CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Prologue

The tribes in India are characterized by the dominant groups as distinctive with their comparatively more isolated habitation in the hilly and the forest areas, and their distinct social, economic and cultural lives. The connotation ‘tribe’ attributed to certain ethnic groups in India is the legacy of the British colonial rule. The term continues to be used in dealing with the exotic indigenous people of India who live outside the cities and townships. In the present day, tribes are found to live in forests, hills, and forest terrains which are the repository of minerals, hydraulic and forest resources with their exotic culture which is peculiar to modern day people. Therefore, the outsiders designate them with various names.

The anthropological literature reveals that the term tribe has been used for those groups of human beings whose place of residents is situated in remote areas like hills, forests, sea coasts and islands, and whose style of life is quite different of the present day civilized men. Local indigenous people in these places of the world are termed as tribe or tribal, to distinguish them from other people of the world. It is distressing to note that the gains of development have not yet reached the intended classes including the tribes to the desired extent. The media institutions have a corporate social responsibility of facilitating the empowerment of tribes who are the excluded sections of Indian society. The present investigation was carried out to assess the role of media in the empowerment of tribal women in Karnataka state. The tribal development in India, constitutional provisions, reservation benefits, empowerment of women in India, media intervention for the empowerment of women, role of media in the empowerment of tribal women, social significance of the study, statement of the problem and objectives of the study are presented in this chapter.

1.2 Tribal Development in India

India has the largest concentration of the tribal population among the countries in the world, next only to Africa, according to Ratha (1986:190). According to 2011 Census, the total tribal population is less than 9% of the country’s total population.
The majority of the tribal population is found in the Eastern, Central and Western regions of India. They are mostly backward, deprived and oppressed sections of Indian society. The tribal economy can be termed as a subsistence economy or a primitive economy. A large number of tribes are still dependent on cultivation, food gathering and fruit collecting exercises for their survival. They are at the lowest rung of social and economic order in India.

Article 342(1) provides that the President may with respect to any State or Union Territory and where it is a State after consultation with the Governor thereof by public notification, specify the tribes or tribal communities or parts of a group or groups within tribes or tribal communities which shall for the purpose of this Constitution be deemed to be Scheduled Tribes in relation to that State or Union Territory as the case may be. Parliament may by law include in or exclude from the list of Scheduled Tribes specified in a notification issued under Clause (1) any tribe or tribal community or part or group within any tribe or tribal community. Religion is not a bar in the case of Scheduled Tribes.

When India attained independence, the new democratic state was made aware of its responsibility towards the welfare of weaker sections of the society. One of the major concerns of Indian planning has therefore been the welfare and development of the weaker sections of the society. The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes constitute nearly one quarter of the total population in India. Tribal development should be viewed at not merely in terms of material needs but equally or even more so in relation to non-material needs such as the right to live with freedom, human dignity and self respect. Hence, a multi-dimensional approach to ‘tribal development’ is the need of the hour. Tribal development encompasses broadly the multi-faceted development of tribes in India. For the tribal population, there has always been a close traditional association with the territory or a tribal domain with the tribal community enjoying a collective command over the natural resources. Today, in all developing countries, ‘tribal development’ is considered to be a subject of special concern. In India, special programmes are implemented for the inclusive and sustainable development of tribes.
Tribal Development before Independence

Prior to the arrival of the European colonial forces, the tribal areas were relatively undisturbed. The Mughal and native rules prior to the British occasionally looted the tribal resources by using their unconstitutional power. The imposition of regular taxation through the passage of the Bengal Permanent Settlement Act of 1793 marked the beginning of unrest and rebellions in all tribal areas of the country. Widespread tribal resistance movements compelled the British administration to negotiate workable peace in the tribal areas and this led to the concept of partially or completely excluded areas of administration in British India. The British administrators pursued a ‘policy of isolation’ and tried to keep the tribes away from the mainstream of national life.

Birsa Munda fought for the rights and privileges of tribes in India and established a new identity for Indian tribes. The tribal freedom movements such as Kol Rebellion (1832), Santal Rebellion (1855-56) and first freedom movement (1857) also played a major role in the organization of tribes in Indian society. Several acts such as Cleveland’s Hill Assembly Plan, Bengal Act, 1833, Wilkinson Act, 1855, Scheduled Area Act 1874, Chotanagpur Tenancy Act (1908), Government of India Act (1919) and Government of India Act (1935) also paved the way for identity development and proactive measures for the development of tribes before independence.

Tribal Development in the Post-Independence Era

Baba Saheb Ambedkar, Chairman of the Drafting Committee was fully aware of the iniquitous forces embedded in the social systems, economic institutions, and political organizations in India in relation to the weaker and vulnerable sections of the society and therefore, considered it necessary to provide for specific corrective measures and mandates in the Constitution in their favor, writes Sankaran (2000:201). The overall pre-independence arrangements continued in the post-independence era after the State re-organization in the early 1950s. The otherwise contiguous tribal areas remained dissected and distributed over several non-tribal states except in the North East, where the tribal people have their own states formed along ethnic lines. Another important aspect of tribal development is that tribes are allergic to the legal system and developmental network created by the state and civil society.
The tribal issues received prominence in the draft constitution, largely through the efforts of Jaipal Singh, the most prominent among the tribal leaders of that time, on the advice of Verrier Elwin. The basic principles that should guide the approach to the development of tribes were closely set out by the Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru who formulated ‘Tribal Panchsheel’ which was later endorsed by the Renuka Ray Team (1959), Dhebar Commission (1961) and the Shilu Ao Committee (1969). These commissions made novel recommendations for the uplift of tribes in India.

The Community Development Programme was launched during the First Five Year Plan (1951-56) to empower tribes in India. The entire country was covered by the Community Development approach by the end of the Second Five Year Plan (1956-61). In the Fourth Five Year Plan (1969-74), series of special programmes were formulated for specific target groups. Similar programmes for tribal development areas were also implemented on a pilot basis. The tribal development agencies were also established all over the country. The Tribal Sub-Plan was evolved in the year 1974-75 to facilitate the overall development of the tribes in India. The Tribal Sub-Plan strategy adopted the Integrated Tribal Development Projects (ITDP) for tribal areas with substantial tribal population.

The Sixth Five Year Plan visualized the raising productivity levels to several economic fields in order to enable the tribes to cross the poverty line. It had some impact on generating employment and increasing the earnings of the tribes. The Modified Tribal Development Approach (MTDA) was also initiated with a view to empower the tribes in India. At the beginning of the year 2000, the Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) strategy was implemented through 194 ITDPs, 259 pockets of tribal concentration, 82 clusters and 75 primitive tribal group projects. In the new millennium, the central government increased the outlay for tribal development, resulting in the expansion of infrastructural facilities, fulfillment of basic needs and betterment of the living standard of the tribes in the country.

Other prominent approaches to tribal development in India include – Special Multipurpose Tribal Block (SMPTDB), Tribal Development Block (TDB), Tribal Development Agencies (TDA), Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs), Integrated Tribal Development Programme, ITDP, Tribal Sub-Plan Strategy, TSP, National Rural Employment Programme (NREP), National Rural Landless Employment Guarantee.
Programme (NRLEG), Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment (TRYSEM), National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) and Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban and Rural Mission (JNNURM). Besides these, Five Year Plans also had tribal development components consistently. Several specific institutional mechanisms for providing assistance for the integrated development of tribes were created in India.

The XI Plan claims to set the path of tribal development in the direction of ‘inclusive growth’ of the socially oppressed classes, economic destitute minorities and tribal groups. Despite these efforts, the laggard groups are yet to catch with the general pace of development taking place in the country. There was substantial increase in the flow of funds for the development of tribes in India, resulting in the expansion of infrastructural facilities and enlargement of coverage of the tribal population. Protective measures have been taken for the welfare of tribes like forests, shifting of cultivation, abolition of bonded labor, rehabilitation of displaced family, land alienation, land reforms, tribal education, vocational training and health and nutrition in the country over a period of time.

Several scholars have also examined the problems and prospects of tribes in India. Empirical studies have revealed that bulk of the tribes still reside in the rural areas. Males and females among the tribes are almost evenly distributed with males having a small edge over the females. There is visible difference in urban-rural tribal literacy level. The outlays for the development of scheduled tribes ranged between 0.5% to 5.0% of the total plan outlays up to the Twelfth Plan period. The attention to development of tribes is not satisfactory in the country. Funds are not set apart in proportion to the percentage of tribes in the country.

Burman (1975:32), Kumaran (1980:115), Deogaonkar (1980:58), Katoch (1986:108), Devan (1988:59), Chand (1988:35) and others have evaluated the impact of tribal development programmes in India. They have reported that the level of tribal development in certain areas is dismal. Others have noted that tribal development programmes have created a positive impact on generating employment and increasing the earnings of the tribes. Some scholars have also observed that tribal development programmes are not effectively implemented by following an integrated approach. Tribal activists have lamented that the benefits failed to reach the lower strata of the tribal community in India. The non-tribes have also availed the benefits of tribes through various projects due to lack of scientific identification of the beneficiaries.
Singh (1982:220) states: “Our tribal development programmes are largely plan based and target oriented and take care of the disbursement of a given amounts of funds in the so called tribal sector. They are not need based, one may venture to say. The problems of the tribes are basically different in different regions of the country and in different areas of the regions. They need micro level analysis and immediate attention and essentially local solutions. Governmental interference is needed at the local level itself. Tribal development in India is at crossroads. Objectives have been planned and declared. Financial resources have been generated and earmarked. The planning process, set in motion, has proceeded far. If we fail to achieve the objectives, tribal expectations having been aroused, we shall succeed in generating frustration. There is the possibility that, having failed to secure satisfaction, the tribal leaders and the tribal mass may turn to assertion of their identity through other channels i.e., sub-nationalism, separate state, etc”.

Singh (2000:224) observes: “Reservation granted to all the sections of STs regardless of their levels of education, income, social status and political power has created difference between different tribes and within tribes. The policy has resulted in the poor getting more poor and rich getting richer. This preferential employment policy benefitted the affluent tribes living in plain areas to grab most of the benefits. De-reservation of the progressive sections of STs could not take place due to organized mobilization and pressure politics of the advanced sections”.

Sankaran (2000:201) notes: “Commencing with the Constitutional commitments and the special legislations to secure equality and human dignity, a large number of welfare measures have been taken up both as policy measures and developmental programmes in all the fields of tribal development. Despite various measures to improve the socio-economic conditions of the Scheduled Tribes, they remain vulnerable. They are subjected to various atrocities, indignities, humiliations and harassments. They are also denied a number of civil rights. This will call for efforts not only on the part of the State and its myriad agencies but collective efforts on the part of the large democratic sections of the society. Apart from the laws and state action, the society itself has to accept, imbibe and internalize the values of equality, non-discrimination, human dignity, justice and democratic practices. The development of Scheduled Tribes is thus a part of a continued quest for equality and
social justice, the objectives enshrined in the Constitution and pursued since independence in the free India.

**Contemporary Tribal Development in India**

The 12th Five Year Plan aims to bring about the integrated tribal development in India. Budgetary allocations are also increased for the development of tribes across the country. An assessment of the implementation approaches under TSP reveals that Integrated Tribal Development Project (ITDP) is not functional due to several reasons such as lack of adequate and trained staff, poor planning processes, inadequate office infrastructure and basic facilities for staff. In many states, project officers at ITDP do not have sufficient work experience.

The Constitution enshrines a number of important provisions for the safeguard as well as promotion of the tribes in India. These provisions include – protective provisions, developmental provisions, administrative provisions and reservation provisions. The tribal leadership is not powerful enough to assert the rights of tribes across the country. The tribal movement is also at the cross roads like any other progressive mass movements in the country. A historic breakthrough is awaited regarding the devolution of power to the grassroots of the tribal communities. Scholars have expressed serious reservations about the tribal developmental initiatives which lack effective coordination and prompt implementation.

The bureaucracy is also primarily responsible for the ineffective implementation of the tribal development programmes. The fact is that the weakest link in the chain in the entire gamut of tribal development process is the implementation component. The tribal development programmes cannot be implemented successfully with the existing formal and complex structures of various developmental agencies. Among the tribes, the so-called primitive tribal groups are extremely vulnerable. They are still living in isolation and their life styles show little change over the years.

In reality, the economically and politically strong within the tribal communities are cornering most of the policy benefits. There is no scientific monitoring and evaluation of tribal development plans in India. Effective machinery has not been set up at grassroots level, regional and national levels in order to ensure that tribal development benefits percolate to the members of the target groups. A
multi-dimensional approach to tribal development is the need of the hour in India. There is no doubt about the need of diversities of strategies for tribal communities in India. Planning for the tribal development needs to be continuously evaluated and upgraded throughout the nation.

Sinha et.al. (2002:225) comment: “The tribes should not be treated as mere receivers of the benefits and that they have been actively involved in the process of tribal development. Real tribal development would require tribal communities engaging in self-management rather than absolutely depending on the administration. It must be noted that the cycle of planning and evaluation ideally operates in a continuous feedback pattern that modifies plans as a programme rolls towards its goals. The present situation demands a revitalizing of existing development strategies and new orientation to the perspectives of tribal development”.

Ramachandran (2012:185) states: “The mass literacy programmes should be made more purposive, which should go hand in hand with improving the cultivation and marketing. The government should create awareness among the tribes before implementation of the development programmes. Infrastructural facilities should be developed in the tribal areas including minor irrigation facilities. Commercial banks, cooperatives and self help groups should provide financial assistance to the tribes. Food processing, medicine and other small industries should be set up in the tribal areas in order to create employment opportunities and achieve the goal of self – reliance among tribes”.

Tribal development is a long drawn process which demands close collaboration among all agencies involved in tribal development like Planning Commission of India, Ministry of Human Resources Development, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Anthropological Survey of India, Directorate of Science and Technology, National Institute of Rural Development, National Institute of Health and Family Welfare, Universities, Regional Tribal Research Institutes, and other Research and Development Organizations in the Country. These organizations should closely collaborate and redraw their research agenda to fulfill to goals of tribal development in India. All tribal development programmes should be implemented after proper analyses of the situation. Awareness drive has to be accelerated through proper media intervention programmes in order to enlist the active participation of tribes in all development projects. Qualitative research approaches are also required to
provide deep insights into the problems of the tribal development. The participatory research is required to establish the reliability and validity of the information pertaining to tribal development programmes in India.

1.3 Current State of Empowerment of Women in India

The United Nations Assembly, Economic and Social Council and the Secretariat are the three main UN bodies which have been functioning effectively for the international level for the protection and advancement of human rights of women. Several conventions were held all over the world to protect human rights of women in general and facilitate the overall empowerment of women in particular. India is a party to all these conventions but is not a signatory to the various resolutions passed by the international fora. The Women’s Indian Association (1917:254) submitted a memorandum to the then Secretary of State for India to facilitate the development of women.

E.S. Montague demanded that they be included under the expanded franchise in the new constitution instead of discriminating on account of sex, should ensure equal opportunities to women. The delegation was led by Sarojini Naidu and 14 other women leaders. But no effort was made by the Secretary of State in providing justice to women. The Montague Chelmsford Scheme of Reforms did not mention any provision for the inclusion of women under the expanded franchise in the new constitution. An attempt has been made to analyze the constitutional provisions, reservation benefits and other progressive measures for the empowerment of women in India.

Early Efforts for the Empowerment of Women

The Indian National Congress (1917) and Muslim League (1918) endorsed the demand made by the Women’s Indian Association and passed resolutions in favor of extending the benefit of franchise to women. Annie Besant and Sarojini Naidu led another delegation of women and appealed to the South Borough Commission (1919) to consider Indian women’s franchise on the same terms as men. But the commission rejected their demand on the specific plea that the social disabilities under which the Indian women labored rendered the experiment premature. The commission advised that this be left to the Indian legislatures to be treated as a domestic subject. The Madras Legislative Council took the lead in 1921 and extended wholehearted support
for the demand of Indian women. By 1929, all the provincial legislatures had given the women the right to vote on the same terms as men. The Government of India Act, 1935 enabled all women over 21 years to exercise their franchise provided they fulfilled the conditions to play a significant role in less conventional political activities.

The Women’s Indian Association made another demand for nomination of women to provincial legislatures. Muthulakshmi Reddy became the first nominated member of the Madras Provincial Legislature. The Indian Political Reforms Committee (1932) came out with a new proposal which reads: ‘Wives and widows of voters to qualify for franchise, for only property owners could exercise the vote and this right was now to be extended to their spouses.’ The women’s organizations totally rejected this new provision since it was unworthy of their inherent fundamental rights as humans and citizens of the country. The Round Table Conference (1929) also did not come out with any progressive measure in this regard.

Mahatma Gandhi launched the Salt Satyagraha Movement in the wake of failure of the Round Table Conference. At the close of the moment, the Mahatma commended their efforts thus: ‘The role of the women played in the freedom struggle is written in letters of gold.’ The Quit India Movement (1942) was a classic example of women gaining considerable recognition during the struggle for freedom. In reality, there was no fundamental change in the nature of gender relationships in Indian society even though women participated actively in the national freedom movement, states Mani Kamerkar (1996:104).

**Constitutional Provisions**

The Constituent Assembly (1946) had among its members Sarojini Naidu, Durgabai Deshmukh, Ammu Swaminathan, Sucheta Kripalani, Purnima Banerjee, Vijayalakshmi Pandit, Renuka Ray and Hansa Mehta to frame the Constitution for India on independence. These women leaders brought to the Constituent Assembly the experience and legitimacy conferred by their active participation in the freedom struggle. Many of the provisions of the Constitution not only provided an equal status to women but offered them positive protection thanks to the relentless efforts of the women members.
After independence, the founding fathers of Indian Constitution decided to secure social, economic and political justice for all citizens irrespective of race, religion, region and sex. They also considered it necessary to provide specific safeguards in the Indian Constitution for the women who have remained in the last rung of the social and economic order. The values embodied in the Constitution of India, provided for a democratic form of government where equality, freedom and non-exploitation was guaranteed to all sections of people including women. Articles 11 (removal of gender based discrimination), 14 (equality before law), 15 (equal opportunities and protection in government service), 16 (equal opportunities in appointment and promotion), 24 (privileges and protections to women), 32 (implementation of fundamental rights), 39 (principle of equal pay for equal work), 42 (healthy environment for women in work place and allowance in times of delivery of child), 46 (welfare of women and weaker sections), 47 (civic amenities including health, nutrition and food for all citizens), 51 (protection of harmony and fraternity), 73 (representation of women in panchayat raj institutions), 74 (representation of women in municipalities and corporations), 325 (inclusion in the list of voters) and 326 (right to franchise) and so on provide specific safeguards and welfare measures for women in Indian society.

The Directive Principles of State Policy enunciated in the Constitution embody the major policy goals of a welfare state. While the Fundamental Rights are justifiable and enforceable in courts of law, the Directive Principles are non-justifiable and non-enforceable in courts. But the State is charged with a duty to apply these principles in making laws. There are certain indirect rights such as prohibition of discrimination or denial of equal production.

Article 11 of Constitution was formulated to ensure the elimination of all forms of the discrimination against women. It reads: “state parties to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights with respect to work as an inalienable right of all human beings and right to protection of health and to safety in working conditions, including the safeguarding of the function of reproduction.

Article 14 of Constitution guarantees to all citizens’ equal protection of laws and equality before law. Both these expressions have also been used in ‘universal
declaration of human right’. The equality before law is guaranteed to all, without regard to sex, race, color or nationality.

Article 15(3) was formulated to make special provisions for women who require special treatment due to their very nature. Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any special provision for women and children. It also ensures equality of opportunity in matters of public employment. The constitutional mandate of equality of sexes and special protection under 15(3) has been enforced by the Supreme Court in cases of Air India Vs. Nargish Mirza, CB Muthmma Vs. Union of India and Maya Deve Vs the State where unequal provisions were quashed against women and in some cases favored for giving special protection to women.

Article 16(2) lays down the rule that no citizen can be to be discriminated for any employment under the State on ground only on religion, race, caste, or sex.

Article 21 has laid down some special provisions for women by way of compensation to rape victims and prevention of sexual harassment. Compensation for rape victims was awarded in “Delhi Domestic working women’s forum vs. Union of India” and rules for prevention of sexual harassment of working women was laid down in “Vishakha vs. State of Rajasthan”.

Article 24 lays down the rule that state parties undertake to adopt all necessary measures at the national level aimed at achieving the full realization of the rights recognized in the constitution. The state has to take suitable measures the protect women from sexual harassment and other forms of violence of coercion in the work place.

Article 32 provides certain remedies for the enforcement of the fundamental rights of the women. A Writ of Mandamus can be filed for the prevention of the violation of fundamental rights of women for ensuring safe and dignified working environment.

Article 39 (a) states that the citizens, men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means of livelihood.

Article 42 provides provision for just and human conditions of work and maternity relief. It is the duty of the State to make provisions for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief.
Article 51A states that it shall be the duty of every citizen of India to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India transcending religious, linguistic and regional or sexual diversity in order to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of the women.

Article 326 enables every person who is a citizen of India and who is not less than 18 years of age to be registered as a voter in elections to the house of the people and legislative assemblies of the State provided he/she is not held guilty of non-residents, unsoundness of mind, crime or corrupt or illegal practice.

Constitution 73rd Amendment Act, 1992 and Article 243D provide that in every Panchayat, State shall be reserved for SC & ST and not less than 1/3 seats shall be reserved for women, and office of the chairperson in the Panchayat at village shall be reserved in such manner as the legislature of the State may by law provide. The 73rd constitution amendment provided a new constitutional platform which ensures the representation of one-third women in the Panchayat Raj Institution.

Constitutional 74th Amendment, Act, 1992 and Article 243 provide that 1/3 seats in Municipal Corporations shall be reserved for women. Such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in the Municipality.

There are also other legislations which are enacted by the government to ensure equal rights to both sexes.

According to Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, provisions have been made to prohibit Bigamy and divorce can be given by the wife, subject to fulfillment of certain conditions. Women have been given right to enjoyment of property rights and other entitlements. The widow and daughter have absolute share in the property acquired personally by the husband and father respectively. The Law of Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956 provides for maintenance for wife, widow, minor children and poor parents. Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 and Amendment Act, 1986 prohibit the dowry system and considered the offences relating to the dowry as cognizable. Prevention of Atrocities Act, 1989 provides safeguard to the women of weaker sections. The National Commission for Women Act, 1990 facilitates redressal of grievances. All these legislations are in existence in India but they are not fully and properly implemented due to lack of political will, institutional mechanisms and punitive measures.
In India, the post independence period has seen many positive steps to improve the socio-economic status of women. Women have become aware of their rights and privileges and spearheaded movements across the country against all sorts of impediments to their empowerment. It would be relevant to document the historical struggle launched by progressive political groups on issues linked to women’s empowerment in India. The Communist Party of India (1954) organized a national conference to address women’s issues. The National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW) was also founded after this conference.

Geraldine Forbes (1998:72) states: “NFIW struggled for egalitarian and socialist structural changes in the socio-economic sphere, conceptualized women’s roles as multi-dimensional and demanded a network of support services for working women in urban and rural areas. Women peasants, agricultural laborers and workers in factories, the service sector, schools and offices joined in large numbers. The women who led the struggle were highly educated, progressive minded and often termed as belonging to the elite. They were however, closely connected with the masses of women and vocalized their marginalization, poverty and oppression through the legislative bodies and protest movements.”

**Reservation Benefits**

The Constitution of India enables the state to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favor of women to assist them to overcome cumulative social, educational, economic and political oppression faced for centuries. The representation of women in the parliament or state legislative assemblies was never been more than 10% despite the fact that women in India constitute 50% of the total population. The provision of reservation for women basically owes its origin in two important factors – the worldwide stress on inclusion of women in political decision making and the organized independent movements of women in India since late 1970. Serious efforts were made to socially and economically empower women after 1975 as a follow up of the world plan of action adopted in Mexico City. In the 1980s and 90s women’s issues had a focus on empowerment as reflected in 9th plan document which envisaged the creation of an enabling environment where women can freely exercise their rights both within and outside home as equal partners along with men.
The percentage of women in Parliament of India is 7.1% as compared to USA where it is 6.4%. India’s record of women in politics is much better, according to empirical evidence. The under-representation of women in the higher echelons of power has prevented the active participation of women in the decision making processes locally, regionally and nationally. Efforts are made to provide reservations for women since 1996 but the Women’s Reservation Bill is gathering dust in the Indian Parliament for reasons best known to the leaders who are on the driver’s seat. Women’s under representation in all elected bodies undermines the democracy. Reservation of seats can enable a large majority of women overcome social resistance by asserting their political and legal rights and thereby open the way for social and economic equality. This reservation should be viewed as a much needed impetus towards achieving the goal of empowerment of women politically and otherwise.

The women who represent the creamy layer had the benefit of political reservation in India in the post-independence era. Seth (1995:207) notes: “Several studies reveal that the majority of women who are actively engaged in political activity come from economically privileged families and often have a close relation – mostly the father, husband or mother, who were prominently involved in politics. In many cases, the facilitator of women politicians’ career has been a prominent leader, who holds an important position in his party and in the decision-making committees of the party. The linkage between higher social and economic status and higher rate of participation was clearly established by empirical evidences gathered by the past researchers”.

Biju (2006:26) observes: “The idea of reserving seats for women in Parliament and State legislatures is an extension of the reform carried out in the composition of the local self governing institutions under the 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendment Acts. However, the participation of women at the decision making process has been very low. They are not adequately represented in the Parliament and in the State legislatures. Political parties have failed to give adequate number of party tickets for election to women. All those provide that Indian women constituting half of the population have never been equal to men in terms of their representation. The present national level indications are also not encouraging for the future of political empowerment of women unless the pending constitution amendment bill providing one-third reservation of seats in Parliament and State legislatures is passed.
The 81st Amendment to the Constitution of India was introduced in 1996 with a view to provide the benefit of reservation of 33% of seats for women in the lower house of the union and state legislatures. No other amendment to the constitution has ever passed since then. The National Policy for the Empowerment of the Women (1988-2000) underscored the need for empowering women through convergence of services, resources on infrastructure. The states also amended the Gram Panchayat acts in consonance with the central act which paved the way for entry of about 75,000 women in Panchayat bodies across the country.

This bill is strongly supported by majority of women, feminists and activists in India. A major argument against the present provision of reservation is non inclusion of reservation for OBC women grounded on the apprehension that the benefits of the provision will be appropriated by high cost which is principal reason for stalling the passage of the bill in the parliament. The passing of legislation relating to women might have other consideration like enhancement of political power, availability of financial support and check in population growth, active participation of women in mainstream development. The leaders of OBC have also demanded for reservation within the reserved categories for women.

The Election Commission has called upon the various political parties to mutually agree to field women candidates in the election to union and state legislature failing which they will be derecognized by the Commission. The constitutionality of the bill is not questioned by anybody but the practicality of the bill is seldom upheld by the leaders of various political parties. It is also strongly argued that the absence of a democratic political culture in India would eternize the kin factor and increase proxy control rendering reservation for women meaningless and enhance the power of men without effecting change in the parliament or the state legislature which the present bill seeks to ensure. The political parties in India have utterly failed to provide 33% reservation for women from panchayat to parliament for the reasons best known to the forces which are wedded to statusquoism.

Panda (2006:166) justifies: “Women’s participation in political processes is important for strengthening democracy and for their struggle against marginalization, trivialization and oppression. Emergence of women as a strong group would change the prevailing political practices, the nature and content of debates in the legislature and women’s issues can be taken care of from feminist perspective both in policy
formulation and implementation. The opposition to the bill characterized the patriarchal attitude of the male parliamentarians and crystallization of the caste and communalization of Indian politics. The long term consequences of the bill lay bare a reversal of the existing socio-political order which is most disconcerting for the opponents of the bill but such fear is unwarranted as long as the provision is limited to 33%. Both the ideological perspective of human rights and the necessity to widen the democratic space for practical reason demands inclusion of women”.

**Current State of Empowerment of Women in India**

The concept of women’s empowerment has being widely discussed and debated all over the world. Empowerment of women can take place at a hierarchy of different levels-individual, household, community and societal. The components of empowerment of women essentially include-access to economic resources, participation in economic decision making, opportunities for self-development, participation in socio-political decision making, scope for skill development and impact on general welfare of the family. Women’s empowerment level gets increased in the community positively when any of these components is positively affected.

Half of the humanity – women have been suffering from the politics of oppression, discrimination, inability, injustice, inequality and exploitation all over the world for almost centuries. Several development experts have rightly defined development as an upward movement of the entire social system towards equality, justice, fraternity and empowerment. Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen sees development as freedom which in turn empowers the people regardless of sex, caste, color and creed. He rightly advocated that the empowerment of women is one of the central issues in the process of development for many countries in the world today. The question of empowerment of women is now on the international agenda.

Gandhiji was a great statesman who liberated India from the European colonial forces led by the British through democratic and non-violent means. He had almost an instinctive to understanding of women and their problems. His concern for the empowerment of women was unquestionable. According to Gandhi, fundamentally man and women are one and their problems must be one in essence. He had dreamt of the empowerment of women in the post-independence era.
The Directive Principles of State Policy and Fundamental Rights enabled the competent authorities to make special provisions for the empowerment of women in India. Emphasis is laid on the health, nutrition, family welfare, educational progress, employment opportunities, prevention of atrocities and political reservation. With a view to benefit the women and children on humanitarian grounds. Various welfare and development schemes have been introduced to improve the living conditions of women and to increase their access to and control of material and social resources. Special programmes have been designed to remove social, economic and political constraints and enable the women to make use of their rights and new opportunities. Progressive policies and empowerment oriented programmes were formulated and implemented with a view to raise the status of women in Indian society. Scholars have expressed their serious reservations about the matters linked to the implementation of several welfare programmes.

The Government of India constituted Central Social Welfare Board in 1954 and State Government constituted regional welfare boards to facilitate the improvement of the status of women and weaker sections of India. These boards are responsible for coordinating the welfare and development activities undertaken by the various departments of the Central and State Governments which may be conducive to the fulfillment of the objectives of empowerment of women. The Government of India also has implemented Rural Women’s Development and Empowerment Project (World Bank Scheme), Norwegian Agency for International Development Scheme (NORAD), Support to Training and Employment Programme (STEP), Training the Rural Youth for Self-Employment (TRYSEM), Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) and so on for the empowerment of women.

The Government of India also created Department for Women and Child Development in all States and Union Territories in order to facilitate specific programmes for the empowerment of women and children. The focus of the programmes for women has shifted further from welfare to development since 1990s. Once again the turn of the century marked a policy shift from development to empowerment of women. These departments primarily focus on the economic development and integration of women into the mainstream of economy. Government and non-governmental organizations working in the field of women and child development are also guided and assisted by these departments.
The prominent programmes implemented by these departments include construction of working women hostels, hostel for girls, job oriented courses and programmes, financial assistance to educated women/women’s associations, self-help activities, crèches for children of working mothers, rehabilitation of widows and victims of domestic violence, training the women for self employment, addressing practical gender needs, facilitating participating of women in grass root level activities, constitution of self-help groups, special cell for the eradication of social evils, implementation of social defense programmes and so on. “Most of these programmes have not been implemented properly due to lack of awareness, network development, community engagement, monitoring and evaluation. These programmes have failed to facilitate the absorption of women into the mainstream of socio-economic life since women are treated as passive recipients of welfare rather than active participants in the process of their empowerment. Most of the rehabilitation programmes implemented by the government lack the human touch, laments Narasimhan (1999:155).

The sorry state of affairs relating to the women-empowerment programmes are systematically documented and evaluated by several commissions and research agencies in India. The Joint Women’s Programme (1995:97) observes: “The basic vulnerability of women which was the cause of poverty was not addressed in the various schemes/projects. A majority of the projects have failed to deliver the expected results in the form of overall betterment of women’s status in the society. The reasons are many: lack of identification with the spirit of the projects among the officials entrusted with the implementation, procedural hassles that most illiterate applicants found intimidating (production of letters or certificates for instance, from relevant authorities) and most important, failure to involve the beneficiary population as participants and treating them instead, as subjects/targets, with decision-making retained in the hands of officials.

Studies have pointed out all alleged misuse of funds, mismanagement of projects and other disadvantages. An overview document on issues pertaining to women in India published as a preparatory document for the Beijing Conference, 1995 pointed that these programmes had been found to be seriously flawed on many counts—they are totally inadequate in terms of numbers reached, they do not reach the target groups and are being used as instruments for political patronage.
Twelfth Five Year Plan Strategy

The women are still subjected to series of disadvantages educationally, socially, economically and politically in Indian society mainly because of the deep routed gender bias and discriminatory tendencies. Women continue to suffer on account of poor access to education, health, nutrition, employment, economic resources and political opportunities. The work participation rates, sex ratio and gender based violence continue to exist in Indian society. The women continue to lack basic social services and economic opportunities. The deteriorating child sex ratio is also causing anxiety.

The key elements for gender equity which are addressed in the 12th five year plan include – economic empowerment, social and physical infrastructure, enabling legislations, women’s participation in governance, inclusiveness of all categories of vulnerable women, engendering national policies and programmes and mainstreaming through gender budgeting.

The 12th plan endeavors to increase women’s employability in the formal sector as well as their asset base. Special emphasis will be laid on women’s work force participation in secondary and tertiary sectors. Extension of land and property rights to women would enable them to improve their economic status. Employment generation with equity in work conditions would cater to the developmental needs of women. The plan strategy also focuses on education, health, infrastructural development, basic needs, employability and other measures which benefit women economically.

The plan also envisages a major scaling up of skill development of women in order to facilitate adequate gainful employment opportunities in various sectors. Special provisions are also made to develop the entrepreneurship of women. Medical insurance facilities are also made available to safeguard the interest of women. The plan also recognizes the need for feminization of agriculture through several progressive measures. Women-specific agricultural programmes will be implemented to improve their economic conditions. The self help groups will be given financial support for groups formation and economic development. The joint land ownership of men and women would also increase women’s equity in property. Women will be promoted to participate actively in the manufacturing sector through special skill
development and leadership development initiatives. Women in the unorganized sector will be given the benefit of social security. The plan also visualizes improving women’s reproductive health and health status.

Special efforts are required to improve the educational status of women. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) intends to increase women teachers, provide better working conditions, organize child tracking system, encourage school drop outs, provide scholarships, extend hostel facilities and ensure vocational training and other opportunities for the educational empowerment of women. The plan also ensures the provision of basic civic amenities for women in educational institutions. Women specific transportation facilities will be extended to facilitate active participation of women in the development process.

Women are also entitled to better portfolio of energy options since they are the primary stakeholders of energy and natural resources management. Women’s groups will be encouraged to undertake smaller power production units and energy based enterprises in urban and rural areas. Special trainings will be offered to develop their expertise in the renewable energy sector. Gender and climate change adaptation strategies will be part of ongoing poverty reduction and development policies. In the media sector also, the government will encourage gender messaging in major programmes.

Several legislations will be enacted to place reasonable restrictions on sex detection, illegal practice of sex determination, and abortion of female foetus. Equal remuneration will be paid to women according to the existing legislation. Special legal provisions are also created to protect women from domestic violence, dowry, human trafficking and other social hazards. Women’s participation in governance will be encouraged at various levels ranging from panchayat to parliament. The plan also primarily focuses on capacity building and networking of women elected representatives in order to improve their leadership and participation in the implementation of various welfare and development programmes.

Special attention will be paid to the needs of vulnerable women in Indian society. Special protective measures will be implemented to safeguard the interest of SC women, ST women, women of religious minorities, differently able women, single women, widows, trafficked women, elderly women, migrant women, women in disturbed areas, women in prison, transgender communities and so on.
The plan also visualizes gender budgeting in order to facilitate adequate flow of funds for the development of women. Planning and budget approval systems will be modified to make gender clearance and ensure policies; programmes and schemes are engendered from the design stage itself. Gender audit will be promoted as an integral part of gender budgeting in the plan. It will be ensured that all important monitoring and evaluation of various developmental schemes would include a gender assessment / status of gender mainstreaming. Gender focal points will be established within various organizations in order to enable all public service institutions to identify and respond to gender issues.

The National Mission for Empowerment of Women aims to generate awareness, build strategies, create gender resource centers, form women’s collectives, improve their capacity, enforce laws and policies and encourage implementation of programmes for the empowerment of women. The Central Social Welfare Board, Rashtriya Mahila Kosh and National Commission for Women are also responsible for the implementation of various programmes and provisions for the protection and development of women. Several initiatives will be undertaken for inclusive development of women in India.

Empirical studies have pointed out that the goal of women empowerment can be achieved mainly through the integrated efforts put forth by various stakeholders of empowerment of women in a pluralistic society like India. Women friendly policies, plans, initiatives and allied progressive measures are required to enhance the capacity of women in India and enhance the possibility of economic inclusion of women. Women’s perspectives have to be included in the policies, legislations, programmes and other measures intended to bring about the empowerment of women. The contributions of women for the socio-economic development as producers and workers need to be recognized in the legislative institutions.

Nevertheless, women’s inadequate representation in the parliament continues to remain a major concern in Indian society and the legislature will have to rise to the occasion as the true angel guardians of gender justice, economic inclusion of women and empowerment of women as desired by several conventions. Women should be empowered by enhancing their skills, knowledge and access to educational opportunities, employment opportunities, entrepreneurship opportunities, political opportunities and developmental opportunities in India. The 12th plan contains a
number of initiatives for the empowerment of women. These objectives and aspirations should be translated into realities in order to facilitate the inclusive development of women in all respects.

1.4 Media Intervention for the Empowerment of Women

Media have a social responsibility of educating the women and various stakeholders on the significance of empowerment of women in India. Academicians have examined the relationship between women and media at regional, national and international levels. The role of media in the empowerment of women is also widely discussed by the policy makers, administrators, academicians, professionals and activists. Women have the capacity to contribute their mite for the progress of the nation. Media institutions are required to provide judicious space and time for the discussion of issues concerning the empowerment of women in the new millennium. The representation of the women, portrayal of women in the media and role of media in the empowerment of women are extensively examined by various scholars and researchers across the globe over a period of time. An attempt is made in the present paper to discuss the relationship between media and empowerment of women with reference to India.

Feminism and Media

Scholars have studied the status of Indian women during different periods such as Ancient India, Indus Civilization, Vedic Age, Age of the Latter Samhitas, Manu-Smriti, Epic Age, Buddhism and Jainism, Islamic Age, Colonial era, Christian Missionaries, Freedom Movement and Post-Independence era. Several visionaries and missionaries have fought against gender based discrimination in Indian society. Buddha, Ramanuja, Basava, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Jyoti Ba Phule, Ishwara Chandra Vidyasagar, Dayananda Saraswati, Govinda Ranade, Ramaswamy Periyar, Narayana Guru, Mahatma Gandhi, Ambedkar and others played a historical role in the empowerment of women in India. They vehemently fought against gender inequality, Sati system, child marriage, Devdasi system and other discriminatory and exploitative tendencies.

Several Indian women like Savitribai Phule, Pandita Ramabai, Ranade Maharani Tapaswini, Bhagini Nivedita, Swarna Kumari Devi, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, Manmohan Kaur, Rajani Alexander, Uma Rao, Meera Desai,
Aparna Bosh, Sarojini Naidu, Shakuntala Reddy and others created new consciousness among the women, actively participated in the feminist movements and prepared grounds for gender justice in India. The Indian Women’s Conference was established by the Congress in order to educate and organize women before the independence.

Ambedkar played a historical role in conferring on women equality before law in India. He also provided series of progressive measures for the empowerment of women in the Constitution of India. The Hindu Code Bill was presented by Ambedkar in order to ensure women’s legal rights in regard to property, succession, marriage, divorce, adoption, guardianship etc. He resigned his ministerial post in protest against the attitude of the parliamentarians towards gender justice and empowerment of women in India.

Feminism is the concept which places emphasis on the gender equality and includes the various dimensions of women’s liberation, equality, justice and empowerment in a civilized society. Feminist movement began in the 1880s in Europe and strongly advocated a single sexual standard for men and women, equal rights in the field of education, employment, politics and other fields and justified greater freedom for women in all walks of life. The modern feminist movement is also termed as ‘new feminist movement’ which laid emphasis on the inclusion of women in all sectors of national development.

The print media in America, Europe and elsewhere provided new status and prestige to the female press corps and also underline the importance of women’s issues to the First Lady. A Presidential Commission was appointed in USA in the year 1963 with a view to examine the basic rights and opportunities to women. This commission provided meaningful ground work for the women’s movement in America. Women’s magazines also came into existence with a view to strengthen the women’s movement and created new awareness among the women. The UNESCO also brought out certain publications which highlighted the plight of women.

Zoonen (1996:258) pointed out that media have always remained at the centre of feminist critique. American newspapers brought out women’s section in order to highlight the issues concerning women and their welfare. Joseph Pulitzer enhanced female readership by popularizing women’s pages. The media were also criticized by
the feminists for the treatment of women as sex objects. In 1970s the feminist press emerged in America and Europe in order to strengthen women’s liberation movement. Women’s studies programmes also gave rise to feminist journals, presses and bookstores. Mac Bride Commission (1982:124) examined the images of women in radio, television, film and press and reported that the coverage of issues related to women’s position in society steadily increased over a period of time.

UNESCO (1985:245) reported that women gained marginal position in the media studies. Shaw and Zach (1987:213) noted that about 25% of women related issues appeared in the press. Gradually efforts were made by the media professionals and women activists to improve the coverage of women in the media. A new organization called Gender and Communication Group came into existence in 1981 to scientifically assess the portrayal of women in the media. A new magazine called Research on Women and Communication was brought out by Western States Communication Association in order to enhance the status of feminist communication in the media.

Professional journals also gave importance to publication of issues concerning gender and empowerment. Several books were also brought out to draw the attention of scholars toward women and media issues. The United Nations Organization and UNESCO also contributed notably for the organization of intellectual exercises all over the world toward enlisting the active participation of media institutions for the empowerment of women.

The UNESCO (1985:245) further stated that the volume of the research commissioned and published on women and communication issues was slight and occasional. Pawar (2009:178) reports: “The UNESCO’s activities in the field of women and communication strengthened more during the United Nations World Conference on Women. The World Plan of Action for the Decade of Women was adopted in the first UN Women’s World Conference which was held at Mexico City in July, 1975. In December, 1975, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution establishing 1976-85 as the Decade for Women. This plan provided guidelines for national action over the ten-year period from 1975 to 1985 as a part of a sustained, long-term effect to achieve the objectives of the International Women’s Year. The plan recognized the importance of media as a vehicle for social change. The UNESCO has been playing a significant role in the development of a global
network of women and men journalists and media practitioners that are committed to gender equality in the media, in all its aspects and at all levels”.

The UNESCO organized training programmes all over the world to improve the journalistic and broadcasting skills of women. They are also enabled to derive the benefits of new communication technologies for their empowerment through information sharing, networking, public visibility, job creation and so on. Efforts are also made to sensitize women on the role and impact of information and communication technologies in a cultural and gender sensitive perspective.

Scholars have also examined the participation of women in the media, portrayal of women in the media, discrimination against women in the media and alternative media for the empowerment of the women. Studies have commonly revealed that media projected the values which were handed down by centuries – own traditions and simply perpetuated the domination one sex over the other. “Women have been portrayed as men would like to see those beautiful creatures, submissive, mothers of their children, efficient housekeepers, but nothing else. The positive side of their progress and their contributions for national development has not been adequately discussed in the media, according to Guru (1996:84).

**Women’s Rights and Media**

The communications media have realized the importance of coverage of women’s issues including violation of women’s human rights in India. The progressive women’s movements are supported by the media through active reports, comments and criticisms. Scholars and activists have noted that women’s issues are glorified in the Indian media. Bathla (2000:19) comments: “A near silence over the existence of women’s groups and the omission of many issues on their agenda in the media coverage clearly indicate that media have ignored the women’s movement”.

The media are widely respected as the informal universities which provide life–oriented education to the people. The media have a definite role to play in highlighting the human rights including the rights of women. The media can provide judicious coverage to the violations of human rights of women. Specific cases of inaction in enforcing the rights of women need to be emphasized. The protection of women’s rights demands commitment and action from the media and other stakeholders in a developing country like India.
Frequent reports on women’s human rights violations in print and electronic media have highlighted the gravity of the situation in India. Sometimes, the media have glorified the violation of women’s human rights on the basis of commercial considerations rather than humanitarian considerations. The media are required to do serious introspection regarding their involvement in the protection of human rights of women. The media have provided employment opportunities to the women professionals who have played a notable role in the formulation of public opinion on issues concerning the violation of human rights of women. The media have not lived up to the expectations of women in facilitating judicious, positive and constructive coverage of certain issues, trends and developments which have impeded the progress of women in India.

**Role of Media in the Empowerment of Women**

The concept of empowerment has been widely discussed and debated all over the world. The United Nations Development Programme (2001:246) has provided a meaningful conceptual framework of empowerment of women. It reads: “Empowerment is defined as the processes by which women take control and ownership of their lives through expansion of their choices. It is the process of acquiring the ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability has previously been denied”.

Several researchers have tried to define the empowerment of women in their own ways on the basis of theoretical and empirical evidences and experiences. The definition most quoted by the scholars is one provided by Baltiwiwala (1994:13). It reads: “Empowerment is the process by which the powerless gain greater control over the circumstances of their lives. It includes both controls over resources and over ideology. Ultimately it includes a growing intrinsic capability – greater self confidence and an inner transformation of one’s consciousness that enables one to overcome external barriers”.

Inherent in this definition are two important ideas, the first of which is that empowerment is not about power over others (a feature of domination), but power to achieve goals and ends. By conceptualizing empowerment in terms of power the definition explicitly recognizes that the process of empowerment involves not only changes in access to resources, but also an understanding of one’s rights and
entitlements and the conscientization that ‘gender roles can be changed and gender equity is possible’.

The second important idea is that the concept of empowerment is more generally applicable to those who are powerless, whether this be male or female individuals or a group, class or cast. Hence, there is nothing about the concept of empowerment per se which applies to women alone. Nonetheless, women’s empowerment or lack of it is unique in that it cuts across all types of class and cast powerlessness and unlike class or caste powerlessness, is played out also within families and households, according to Malhotra et al (2002:129).

While empowerment literally means ‘to invest with power’, in the context of women’s empowerment the term has come to denote women’s increased control over their own lives, bodies and environment. Scholars have placed emphasis on women’s decision making roles, their economic self-reliance and their legal rights to equal treatment, inheritance and protection against all forms of discrimination in addition to the elimination of barriers to their access of resources such as education, finance, political power and developmental initiatives.

Kabeer (2001:102) identifies the core elements of the empowerment of women namely-agency, awareness, self-esteem and self-confidence. Women’s empowerment is indeed a multi-dimensional revolution. There are several agencies and activities which are associated with the process of empowerment of women. The Constitution of India not only grants equality to women, but authorizes the State to adopt progressive measures of positive discrimination in favor of women. Within the framework of a democratic polity, our laws, development policies, plans and programmes have aimed at women’s empowerment in different spheres of human life.

Scholars have identified the core elements of empowerment namely-agency (The ability to define one’s goals and act upon them), awareness of gendered power structures, self-esteem and self-confidence. Empowerment of women takes place at a hierarchy of different levels of individual, household, community and societal and is facilitated by providing encouraging factors.

United Nations Development Programme (2001:246) identified two processes related to the empowerment of women. The first is social mobilization and collective agency, as poor women often lack the basic capabilities and self confidence to counter
and challenge existing disparities and barriers against them. Often, change agents are needed to catalyze social mobilization consciously. Second, the process of social mobilization needs to be accompanied and complimented by economic security. As long as the disadvantaged suffer from economic deprivation and livelihood insecurity, they will not be in a position to mobilize.

The year 2001 was celebrated as ‘Women Empowerment Year’ and the Government of India realized the need for improving the access of women to national resources and for ensuring their rightful place in the mainstream of economic development. The objective of the government was to create large scale awareness with the active participation of women themselves in the process of their empowerment. The major components of empowerment of women include-access to economic resources and influence over their uses, participation in economic decision making, opportunities for self-development, participation in socio-political decision, scope for skill development and impact on general welfare of the family and community.

Justice Ray observes: “The mass media in India have grown remarkably since independence. The media are indeed a binding force for bridging the gap between equality of opportunities by helping to set the societal mindsets that have become deeply ingrained structural barriers to the advancement of the women. In the last decade women have made great strides and progress in the media world. Women occupy the top echelons of the media, including editors, proprietors, journalists and anchors. Women’s organizations and media groups have had an active role to play in promoting this positive change. Nevertheless, women’s projection in the media continues to remain a major concern and subject of discussion and debate in many fora including Parliament. Women invariably feature in the media either as sex objects or as victims of violence, but not as role models or decision makers. Gender issues are considered only when an incident is brought to light and therefore they are not featured in our mainstream media except in customized magazines or publications”.

A developing nation like India cannot progress without uplifting and ensuring equal share to the women in the mainstream of national life in terms of power, resources and opportunities. Women and media were identified as an area of critical concern at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. The
conference had called upon the media to promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women. The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women also emphasized the role of media in the empowerment of women. Several organizations have also urged that besides giving greater importance on women’s issues, there should be sufficient coverage of women and their issues from all sections of the society.

The projection of women in media advertisements and other entertainment channels is contrary to the Directive Principles of State Policy and constitutional provisions. The National Commission for Women also suggested some amendment to the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986 and sought to impose more penalties on the violators of the provision of the Act. There is a need for the media institutions to create a conducive atmosphere for the empowerment of the women. Media are also required to take proper care to highlight the issues relating to women in a balanced and judicious manner. The media should also play a more positive role to bring about greater transparency in gender issue and help to realize larger share for the women in all the socio-economic development endeavors.

Malhotra et.al. (2002:129) comment: “The invisibility of women in society is thus further perpetuated and enhanced by the media. Further, many aspects of women’s oppression are so common place and widely accepted that they are not judged unusual to merit coverage. Thus, most issues of special concern to women do not fit into the traditional concepts of what constitute news”. Jayanti Ghosh notes: “Rural women play a major role in agriculture and ensuring food security and stability all over the world, yet this role is barely recognized and hardly ever rewarded.

Jaitly (2008:96) states: “It is clear that men, with their prominence in situations of power in the corporate sector, the bureaucracy, politics and the judiciary, will also express their biases within the media as well. Many campaigns against injustices meted out to women were successful because the media gave coverage to them and this led to legislation, greater awareness among certain sections of society and a slow but steady sensitization of law enforcement bodies, at least in urban areas. The market place has not only changed the ideological orientation of the most of the media, with honorable exceptions, but has resorted to making women a marketable item. Many newspapers imitate not the best of western journalistic standards but the worst by using the techniques employed by tabloids to increase their readership. Most
serials in what is called the entertainment media which overlaps with the newly kind infotainment format watched by millions show women as servile, over saintly, constraint victim of rape or family repression. It is natural that the national, i.e., urban media sets the pace but the danger is that the regional media feels it has to follow suit. This trend has absolutely no meaning or relevance for the rural women of India who care more about fuel, water, food on the choolah, jobs for their sons and a few moments of rest for themselves. Empowerment of women can only come about when they feel free of these worries and feel safe in terms of their own bodies”.

Mathew (2008:136) notes: “Women’s education and health are yet to get the kind of serious attention they deserve from the Indian media. Empowerment of women can happen only when women become aware of their psychological enslavement and rebel against it. There are signs of this happening. We find more and more women taking up challenges, chasing their dreams, and standing up for a cause. Women are in the forefront of mass resistance against displacement of people. They have organized themselves against child marriage and child labor, gambling and prostitution and have opened night schools and skill training centers for themselves. All over the country, women and forming cooperatives and support groups for financial independence and protection from male assaults. Sadly, atrocities against women have not abated even after the arrival of the Domestic Violence Act, 2005. It is a national tragedy that half the people in India—the womankind—live in fear, always looking over their shoulders. The media can facilitate the empowerment of women by sensitizing men and society in general, by voicing the silent screams of women, by creating more female icons who can rouse women’s consciousness, by initiating stimulating debates on women’s issues, by simply devoting more print space and television time for women, by using television to break male stereotypes, by influencing legislatures to enact laws for protection of women’s rights, by employing more women communicators, by promoting literacy and women’s education, by advocating active deployment of women in the police and other visible symbols of power, and by using non-sexist language and metaphors”.

The media owes to the nation and to the women in particular to stand steadfastly in the espousal of causes of the women who constitute nearly 50% of our population. The media have a social obligation of providing adequate support to the women in their fight against all injustice, discrimination and deprivations. The media
are contributing decisively toward public opinion formation on gender justice and empowerment of women. Gender sensitization and women empowerment are prerequisites for the holistic empowerment of women. The Indian media are also playing a pro-active role in projecting the issues of women such as gender equity, gender justice, gender discrimination and exploitation of women. This is a positive development since it highlights important issues of women’s empowerment in Indian society. The media are required to play a notable role in the empowerment of the women since women are not able to enjoy their constitutional rights in full measure.

The future lies with women. The future has come closer, with the dawn of the digital age where the World Wide Web is a great leveler. It is a world of infinite possibilities for women as well as men, and anyone with an innovative idea and the willingness to work hard can realize their dreams here. Anyone can start a business on the internet, showcase one’s talents, market anything and network with an awesome number of people- and publish newspapers without worrying about installing huge printing presses. The Internet can be liberating for women. It is their future, for there is no gender discrimination on the web. Women therefore need to be actively involved in decisions making regarding the development of the new communication technologies as effective instruments of empowerment of women. In addressing the issue of mobilization of media for the empowerment of women, governments, media institutions and other authorities should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in the management of media institutions.

The word ‘empowerment’ has become the watch word of the new millennium. There are several protective measures in the Constitution of India for women and other weaker sections of society. The central and state governments have also implemented series of programmes for the benefit of women. The media have not achieved notable success in the empowerment of women since the market forces are controlling the media. There is increasing glorification of atrocities on women but the media have not facilitated meaningful social, political, intellectual and cultural mobilization with reference to empowerment of women in India.

Women’s perspectives have to be included in the media priorities, contents and services in order to ensure gender justice. The contributions of women for the socio-economic development as producers and workers need to be recognized in the media institutions. Women should be empowered by enhancing their skills,
knowledge and access to media institutions, economic organizations, educational institutions, political parties and other institutions of public service. The media institutions should do serious introspection about their role in the empowerment of women in India and elsewhere.

1.5 Role of Media in the Empowerment of Tribal Women

There are about 650 tribal groups in India. The women are considered as an incorporated entity in the male-dominated social, economic, political and cultural order. The tribal women are equal partners with men in relation to work participation in forests, fields, markets and other spheres of human life. The position of tribal women in Indian society is quite paradoxical. The tribal women have always played a dominant role in agriculture, handicraft and forest based economy in India. The Constitution of India has guaranteed equality of opportunity to all sections of society including the tribal women. But they lag behind in every sphere of human life including education, employment and politics. The tribal women are subjected to discrimination in many ways. Communication media have also neglected the tribal women due to several reasons in the post-independence era in India.

Communication is rightly viewed as an instrument of development. Many scholars have studied the role of communication in the process of development in India and abroad. The essence of the ideology of ‘development communication’ is the creation of a new society on the basis of equality and justice. The media intervention packages and programmes are required to popularize the beneficial effects of various development projects and to enlist the active participation of the beneficiaries in the process of development. Media and development are inter-related systems. The maximum responsibility lies on the media to make the developmental activities clear and accessible to the common people.

The Mac Bride Commission (1982:124) observed that communication component in all development projects should receive adequate funding. Systematic media intervention is necessary to bridge the communication gap between the development programme and target group. Scholars have advocated that an entirely new orientation to development in which education as a critical input is inescapable. Guru (1997:85) noted that development support communication includes the integration of planned, organized and specific communication package into
development planning and programme implementation at various levels. Scholars have also proposed pedagogy of the oppressed on the basis of human values and distributive justice. Experience has shown that media when used without concomitant changes in the structure of the society and economy could lead to the strengthening of the status quo.

The media have not provided proper feedback to the policy makers and implementers regarding the effectiveness of various tribal development projects, according to empirical studies. A comprehensive policy of communication related to tribal development goals is not formulated to facilitate meaningful media intervention for tribal development over a period of time. “The transition of the tribal people from their tribal economy to national economy, from their tribal organization to national political organization, must be planned and piloted in the due consideration to the social group’s concern”, observes Majumdar.

**Status of Tribal Women**

The tribal people have remained untouched by modern developments since they mostly live in rural and remote areas. They have lost their land, resources and rights due to increasing industrialization, urbanization and modernization processes. These processes have posed series of threats to the peaceful coexistence of tribes in India. A tribal woman occupies an important place in the socio-economic structure of tribal society. The tribal women are also exploited in many ways. A comprehensive review of educational, health, employment and developmental status of tribal women presents a pathetic picture. The tribal women are known for ignorance, ill health, malnutrition, unemployment and other complexities of development. There has been a good deal of studies on the status, problems and prospects of tribal women in India and abroad. The tribal women also lack significant leadership positions in tribal economy and political sectors even though they played an active role in tribal movement.

Social stratification has also affected the tribal society since the tribal people are subjected to rapid alteration, addition and adjustment due to structural and cultural change across the country. Modern activities like tourism promotion, mining and commercialization have resulted in a complex tribal stratification which has affected gender justice and equity in tribal community. The traditional patterns, dimensions and processes of social stratification have changed in the modern times due to the
forces of modernization and urbanization. Empirical studies carried out by Parkins (1972:171), Goldthrope (1984:78), Crompton and Mann (1986:46), Michall Mann (2004:134), Myers, Diana Tietiens (1987:150) and others have revealed that the topic of gender has been relatively neglected in the mainstream stratification theory and research which has brought about the oppression of tribal women.

Tribal women continue to be the bearers and rearers of children. There are many factors associated with gender identities of tribal women. The tribal culture has facilitated the construction of positive gender identity for tribal women. Anthropologists like P.N.Mishra, L.K.Anantha Krishna Iyer, G.S.Ghurye, Iravati Karve and others have also provided a new dimension to research in tribal development in India. There is a rich tradition of tribal studies in Indian society. The scholars have reported that developmental projects have adversely affected the tribal women. Sinha (1978:228), Sushma Sahay Prasad (1988:182), Jaynti Alam (1998:04), Vinita Damodaran (2002:49) and others have observed that tribal women in the informal sector have experienced several disadvantages in India. Tribal women experienced severe economic stress and oppression due to destruction of the forest in the name of development.

Mahashwetadevi fought for the empowerment of tribal women in India and noted that tribal women are subjected to two-tier exploitation – as a laborer and also as instrument of sexual gratification to the new controllers of economy. She presented the politics of oppression hatched by the newly formed mafia group which is responsible for the saddening state of affairs of tribal women in India. The process of tribal development did not have a positive impact on the structure of tribal society and status of tribal women. The new forces of modernization have drastically affected the indigenous systems and their culture, tradition, social practices, occupational pattern and so forth according to Bodra (2008:29).

The implications of social change, modernization and development on tribal women are scientifically analyzed by the anthropologists. They have reported that the penetration of alien culture in the age of globalization has adversely affected the status of tribal women. The emergence of new market economy has increased the control of market forces over tribal communities and reduced the status of tribal women. The changes in tribal land structure and dispossession of the movable and immovable property from the hands of tribes and the ownership of non-tribal affluent
classes have severely affected the status of tribal women. In the market economy, tribal women have been taken for granted since they have not learnt the art of managing commercialization of economy. The division of labor among tribal communities in the new millennium has brought about the exploitation of tribal women who are considered only as workers and commodities by the market forces.

**Communication Support for Tribal Women Empowerment**

Serious doubts are also expressed as to the wanton devaluation of the tribal life and its core values. Literally, the information underclass has become powerless. This is very much true especially in tribal areas where people are alienated from the mainstream of national development. The Indian Space Research organization (ISRO) carried out several progressive communication experiments in the tribal areas to enlist the active participation of tribes in the process of development.

The policy makers have also encouraged the media institutions to undertake joint projects with user agencies to facilitate satellite based operational systems to support education and development in rural and tribal areas. Communications media including television and social media are expanded in the tribal areas. The print media, electronic media and new media have increased their space, time and resources in order to reach out to the unreached tribes. Communication support for tribal development is crucial in the present times. Participatory approaches to tribal development communication are required to open up new vistas of empowerment of tribal women. The Jhabua Development Communications Project (JDCP) of Madhya Pradesh facilitated the installation of community television station and disseminated various tribal development programmes for the benefit of tribal women in the project area.

The media professionals are called upon to assume pro-active roles as catalysts of tribal women empowerment in the country. Tribal development communication management in general and tribal women empowerment oriented media intervention in particular are enduring areas of research in India. The future agenda for media organizations must deal with the expansion of communications media in the tribal areas, production of tribal development oriented media programmes, and involvement of tribes in the communication programmes and evaluation of the impact of media on tribal women. The media institutions have to
work in close collaboration toward designing tribal women empowerment centered communication programme at this juncture.

1.6 Social Significance of the Study

The Constitution of India has guaranteed several provisions for the empowerment of women and weaker sections of society. There are specific safeguards and welfare measures which are enshrined in the Directive Principles of State Policy for the tribes of India. A vast majority of the tribes have remained underprivileged in India due to non-implementation of constitutional provisions and tribal development programmes due to lack of political commitment and social activism in the country. The tribal movement is at the cross roads in India due to several factors. Activists and scholars have expressed their serious reservations about the tribal developmental initiatives which lack coordination and prompt implementation in the country.

The Government of India has implemented specific programmes under the banner of Tribal Sub-Plan and Integrated Tribal Development Project for the empowerment of tribes in the country. Tribal women are not actively involved in the process of development due to poverty, ignorance, disorganization and other constraints. The women’s movements in India have not taken the tribal women into confidence. The issues and concerns of tribal women are not properly addressed by the policy makers and organizers of women’s movement in the country. The media too have neglected the development of tribal women due to the absence of corporate concern and commitment. The market forces have sit on the driver’s seat from media management point of view. The media have not devoted judicious time and space for the discussion of the problems and prospects of tribal women in India. Scholars have examined the role of media in tribal development in India and abroad. Surprisingly, the role of media in the empowerment of tribal women has not been systematically evaluated by the past researchers in India. Hence, it was decided to systematically investigate the role of media in the empowerment of tribal women with special reference to Karnataka state.
1.7 Statement of the Problem

The concept of empowerment of women is gaining importance throughout the world. Series of constitutional safeguards and provisions are included in the Constitution of India for the empowerment of women and weaker sections by the founders of constitution and builders of modern India. The central and state governments have also implemented several tribal development specific programmes in the post-independence era for the empowerment of women. The social and economic status of general women and tribal women remains pathetic in the country due to non-implementation of constitutional provisions and development projects. Studies have revealed that tribal women remain disadvantaged in India in the absence of state patronage and civil society support. There is a growing recognition all over the world about the crucial role of media in the empowerment of women. A synthesis of the available literature suggests that societal, governmental, educational and media intervention for the empowerment of women in general and tribal women in particular with special reference to Karnataka suffer from certain limitations from research and development points of view. Therefore, the primary tasks of present study were concerned with identifying a reasonably representative sample of stakeholders of tribal development and beneficiaries of tribal development to assess their views on the role of media in the empowerment of tribal women in Karnataka state. The present topic was chosen because:

a. Empowerment of women has become an important Millennium Development Goal.

b. Tribal development has become a thrust area of national development.

c. Tribal women empowerment has become a challenging task of our times.

d. Karnataka state has emerged as a model state from rural and tribal development points of view.

e. Media intervention for tribal women empowerment assumes great significance in the present times.

b. A constant and continued research on the role of media in the empowerment of tribal women is imperative in a developing state like Karnataka.
1.8 Objectives of the Study

1. Assess tribal women empowerment in Karnataka state.
2. Analyze the media exposure among tribal women in Karnataka state.
3. Examine the communication source of tribal development programmes in Karnataka state.
4. Evaluate the role of media in the empowerment of tribal women in Karnataka State.
5. Study the limitations of media from tribal women empowerment point of view: and
6. Suggest appropriate methods for the betterment of media services for the empowerment of tribal women in Karnataka state.

1.9 Presentation of the Study

The thesis consists of 6 chapters. The first chapter namely – introduction presents the tribal development in India, constitutional provisions, reservation benefits and current state of empowerment of women in India, media intervention for the empowerment of women, role of media in the empowerment of tribal women, social significance of the study, statement of the problem and objectives of the study.

The second chapter namely – review of literature presents the tribal development studies, tribal media studies, tribal women studies and tribal women media studies.

The third chapter namely – research methods presents the salient features of research such as hypotheses of the study, study variables, research design, selection of study areas, selection of sample, tools of data collection, primary data collection, secondary data collection, statistical analysis, reliability and validity of data and definitions of the terms used in the study.

The fourth chapter namely – tribal women empowerment in Karnataka presents the profile of Karnataka state, tribal development in Karnataka state and tribal women empowerment in Karnataka state.

The fifth chapter namely – results and discussion presents demographic features of the respondents, communication media association of respondents, awareness about tribal development programmes, communication source of tribal
development programmes, role of media in the empowerment of tribal women and drawbacks of media from tribal women empowerment point of view.

The sixth chapter namely – conclusion presents findings of the study, testing of hypotheses, limitations of the study, implications of the study and implications on future research. The last part of the thesis consists of bibliographical references, questionnaire and select photographs.

1.10 Summary

The subject of empowerment of women has become a prominent aspect of research and development endeavours in the world. The status of tribal women has not improved considerably in India despite implementation of several constitutional provisions and development programmes. The stakeholders of tribal development have not understood the ground realities and humanitarian approaches to tribal women empowerment due to lack of professional and social commitment. The country is poised for faster growth under the rule of National Democratic Alliance in the present times. Scholars have examined the role of media in tribal development over a period of time and reported that media have not done justice to their role from tribal development point of view. The contributions of media for the empowerment of tribal women are not noteworthy in letter and spirit. Systematic media intervention for tribal women empowerment helps the tribal women to change their mindset, adopt healthy lifestyles, obtain the benefits of development projects and achieve development through active participation. A good deal of research effort is required in India to improve the status of tribal women in India. Hence, the present study assumes profound academic significance.