectively in
the developmental process.

Education

Equal access to education for women and girls will be ensured. Special
measures will be taken to eliminate discrimination, universalize education, eradicate
illiteracy, create a gender-sensitive educational system, increase enrolment and
retention rates of girls and improve the quality of education to facilitate life-long
learning as well as development of occupation/vocation/technical skills by women.
Reducing the gender gap in secondary and higher education would be a focus area.
Sectoral time targets in existing policies will be achieved, with a special focus on
girls and women, particularly those belonging to weaker sections including the
Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes/Other Backward Classes/Minorities. Gender sensitive curricula would be developed at all levels of educational system in order to address sex stereotyping as one of the causes of gender discrimination.

Health

A holistic approach to women's health which includes both nutrition and health services will be adopted and special attention will be given to the needs of women and the girl at all stages of the life cycle. The reduction of infant mortality and maternal mortality, which are sensitive indicators of human development, is a priority concern. This policy reiterates the national demographic goals for Infant Mortality Rate (IMR), Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) set out in the National Population Policy 2000. Women should have access to comprehensive, affordable and quality health care. Measures will be adopted that take into account the reproductive rights of women to enable them to exercise informed choices, their vulnerability to sexual and health problems together with endemic, infectious and communicable diseases such as malaria, TB, and water borne diseases as well as hypertension and cardio-pulmonary diseases. The social, developmental and health consequences of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases will be tackled from a gender perspective.

To effectively meet problems of infant and maternal mortality, and early marriage the availability of good and accurate data at micro level on deaths, birth and
marriages are required. Strict implementation of registration of births and deaths would be ensured and registration of marriages would be made compulsory.

In accordance with the commitment of the National Population Policy (2000) to population stabilization, this Policy recognizes the critical need of men and women to have access to safe, effective and affordable methods of family planning of their choice and the need to suitably address the issues of early marriages and spacing of children. Interventions such as spread of education, compulsory registration of marriage and special programmes like BSY should impact on delaying the age of marriage so that by 2010 child marriages are eliminated. Women's traditional knowledge about health care and nutrition will be recognized through proper documentation and its use will be encouraged. The use of Indian and alternative systems of medicine will be enhanced within the framework of overall health infrastructure available for women.

Nutrition

In view of the high risk of malnutrition and disease that women face at all the three critical stages viz., infancy and childhood, adolescent and reproductive phase, focused attention would be paid to meeting the nutritional needs of women at all stages of the life cycle. This is also important in view of the critical link between the health of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women with the health of infant and young children. Special efforts will be made to tackle the problem of macro and
micro nutrient deficiencies especially amongst pregnant and lactating women as it leads to various diseases and disabilities.

Intra-household discrimination in nutritional matters vis-à-vis girls and women will be sought to be ended through appropriate strategies. Widespread use of nutrition education would be made to address the issues of intra-household imbalances in nutrition and the special needs of pregnant and lactating women. Women’s participation will also be ensured in the planning, superintendence and delivery of the system.

**Drinking Water and Sanitation**

Special attention will be given to the needs of women in the provision of safe drinking water, sewage disposal, toilet facilities and sanitation within accessible reach of households, especially in rural areas and urban slums. Women’s participation will be ensured in the planning, delivery and maintenance of such services.

**Housing and Shelter**

Women’s perspectives will be included in housing policies, planning of housing colonies and provision of shelter both in rural and urban areas. Special attention will be given for providing adequate and safe housing and accommodation for women including single women, heads of households, working women, students, apprentices and trainees.
Environment

Women will be involved and their perspectives reflected in the policies and programmes for environment, conservation and restoration. Considering the impact of environmental factors on their livelihoods, women's participation will be ensured in the conservation of the environment and control of environmental degradation. The vast majority of rural women still depends on the locally available non-commercial sources of energy such as animal dung, crop waste and fuel wood. In order to ensure the efficient use of these energy resources in an environmental friendly manner, the Policy will aim at promoting the programmes of non-conventional energy resources. Women will be involved in spreading the use of solar energy, biogas, smokeless chulahs and other rural application so as to have a visible impact of these measures in influencing eco system and in changing the life styles of rural women.

Women in Rural Areas

In rural India, agriculture and allied industrial sectors employ as much as 89.5% of the total female labour. Women have extensive workloads with dual responsibility for farm and household production. Women's work is getting harder and more time-consuming due to ecological degradation and changing agricultural technologies and practices. Women have an active role and extensive involvement in livestock production, forest resource use and fishery processing. Women spend hours per day fetch real water from distant sources to their homes. Women contribute
considerably to household income through farm and nonfarm activities as well as through work as landless agricultural labourers. Women work as family labour is underestimated. There are high degrees of inter-state and intra-state variations in gender roles in agriculture, environment and rural production.

Indian women are extensively involved in agricultural activities. The mode of female participation in agricultural production varies with the land-owning status of farm households. In overall farm production, women's average contribution is estimated at 55% to 66% of the total labour. Rural Indian women's interface with the forests is varying - gathering, wage employment, production in farm forestry and management of afforested areas in the community plantation. Nature and extent of women's participation in fishery varies across the states. Fish drying/curing, marketing and hand braiding and net-mending are the main areas of women's involvement in Andhra Pradesh.

Objectives

The main objectives of the study

- To Study the Socio-economic Conditions of rural women in Chittoor District.
- To study and analyse different developmental programmes in Chittoor District
- To analyses the impact of Rural development programmes on family, marriage, socio-economic and political status, health and family planning etc.
➢ To examine the changing status of women through SHGs, IKP, MGNREGS and Deepam schemes.

➢ To suggest various means to the empowerment of Rural women.

Methodology

Multistage, simple and stratified random sampling techniques were used to select the respondents for the collection of data for the study from Chittoor District of Andhra Pradesh. First of all four Mandals viz GUDIPALA, PEDDA TIPPA SAMUDRAM, GANGAVARAM and BUCHINAIDU KANDRIGA out of 66 mandals were selected from the district by using simple random sampling technique. From each mandal 25 Self Help Group were selected by using random sampling technique and thus the total of 100 self help groups were selected. From each Self Help Group three respondents were selected by stratified random sampling technique. All the respondents are females and they range in age group of 18-65 years. Thus the total sample constitute 300 female respondents.

Data collection

Primary data as well secondary data were collected for the present study. The secondary data were collected from the existing programmes i.e., Poverty Alleviation Programmes, different journals, periodicals, magazines, daily news papers etc. Primary data was collected by using interview schedules. The researcher met personally all the respondents with a designed scheduled. The researcher keenly
observed that MGNREGS programme, allotment of work site, women savings, debt
position, changing trends of women education, decision making in child marriages,
money saving, conducting of meetings of SHGs, implementation of Indira Kranthi
Patham, and problems relating to Deepam Scheme.

Tools for data collection

The data was collected with the help of Interview method, Observation method
and focused group Interview technique. The data was processed, tabulated, analyzed
and interpreted with the help of statistical tools like percentages, averages etc.

Analysis and interpretation of data

The collected data was analyzed and tabulated with the help of computers.
Frequency and Percentages are computed for the interpretation of the data. Both
quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed by using the statistical
package for the social sciences. Frequency and cross tables were generated and the
results were interpreted through percentage analysis. Frequency tables were used to
examine the profile of the IKP, beneficiaries of the Deepam scheme, active role of
Shrama Sakthi Sangam in MGNREGS and socio economic particulars of the
respondents.
CHAPTERISATION

The thesis has been organized into six chapters.

The First Chapter deals with the Introduction, Methodology and Objectives of the study.

The Second Chapter discusses the Review of literature.

The Third Chapter explains the Profile of the Chittoor District and Field area selected.

The Fourth Chapter describes the various Developmental Programmes implemented in Andhra Pradesh

The Fifth Chapter analyses the data of the present study.

The Sixth Chapter presents the Summary and Conclusions of the work done.