Chapter II

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT: THEORETICAL ISSUES
2.1 INTRODUCTION

"If you can't feed a hundred people, then feed just one."
"Never worry about numbers. Help one person at a time, and always start with the person nearest you." -- Mother Teresa

The empowerment of women became necessary as they are almost fifty percent of the population and are being discriminated at all fronts. The moral inferiority of Indians, especially Hindus, was supposed to be demonstrated by the barbaric practices followed against women. Writing in the nineteenth century, John Stuart Mill considered Hindu civilization crude and immoral. Thus, colonial historians justified the British rule in India by arguing that Hindu women received the protection and intervention of the colonial rule, as at that time the practice of 'sati' was widely practiced. Even from the Brahmanical sources, there is sufficient evidence to show that the structure of institutions that ensured the subordination of women was complete long before Muslims as a religious community had even come into being. As for property is concerned, women not only did not own property, they were considered to be property or commodity, the bride, for example, being gifted to groom along with other goods. The present day problems like bride burning, domestic violence, suicides of wives, daughters and sisters, the origins can be traced to our ancestors who acted out of ignorance. Hence, the solution lies in empowering women to eliminate the economic inequalities, social Inequalities, physical inequalities, and political equalities. Economic inequalities
of women may be in terms of inheritance of property, salary, contribution to the maintenance of the family etc. Women have no right to inherit the property on equal basis on par with her brothers as per Dharma Sastras. This social deformity resulted in the rise of dowry system in the Hindu Society. Social equality means inequality in terms of literacy, education in which women are not on par with men. As per Census 2001, the female literacy is 54.16 per cent compared to the male literacy of 75.6 per cent. This was due to discouragement of female education by men, who may be brothers, fathers and others, or as a whole. On levels of education too, a women 'right' from her childhood, who is eager to study, has to overcome 'n' number of obstacles, which may be social, cultural and biological. In India, female entrance into colleges is mere 35.5 per cent, and the percentage of female entrance into post-graduation and in other higher studies is dismal. Even though she completed her education, her decision to do the job or a particular job depends at the mercy of the male members of the family, as they suddenly attain the feudal face and the women's decision would be turned down by a single stroke of word. The political inequality is at high degree, which is visible to the naked eye, and can be seen by observing the number of women representatives in the legislatures. Women have been politically marginalized in our country and most of them live extremely restricted lives. They are not allowed to have much of a voice even within their community or family's decision-making processes, leave alone a meaningful say in the national politics.
Not just politicians but also even many intellectuals are angrily rejecting the idea of reservations for women and calling it a retrogressive move. Even in societies where women exercise relatively more freedom in day-to-day living, they remain politically marginalized. Women have done extremely well in the Scandinavian countries, Sweden (34 M.Ps), Norway 39 M.P.s, Denmark, Finland, where they are moving in the direction of near equal participation. In these societies, women have begun to seriously alter the very nature of politics and have made enduring and substantial gains for themselves in every field. In India, the problem is more serious because while women are inching forward bit by bit, the participation of women in politics is actually declining. In the 1996 elections, there were 6.4 percent of 543 seats in the Parliament and in 1999 elections they are 6.5 percent. In the State’s legislatures, the representation of women shows the contradictory features as they do not show the relationship between the rate of literacy of women and their participation in politics. In Kerala, the overall literacy rate is reportedly 90 per cent with 80 percent female literacy. By contrast, in Rajasthan, the female literacy is mere 20 percent and only 12 of the females are literate in rural areas. Kerala has a matrimonial tradition in which women have a much larger measure of autonomy and freedom of movement while most of the women in Rajasthan live far more lives that are restricted in aggressively patriarchal communities. However, not all the cultural and educational advantages of women in Kerala have translated into
higher political participation. The percentage of women in Kerala legislative assembly rose from less than one percent in 1967 to six per cent in 1991. In Rajasthan, the representation of women was four percent in 1967 and reached eight percent in 1986-90. By contrast, U.P, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, which are known for their low educational levels and repressive cultural norms for women, have not only sent a relatively larger portion of women to the Lok Sabha but have also elected relatively more women MLAs. Physical inequality is another form, which is the hallmark of patriarchy and causing the physical elimination of girl child. The character of Indian society and culture, satirically saying, which is hailed as great, may be known by observing the fluctuating sex ratio against women. In year 1901, it was 972 and in 1951, it was 946; whereas, in developed countries there are 1060 female for 1000 male, as in those countries the life expectancy of women is generally longer than men due to the availability of health facilities. Moreover, according to the recent census the decrease in sex ratio in the age group of 0-6 is alarming.

The general tendency of life expectancy of women is higher and it is common to all over the world. But the sex ratio in India is against women. It is because of the practice of female infanticide, particularly in the urban areas likes Bombay, New Delhi, Hyderabad, Madras etc. The middle class families in particular are the main perpetrators of this practice due to economic reasons as bearing a girl child is uneconomical to them and the parents think
the expenditure spent on her is lost forever, and another cause is the preference of the male child. In fact, women live longer, if they are allowed to live. In spite of having higher life expectancy, the number of women is low as indicated by the fluctuating sex ratios, which are against women. It is a more serious issue in the states of Haryana and Punjab where the sex ratio is seriously against women. The girl child has to encounter the first attempt before her birth. The medical test, amniocentesis, which is meant to test the health of the foetus, is being used to test the sex of the foetus. If the foetus is female, then there will be termination of the pregnancy. Here this termination issue is also decided not by the pregnant mother, but by her husband or in-laws. Hence, the saga of sorrows start right from the womb. The girl child is not only eliminated before birth, but also, if survived, sold to others by the parents pressed by poverty, as some tribal societies are presently doing, or neglected nutritionally during the growing period, which ultimately may result in maternal deaths, or subjected to burning for want of dowry, or often commit suicides. Even though, if she overcomes all these obstacles, then there is the threat of rapes and kidnaps in this so-called great Indian civilized society. More than 11000 rapes and more than 12000 kidnappings per year are reported in India. Ironically, the age of victim may vary from three year to 80 year old and the age of rapist could be from a student to eighty-year-old man. Most of the atrocities against the girl child are unreported to the police officials due to fear, shame or humiliation. In India, every one of the three married women is
subjected to atrocities like beating, burning, withdrawal, sexual harassment etc. The life of women, particularly when she attained the age of marriage, is miserable. She is bound to face the several comments from street side Romes and those Romes may be a teenager or middle-aged man or 'elderly' like man. Women, instead of protesting become habituated to this kind of social harassment. Even in settling her marriage, her opinion is often overlooked or may not be considered not necessary by the family members, particularly by the male members which is the basic violation of Human Rights, and is an offence under Civil Procedure Code and Criminal Procedure Code. Some girls are made to get married even before the constitutionally prescribed age of 18. All these offences against women suggest the character of Indian society which is not at all civilized and treats women as second-class or marginalized citizen, leave alone the right to dignity, their physical survival is in question. The Indian society shows the unique distinction that whatever is the religion, caste, class or creed, it treats women alike, and commits atrocities against women alike with the similar intentions, and all the men treat women alike. Hence, it is a unique way of showing the unity in diversity.

The socio-cultural causes are evolutionary in nature and with the help of religion, men were successful to make women as animate objects. Our great culture discriminates women as our religious texts, which laid foundations basing on hierarchy. Our
great Dharmasastras are against women and equated them with cattle. Particularly, Manu allowed the husband to beat his wife with the stick if she questioned his orders. Manu even denied education and property rights to women, disallowed remarriage for a widow, and codified the methodology of subjugating the women and this methodology is being indoctrinated generation after generation. Her objections raised, out of compulsion, are often ignored. Even the 11th century Bhakti saints also equated women with cattle and allowed the husband to beat his wife with stick if she disobeyed his orders. Hence, women are denied of qualitative life handicapped by a perfectly framed culture biased against the interests of women. Whatever women got from men are gifts only and not their legitimate dues. One wonder is this indoctrination has entered up to DNA level! The women born and brought-up in this culture are becoming women patriarchs due to prolonged indoctrination of patriarchal prejudices. The mother, who is a woman patriarch, purposefully appears herself before her daughters as a model to show that how the women should be. Hence, the vicious circle or fatal triangle 'Patriarchy-Men-Oppression' goes on and atrocities against women continue unabated and unstopped. Some mothers, who are strict women patriarchs, do not allow their daughters even to laugh, to sit before books even for an hour, believing that girl child should learn to do domestic work first. This is resulting in ignorance of the girl child about the worldly affairs, day-to-day happenings, and changing patterns of the society. Hence, the girl, after getting married under
patriarchal setup, when enters her family of procreation, need to live with her husband who is aware of worldly affairs, day-to-day happenings, and changing patterns of the society and the girl faces the problems of adjustment within this new environment, which is different from her family of orientation. If her husband is kind and considerate, then it is well and good. If he is a bad person, then the girl, who is ignorant of worldly affairs, day-to-day happenings, and changing patterns of the society, undergoes frustration resulting in maladjustment, ultimately ending in domestic violence. Even a woman who had higher education often gets ill-treated or cheated by her husband or/ in the society, as she has brought up in the patriarchal system, which is undemocratic. Hence, the generations of girls tend to grow in ignorance with indifference to worldly affairs, day-to-day happenings, and changing patterns of the society, their rights and their abilities, and hence they suffer.

In India, women suffer from hunger and poverty in greater numbers and to a great degree than men. At the same time, it is women who bear the primary responsibility for actions needed to end hunger: education, nutrition, health and family income.

There are seven major areas of discrimination against women in India:

(i) **Mal-nutrition**: India has exceptionally high rates of child malnutrition, because tradition in India requires that women eat last and least throughout their lives, even
when pregnant and lactating. Mal-nourished women give birth to mal-nourished children, perpetuating the cycle.

(ii) **Poor Health**: women receive less health care than men. Many women die in childbirth of easily prevented complications. Working conditions and environmental pollution further impairs women’s health.

(iii) **Lack of Education**: Families are far less likely to educate girls than boys, and far more likely to pull them out of school, either to help out at home or from fear of molestation.

(iv) **Overwork**: Women work longer hours and their work is more arduous than men’s; yet, their work is unrecognized. Men report that “women, like children, eat and do nothing”. Technological progress in agriculture has had a negative impact on women.

(v) **Unskilled**: In women’s primary employment sector – agriculture – extension services overlook women.

(vi) **Mistreatment**: In recent years, there has been an alarming rise in atrocities against women in India, in terms of rapes, assaults and dowry-related murders. Fear of violence suppresses the aspirations of all women. Female infanticide and sex-selective abortions are additional forms of violence that reflect the humiliation of females in India society.

(vii) **Powerlessness**: While women are guaranteed equality under the constitution, legal protection has little effect in
the face of prevailing patriarchal traditions. Women lack power to decide whom they will marry, and are often married off as children. Legal loop holes are used to deny women inheritance rights.

2.2 NEED FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

"Women represent 50 per cent of the world's population, produce half of the world's food supply, account for 60 per cent of the working force, contribute up to 33.3 per cent of the official labour force, perform nearly 66.6 per cent of all working hours, receive 10 per cent of world's economy, but, surprisingly own less than 1 per cent of the world's real estate" (The Voice of Working Women, UNO, 1982).

Nothing else could justify the need for women empowerment than the above simple truth. Besides, women are called as silent majority, "pace-makers of development". Therefore without their development and progress there cannot be any real development in the world. There is a dire necessity for the equality and empowerment of women in the society. To achieve women's equality and empowerment, they have to be provided with wholesome opportunities and rights, access to basic civic amenities, right to education, right to earn a livelihood, right to equal wages, right to question and fight injustice, right to decision-making, right to express themselves, right to live a life of dignity, right to legal status and protection against violence and injustice.
If national development and women’s development have to be purposive and relevant, women have to be equal partners and participants. Gender stereotyping should not take place and gender sensitization is required at every level for men and women. The powerful and deep-rooted cultural forces, outdated value system, discriminatory socialization process and oppressive social structural forces that obstruct such an access, need to be confronted and reversed.

Hence, there is an urgent necessity to improve the status of women by well-conceived, planned development programmes which would have active community participation and be based on the women’s needs in order to emancipate and empower them. We have to not only posit goals but also back them up with adequate resources and set up institutions at every level – local, state and national – to ensure that the objectives are implemented and the implementation monitored. Also, we should have a body similar to the Equal Opportunities Commission of the United Kingdom to act both as a monitoring as well as grievance machinery for all government departments, public sector units, semi-government agencies, judiciary and private sector. India has a strong and sophisticated women’s movement. It has to ensure, together with the government that the “apartheid of gender” must end. The struggle to free women must go on to carry out the mission of advancement, not only of women but also of humanity as a whole. This is a man’s struggle too. The position of women in a society is
the reflection on the society itself. The more emancipated its women are, the more advanced a society is.

To sum up, women form a sub-set that is often disadvantaged, discriminated against and marginalized in most spheres of life as compared to men within the same category. Such marginalization and subordination is reflected in wide male-female disparities in virtually all aspects of social well-being, at every scale from the local to the national and international. Moreover, ideologically, the woman was considered a completely inferior species, inferior to the male. Individually, she has no personality; socially, she was kept in utter subjection; morally, she was considered lacking the ethical fibre; economically, she was treated not worthy to have right to property; and politically, she was excluded from the power positions.

The analysis of the indicators on the situation of women reveals that women's condition continues to be miserable and they still confront immense problems in all the domains of life. And it is said that women's lives in India and the world over are circumscribed by what can be termed as the "five Ps" - patriarchy; productive resources access inadequacy; poverty; promotion advancement, insufficiency and powerlessness. In the words of Antrobus and Bizot (1993) the "gender relationship of dominance and subordination is a political relationship which derives material sustenance from conditions and structures of production and its
legitimacy from a tradition/culture which upholds subordination of women.”

The physical strength and alleged dominance of men has been an important instrument of controlling women’s freedom of action. Moreover, the root of women’s subjection has been their economic dependence on men: Unless women break the shackle of economic dependency on men, they have a status equivalent to that of horses, as owner’s pride, very useful, but controlled and maintained by men. Thus prevails the need for empowerment of women in the society.

2.3 DIMENSIONS OF EMPOWERMENT

How is empowerment experienced and demonstrated? This wider picture shows empowerment to be operating within three dimensions:

(a) Personal: Development of a sense of self and individual confidence and capacity, and undoing the defects of internalized oppression.

(b) Rational: Development of the ability to negotiate and influence the nature of a relationship and decisions made within it.

(c) Collective: Where individuals work together to achieve a more extensive impact than each could have had alone. This includes involvement in political structures, but might also cover collective action based co-operation rather than competition. Collective action may be locally focused – for example, groups
acting at village or neighborhood level or be more institutionalized, such as the activities of national networks the formal procedures of the United Nations.

(d) The Three Dimensions of Empowerment

There is a broad agreement within the social work and education disciplines that empowerment is a process which involves some degree of personal development, but that this is not sufficient, and that it involves moving from insight to action. In a counseling context, is defined as,

The process by which people, organization or groups who are powerless (a) become aware of the power dynamics at work in their life context, (b) develop skills and capacity of gaining some reasonable control over their lives, (c) exercise this control without infringing upon the rights of others and (d) support the empowerment of others in the community.

The distinguishes between 'the situation of empowerment', where all four of these conditions are met; and 'an empowerment', where one or more of the conditions is in place or being developed, but where the full requirements are not present.
Understanding your situation is important; if you do, you are more likely to act to change it; McWhirter's definition makes it clear that taking action is not about gaining the power to dominate others.9

Writers on social group work also insist that empowerment must be used in the context of oppression, since empowerment is about working to remove the existence and effects of unjust inequalities. Empowerment can take place on a small scale, linking people with others in similar situations through self-help, education, support, or social action groups and network building; or on a larger scale, through community organization, campaigning, legislative lobbying, social planning, and policy development.

The definitions of empowerment used in education, counselling, and social work, although developed through work in industrialized countries, are broadly similar to Friere's concept of 'conscientization' which centres on individuals becoming subjects in their circumstances and the social environment, that leads to action.

In practice, much empowerment work involves forms of group work. The role of the outside professional in this context becomes one of helper and facilitator, anything more directive is seen as interfering with the empowerment of the people concerned. The outside professional cannot expect to control the outcomes of authentic empowerment. Writing about educating,
Taliaferro (1991) points out that true power cannot be bestowed: it comes from within. Any notion of empowerment being given by one group to another hides an attempt to keep control, and she describes the idea of gradual empowerment as ‘especially dubious’. Real empowerment may take unanticipated directions. Outside professional should, therefore, be clear that any power over which they have in relation to the people they work with is likely to be challenged.

This raises an ethical and political issue: if one party has more power as is the case with statutory authorities or financially upwardly organizations, such as development agencies in respect of groups they support it is misleading to deny that this is so.

2.4 EMPOWERMENT: A DYNAMIC VIEW

We may now turn to the issue of ‘empowerment’ what it is and how it might be developed. The simple model of three dimensions of empowerment, described earlier, while a useful approach, is not adequate for detailed analysis. While it emphasizes the different contexts in which empowerment can be experienced and exercised at a personal level, in relationships, and within a group, it does not give details of what empowerment consists of and does not distinguish between processes and changes that may occur because of those processes. It is inadequate for different forms of power. It fails to repress the complexity of empowerment processes as they toured either or the
case study organizations. In addition to these shortcomings, the model does not provide sufficient analytical capacity to make it useful to an external agency looking to identify appropriate interventions.

The individual or group brings to the process of empowerment an existing experience and history. The process does start at a certain point in time, but might have been operating in various ways ever since the group existed or the individual was born. Prior experience can affect the empowerment process in a variety of ways and it may affect the strength of a particular encouraging or inhibiting pressures it may bias the areas in which new power is gained. For family may be developing her self-confidence and self-esteem, but for their processes are likely to be manifested in her interactions with more experienced leads, with authority or with organizational tasks which ‘stretch’ her in some way. The way in which the two women respond to inhibiting factors, such as demand on their time, will be different. The women with experience of leadership will almost certainly have coped with such constraints in other situations, and have developed strategies to deal with them.

Based on the above premise, Rowlands (1990) has developed a new model for women’s empowerment which is described below.
A. PERSONAL EMPOWERMENT

The core of the empowerment process involves fundamental psychological and psycho-social processes of changes, to which individual women alluded repeatedly. Central to these are the development of self-confidence and self-esteem and a sense of urgency, of being an individual who can interact with her surroundings and cause things to happen. Rowlands (1997) 'dignity' in the core aspects. The process of empowerment is both an experience as a feeling of personal change and development, and also manifested, or demonstrated, in changed behaviour. Each woman experiences the process in an individual way, related to her own history, circumstances, and actions.

B. COLLECTIVE EMPOWERMENT

The 'collective empowerment' dimension is very closely related to the personal dimension, since without empowerment at a personal level, it is very hard for the individual to be active collectively. It is very difficult for a group to become active and effective without, isometrically, mass of participating individuals who have achieved a degree of personal empowerment. There is also a circular inter-relationship participating the process of personal empowerment, and vice-versa. The process of collective empowerment builds on any experiences of individual members of the group of participation in other groups or collective activities.
C. EMPOWERMENT WITHIN CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS

To have sense of empowerment in relation to other people is associated with and, to a large extent, dependent upon self-confidence, self-esteem, and a sense of agency. It also depends on the development of the individual's abilities to negotiate, communicate, and defend his or her rights. Such skills themselves also represent 'changes' demonstrating personal empowerment.

From her experiences based on the interviews with women in rural Honduras, Rowlands (1997) concludes that the model shows clearly that it is not enough to take the 'core' in any one dimension and say this is what empowerment consists of, for example, having more self-confidence and dignity do not necessarily lead to change since how power is exercise or experienced. In other words, empowerment cannot simply be equated with self-confidence and dignity. It is also what happens as a result of having self-confidence and dignity. Hence, the need for a sense of agency as scintilla element of personal or collative empowerment. Empowerment processes are dynamic and the three dimensions of empowerment suggested in the model are closely linked: positive changes in one dimension can encourage changes in either the same dimension of in another. Factors that encourage empowerment can be reinforced and are reinforcing, unhitching factors and obstacles can be mitigated, and overcome, thus serving empowerment.
2.5 EMPOWERMENT AS A GENDER ISSUE

The empowerment of women is a gender-issue and not simply a women issue. It is also a class issue, a race issue, and so on, according to the various and changing identities people have. It is about transform social relations\(^{11}\). In tackling personal empowerment in its most basic form, the women had to confront conditioning and power relations in the decision to move outwards from the home into involvement in the group.

Women may become personally empowered in many ways, including becoming able to earn her own living. However, if full responsibility for domestic duties continues including child care, her empowerment, at the same time, may actually increase her burden. In some cases, this also enables the man to assume less responsibility than before. A woman will often resolve the problem by devolving the work onto the shoulders of another woman and, commonly, onto her eldest daughter.

If empowerment of women is a gender issue, there is a need to tackle the corresponding task with men that will contribute to reducing the ‘obstacle’ of machismo and open up the possibilities of change in gender relations. It’s work has not had much recognition to date, and is very rare in the design of development programme.
2.6 EMPOWERMENT AS A DEVELOPMENT ISSUE

Women who become empowered to act to meet their own needs can also contribute to development of the wider society. This differs from an ‘efficiency approach’ to women development in that it is the women themselves who identify the need and the solution, rather than the development agency or government body. There are many studies which show that women who got educated tend to have fewer children. Women with a lighter burden of domestic responsibilities are more able to take up opportunities for other activates. Empowered women, especially within an origination where collective empowerment can become possible, are more likely to act to exert political pressure for change in favour of essential development needs. There may be economic needs, but may also be other kinds of development needs, such as the need for an effective state justice system through which women can invoke existing legal protections.

The emphasis on gender in the development discourse has resulted in the emergence of the concept of empowerment of women and incorporation of gender in human development studies. The concept of human development, popularized by UNDP, puts people at the centre of development and advocates that the purpose of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives. By emphasizing equity and poverty, it proposes initiative for human well-being. The UNDP has explicitly introduced gender as part of human
development. In the opinion of UNDP, human development would be impossible without gender equality. As long as women are excluded from the development process, development will become weak and lop-sided and sustainable human development can be achieved by engendering development. Thus, UNDP believes that "human development, if not engendered, is endangered". In order to measure the extent of gender inequality and its impact on social progress, the UNDP has developed two indices as a part of its 1995 report-Gender related Development Index (GDI) and Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM)\textsuperscript{13}. GDI is the HDI adjusted for gender inequality. HDI is the average of three dimensions, namely, longevity, knowledge and access to the basic resource; whereas, GDI measures achievement in the same basic capabilities as the HDI does, but takes note of inequality in achievement between women and men. HDI indicates that higher the inequality, lower would be the GDI i.e. GDI falls when the achievement levels of both women and men go down or when the disparity between their achievements increases. GEM examines the level of participation of men and women in socio-economic and political life of the nation with the help of per capital income, share of jobs and share of seats in the legislature. Greater the share of women in these three variables, higher would be the GEM. Thus, while the GDI is concerned with the human capabilities living standards, the GEM is concerned with the use of these capabilities, and takes advantage of the opportunities of life.
2.7 APPROACHES TO WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

The declaration of International Women Decade in 1975 brought into focus the importance of bringing women into the main-stream of development. Policy makers and development planners have highlighted the need for the economic uplift of the women of rural India as an essential prerequisite for overall development. The following discussion gives details of the approaches.

(a) Government’s approach

Governments of India at the center and in the State have given preference to grouping women for development. Development planning, as a matter of policy, has always aimed at removing inequalities in the process of development to ensure that fruits of development are enjoyed by all without gender bias. In the early years of planning, the concern for gender was from a welfare perspective, which manifested itself in the form of grants, waivers, subsidies and free ships for girls and women in programmes meant for their development. But these concessions did not produce the desired level of participation. In the later half of the 1970’s, the focus shifted from greater emphasis on integration of women the main-stream of social and economic development.

Many social and economic programmes like non-formal education for girls, Integrated Rural Development Programme and others were evolved with a percentage set aside solely for them.
The expectation is that the benefits derived from these programmes had to be sustained. Several studies have shown that 'practical gender gains' in improved livelihood, education, nutrition and sanitation are not sustained. The 'strategic need' to give 'women a voice' in the decisions so that directly it affect their lives, is not adequately taken care of. The strategy in the 1990's as mentioned earlier, has shifted to empowerment of women and giving them a voice in decision-making.

Ever since independence, a number of innovative schemes have been launched for the uplift of women in the country with empowerment as the goal. Regarding the empowerment of rural women, focus is laid on the following aspects;

1. Direct involvement of women in programming and management.
2. Effective collaboration with community organizations.
3. Organizing and strengthening of women's self-help groups.
4. Sensitization and advocacy for gender just society.
5. Identification of women's needs and priorities while generating employment and
6. Organizing women in different groups to undertake certain productive activities to earn their livelihood and to develop the rural community.

The National Policy on Education (1986) has suggested certain strategies to empower women. Accordingly, women are to be
empowered through collective reflection and decision-making. The parameters of empowerment are positive self-image, critical thinking, group cohesion, decision-making, equal participation and economic development. The plans also pointed out the need for holistic approach towards the development of women.

(b) Women Employment during Plan Period

The Government of India and State governments, considering women economic empowerment as prerequisite for empowerment; focused their attention on promoting the cause of women by way of adding the separate chapter on women's development in the Sixth Five Year Plan. During the Sixth Plan, a variety of programmes were taken up under different sectors of development to ameliorate the working conditions of women and to raise their economic and social status\(^{15}\). A special cell to look after the employment of women and monitor the implementation of Equal Remuneration Act was created in 1976. Setting up of Vocational Training Centers exclusively meant for women; priority to women heads of house-holds in the IRDP; fixing 1/3 share to women in Training of Rural Youth for Self Employment (TRYSEM) are among the efforts made. A new scheme, namely, Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) was started in 1982-83 as a pilot project. This scheme, based on group approach, is intended to provide training in activities like weaving, fishing, winding, broom and rope-making, brick-making and pickle-making. The scheme of setting up Krishivignana Kendras,
introduced for bridging the gap between farmers' knowledge and available technology, also covered women. The introduction of joint pattas is another important effort. Necessary safeguards were provided to enable them to take up gainful employment in the trades/jobs suitable to their aptitude.

In the Seventh Plan, the basic approach was to inculcate confidence among women and bring about an awareness of their own potential for development, as also of their rights and their privileges. Special attention was given to improve existing skills of women and imparting to them new skills under the programmes like exchange of development, fodder production, post-harvest technology, farmers training in horticulture, fisheries, and poultry, dairy and social forestry. Horticultural research and development programmes are intended to play a significant role in economic and nutritional progress. Stress was laid on giving adequate employment to women beneficiaries under the schemes, the National Rural Employment Programme and Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Scheme.

Women doing house-hold works were covered under the scheme of providing financial assistance to the assignees of ceiling on surplus land. It was also intended to make attempts to identify and forge the women beneficiaries under entrepreneurial development programme. Promotion of skilled employment was another objective. Under the programme of training of workers and entrepreneurs, women beneficiaries would be given
preference. A new scheme viz Women’s Development Corporation was taken up for promoting employment-generating activities for women, especially for women of the poorer sections of society.

The approach of the Eighth Plan was that women have to be empowered by raising their status and bringing them into the main stream of national development, not as mere beneficiaries, but as contributors and partakers along with men. The document highlighted the need for mobilization, organization and concretization of the poor women of the village.

Empowerment of the women is the major objective of the Ninth Plan. It is stated that an integrated approach is proposed to be adopted for empowering women. A special strategy of earmarking of funds named as ‘women’s component’ is to be adopted. The approach paper to the Ninth Plan categorically states that the plan recommends the expeditious adoption of the ‘National Policy for Empowering Women’ along with a well-defined gender development index to monitor the impact of its implementation in raising the status of women from time to time. It clearly states that economic empowerment of women is mainly based on their participation in decision-making process with regard to raising and distribution of resources i.e. incomes, investment and expenditure at all levels. It is also noted that efforts would be made to enhance the earning capacity of women, besides access to and ownership of all family and country assets, opportunities for exercising decision-making power inside house-holds. Participation
of women in conservation of environment and empowerment of
the equality of life of women should be assured according to the
stand taken by the government.

recognized two parameters for women’s economic empowerment.
This plan laid emphasis on the economic development and
integration of women into the main-stream of economy through
education. It is noted in the report that 65 per cent women are
illiterate and fruits of development have not yet reached equally to
them.

Among these women, the rural women, who constitute the
majority, are not able to gain from these benefits as much as the
urban women are. The core group that prepared the plan made
far-reaching recommendation regarding the economic
empowerment of women. It is suggested that women can be
empowered through collective reflection and decision-making and
the parameters of empowerment are:

a. Building a positive self-image and self-confidence.
b. Development of ability to think critically.
c. Building up group cohesion and fostering decision-making
   and action.
d. Ensuring equal participation in the process of bringing about
   social change.
e. Encouraging group action in order to bring about change in
   society and
f. Providing the wherewithal of economic independence.

2.8 NATIONAL POLICY FOR THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN INDIA - 2001

The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles. The Constitution not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the state to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women.

Within the framework of a democratic polity, our laws, development policies, plans and programmes have aimed at women’s advancement in different spheres. From the Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-78) onwards, there has been a marked shift in the approach to women’s issues from welfare to development. In recent years, the empowerment of women has been recognized as the central issue in determining the status of women. The National Commission for Women was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1990 to safeguard the rights and legal entitlements of women. The 73rd and 74th Amendments (1993) to the Constitution of India have provided for reservation of seats in the local bodies of Panchayats and Municipalities for women, laying a strong foundation for their participation in decision-making at the local levels.

India has also ratified various international conventions and human rights instruments committing to secure equal
rights for women. Key among them is the ratification of the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1993.

The Mexico Plan of Action (1975), the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies (1985), the Beijing Declaration as well as the Platform for Action (1995) and the Outcome Document adopted by the UNGA Session on Gender Equality and Development and Peace for the 21st century, titled “Further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action have been unreservedly endorsed by India for appropriate follow-up. The policy also takes note of the commitments of the Ninth Five Year Plan and the other sectoral policies relating to empowerment of women19.

The women's movement and a wide-spread network of non-Governmental Organizations, which have strong grass-roots presence and deep insight into women's concerns, have contributed in inspiring initiatives for the empowerment of women. However, there still exists a wide gap between the goals enunciated in the constitution, legislation, policies, plans, programmes and related mechanisms on the one hand and the situational reality of the status of women in India, on the other. This has been analysed extensively in the report of the committee on the status of women in India. "Towards Equality", 1974 and highlighted in the National Perspective Plan

Gender disparity manifests itself in various forms, the most obvious being the trend of continuously declining female ratio in the population in the last few decades. Social stereotyping and violence at the domestic and societal levels are some of the other manifestations. Discrimination against girl children, adolescent girls and women persists in parts of the country.

The underlying causes of gender inequality are related to social and economic structure, which is based on informal and formal norms, and practices. 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.

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 stake holders for achieving its goals. Specifically, the objectives of this policy include:
(i) Creating an environment through positive economic and social policies for full development of women to enable them to realize their full potential.

(ii) 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.

(iii) Equal access to participation and decision-making of women in social, political and economic life of the nation.

(iv) 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.

(v) Strengthening legal systems aimed at elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.

(vi) Changing societal attitudes and community practices by active participation and involvement of both men and women.

(vii) Mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development process.

(viii) Elimination of discrimination and all forms of violence against women and the girl child; and

(ix) Building and strengthening partnerships with civil society, particularly women’s organizations.
2. 9 PROGRAMMES FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

During the Plan period, many programmes have been implemented for women empowerment and are discussed below.

1. Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP)

The Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) was launched as an important anti-poverty programme. During March 1976, it was implemented on experimental basis in 20 related districts and it were only in October 1982, it was extended to all the districts in the country. The primary objective of the programme was to enable the low income families residing in the rural areas to cross the poverty line\textsuperscript{20}. To realize the said objective, income-generating activities, self-employment activities in the fields of agriculture, horticulture and animal husbandry in the primary sector were grounded. Weaving and handicrafts in the secondary sector and service and business activities in the tertiary sector have been taken up. IRDP considered the house-hold as the basic unit of development. It has actually included a number of rural development programmes like Employment Guarantee Schemes (EGS), Food for Work Programme (FFWP), Small Farmers Development Agency (SFDA), Marginal Farmers and Agricultural Labourers Development Agency (MFALDA), Minimum Needs Programme (MNP), Drought-Prone Areas Programme (DPAP) etc. The IRDP aims at bringing about improvements in the economic and social life of the rural poor including women. This programme
takes care of various aspects of rural life such as agricultural growth, rural industrialization, education, health, public works, poverty and unemployment. The ultimate object is to enable them to acquire productive assets and appropriate skills to alleviate poverty.

2. Training of Rural Youth For Self Employment (TRYSEM)

The scheme of training of rural youth for self employment was started on August, 15th 1979 to provide technical skills to the rural youth in order to enable them to seek employment in the fields of agriculture, industry, services and business activities. Only youth in the age group of 18-35 and belonging to the families living below the poverty line are eligible for training. Priority for selection was given to the schedule caste and scheduled tribe persons, ex-servicemen. Further, one-third of the beneficiaries must be drawn from women category and a stipend of Rs.75/- to 200/- per month was provided to the trainees. On the completion of training, TRYSEM beneficiaries were assisted under the IRDP21.

The main criticisms against this programme were: (i) limited coverage of the programme; (ii) skills provided under the scheme have not linked with the rural industrialization. Training was provided on the basis of ad hoc considerations and skills imparted were not of much help and (iii) amount of stipend was too inadequate to motivate the youth to take advantage of the training.
3. Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY)

This programme was launched in April, 1989. Main aim of the scheme, was that at least one member of each poor family should be provided with employment for 50 to 100 days in a year at a work place near to his/her residence\textsuperscript{22}. About 30 per cent of the beneficiaries under this scheme should be drawn from women category. Both the rural wage employment programmes (i.e. the National Rural Employment Programme), and the RLEGP were merged in this scheme. Central assistance was provided to the extent of 80 per cent. The scheme was implemented through the village Panchayats.

4. Supply of Improved Tool Kits to Rural Artisans (SITRA)

This scheme was launched in July 1992, as a sub-scheme of IRDP, in selected districts to start with and was gradually extended to all the districts of the country. Under this scheme, the rural artisans (except weavers, tailors, needle workers and beedi workers) were supplied with a kit containing improved tools costing not more than Rs.2000. Of the total cost, the beneficiary has to bear 10 per cent and the remaining 90 per cent was being extended as subsidy by the Government of India. Further, the supply of power-driven tolls, subject to a maximum of Rs.4, 500 have also been provided\textsuperscript{23}. Since the inception of the scheme, till 1996-97 some 6.10 lakh kits have been distributed to the rural artisans with an out lay of Rs.116.19 crore. The major beneficiary

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\textbf{Rs. 331.48}
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\textbf{Rec 859}
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of the scheme belongs to blacksmith, carpentry, stone crafts, leather works, pottery and cane and bamboo work categories.

5. Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS)

The EAS became operational from October 2\textsuperscript{nd} 1993 and covered 3,206 backward blocks. The scheme primarily aimed at providing at least 100 days of unskilled manual work. Its funding pattern was 80:20 by the Centre and the States, respectively. Providing employment to the poor during the lean agricultural season in rural areas was the main theme of the scheme. Contractors were engaged and the works were undertaken by the government departments. Wages were paid partly in the form of food-grains and partly in cash.

6. Mahila Samriddhi Yojana (MSY)

The development of women in India has been recognized long back and accordingly a number of programmes have been designed to assure women a fair share of their income and to empower them. The Mahila Samriddhi Yojana (MSY) is one such scheme which was launched on 2\textsuperscript{nd} October, 1993 for the economic betterment of the rural women. It encourages and promotes thrift by enabling the women to deposit their hard earned savings and to give them the opportunity and the authority to utilize their income in a manner they think appropriate. It also provides an interface of women with government functionaries and enables them to face their problems of life with strength, courage and confidence.
7. Indira Mahila Yojana (IMY)

IMY is a recent effort at a co-ordinated development of women. The programmes focuses on group dynamics and participation for organizing women into groups launched in August 1995. The programme aims at covering all sectoral programmes, for women both vertically (i.e. through levels of local, block and district) and spatially (at the diverse programmes that exist for women), strengthening women by making them better informed and aware and helping them become self-reliant and economically empowered through income-generation activities. The programme would be co-ordinated through Indira Mahila Kendra's at the village level and Indira Mahila Block Kendra's at the block level. These Kendra's would be given a one time grant by the government. NGOs identified, for acting as facilitators for these Kendra's, would also be similarly given grants.

The efforts of government and its different agencies are ably supplemented by non-governmental organizations that are playing an equally important role in facilitating women empowerment. Despite concerted efforts of governments and NGOs, there are certain gaps. Of course we have come a long way in empowering women. Yet, the future journey is difficult and demanding.

8. Swarnajayanti Gram Swaroozgar Yojana (SGSY)

The SGSY was launched on April, 1999, as a restructured self-employment programme, in which the earlier anti-poverty
programmes viz., IRDP, TRYSEM, DWCRA, MWS and GKY have been merged. The emphasis of the SGSY is on cluster activities with a large number of micro enterprises. The primary objective of the programme is to bring the assisted families above the poverty line by providing them income-generating assets through a mix of bank credit and government subsidy.

9. A.P. Rural Livelihoods Programme (APRLP)

With the view to meet the livelihood needs of the resource poor landless. Women and other vulnerable sections, a special project, namely, APRLP was initiated by the Government of A.P with the support of DFID and U.K. Under this project, habitations with high natural resource degradation and socio-economic deprivation will be identified and provided better livelihood opportunities for the marginalized. Ensuring people’s participation is another significant feature of the project.

APRLP offers support to on-going water-shed programme by working in 500 new water-sheds and 2000 on-going and completed watershed. The P.D. DPAP will be the overall charge of the implementation of the APRLP programme. Specially trained and committed personnel have been appointed for the agricultural production and to promote live-stock activities in water-shed areas.
10. Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK)

The Rashtriya Mahila Kosh was set up in 1993 by the Department of Women and Child Development, Government of India. The main purpose of RMK is to provide credit facilities to the poorest of the poor and assetless women who are in need of credit. The credit facilities are provided through women’s development corporations, non-Governmental organisations and Self-Help Groups. The RMK provides credit facilities to two lakh women from rural and urban areas. In order to provide the credit facilities, the family income is taken as criteria and the women who intend to avail credit facilities under this scheme should not have more than Rs. 11000/- income per annum in rural areas and Rs. 11800/- per annum in urban areas. An interest of 12 per cent per annum will be charged to individual borrowers and 8 per cent to the NGOs and corporations.

11. Indira Kranthi Patham (IKP)

The Government of Andhra Pradesh has been implementing since June 2000 a special project called “IKP” to address poverty through empowerment of rural poor women especially the poorest of the poor. The project being implemented by the Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP) under Department of Rural Development and Panchayat raj, (GOAP), covered 180 backward mandals in 6 Districts under Phase I. The phase II of the Project covering 548 backward mandals and all coastal Fisherman Villages
in other 16 Districts had commenced since June 2002, thus covering 864 rural mandals of all the districts of the State. The unique feature of the project is that it would be implemented through SHGs and developing other grass-roots level institutions of the poor involving SHGs, viz, Village organizations (VOs) and Mandal Samakya (MS), enhancing their capacities to manage their resources. The projects would also support sub-projects to be implemented by grass-roots institutions to increase their livelihood opportunities, income and reduce risks. These sub-projects are part of a village micro-plan, viz, Livelihood Enhancement Action Plan (LEAP) prepared under VELUGU by the project staff. The poor families have to be covered under this scheme.

The Project involves strengthening of all the existing SHGs promoted by DRDAs and facilitating their bank linkage. Another important component of the projects is Community Investment Fund (CIF) to support investments in sub-projects proposed and implemented by SHGs and VOs. The CIF is provided, under the projects, as a loan component to the members through their SHGs and the members and the SHGs would pay the amount to the VOs. The project provides for accessing bank credit by the SHGs.

The project is expected to generate income and employment to the SHG members. The other components of VELUGU include educational support for girl child labour, support to people with disabilities and special interventions like social risk management through community-based insurance package and rice credit.
scheme which provide for food security to the poor by making available rice on credit with repayment period of 1-2 months.

12. DWCRA (Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas)

Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) programme was introduced in Andhra Pradesh in 1982-83 with the co-operation of UNICEF, with the primary objective of focusing attention on the women and the members of rural families living below the poverty line with a view to providing opportunities for self-employment on a sustained basis. The women members of DWCRA form groups of 10 to 15 women, each for taking up economic activities suited to their skills, aptitude and locally available resources. This programme also aims at improving women's access to basic services like health, education, child-care, nutrition, water and sanitation.

CONCLUSION

The 'trickle down' hypothesis has fallen out of favour in the development discourse. People-centered approaches have come to occupy centre stage in the development dialogue. Development is increasingly viewed as progress towards a desirable state of society which is inconsistent with malnutrition with decease, hunger, unemployment, domination and oppression. Further, it should be sustainable. Development should be ensured to each individual as a right and not as a benefit. In order for every individual to demand development as a right, his/her entitlements
must be improved. The emergence of human development approach and the use of GDI and GEM have brought gender concerns to the centre stage of development debate. The women and development approach argued in favour of a change in the structure of relationship between developed and developing countries, while the gender and development approach has attacked the structure of gender relations and the institutions and policies determining the gender construct.

Empowerment of women has come to be accepted as a key objective of development. Empowerment is a process of improving women's control over resources, ideology and self. It is a process of enlarging the entitlements and choices of women. It is a process of giving power to women to control their own lives. Empowerment is a process which can be promoted through education and awareness-building, provision of larger economic opportunities, improved access to health, educational, social services, collectivization and organization and greater role in political decision-making. Empowerment manifests itself in improved awareness and self-confidence, larger roles and responsibilities within the family and in the community, physical mobility, improved self-identity and greater participation in political decision-making. The key objective of DWCRA is empowerment of rural women.

Empowerment is a work which may used in imprecise and misleading ways in relation to women and processes of
development, in part because of the contested nature of its underlying concept, i.e. power. Where empowerment is used deliberately and there is clarity about the relevant kind of power concerned, it is a concept with the potential to be used creatively and effectively both analytically and in practice to facilitate women development. This is particularly so if empowerment is seen as process within the changing and complex context of a gender-differentiated society, where women’s life experiences may differ widely.
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