Empowerment has become a central concept denoting the perception of community residents with an unequal share of valued resources that can influence the decision-making process on issues of concern to them. Empowerment is the ability of people to gain understanding and control over personal, social, economic and political factors in order to take action to improve their life situations.

Empowerment has been studied at different levels of analysis. At the individual level empowerment has been conceptualized as perceptions of personal control, political efficacy, and a critical understanding of the socio-political environment. At the organizational level the focus is on processes and structures that enhance members’ skills and provide them with the support necessary to increase their perceived ability to influence the process of community change. At the community level of analysis, empowerment is the result of individuals working together in an organized fashion to improve their collective quality of life and fend off negative changes in the community environment. Within the notion of empowerment, there is a need to focus on information literacy—the skills and knowledge necessary to be able to use today’s information and communication technologies effectively. In this framework, it is assumed that the consequences of empowerment are the use of political action to access and influence the process of governance. Empowerment is usually described as a process in the social science literature and, as such, is built over time, requiring measurement in a longitudinal design.
An attempt has been made in this chapter to briefly discuss the concepts of empowerment and sense of political efficacy.

2.1 THE CONCEPT OF EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment is a multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives. It is a process that fosters power (that is, the capacity to implement) in people, for use in their own lives, their communities, and in their society, by acting on issues that they define as important. Three components of the definition are basic to any understanding of empowerment. Empowerment is multi-dimensional, it is social, and also a process. It is multi-dimensional in that it occurs within sociological, psychological, economic, and other dimensions. Empowerment also occurs at various levels, such as individual, group, and community. Empowerment, by definition, is a social process, since it occurs in relationship to others. Empowerment is a process that is similar to a path or journey, one that develops as one works through it. Other aspects of empowerment may vary according to the specific context and people involved, but these remain constant. In addition, one important implication of this definition of empowerment is that the individual and community are fundamentally connected.

Empowerment of women also implies avoidance of crimes and atrocities against women and improvement in their education, health etc. Improvement of the status of women and their access to family planning services, make a triple contribution to sustainable development such as they make their own contribution to the quality of life and absolute eradication of poverty, they contribute to economic growth, by raising the quality and skills of the work force and slowing down population growth thus reducing the burden on the environment which will improve sustainability.
2.1.1 THE MEANING OF WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment of women would necessarily mean redefining the notions of femininity and masculinity as well as changing man-woman relationship. This is something more and more women are now talking about. Contrary to the rumours which are spread, feminists are not against men. They are against patriarchy as a system, against aggressive masculinity. They want men who are gentle and caring. The new models of good men for women are not muscular, aggressive and supermen but men like Mahatma Gandhi, Jesus Christ, Guru Nanak, Buddha. They want husbands who can not only act as fathers but also as mothers.

Empowerment of women is not a one way process—it is not the adult educators and activists who can go and empower others. It is a two way process in which women empower and get empowered. This is an ongoing journey for all the women. No one can become empowered for good and then become an expert in empowering others.

As women account for more than half of the world’s illiterate population, achieving literacy could be one of the first steps for improving women to participate more in society and free themselves from economic exploitation and oppression. The empowerment of women and the improvement of their status, particularly in respect of education, health and economic opportunity is a highly important end in itself. In addition, this also enhances their decision-making capacity in vital areas, especially in the areas of reproduction. Education is one of the most important means of empowering women and of giving them knowledge, skills and self confidence necessary, to be full partners in the development process (Lucy, 1995).

Empowerment of women entails struggle; it entails learning to deal with the forces of oppression; it entails having a vision of a new society and it
also entails conscious and deliberate interventions and efforts to enhance the quality of life. Collective strength is necessary for building solidarity and support among workers to achieve empowerment. On the one hand, a struggle against existing forces of oppression has to be undertaken and on the other, support for women workers has to be generated through collective strength. In order to fight against the socially constructed gender biases, women have to swim against the stream that requires more strength. Such a strength comes from the process of empowerment.

Some of the empowerment mechanisms could be identified as follows—

- Literacy and higher education;
- Better health care for herself and her children;
- Higher age at marriage;
- Greater work participation in modernized sector;
- Necessary financial and service support for self-employment;
- Opportunities for higher positions of power;
- Complete knowledge of her rights; and above all
- Self-reliance, self-respect and dignity of being a woman.

The World Population Report 1994 states very clearly that, "Empowering women means extending choices, choice about if and when to get married, choice about education, employment, opportunities, controlling the social and physical environment, choice about if and when to get pregnant and ultimately about family size. Empowerment requires that husbands, partners, family members, and communities help to promote a healthy environment too from violences or abuse, in which women are free to use community services on the basis of equality.” The parameters of empowerment are—
Building a positive self-image and self-confidence.
Developing ability to think critically.
Building up group cohesion and fostering decision-making and action.
Ensuring equal participation in the process of bringing about social change.
Encouraging group action in order to bring about change in the society.
Providing the economic independence.

2.1.2 WHAT DOES WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT ACHIEVE?

Women’s empowerment helped women to make necessary transitions over their life courses (Foner and Kertzer, 1978; Marks, 1977). As the patterns of women’s interactions have an impact on broader social structures, to the extent that they make changes in these exchanges, they would be in more advantageous positions to make changes at broader levels of social organization (Sanday, 1981).

When women find their real selves, they would be more able to recognize that many of the institutional demands on them were alien to their true interests (Turner, 1976). Empowering changes in women’s attitudes result in new values that motivate them to participate more actively in broader social contexts (Mason, Czajka, and Arber, 1976; Roper and Labeff, 1977).

Women’s empowerment allowed women to be appreciated and acknowledged for who they are and what they do (Kessler-Harris, 1981; Levy, 1989). Women’s support of other women (Oliker, 1989) heralds a new stage of women’s development, where women can unite and act collectively to reduce and remove oppressive social structures (Fitzpatrick, 1990).
On both individual and social levels, women’s empowerment neutralized and sometimes negated their pervasive devaluation (Reskin, 1988). Women’s empowerment also modified women’s existing sexual ideologies (Mason and Bumpass, 1975) by introducing women’s own goals and values into their decision-making. Women became more autonomous through their empowerment and, consequently, institutionalized patterns of gender arrangement would continue to be scrutinized and questioned.

Women are empowered when they are in touch with their own traditions, shared achievements, and real interests. Women’s expansion of power depended on their abilities to stay centered in their own uniqueness, as well as to be open simultaneously to the range of action possibilities demonstrated through other women’s lives (Gerson, 1985).

Women’s personal exchanges with other people were unavoidable. Influenced by their historical circumstances, women acted most effectively when they could recognize the inevitability of this interdependence (Hall, 1990).

It was not particularly the ideology of feminism that empowered women, but rather their capacities to face bravely the individual and social facts of their actual situations (Lengermann and Wallace, 1985). Though examining the facts of their lives, women understand themselves and their circumstances more fully and became free of the extent and internal controls that would otherwise define their lives for them. This process of empowerment also may be thought of as the way in which women observe, interpret, and assess their realities as objectively as possible (Andersen, 1988).

Empowerment allowed women to move beyond other conventional gender stereotypes and rigid gender role definitions. When women deliberately turned toward the most significant sites of their
oppression—families, religion, and work—they began to see the complexities and nuances of their own exploitation (Mills, 1967). Women must know themselves sufficiently to become free, and this occurred only when they understood how much society controlled them and perpetuated their subordination (Randour, 1987).

When women make their own empowerment into a goal close to their hearts—a primary task of each day—they inevitably became an integral part of grassroots activism (Diaz-Diocaretz and Zavala 1985; Iglitzin and Ross, 1986). However, when women choose to ignore or deny their need to be empowered, they became pawns of the social mechanisms that perpetuated their subordination (Durkheim, 1984).

Empowerment has been the initial phase of women’s liberation freedom, and equity as well as a long-range goal of women’s political participation. It was the first step in a long journey toward the formulation and realization of human rights and responsibilities that transcended gender role stereotypes and the objectification of women and the men.

Empowerment of women and their equal status etc., are more easily said, than put into practice. This is, more especially so, in a society ridden with orthodox and conservative ideals and ideologies for which religious sanction and support are not lacking. In such societies any improvement in the status of women is almost impossible without the cooperation and change of hearts from the part of men (Lucy, 1995).

2.1.3 GENERALIZATIONS ABOUT EMPOWERMENT

In order to stay empowered, according to Hall (1992), women have to be familiar with at least some of the institutional trends that had previously restricted them. Knowing what to expect from others in the course of their empowerment enabled women to maintain stronger functioning positions.
The welfare of one woman, remains inextricably tied to the welfare of all women. Some of the generalizations that can be made about women’s empowerment as a social change process are listed below (Sahay, 1998) —

- Women’s empowerment is a social process that neutralizes women’s oppressions. If women do not take decisive action on their own behalf, their victimization will continue automatically through their traditional subordination.

- Grassroot political activism growing from women’s empowerment derives from women’s decisions to be empowered. The actions that follow women’s resolves to develop their potential and to take broader roles in community and societal activities.

- Women’s empowerment is synonymous with the achievement of equity and equal mindedness in society. These are not accomplished at the expense of others, but in a mutually cooperative spirit wherever possible.

- Women’s empowerment will result in traditional female values being more respected in society at large, it is not women’s purpose to take power while respecting men for who they are.

- Women’s empowerment is a base for human liberation and empowerment for all. Although initially women will neutralize patriarchal structure in order to ground their own rights in social realities, women can not be empowered effectively at the expense of others.

- Women’s empowerment will bring more balance to the male value hierarchies in current traditional and modern societies. Empowerment reestablishes cooperation as a viable social process and make the development of all people more possible than is the case in fiercely competitive patriarchies.
2.1.4 CHOICES WOMEN CAN MAKE FOR EMPOWERMENT

Women must make several choices, according to Hall (1992), in order to assess the usefulness and meaningfulness of empowerment. Also, women must make choices that are predictably effective in order to maintain their empowerment. Some of the choices women must consider are listed below—

- In order to be empowered, women must want to be empowered. Although it may be comfortable to live dependently for a short time, sooner or later women must address the issue of becoming independent and make deliberate choices in one direction or another.

- Choosing to be one’s real self and choosing to develop one’s potential are synonymous with the choice to be empowered. Empowered has many phases, and choosing actions that constructively build one’s resources in one aspect of an overall empowerment that must be continuous in order to be effective.

- Choosing to lead a meaningful life will eventually lead to empowerment. Women must be sufficiently courageous to ask basic questions about the quality of their lives in order to live fully and productively.

- The choice to be empowered needs to be renewed continuously. Empowerment is a process that has to be forged at all stages of the life cycle.

- The accomplishment of women’s empowerment does not mean that others will necessarily be oppressed. When women choose their own empowerment, they are in stronger positions to support others and to make more solid contributions to society.
Empowerment requires women to face the facts of their lives at all levels of social organization. Choosing to be realistic in interpersonal and community matters is essentially the choice to be empowered.

2.1.5 CONSTRAINTS OF EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment of women is not easy one. There are various constraints of empowerment of women. Some of them are as follows—

- Low education of the women.
- Poor skills of the women.
- Poor information base to the women.
- Poor exposure of the women.
- Available time to the women.
- Transfer of technology causes replacement of women.
- Women won’t have any protection in informal sector.
- No relief due to drudgery.

2.2 THE CONCEPT OF SENSE OF POLITICAL EFFICACY

The concept of sense of political efficacy is of recent origin. But it has assumed a significance of vital proportions in modern political analysis. The analysis and interpretation of political behaviour or political system can’t ignore the importance of sense of political efficacy. Political scientists, political sociologists, social psychologists and political psychologists have found this concept useful in explaining political phenomena. In this chapter, we propose to explain the meaning of the concept of sense of political efficacy, its origin and development, its components and its measurement.

2.2.1 THE MEANING OF SENSE OF POLITICAL EFFICACY

An attempt to clarify the meaning of any concept ought to be undertaken from two angles: ‘What it is?’ and ‘What it is not?’ Let us follow these scientific norms.
As regards the first question, viz., what the sense of political efficacy is, we may take the help of the pioneer researchers in the concerned field, Campbell, Gurin and Miller. According to them, the sense of political efficacy is the feeling in the citizen that his “individual political action does have or can have, an impact upon the political process, i.e., it is worth-while to perform one’s civic duties. It is the feeling that political and social change is possible, and that individual citizen can play a part in bringing about this change” (1954).

However, Easton and Dennis have aptly enumerated the feelings which constitute the sense of political efficacy. They refer to sense of political efficacy as “a sense of direct political potency of the individual; a brief in the responsiveness of the Government to the desires of individuals; the idea of the comprehensibility of Government; the availability of adequate means of influence; and general resistance to fatalism about the tractability of Government to any one, ruler or ruled” (1967).

Following these scholars, we have postulated sense of political efficacy as individual’s perceptions of his effectiveness in the domain of politics. It is a feeling that individual political action does have or can have an impact upon the political process.

Now, let us clarify the meaning of the concept of sense of political efficacy by delineating as to what it is not? Sometimes, the concept of ‘sense of political efficacy’ is confused with such concepts as ‘sense of citizen duty’, ‘sense of personal efficacy’, ‘political participation’, ‘political awareness’, ‘political interest’, ‘political involvement’ and ‘political modernization’. But such concepts are not synonyms of the concept of sense of political efficacy. For example, the ‘sense of political efficacy’ is not the same as ‘sense of citizen duty’ (also called as the sense of ‘civic competence’ or ‘political responsibility’). The ‘sense of citizen duty’ is a feeling that oneself and others
ought to participate in the political activity, whether or not the citizen feels that his actions matter. It clearly indicates that the ‘sense of citizen duty’ is a conditioning variable to the ‘sense of political efficacy’.

In the same way, the concept of ‘sense of political efficacy’ stands apart from the concept of ‘sense of personal efficacy’. The former is an extension of the sense of personal efficacy or effectiveness in the domain of politics. Inkeles and Smith (1974) have defined ‘personal efficacy’ as the expression of man’s confidence in his ability, alone or in concert with other men, to organize his life so as to master the challenges it presents at the personal, interpersonal, the communal, the national and even at the international level. A person’s sense of political efficacy may be highest when his sense of personal efficacy is high, indicating that sense of political efficacy may be the result of (or contribution to) one’s sense of effectiveness in non-political affairs.

Again, it is worthwhile to distinguish between ‘sense of political efficacy’ and ‘political participation’. The former refers to the individual’s perceptions of his effectiveness in politics, whereas, the latter manifests itself in his actual participation in those voluntary activities by which members of a society share in the selection of rulers and, directly or indirectly, in the formulation of public policy. It also includes such activities as voting, seeking information, contributing financially, discussing and proselytizing, attending meetings, communicating with representatives, enrolment in a party, canvassing and registering voters, speech writing and speech making, campaigning and competing for public and party offices. The comparison points out two glaring distinctions between the two concepts: first, the concept of ‘sense of political efficacy’ relates to the affective plane of the mental activity, whereas, political participation exhibits the conative plane of the mental activity. Second, political participation may be a dependent variable of the sense of political efficacy.
Likewise, the two concepts of ‘sense of political efficacy’ and ‘political awareness’ can also be distinguished from one another. Political awareness refers to one’s knowledge about Government policies and functioning of various political parties, awareness of current political issues and knowledge of organizational working and consequences of each party’s victory in the elections for the country. As regards the issue of interrelationship between these two categories of political phenomena, there appears to exist a controversy. Some scholars have viewed that political awareness may increase one’s sense of political efficacy, whereas, others have hypothesized that it may be other way round, i.e., sense of political efficacy may increase one’s awareness in politics and interest in seeking information about various political issues. In the present study, the former stand has been adopted.

Similarly, it is proposed to emphasize a clear distinction between ‘political interest’ and the ‘sense of political efficacy’. Political interest, in fact, indicates one’s degree of positive aptitude, or in layman’s language one’s liking towards such political activities or events like elections, upheavals, various kinds of socio-political movements or political personalities. Obviously, one’s liking is quite apart from one’s sense of own potency in shaping the above events. High sense of political efficacy may be the function of one’s interest in politics or vice-versa.

The allied concept of ‘political involvement’ is also confused with the concept of ‘sense of political efficacy’. Political involvement refers to those personal motives of an individual which make him emotionally committed towards the fulfilment of certain political obligations, which he perceives to be his own duty. Obviously, an individual may be politically involved in an activity while not feeling potent to influence it, i.e., not feeling efficacious. It also signifies that the individual’s political
involvement is influenced by the effect of a political activity on the individual himself. The more a person feels personally affected by a political activity, the more he feels politically involved in it. The study of American voters by Campbell et. al., (1954) shows that a majority of them care little about most of the issues, but issues that affect them directly are exceptions.

Lastly, the concept of ‘political modernization’ also confronts us. In the accepted sense of the term it ‘assumes universality of a political consensus based on political individualism or citizenship role’ (Singh, 1971). It is a multi-dimensional concept and ‘sense of political efficacy’ is only one of its components, others being the ‘political awareness’ and ‘political participation’.

From the foregoing, it is evident that the sense of political efficacy is a multi-dimensional concept. It refers to a psycho-political phenomenon which needs to be understood both theoretically and empirically. Infact, it can neither be viewed purely at the psychological level, implying only personal efficacy, nor at the political level, implying political responsibility or political potency. In order to be a valid concept, it has to be considered at both the psychological and the political levels. It is not purely a normative behaviour at the situational level. In other words, we can say that sense of political efficacy is situationally relevant dividing into national, local or neighbourhood orientation.

Here it becomes imperative to point out that the essential pre-requisite of the sense of political efficacy lies in particular features of the prevailing political structure at a given time. It assumes that the Government structure is responsive to the expectations of the citizens in decision-making and it also provides the citizens adequate means to express their political effectiveness.
2.2.2 THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPT

The concept of sense of political efficacy had its origin in social psychology during 1950’s and is considered analogous to such terms as ‘ego strength’, ‘subjective competence’, ‘self-confidence’ and ‘personal effectiveness’ (Prewitt, 1968). De-Rebello (1979) has defined efficacy as “the expression of man’s confidence in his ability, alone or in concert with other men, to organize his life so as to master the challenges it presents at the personal, the interpersonal, the communal, the national and international level”, and “the feeling that it is possible to have an effect on the environment and to bring about change through personal effort”. Efficacy actually depends on the individual’s degree of belief and feeling that he is able to achieve goals by his own effort and that he can significantly control events and external environment, whether physical or social, rather than being, mainly or completely controlled by it. Sense of political efficacy is, in fact, an extension of the concept of ‘personal effectiveness’ as applied to the political behaviour. When applied to political behaviour, it refers to ‘subjective political competence’, ‘powerfulness’ and ‘political effectiveness’. Interest in this concept became widespread with the development of a scale measuring political efficacy by the University of Michigan’s Survey Research Centre (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee, 1954; Campbell, Gurin and Miller, 1954). It may be mentioned, however, that it is only after 1960 that more and more political scientists, sociologists, social and political psychologists have begun to pay attention to the study of sense of political efficacy as a significant variable in the analysis of political behaviour. This is supported by the fact that a good number of studies have been conducted in this area during 1960’s and 1970’s.

Campbell et. al., (1954) were the first to conceptualise the sense of political efficacy as a person’s belief that the alone, or in concert with other,
can affect or retard political and social change, and can induce the desired behaviour on the part of political authorities. They used the term to identify a citizen’s feeling about the effects of his action on political events and affairs, and measured it through an index which was included in their pre-election questionnaire for the study of American Presidential Election.

The famous psychologist, Douvan (1959), has provided a different perspective to the concept of sense of political efficacy. She has investigated the relationship between a personality variable variously named as ‘sense of political efficacy’, ‘feelings of personal responsibility’, ‘psychological competence’ and ‘potency’ on the one hand and political participation and apathy, on the other. According to her, the sense of political awareness is a general personality characteristic and as such it bears a relationship to both overt behavioural responses and to psychological attitudinal reactions. The sense of personal effectiveness is also clearly related to the attentiveness and psychological energy with which a person confronts. Its relationship to more overt actions may be attenuated by extraneous factors intervening between motivation and behaviour. Empirically, the relationship between sense of personal effectiveness and political participation has not been clearly established. Of the six measures of overt participation—voter registration, voting record, usual vote, participation in campaign, contact with officials and the index of political action—all the measures are significantly related to sense of political efficacy except participation in campaign and contact with officials. Usual vote may be a questionable measure of an overt activity. Straight or split ticket voting is a measure of style rather than that of extent of behaviour. But this proposition is debatable for according to some studies split ticket voting is a more energetic and differentiated response to an election than straight ticket vote.
The concept of sense of political efficacy as used by earlier scholars has been termed it a key ‘regime norm’ underlying a person’s participation in a stable political system. In the personality theory, a sense of efficacy has been related to the degree of psychic competence a person possesses by psychologists like Smith (1968).

Mathiason and Powell (1972) have provided a new dimension to the concept of political efficacy by attempting a typology of political efficacy. They have distinguished between opinion efficacy and national efficacy, a distinction which has not been made by earlier scholars. ‘Opinion efficacy’ refers to a person’s belief that personal political opinions are important, whereas, ‘national efficacy’ specifies an object as also to a situation and it refers to a person’s belief that he can influence national Government. National efficacy may be direct political efficacy or mediated political efficacy. ‘Direct political efficacy’ is the feeling that an individual can influence national Government decisions directly, by himself. It is a type of national efficacy which characterizes stable and modern nations such as the United States. ‘Mediated political efficacy’ refers to an individual’s feeling that he can influence Government because he enjoys an instrumental relationship with a network of mediators, or brokers, who are, in turn, influential as catalytic agents in a political system at all levels.

2.2.3 THE COMPONENTS OF SENSE OF POLITICAL EFFICACY

The norms of scientific investigation make it obligatory on the part of any investigator to define the components of a phenomenon, which he or she is trying to investigate. The components of sense of political efficacy are to be discussed at two levels: first of all we have to formulate the components theoretically and, then, we have to test them empirically. Here we are concerned with the theoretical formulation of the components of
sense of political efficacy. We find Easton and Dennis (1967) of much help to us at this juncture. They have indicated three components of sense of political efficacy, even though they have designated them as the ‘elements’ of sense of political efficacy. The three components identified by them are: norm, disposition and actual conduct of a person. As a ‘norm’, the sense of political efficacy refers to the ability of the people to act effectively in politics. As a ‘disposition’, it refers to the capacity of the people to be effective in the political sphere. As an ‘actual conduct’ of a person, it refers to one’s behaviour. Clarifying the interrelationship among these components, they have observed that a person may or may not act efficaciously, but in so far as he is able to influence the course of events in actuality and participates in shaping the political destiny, he demonstrates an observable capacity to behave effectively, regardless of whether he is aware of a principle of political efficacy or has a sense of being efficacious.

Agreeing with Easton and Dennis (1967), we have proposed to test the above theoretical formulation of the components of sense of political efficacy by the following items in our schedule (the agreement or disagreement with the items signifies the presence or absence of sense of political efficacy in the respondents).

As regards norms, undermentioned items propose to test them—

1) To cast vote is the only way which affects the Government;

2) The right functioning of Government depends to a large extent on the public opinion; and

3) Some people say that the casting of vote or abstaining from it in elections matters.

The above three items are clearly related to the norms of the democratic set-up which exists in our society. Naturally, voting is the only
means by which citizens can express the approval or rejection of the policies and programmes of their existing Government. Hence, the public opinion and the right to free vote are the two vital norms of our democratic polity.

The second component of the sense of political efficacy is the disposition of the individual towards his own capacity to be effective in political sphere. In fact, this component of sense of political efficacy is more crucial than other component as it relates to the plane of affectivity of political actors. Hence, it was thought proper to investigate this component a bit intensively. As such, the following five items attempt to identify the presence or absence of sense of political efficacy among the respondents of the present study—

1) Being the citizens of India, our thinking or saying has a great effect on the Government;
2) People can change the Government, if they so wish;
3) It is possible to organize the people against the unjust or unfair policies of the Government;
4) Sometimes the Government matters are so complex that the ordinary people like us fail to understand as to what is happening; and
5) You have a considerable interest in the issues or problems the country is facing today.

The third and final component of the sense of political efficacy is the ‘actual conduct’ of the persons. It means that we should try to know as to how a person proposes to translate his sense of political efficacy in his actual behaviour. Generally following three items are framed to test this dimension of sense of political efficacy—

1) People can solve the problems of their constituency with the help of elected representatives of their constituency (MLAs and MPs);
2) If people discuss current affairs of the country with their friends, colleagues and neighbours, it can definitely influence the situation of the country; and

3) By writing to legislators or by contacting them personally, legislators can be made more responsive and responsible to their voters.

2.2.4 MEASURES OF SENSE OF POLITICAL EFFICACY

Sense of political efficacy has been measured by an index constructed on the pattern of Guttman type scale which demands 90 per cent reproducibility for the total scale (i.e., a total error of greater than 10 per cent means that the scale is unsatisfactory). Campbell et. al., (1954) were the first to measure the sense of political efficacy of American citizens in an attempt to study voting behaviour at the time of Presidential Election. They selected five items (calling for a simple ‘agree’ or ‘disagree’ responses) to measure some of the components of political efficacy and included them in their pre-election questionnaire. These items were—

1) I don’t think public officials care much what people like me think;

2) The way people vote is the main thing that decides how things are run in this country;

3) Voting is the only way that people like me can have any say about how the Government runs the things;

4) People like me don’t have any say about what the Government does; and

5) Sometimes politics and Government seem so complicated that a person like me can’t really understand what is going on.

The five item scale constructed by Campbell et. al., contains five important ideas. The first idea involves a feeling that the Government or authorities are responsive to the desires of the individuals, like the
respondents. The second idea, implicit in the meaning of the scale is just contrary to the previous one, i.e., a feeling that the ego is positively and sufficiently independently in a position to effect the functioning of the Government. The third closely associated idea is concerned with the comprehensibility of the Government and political system, its policies and rules by the ego, i.e., knowledge about ruling and being ruled out. The fourth nation is related to the means available to the individual to effect the Government. The fifth possible assumption is the idea of general inevitability or inactivity of Government. It could be that officials are perceived to be caught up in a pre-determined, unalterable pattern of events from which no escape is possible.

‘Disagree’ responses to items 1, 3, 4, and 5 and an ‘agree’ response to item 2 were coded as measures of efficacy. To respond in contrary fashion (i.e., to think that public officials are not responsive to the will of the electorate, to feel that most major policy decisions are the work of ‘wire-pullers’ and pressure groups and the product of ‘backroom deals’, to be unaware that means of expressing one’s political wishes other than voting are available to the average citizen, and to be of opinion that the modern complexities of Government have made citizen participation either impossible or unavailing) indicates a high degree of political futility.

This five item scale had an overall coefficient of reproducibility of 92.8 (i.e., had 7.7 per cent error). The range of error was 6 to 8 per cent for four of the individual items (except for item 2 which had 10.8 per cent error). Since the second question (“The way people vote is the main thing that decides how things are run in the country”) was considered somewhat ambiguous, it was dropped from the scale. The recomputed coefficient of reproducibility was 93.5 with none of the four items yielding more than 7.3
per cent error. This scale also met Jackson’s criterion for scalability with a plus percentage ratio (PPR) of \( 0.75 \).

In another attempt to determine the sense of political efficacy, not among the voters but among the American children, Easton and Dennis (1967) modified the original five questions used by Campbell et. al., (1954). In all, the former used following eight questions—

1) Voting is the only way that people like my mother and father can have any say about how the Government runs the things;
2) Sometimes I can’t understand what goes on in the Government;
3) What happens in Government will happen no matter what people do. It is like the weather. There is nothing people can do about it;
4) There are some big powerful men in the Government who are running the whole thing and they do not care much about ordinary people like us;
5) My family does not have any say about what the Government does;
6) I don’t think the Government care much what people like my family think;
7) Citizens do not have a chance to say what they think about running the Government; and
8) How much do these people help decide which laws are made for our country: very much, some, very little, or not at all? Put an X for each person or group of persons listed.

The content of the four items (considered the heart of the early learning of SPE) which load highest at all grade levels pertains to the responsiveness of officials (items 2 and 4) and to the autonomous power of ordinary people (items 3 and 5). Out of eight items, seven at some point do load on the component as defined at every grade by five best items. Each
item was dichotomized and intercorrelated with others using tetrachoric correlation.

The indices evolved for the American setting have been used with slight modification in most of the studies in Indian setting. Atal (1971) formulated the SPE index for studying political behaviour in India modelled after a similar index evolved by Campbell et. al., (1954). The five questions forming the index are as follows—

1) It is now being said that Government officials have become more considerate towards public, what do you think?
   i) Agree
   ii) Disagree
   iii) N. R. / D. K.

2) Does the public have any means to influence the Government?
   i) Yes  What are they ……..
   ii) No
   iii) N. R. / D. K.

3) Is it possible for the people to change the Government if they so will?
   i) Yes  How ……….
   ii) No
   iii) N. R. / D. K.

4) Some people believe that it would not matter whether one votes or not. What is your opinion?
   i) Yes
   ii) It does make a difference
   iii) It does not make a difference to me but will certainly make a difference to the candidate
   iv) N. R. / D. K.
5) Do you consider it desirable for people to participate in politics?
   i) Yes
   ii) Not good
   iii) N. R. / D. K.

Positive responses to items 1, 2, 3 and 5 and negative response to 4 (ii and iii) are regarded as measures of efficacy and given a score of one each, and negative responses are given a score of zero. Though, Atal simply paraphrased Campbell et. al., index and translated it in Hindi, he accepted it because it had very high coefficient of reproducibility (CR — 0.95) in Indian setting too. The CR indicates that only 5 per cent error is involved in assigning the score. The usual demand in a Guttman scale is 0.90 and hence his scale seems to be quite satisfactory even for Indian situation.

In the studies in Fourth General Elections in India supported by RPC of the Planning Commission, SPE was measured by two different sets of questions asked in Phase II and III. Following four items were included during interview in Phase II—

1) People like me have no say in what the Government does;
2) Voting is the only way through which people like me can have any say in what the Government does;
3) Sometimes politics and Government are so complicated that people like me can’t understand it; and
4) Public officials do not care much for what people like me think.

Disagreement with items 1, 3 and 4 and agreement with 2 were considered as the measures of political efficacy. Another set of four questions asked in Phase III had following questions—

1) How much attention does the Government pay to public opinion?
2) To what extent the political parties are able to help in making Government pay attention to public opinion?
3) Do elections make Government pay attention to public opinion?

4) How much attention do MLAs and MPs pay to people who elect them?

The response was regarded in four categories of "good deal", "some what", "not much" and "not at all". The first two categories are positive and affirmative in character while the other two are negative in their nature. Eight statements were treated at par for preparing the index. The four questions asked in first set are the same as used by Campbell et. al., (1954). The questions asked in second set in fact are questions about the opinion and they can't be treated as measures of SPE. Moreover, no attempt was made to determine the reliability and validity of the index and hence it can't be considered as a satisfactory scale.

Sheth (1978) has used 4 point index to measure SPE which again is a paraphrasing of Campbell et. al., index. Persons having following four characteristics were considered as efficacious—

1) Feels that his individual vote has an effect on how things will be in a county;

2) Feels that as a citizen he can influence Government policies and actions;

3) Feels that legislators are responsible to people's problems and opinions; and

4) Feels confident about its ability to understand what Government and politics are about.

Gupta (1973, 1975) selected five highly loaded questions from the Index of Easton and Dennis (1967) and translated them in Hindi in charting out the sense of political efficacy among Indian children. The five questions were—
1) Voting is the only way that people like my mother and father can have any say about how the Government runs things?
   i) Right
   ii) Wrong

2) The ordinary people like us cannot do anything about what the Government does?
   i) Right
   ii) Wrong

3) There are some big powerful men in the Government who are running the whole thing and they do not care about ordinary people like us?
   i) Right
   ii) Wrong

4) My family does not have any say in what the Government does.
   i) Right
   ii) Wrong

5) I do not think people in the Government care much about what people like my family think.
   i) Right
   ii) Wrong

Positive response to item 1 and negative responses to 2, 3, 4 and 5 were considered as measures of political efficacy. Each of the efficacious response measures was assigned a score of 1. The non-efficacious response measures were given a 0 score. The index used by Gupta had 0.90 per cent coefficient of reproducibility, which means that only 10 per cent error is involved in assigning the score and this meets the usual demand of Guttman scale.
But, the very usefulness of the adaptation of SPE indices drawn from American experience to Indian setting is questionable. The main limitations of adaptation of these indices are—

1) America, which is basically a two party system, has been exposed to the democratic experience for quite a long time with the elections starting as early as 1789, and the change of Government from one party to another has been a frequent event, whereas, in India we have witnessed only Eighth General Elections upto 1984. From the First General Elections in 1952 to the Sixth General Elections in 1977, there has been only one party Government and hence the question of being exposed to the effectiveness of vote in changing the Government has been redundant. Not only this, even political socialization starts very early among American children, whereas, it is almost lacking in Indian setting and a majority of poor and illiterate Indians can’t, in general, be expected to have developed any substantial degree of political self-confidence. Besides these factors, the processes of democratisation and politicization (or political modernity) have not been at work for a sufficiently long time to make as yet any substantial impact upon the mind of many of the people, especially the poor, the illiterate, and the passive.

2) The indices have been evolved and used to measure political efficacy at the time of elections when the electors are exposed to campaigning by different political parties and give undue emphasis on voting only, which is a casual political activity, thus ignoring other specific activities like—(i) supporting possible pressure groups by being their member, (ii) personally communicating directly with legislators, (iii) participating in political party activity and thus acquiring a claim over legislators, and (iv) engaging in habitual dissemination of political opinions through word of mouth.
communications to other citizens. In other words, political mobilization aspect has altogether been neglected. If these indices are to be used to measure political efficacy in normal time (i. e., not at the time of elections), then individual’s feelings about more demanding activities like letter writing, discussing current political issues, contacting officials and campaigning activities need to be taken into consideration.

3) The indices have been constructed to measure efficacy in relation to personnel and policies of national Government than those of the local Government (for example, panchayats and municipalities in India). Since local Government is more immediate, accessible and familiar to the citizens, it might be inferred that institutional availability at this level plays more important role in retarding or promoting efficacy. Muthayya (1976) has included one question at panchayat level (i. e., “No say what the panchayat does”) besides two other questions (one relating to Government officials and another to elected representatives) to measure political efficacy. But the reliability and validity of his scale still remains to be determined.

4) Questions 2 and 3 on the one hand and 4 and 5 on the other hand used by Campbell et. al., (1954), which are incorproated in Atal’s Index, as well as questions 4, 5, 6 and 7 used by Easton and Dennis (1967), incorporated by Gupta (1973, 1975) in his index, are quite similar in content and this reduces the comprehensiveness of the scale.

5) Again, some items as item first of Atal’s Index (which is fourth item of RPC studies Index), i. e., “It is now being said that Government officials have become more considerate towards public, what do you think” ? have hardly any relevance in the Indian setting as a large number of persons, especially the rural ones, do not come into direct contact with the Government officials at all.
6) Though, the index evolved by Campbell et. al., had an overall coefficient of reproducibility of 93.5 (more than what is required in a Guttman type scale) and also met Jackson’s criterion for scalability with a plus percentage ratio of 0.75 still, no attention was given to know the inter-item-correlation. When Mathiason and Powell (1972) tried to translate scale items across culture in their study of Venezuelan and Colombian peasants, they got extremely low or null inter-item-correlations.

7) The index evolved by Easton and Dennis (1967) and used by Lyons (1972) and many others to measure the political efficacy of school children or college students in American setting (which has been followed by Gupta for measuring SPE in Indian setting), is in fact, meant for those who don’t vote and participate in more demanding political activities and the unit is not only the children but family and still larger groups with which one identifies oneself. This reduces its reliability. The main drawbacks of this index are—(i) The presumption in constructing the index is that the responsiveness of individuals and the autonomous power of the ordinary people to the Government lies at the root of political socialization which starts very early in life. The presumption is that by the middle of the age, inter-connected political orientations become bound up with associated elements regarding the lack of inevitability of the Government. This presumption may be right in its own, but what is sought to be measured through the index is the inter-connected political orientations very early in life. This index, if administered to children alone, will not yield any information whether it gets bound up with the lack of inevitability of the Government. This limits the validity of the index; (ii) The dimensions of comprehensibility (item 2) has been found by the authors to be only an artifact of the measure
of political efficacy. The rationale given for the inclusion of the item is that the children’s consciousness of the Government being politically efficacious may sometimes, by very low or very high. This rationale is not understandable and may be considered if the authors have taken this item apart from the index; (iii) The authors have taken into consideration the fact that five high loading items may be associated simply because of response set. In order to discount this probability they have put the questions negatively, but the response set in that case may again be patterned on the other side. This does not ensure the reliability of the scale; (iv) The authors have found that the item with the same format which has a priori to do with SPE in terms of incomprehensibility (item 2), in effect does not load on the political efficacy component in terms of other items. From this an inference has been drawn by the authors that children are differentiating the meaning of the items and not simply responding in a set fashion. It may be the other way round. They may not be responding to it in a set fashion because every child is comprehending the item in a different way; (v) It is not clear from the index whether it is an attitude measure or opinion measure or measure of norms. Political efficacy has been conceptualized as a norm but the items in the index and the empirical construction made by them reveal that they are not measuring the norm but making an opinion survey of the level of political socialization very early in life. How far this may be considered an index of political efficacy is doubtful.

Thus, from an examination of the efforts made by American and Indian scholars to measure sense of political efficacy, it may be seen that sufficient attention has not been devoted to develop a very satisfactory, reliable and valid tool to measure it. Moreover, any measure of sense of
political efficacy should correspond to its conceptualization. Besides, this suggests the need to construct an index of sense of political efficacy which is capable of measuring it not only at time of elections but even in other situations and at the same time it can be successfully applied to different institutional settings.

To fill up the above gap, a seven point index of sense of political efficacy has been constructed for the present study, which is helpful to measure it both at election and non-election times. At the same time, standardized questions about empowerment of women covering its different components are combined to form a nine point index of empowerment. Cross-tabulation of sense of political efficacy as independent variable with empowerment as dependent variable has also been attempted to explore the interplay between sense of political efficacy and empowerment of women. How much we have succeeded in our efforts to measure sense of political efficacy and empowerment will be evident in the chapters to follow.