CHAPTER – 1

INTRODUCTION
1.1 Introduction:

India is the second largest populous country in the world and the women in the country account for about half of the human resources. But, this vast human potential is still kept unutilized, under-utilized and misused to a larger extent mainly because of poor access to health, literacy and employment.

Gender disparity manifests itself in various forms, the most obvious being the trend of continuously declining female ratio in the population in the last few decades. Social stereotyping and violence at the domestic and societal levels are some of the other manifestations. Discrimination against girl children, adolescent girls and women persists in almost all parts of the country. The underlying causes of gender inequality are related to social and economic structure, which is based on informal and formal norms, and practices. Consequently, the access of women particularly those belonging to weaker sections majority of whom are in the rural areas' and in the informal, unorganized sector - to education, health and productive resources, among others, is inadequate. Therefore, they remain largely marginalized, poor and socially excluded, and lack behind in the developmental process in spite of the best efforts made by the government to develop women.

The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights/ Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles. The Constitution not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of
women with in the framework of a democratic polity, laws and development policies. Plans and programmes have aimed at women's advancement in different spheres. From the Fifth five Year Plan (1974-78) onwards there has been a marked shift in the approach to women's issues from welfare to development. In recent years, the empowerment of women has been recognized as the central issue in determining the status of women.

The National Commission for Women was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1990 to safeguard the rights and legal entitlements of women. The 73rd and 74th Amendments (1993) to the Constitution of India have provided for reservation of seats in the local bodies of Panchayats and Municipalities for women, laying a strong foundation for their participation in decision making at the local levels. However, there still exists a wide gap between the goals enunciated in the Constitution, legislation, policies, plans, programmes, and related mechanisms on the one hand and the situational reality of the status of women in India, on the other. The Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India, "Towards Equality", 1974 the National Perspective Plan for Women, 1988-2000, the Shramshakti Report, 1988, the Platform for Action, Five Years After- An assessment", The National Policy for the empowerment of women (2001) is a land mark in this regard.

1.2 Role of women in Agriculture:

The agricultural sector is a crucial component of the Indian economy and it accounts for two thirds of the employment. It further provides food,
nutrition and employment security. Women are an integral part of agriculture. They contribute substantially from seedling to storage, germ plasma conservation and environment protection round the year. All over India a large number of women are involved in agriculture. Indian women’s contribution to agriculture is a significant and crucial way both to agricultural production and the women’s household sector. A large number of adult women in India are in fact farmers working on land. However, agricultural policy is still dominated by the false view that ‘farmers are men’ women are only housewives’. In fact agriculture employs 85 per cent of all economically active women. It is also related to the fact that although women work to sustain their families most of their work is not measured in wages. Women’s work also became invisible because women are concentrated outside market related or remunerated work and they are normally engaged in multiple tasks. Yet very rarely do women get the recognition for their perpetual contribution in agriculture in the rural economy. Their work is concerned as secondary by and large by policy makers.

The problem for women is exacerbated by discrimination and they are often paid less than their counterpart the men. It is women who carry the double burden of poverty and discrimination. They have less access than men to credit, to production resources such as irrigation, water, fertilizers and improved technologies. The new global structural transformation is posing new challenges to the women in agricultural sector. These women, who are already exploited, now suffer under tremendous disadvantages in the contemporary world due to liberalization, privatization and globalization.
Over the years there has been a decline in the number of cultivators and more and more women are working as agricultural laborers. According to the Census of India, in 1981 the percentage of women cultivators was 33.09 and in 1991 it was 34.22 per cent but the percentage of laborers was 46.34 in 1981 and it declined to 43.93 per cent (Census). If we look at the distribution of women workers in agriculture we can see an increase in the percentage of laborers from 31.9 per cent in 1951 to 43.93 per cent in 1991 while the number of cultivators declined from 45.4 per cent in 1951 to 34.22 per cent in 1991. More recently, the increased commercialization of agriculture and monetization of economy have resulted in the transformation of agriculture labor into wage employment. At the national level, the rate of economic participation of women is 20.85 per cent as compared to 53.20 per cent for men. Nearly 79.40 per cent of all economically active women were engaged in agriculture compared to 63.30 per cent of men.

1.2.1. Nature of Women's work:

According to 1991 census 20 per cent of the workingwomen are involved in agriculture operations, 38 per cent in agricultural activities, 22 per cent in livestock, forestry, plantation and orchards and other allied activities. Women work in their own land as cultivators or in others land as paid laborers. Whether it is shifting cultivation, subsistence and low input agriculture, or high external input agriculture. Women work longer and harder than men. Women are involved in pre-sowing and sowing, which includes preparation of land,
puddling of land, repairing bunds and channels, maintenance of agricultural tools and implements, preparation of compost and farm yard manure, seed selection, seed treatment before sowing, preparation of nursery beds, transplanting, thinning, weeding, scaring of birds, using plant protective measures, harvesting and post harvesting activities.

A large number of these women are burdened with the double burden of work and are vulnerable to exploitation. Though not a homogeneous group by way of caste, class or economic activity, deprivation and discrimination is common to all women. They suffer from lack of opportunity to work, low and discriminatory wages and exploitative conditions resulting in casualization. They lack social security, face occupational health hazards, and do not have access to new technologies, skills and knowledge. With the advent of globalization women continue to suffer and the growth in agriculture is neither sustainable nor equitable.

1.2.2. Globalization’s and women:

Globalization has decreased the control of women over resources, and it has led to displacement and when both men and women land up in urban slums. It affects the women more due to lack of sanitation and increase of violence. Women in agriculture sector as a group are more vulnerable than men to the extremes of poverty and its consequences. In the poor household the women’s capacity to work, her health, her knowledge and her skill endowments are often the only resource to call upon for survival as per the
World Bank Report (1991), Gender and Development in India. The poorer the household, the more it depends on the productivity of women. The wages here are so low that every family member is called upon to assist in some aspect of production, resulting in large-scale child labor in many home based industries.

These growth-oriented policies have taken away whatever control women had over traditional occupations and denied them better avenues of employment. In the shift from welfare to economic development the worst hit have been women, because a large number of them are in the informal sector. Globalization has only widened gender disparity and increased feminization of poverty. Since women in the unorganized sectors have none they continue to bear the brunt of gender and class inequalities, experience increasing marginalization and pauperization.

The agricultural reforms must be sensitive to gender needs. Women in small households need to be taught the necessary skills to go with the new technologies. The existing policy package consisting of Minimum Support Price for selected agricultural products and procurement of few food products and the supply of food grains and a few essential items through the Public Distribution System (PDS) to be reviewed. The goal must be sustainable agricultural development. It is imperative for the government to prioritize food security. It is very important to develop safety nets to minimize the adverse distributional consequences of globalization. Legal frameworks should be altered to ease women's access to and control of resources. The granting of
land rights to women, rectifying the discriminatory inheritance laws, labor market legislations and laws to protect common property will go a long way in altering the social conditioning of gender.

Sustainable human development must be at the top of the priority agenda and it must start with a bottom up approach keeping the gender concerns in mind. Women's concerns need to be explicitly incorporated as integral elements of the objectives, content, monitoring and international support for structural adjustment. There is a need to take into account women's special needs in the contribution to economic production, such as household management, child rearing, and community organization in addition to their contribution to agriculture. Sustainable human development, specifically women and women farmers must receive priority. Further, development must start with a bottom up approach keeping the gender concerns in mind.

1.3 Women Empowerment:

Empowerment of women for social development is a more complex process than it appeared to be. It is now recognized that empowerment involves an advancement in several important and related spheres to ensure the overall well-being of the empowered. Benefits derived from the empowerment programmes must not only be relevant to the needs of the intended beneficiaries, but efforts must be made to ensure that the target population is also able to retain the benefits. This is particularly significant for women. Empowerment of women in the Third World Countries is important because the benefits will be felt not only by the women themselves, but by their
households as well. It may require a more enlightened approach to ensure the empowerment of women.

National Policy for the empowerment of women, 2001 also takes note of the commitments of the Ninth Five Year Plan and the other Sectoral Policies relating to empowerment of women. The women's movement and a widespread network of non-Government Organisations which have strong grassroots presence and deep insight into women's concerns have contributed in inspiring initiatives for the empowerment of women.

As far as main objective of empowering women as agents of social change and development is concerned, already many plans are afoot and they are yielding good results. Significant gains in respect of women's health status have been achieved, life expectancy for females at birth which was 31.6 years in 1951 and it rose to 58.1 years during 1986-1990 and 62 years during 1991-2001 and 67 years during 2001-2006. In the field of education there is considerable improvement in female literacy as it has risen came up to the present rate of 39.19 per cent from 8.9 per cent in 1951. In the field of employment the female work participation has grown from 19.7 per cent in 1981 to 22.3 per cent in 1991. The total fertility rate has also come down from 5.97 in 1951-1961 to 3.3 per cent in 1997 and 2.8 in 2003 signaling a comparatively greater acceptance of family planning and late marriage norms. The percentage of women labour to total workforce has declined from 28.98 per cent in 1951 to 26.8 per cent in 1996. In the decision making positions (IAS, IFS, IPS), the number of women, though increased from 311 in 1985 to
501 in 1996, still needs to be improved. Given chance and empowerment women can actively participate in development.

The impact of the working of SHG on women member's perceptions, attitudes and knowledge are some of the important social and economic indicators reveals that there is change in women empowerment after the introduction of SHGs. It is equally essential to know whether the women's role in the household has improved through their participation in decision-making relating to important family matters, as a consequence of being a member of the self help group. As she has got some training whereby her capacities have improved and she has attained some level of empowerment, it would be of interest to know whether she was allowed to play a better role in decision making in her household matters like marriage, dowry, education, asset purchase, major loans and health care.

1.4. Women and Poverty:

More than 25 per cent of the total population of India lives below the poverty line i.e., US $ one a day and about 10 per cent just above this line. Most of the poor are landless farmers or migrant laborers who have migrated into the urban area or slums. The main reason for migration is the lack of employment opportunities and sufficient means of sustainable crop and livestock. World Bank in its report gender and poverty in India in 1995 felt that there are a number of factors that contribute to differentials in the experience of poverty and disadvantage between men and women. These include legal, cultural norms that restrict women's capacity to work, her health,
her knowledge and her skill endowments are often the only resource to call upon for survival.¹

The quality of life can be enriched even in the poverty situation through intangible, non-quantifiable factors - which is one of their important features of an alternative strategy for women development. It has been observed that it is powerlessness and poverty, which are the real inhabiting factors even among the poor women, The poor want improvement in their lives and their awareness of their prevailing system helped them to tackle the issues like battery, bigamy, entitlements within and outside the family, and denial of dignity as individuals. Thus ultimately the women are taking the path of emancipation, on a sustainable basis.

1.5. Gender concerns at international level since 1975:

There has been a global effort with a strong support from the United Nations since 1975, to understand the discrimination and restore a status to women through equality, development and peace. The UN General Assembly declared the International Year of Women in 1975 and the women’s decade (1975-85). It organized four world conferences at Mexico (1975); at Copenhagen (1980); at Nairobi (1985), and at Beijing (1995). Several programmes were introduced for women’s development as a consequence of these conferences. The U.S. Convention on the elimination of all types of discrimination against women (CEADW) in 1979 was reckoned as the ‘Bill of Rights of Women’.

¹World Bank, (1995), Gender and Poverty in India
The last decade of this century has been a process of gender development at the global level with the highest levels of political participation. The World Summit for Children, (1990) set goals for health, education and nutrition for women in the task of solving environmental problems. The International Conference on Human Rights (1993) affirmed women's rights as a central element to confront the problem of violence against women. The International Conference on Population and Development (1994) brought out a link between the demographic issues and the advancement of women through education, health and nutrition. The World Summit (1995) held at Beijing focused on the structural changes, which are necessary in the society for proper utilization of natural, physical and human capital.\(^2\) Added to this, the SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) has identified 1990 as the year of Girl child. Thus, from the fervent feminism of ‘sixties’ to the introspections on women’s status in the ‘seventies’ to women in development debates in the ‘eighties’, and to focus gender issues in the ‘nineties’ has been a whole reshaping paradigms of women development.

The Mexico Plan of Action (1975), the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies (1985), the Beijing Declaration as well as the Platform for Action (1995) and the Outcome Document adopted by the UNGA Session on Gender Equality and Development & Peace for the 21st century, titled "Further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action" have been unreservedly endorsed by India for appropriate follow up.

To protect the women's rights and ameliorate their status in the society, there are a number of conventions, declarations, policies and programmes that have been promulgated from time to time. To name a few - The Declaration on the elimination of discrimination against women (1967), The Declaration of Mexico on the equality of women and their contribution to development and peace (1975) and the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (1979), Conference on Population and Development in Copenhagen in 1995, The UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. Recently, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which would guarantee women's human rights, has been ratified by 166 countries. After the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights, The United Nations instituted a Rapporteur on Women's Human Rights to monitor their condition worldwide and to ensure that women's situation is included in UN reports on countries' human right status. If the resolutions of all these international discussions and commitments towards the women's rights are to be truly translated into practice, the development of women in particular and the development of the entire nation in general would be possible.

Actually, the problem of integrating women in the development process is the theme of policy makers not so much because of IWY and the women's Decade, but because of the increasing realization of social imbalances that
development has created all over the world. There is now movement, research, review and global action on this issue in many countries to promote the advancement of women and their full participation in development process. This, however, pre-supposes to integrate the felt needs of women in general, and rural women in particular, with the developmental plan for the economy as a whole.

The elaborate discussion on the basic concept of IIRD, its retrospect; women's participation in HRD, the women development policies and programmes since 1975 at the world level explains the importance of the theme of HRD and the need for integrating women into the mainstream of HRD.

The central theme of the Human Development Reports (hereafter referred as HDRs) published every year by UNDP since 1990 states that the development in its wiser perspective, covers all aspects of community life and should aim at maximum production, full employment and economic quality to men and women. The focus of the reports is on human lives – how they change over time; how they utilize these opportunities; how the range of people's choices can be measured. Thus, the concept of HRD gained added momentum in the development strategy all over the world since 1990.

Women in most of the countries are subjected to discriminatory restrictions, deprived of their fundamental freedom regarding voting, marriage, travel, property ownership and inheritance, custody of children, citizenship and court testimony. Besides there is sex-based discrimination in access to

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education, employment, health care, financial services, etc. Violence against them takes many forms but is universal. The UN development programmes, Annual Human Development Report commented (1998) that "in no society are women secure or treated as equal to men. Personal insecurity shadows them from cradle to grave. From childhood through adulthood they are abused because of their gender". Despite the productive contributions of the life and wealth of the nation, they are subjected to discrimination in every walk of life; 'she is relegated to the level of 'passive' participants rather than the 'active' one in all activities Today women comprise 66 per cent of the world's illiterates and 70 per cent of the world's poor (Rachana, 2000). Deep rooted socio-religious traditions have further created bottlenecks in their progress to great extent,

In the light of above, the question of Human Rights with its emphasis on the rights of women has become a dominant agenda of international society. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights including other conventions and treaties lays down a standard code of Human Rights applicable to one and all, men and women regardless of race, caste and colour, sex, religion, language or place of birth. This is the common achievement of mankind for which it has been striving for centuries. These rights are considered as foundations of freedom, justice, peace and development. Human Rights are not ideals and aspirations alone. They are claims where every individual has a right to exercise. Thus Human Rights cannot be taken away or alienated from an individual.
Human Rights for women have been defined as the collective rights of women to be seen and accepted as persons with the capacity to dedicate and act on her own behalf and to have actual access to resources and equitable social, economic and political support to develop her full potential, exercise her right as full human being and to support the development of others.

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

1.5.1. Gender concerns in India:

important policy-guiding documents include the national Plan of Action for Women adopted in 1976 when National Perspective Plan for Women (1988-2000) drafted by a Group of Experts which is more or less a long-term policy document indicating a holistic approach for the development of women. The Constitution imposes a fundamental duty on every citizen to renounce all practices derogatory to the dignity of women.

1.6. Working of Self Help Groups:

In the recent times the self help group concept became popular among women and many women were benefited out of this scheme. The SHGs helped a lot in empowering the women. SHGs reflects as a positive manifestation of successful self-management. For other functioning of the SHGs is most important to change the leader periodically if the groups are following democratic way of functioning. Also it helps to develop leadership qualities in each member over a period of time. This is their secret behind rotation of leadership in the group. If, only one member continues to head the group over a long period, there is a possibility that she may develop vested interests and consequently some of the members may suffer also. The other side is that rest of the member will be deprived of an opportunity to acquire leadership qualities.

Regarding the participation in the local bodies as Sarpanches and becoming effective natural leaders, 70 per cent of the women in the past were not aware of such things happening in their community, but now such ignorant women's proportion has come down drastically. This is a very appreciable
landmark of development and if the same trend continues, certainly all the women members will shed their shyness and become natural leaders.

As regards improved skills to develop their own income generation activities, there is a change, training undergone and participation in capacity building exercises, but it is not adequate. The emancipation aspect can be visualised if only these human development parameters also registered remarkable change. The groups cannot be sustained during the next five years, unless and otherwise the Government through its line departments provides constant and continuous skill improvement and capacity building training programmes. Otherwise, the development achieved so far may whither away over the coming years.

Though there is a constitutional provision for women to be members of some of the community based organizations, in reality their participation is very low of negligible. It takes time for the women to come out and participate in the CBOs, through the empowerment and capacity they gained because of the group approach.

The neglect of women in the development process and the immediate need for appropriate attention on women to enable them to attain their requisite position in the society has been emphasised. Realising the need Government of India initiated exclusive development programmes for women with active association of State Government. Government of Andhra Pradesh is one State in the country which stands as a pioneering State in terms of SHG movement based on micro credit. The State witnessed gigantic strides in terms of women
empowerment through micro credit. However, research studies penetrating into the aspects of process, impact and efficacy aspects are always essential to understand the process of SHG movement in a much better manner and suggest requisite measures to pay a better way for realising the potential and benefits of SHG Movement.

1.7. Status of Women in India:

It is evident that women in Indian society enjoyed a high prestige and honors both at home and in the society during Vedic period. She used to participate in social and religious practices with utmost dignity. They had competent dialogue, debate and discussion with men in the matters related to philosophy and religion. Later, the foreign invasions during the medieval period, resulted in a setback position to the women in the Indian society. The purdah system, the western educational system and culture, the conservative attitudes and traditional customs influenced her to be away from social exposure; and to be content with an inferior status in the male dominated society, and confirming herself to the four walls of the domestic sphere.

During the past few decades\textsuperscript{4}, the traditional society of India has been undergoing a series of changes. In the post independent India, changes have become more pronounced as a result of constitutional provisions, planned economic development and advancement in science and technology. Today women are exposed to formal education and participation in paid labour force.

They are moving towards a situation where they would be required to make multiple roles and responsibilities.

All our modern national leaders from Raja Ram Mohan Roy to Rajiv Gandhi were upholders of women's education and women's freedom for self-development. Mahatma Gandhi perceived women as forerunners of the social transformation in nation-building activity. Swamy Vivekananda impressed on the nation the urgent need to educate our women and said that "as a bird cannot fly on one wing. Our nation cannot withstand progress only men getting education". Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, was even more emphatic on the need for women's education as they are the "Symbols of Indian Culture". He says, 'if we deny education to women, we are denying culture to the nation". Dr. S. Radha Krishna, ex-President of India has stated that there cannot be educated people, without educated women. They don't take their work to be a profession, rather a mission and services of such women are needed in the life of every nation. Home, society, and culture we cannot think to these without of thinking of women.

Prime Minister late Smt. Indira Gandhi has never missed an opportunity to point out that the importance of 'Half the World' namely, "women". Emphasizing the importance she felt that if they are neglected 'humanity' is deprived half of its energy and creativity." There is a word of truth in the

7 N.B.Sen., op.cit., p.65.
maxim, which says that the 'hand that rocks the cradle, rules the world', as it is the 'mother' in woman that sustains social growth. Women no longer can confine herself to the kitchen, kids and keeping clean the house.

Rajiv Gandhi opines that, through literacy women can become aware of their social and legal rights; learn and improve income generating skills, acquire a voice in the affairs of the family and move towards equal participation in the process of development and social change. As women acquire literacy, infant mortality falls; life expectation rate increases; and incidence of diseases declines. Female literacy, in a way, results in a relatively late marriage and acceptance to small family norm. There is also the underlying hypothesis that a literate mother should like to see her child achieve an appreciable higher standard than her own. The employment and income hold the key to the improvement in the women's position and the ultimate quality of life of the members in the concerned family.

Thus, women play a crucial role in contributing to the human resource development, through their care, concern, commitment and capacity. None can deny the fact that qualitative improvement in the status of women, especially of rural areas, who constitute more or less 50 per cent in many countries can certainly accelerate the process of human resource development.

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1.7.1. Women Development Programmes in India:

It is appreciable to note that after the attainment of independence women were on their way to progress through the political sanctions, planned efforts and organizational arrangements. The Preamble of the Constitution resolved to secure for all the equality of status, and opportunity to ensure justice, social, economic and political; and liberty and dignity of the individual. The Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of state policy are an added support to this. Equality in the political set up is guaranteed through the institution of Adult Franchise and Article 15, which prohibits any kind of discrimination in this regard. Moreover several legislations were passed now and then to meet with the changing needs of the women in particular and society at large. These legislations confer on women certain rights and privileges such as; Child Marriage Restraint Act; Special Marriage Act; Anti-Dowri Act; Right to Divorce & Right to Maintenance; Hindu succession Act; Equal Rights to property; Equal Remuneration Act; Maternity Benefit Act; and Right to motherhood etc.

All such political sanctions enabled Indian women to move on their gradual way to security, harmony, peace and progress in their lives. During the plan period since 1951, the planning commission concentrated on three major areas of health, education and social welfare for women as a measure for development and the various programmes taken up in different plans.
During the First Five Year plan period (1951-56) the Central Social Welfare Board (CSEB) was the pioneer organization for women and children with its nation-wide programmes. The Board has its counter parts in the states and they provided assistance to voluntary agencies for improving the conditions of women and children. Priority was given to services like health, education, sanitation, housing and rehabilitation to build up human capital. ‘Mahila Mandals identified the problems of high infant and maternal mortality and undertook to develop school feeding programmes, maternity centres and child health centres.

The second plan (1956-61) adopted a welfare approach towards women. It recognised the need for organization for women as workers; protection against in furious work; women to be extended with maternity benefits and crushes in work place; equal pay for equal work and the provision of training to women.

The third plan (1961-66) focused on expansion of girls education as a strategy for women’s development efforts on providing condensed courses for adult women on health, nutrition and family planning were continued.

The fourth plan (1969-74) continued its emphasis on women’s education. The outlay on family planning was stepped up; immunization of preschool children was given high priority, followed by supplementary diet for children expectant and nursing mothers. A committee was constituted in 1971 to examine the social status of women and the report was submitted in 1975. A
major outcome of the report was the national plan of action in the areas of health, nutrition, education, employment legislation, social welfare programme and to improve the conditions of women in India, against declining sex-ratio, lower expectancy of life, higher infant and maternal mortality, fall in work participation, literacy and accelerating migration.

During the fifth plan period (1974-78) there was a shift from welfare approach to development approach for women. Women Welfare and Development Bureaus were set up in 1976 to act as nodal points to initiate measures for women’s development. Functional literacy for adult women (15-45 years) was launched in 1975-76. The major objective was the removal of poverty and attainment of self-reliance. Hence, the priorities assigned to women development programme were mainly education, health and some aspects of welfare. In pursuance of the UN General Assembly Resolution, the Government of India decided to join other countries of the world observing 1975 as IWY and constituted a national committee which finalized the programme as follows: issue of commemorative postage stamp; observance of women’s day on March 8th; distribution of educative material; holding exhibitions; sports, festivals, organizing essay writing, seminars, conventions etc.

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The department is bringing out monthly News Letter from March 1975, highlighting the activities held at various levels and news from other countries. The department has also brought out a compendium on programmes of 'women in India'. The declaration of international women's Decade (1975-85) brought into focus the importance of bringing women as part of development.\(^{11}\)

The sixth plan (1980-85) contains for the first time in India's Planning history, a chapter on 'Women and Development'. It emphasizes three strategies as essential for women's development (a) economic independence, (b) educational advancement and (c) access to health care and family planning. In the rural development sector, the integrated rural development programme (IRDP) accorded priority to women heads of households. About 3.27 lakh women constituting 34.8 per cent of total number of beneficiaries were trained under TRYSEM (Training Rural Youth for Self Employment 1979) and a new scheme, namely Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWACRA) was started in 1982-83 as a pilot project in fifty blocks. Balwadis and Anganwadis were set up for girls under the age group of 3-6 years to boost enrolment in primary schools of rural and backward areas. Two separate universities for women have been established in the states of Tamilnadu and Andhra Pradesh.

The enrolment to National Adult Education Programme (NAEP) counts on fifty two per cent (2.89 millions) of total enrolment. Besides 4,62,000

\(^{11}\) Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Govt. of India (1979), India A Reference Annual, Publications Division, Pp.115-116.
women were covered under the programme for functional literacy, implemented by the ministry of social welfare. Under ‘Science and Technology for women’s development’, priority was given to smokeless chulhas, use of solar cookers setting up bio-gas plants and devices for water-purification. Demonstration-cum training centers were set up by National Research Development Centre (NRDC) to promote expertise and entrepreneurial activity among women. The Integrated Child Development Service (ICDS) provides special nutrition to pregnant women and nursing mothers. At the end of the sixth plan more than 1.2 million were receiving benefits under this programme. By the end of 1984-85, voluntary organizations were assisted for constructing working women’s hostels. Condensed courses of education and vocational training courses were organized by a number of voluntary organizations benefiting more than 1 lakh of women. The Scheme of ‘assistance to women in distress’ covered nearly 9,260 women. Child Marriage Restraint Act, Factories Act, Equal Remuneration Act and several other outstanding laws were enacted.

The seventh plan (1985-90) recognized the importance of women’s potential as human resource and ministry of HRD identified women as the most crucial input for development. A separate department of women and child development was set up under the newly created ministry of HRD in September 1985. The thrust of the various programmes are on providing services for employment and income; education and training; general awareness and legal support, besides access of women to lend support through credit, marketing, training in skills and management were included.
The strategies for the development of rural women in the seventh plan mainly include
- to cover cent percent enrolment in education for children up to the age of 14 years by 2000 A.D.,
- to achieve health for all by 2000 A.D;
- to ensure the proper implementation of Equal Remuneration Act;
- to reduce drudgery of women with increased emphasis on science and technology;
- to restructure education programmes and curricula to eliminate gender bias.\textsuperscript{12}

Indecent Representation of women (Prohibition) Act 1986, the Sati (Prevention Act) 1987, National Plan of Action for Girl Child (1991-2000) were noteworthy in this period. However, the experience of our efforts to women development has shown that the fruits of our efforts had not reached to all sections of the society, particularly of women who constitute the single largest group of exploited citizens. Hence the programme consultative committee attached to the Ministry of HRD urged the government to evolve a time-bound action for implementation of the National Perspective Plan for Women (NPPW) 1988-2000. The plan aims at economic development and integration of women into the mainstream of economy with equity and social justice. It views women not as a weaker segment of the society or as passive beneficiaries of development process but as a source of unique strength urging

\textsuperscript{12} Binita Verma, op.cit., pp.23-25.
strategies to perceive women in a holistic manner for national goals. It has made sectoral reviews of the women's situation and suggested interlinkages and action has been initiated to implement the recommendations of the national perspective plan:

National Commission on self employed women headed by Smt. Ela R. Bhatt was set up in 1987 to make a comprehensive study of the working and living conditions to poor women. The commission presented its report ‘Sharam Sakthi’ in July, 1988 and envisages that, in wage employment more than half the respondents receive wages below the subsistence levels. It further revealed that employment which the women get is irregular, uncertain, seasonal and discretionary and characterized by malpractices in payment; irregular payment, signature on inflated amount and extortion of commission on payment. The World Bank in 1991 remarked that participation in such activities in unlikely to increase women’s control over family resources.

A 29 member national committee on women headed by prime minister was reconstituted in February 1988. The monitoring unit set up by the department consisted of 27 beneficiaries-oriented schemes for women identified by the prime minister’s office. The unit also engaged itself in monitoring the progress of point 12-'equality for women' of the 20-point programme. Its activities include13. To dentify women-entrepreneurs, prepare a shelf of viable projects and provide technical consultancy services, to facilitate the viability of credit through banks and other financial agencies, to

13 Publications Division, Govt. of India, India Year Book, (1991) p.293.
train the beneficiaries in concerned trades; project formulation; financial management etc; and National commission\textsuperscript{14} for women (NCW) a statutory body was set up in 1992 for safeguarding the rights of women; the commission is to ensure due representation of women in all spheres to check discrimination against women and for redressal to their grievances.\textsuperscript{15}

The eighth five Year plan (1992-97)\textsuperscript{16} aims at enabling women to function as equal partners in development. Moreover, the plan also intends to effectively implement social legislation for women by formulating women’s groups at grass-root level and strengthening the same. The 72\textsuperscript{nd} and the 73\textsuperscript{rd} constitutional Amendment Bill (1992) and passing of 33 per cent reservation for women in Panchayat Raj Institutions is a step to promote political participation by women. The Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK) was set up in 1992-93 with a corpus fund of 31 crores to meet the credit needs of the poor women particularly in the informal sector, through the non-government organizations. The national cresche fund was to extend assistance to NGO’s to open new crèches. Mahila Samrudhi Yojana (MSY) was launched in 1993 through the network of 1.32 lakh post offices to encourage savings and to promote self reliance and economic independence among rural women. The Food and Nutrition Board was brought from Ministry of food department to strengthen its nodal role in the field of nutrition.

\textsuperscript{14} Publications Division, Govt. of India, India Year Book,(1995), p.261.


The approach paper to the Ninth Five Year Plan has identified 'empowerment of women' as an objective of the plan. The women need to be empowered both in the ownership as well as management aspects of the agriculture and allied services, i.e., poultry, fishery, orchard etc. A special women development cell needs to be constituted in District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) to look after this task17. Thus the programmes for women development include those of the income generation, welfare and support services, and gender sensitization programmes. They play the role of being both supplementary and complementary to the general labour and employment policy directed towards the most disadvantaged sections of the societies like scheduled caste and scheduled tribes and other economically backward classes living in backward rural areas, tribal areas and urban slums. Ultimately they develop human resource potential and result in growth with equity, equality and social justice.

Creation of an enabling environment for women to exercise their rights, both within and outside their homes as equal partners along with men through early finalization and adoption of the "National Policy for Empowerment of Women" is its main objective. It calls for an expeditious action to legislate reservation of not less than 1/3 seats for women in Parliament and in the State

17 Ibid., p.24.
Legislative Assemblies to ensure their adequate representation in decision making.

During the Tenth Five Year Plan poverty eradication and provision of more need based employment opportunities and empowerment of women were given priority.

Thus, all the Five Year Plans had given importance to the development of women. The concept of women's development in the First Five Plan was welfare oriented. In the Second Five year Plan Mahila pals were organized for development of women at the grass root level. The Third, Fourth and other interim plans accorded high priority to education. In the Fifth Five Year Plan the shift was from welfare to development. Women's development was recognized as one of the development sectors in the Sixth Five Year Plan. In the Seventh Five Year Plan the developmental programmes for women had a major objective of raising their economic and social status. In the Eighth Five Year Plan, there was a definite shift from development to empowerment of women. The Ninth Five Year Plan document has empowerment of women as one of the nine primary objectives. The Commitments of the Ninth Plan (1997-2002) envisages the empowering of women as the agents of social change and development.

An examination of the status of women in India and the women development programmes sponsored by the government during the Five year
plans shows that there is improvement in the status of women in country over time, but still there is a lot to be done in this regard.

1.8 Gender concerns in Andhra Pradesh:

The Government of Andhra Pradesh is doing its best to improve the status of women in the state. Various legislative measures and programmes were undertaken from the upliftment of women. The First Five Year Plan (1951-56) focused on the need to provide adequate services for women's welfare. It planned for development of maternal and child health and family planning services.

The Second Five Year Plan (1956-60) stated that women should be protected against injurious work and it also suggested speedy implementation of the principle of equal pay for equal work.

During The Third Five Year Plan (1960-66) the main thrust was on the expansion of girl's education.

The Fourth Five Year Plan (1969-74) aims to improve maternal and child health services, supplementary feeding for children and nursing and expectant mother were also introduced.

The Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-79) showed a shift from welfare to development. The new approach aimed at an integration of welfare with developmental services.
The Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-85) introduced a separate chapter on women. This plan adopted a multi-disciplinary approach with a three pronged thrust on health, education and employment. It stressed on economic independence.

During Seventh Five Year Plan (1986-90) the main thrust was in making women realize their role in the process of development. It focused on the concepts of equality and empowerment of women which was expressed by the International Decade for Women.

The Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-97) shifted the focus from development to empowerment. In 1990 the National Commission for Women Act was enacted.

The Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002) main objectives are: (a) Generation of adequate productive employment and eradication of poverty, (b) provision for basic minimum services to safe drinking water, primary health care facilities, universal primary education, shelter and connectivity to all, (c) promoting and developing people's participation through Panchayati Raj Institutions, (d) Empowerment of Women.

Some of Acts and Programmes that are meant for safe-guarding the interests of women in Andhra Pradesh are enumerated below:

1. Equal property right for daughter and son under the Hindu Succession Act since May 1986, to uphold the fundamental right of equality before law and to put an end to social inequality of women.
2. A.P. Devadasis Act 1988, bans the practice of dedication of women as Devadasis, Jogins, Basavins, etc.

3. The A.P. Factories Rules, 1950 provides under Section 73-76, for creches where more than 30 women employees are working (Section 48).

In 13rd round Janma Bhoomi was for women empowerment and named as Mahila Janma Bhoomi. The following were the priority issues: 4 lakhs gas connections to DWCRA Groups under Deepam Scheme, Release of Rs. 33.00 crores to DWCRA Groups towards revolving fund. Release of NABARD loans to DWCRA Groups, Releasing Rs. 12.50 crores towards 'Girl Child Protection Scheme', Implementing equal pay for men and women. The vision 2020 is a landmark in this regard.

1.9. Need for the study:

There are a good number of studies and women in India. Lot of changes had taken place in women development programmes and there is every need to study the development of women in the changed scenario. The present study is a departure from the earlier studies through its focus on urban women at micro-level. It covers 349 respondents selected from Vijayawada city in Krishna district in A.P., so that the urban women of the city are made more visible on the economic scene as participants in development. Keeping this in view, the present study has been taken up.

\[18 \text{ Deccan Chronicle, July 21, 2000}\]
1.10. Scheme of analysis:

The scheme analysis for the present study consists of nine chapters as listed below:

- The first chapter covers introduction, importance and need for the study.
- The second chapter explains the objectives, methodology and the review of literature.
- The third chapter deals with status of women in India.
- The forth chapter deals with HRD and women development in India.
- The fifth chapter examines the general background characteristics of the respondent.
- The sixth chapter deals with education and social attitudes towards society.
- The seventh chapter deals with health and reproductive behavior of the respondent.
- The eighth chapter deals with assets, income and occupation of the respondent.
- The ninth chapter deals with summary and conclusions.

Thus, the present study has a lot of socio-economic relevance.