CHAPTER I

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY
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1.1.0 Overview

Women empowerment is an important area of study in the modern era of gender equality. The study focuses on the educational empowerment measures initiated by the Puducherry government for a period five years – 2005-2010 and the initiatives taken by the Government and the Private schools for empowerment of girl students. The researcher has applied qualitative and quantitative techniques for the present study. The first chapter of the thesis focuses on the settings, theoretical aspects of the study, importance of women empowerment, importance of education, objectives of education, status of women over history, types of empowerment, need for the study, objectives and hypotheses. The second chapter concentrates on the Review of related Literature. Various works on women empowerment and educational empowerment have been systematically reviewed to identify the gaps. The third chapter gives a detailed account of the Research methodology including operational definition of all the concepts, data collection, techniques used, delimitation of the study and chapterization. The fourth chapter critically analyses the educational women empowerment measures initiated by the Puducherry government during the period 2005-10 for girls at school and
college levels. For this section, the researcher has applied qualitative technique. The fifth chapter evaluates the attitude of the girl students of Private and Government schools towards the empowerment measures initiated by the concerned schools for which quantitative technique has been applied and the final chapter gives the findings and the suggestions of the study.

### 1.2.0 Education

According to Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, education in the largest sense is any act or experience that has a formative effect on the mind, character, or physical ability of an individual. In its technical sense, education is the process by which society deliberately transmits accumulated knowledge, skills and values from one generation to another\(^1\).

#### 1.2.1 Aims and Objectives of Education

The aims and objectives of education include individual as well as social aims, with emphasis of social transformation aiming at reconstructing the society to make it modernized, productive, participative, value oriented and nation committed to its constitutional obligations. There are numerous aims of education as mentioned below:

- **a. Individual Development**

b. To Acquire Knowledge
c. Vocational Aim
d. Moral Aim
e. Complete Living Aim
f. Harmonious Development Aim
g. Leisure Aim
h. Social and National Development
   i. Social Transformation
   ii. Modernization
   iii. Productivity
   iv. Community Participation and
   v. Acquisition of Values

1.3.0 Empowerment

According to Business Dictionary, empowerment means, “A management practice of sharing information, rewards, and power with employees so that they can take initiative and make decisions to solve problems and improve service and performance. Empowerment is based on the idea that giving employees skills, resources, authority, opportunity, motivation, as well
holding them responsible and accountable for outcomes of their actions, will contribute to their competence and satisfaction”.  

There are other definitions of empowerment as: “The term empowerment refers to a range of activities from individual self-assertion to collective resistance, protest and mobilization that challenge basic power relations. For individuals and groups where class, caste, ethnicity and gender determine their access to resources and power, their empowerment begins when they not only recognize the systemic forces that oppress them, but act to change existing power relationships. Empowerment, therefore, is a process aimed at changing the nature and direction of systemic forces that marginalize women and other disadvantaged sectors in a given context. “It is giving lawful power or authority to act. If people were empowered they would be able to participate in the planning, execution and implementation of developmental schemes. Apart from Political Empowerment, Economic and Social Empowerment are crucial. Empowerment and development are closely related. Empowerment leads to development, which further leads to greater empowerment”.

Empowerment is a word widely used, but seldom defined. Long before the word became popular women were speaking about gaining control over

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  \item \textsuperscript{2} www.businessdictionary.com/definition/empowerment.html, accessed on 05/02/2011.
  \item \textsuperscript{3} Babu, C. Sylendra (2007) “You too can become an I.P.S. Officer I.P.S.”, Krishna Press, Chennai, P 133
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their lives, and participating in the decisions that affect them in the home and community in government and international development policies. The word ‘empowerment’ captures this sense of gaining control of participating in decision making. More recently the word has entered the vocabulary of development agencies, including international organizations and the United Nations.

According to Pillai (1995), “empowerment is an active, multidimensional process which enables women to realize their full identity and powers in all spheres of life. Power is not a commodity to be transacted; nor can it be given away as aims”. Power has to be acquired and once acquired it needs to be exercised, sustained and preserved.⁴

1.3.1 Strategies of Empowerment

Empowerment Strategies are varied and refer to those strategies which enable women to realize their full potentials. They consist of greater access to knowledge and resources, greater autonomy in decision making, greater ability to plan their lives, greater control over the circumstances that influence their lives and finally factors which would free them from the shackles of custom beliefs and practices. Unless they themselves become conscious of the

oppression meted out to them and show initiative to push forward it would not be possible to change their status much. Some of the empowerment mechanisms could be identified as follows:\textsuperscript{5}

- Literacy 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.

1.4.0 Women Empowerment

According to UNESCO, women empowerment means the following:

- Having decision-making power of their own
- Having access to information and resources for taking proper decision.

• Having a range of options from which you can make choices (not just yes/no, either/or).

• Ability to exercise assertiveness in collective decision making.

• Having positive thinking on the ability to make change.

• Ability to learn skills for improving one's personal or group power.

• Ability to change others’ perceptions by democratic means.

• Involving in the growth process and changes that are never ending and self-initiated.

• Increasing one's positive self-image and overcoming stigma.

According to U.N. women Empowerment means, “What, then, is women's empowerment? Women's empowerment has five components:

• women's sense of self-worth;

• their right to have and to determine choices;

• their right to have access to opportunities and resources;

• their right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; and
• their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally. ⁶

Empowerment of women is a complex concept encompassing physical, social, economic and political aspects. Particularly after the declaration of 1976-85 as the decade for women by the United Nations, question of empowering women as equal partner in all walks of life becomes a critical issue throughout the world. Women empowerment means giving powers to women. Giving them importance can be called as women empowerment. The word ‘women empowerment’ essentially means that the women have the power or capacity to regulate their day to day lives in the social, political and economic terms, a power which enables them to move from the periphery to the centre stage. Self-decision regarding education, participation, mobility, economic independency, public speaking, awareness and exercise of rights, political participation and many more factors ensure women empowerment. In short, women empowerment is the breaking of personal limitation.

The women Empowerment frame work reconceptualises the development objectives of gender responsive programming. Rather than focusing in economic objectives such as enabling women to be more productive or use their

⁶www.fanpop.com › characters › female... › articles - Read more:
http://wiki.answers.com/Q/Defenitions_of_women_empowerment#ixzz1KkDpMsAm
labor time more effectively in order to reap the benefits of development, it views women’s equality and women’s empowerment as central development objectives in their own rights.⁷ Women empowerment is a bottom up process of transforming gender power relations, developing awareness of women’s subordination and building their capacity to challenge the power relation. It encompasses a wide array of things that are common like economic independence, effective communication, discrete thinking etc.

1.5.0 Types of Empowerment

There are various types of empowerment initiated by different welfare states during different periods of time. Most of the scholars have agreed the following types as important for women empowerment to uplift their status to achieve gender equality.

1.5.1 Social Empowerment of Women

The indicators of social empowerment of women include the base of gender inequality, sex ratios, life expectancy rates and fertility rates which show the general status of women in terms of literacy, economic growth, availability of health care and birth control facilities, educational status of women, age at marriage, literacy rates and participation of women outside the home.

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against women is a real factor which needs some real concentration. It demoralizes the women psychotically and physically. It is necessary to develop feminist values and give equal social status against all forms of oppression. Social equality can be achieved only through addressing the needs of women in the areas of education, health, nutrition, drinking water, housing, shelter, sanitation and participation in walks of life. The best way to achieve social empowerment is through educational empowerment.  

1.5.2. Economic Empowerment

“Women who are economically empowered are an incredibly powerful source of development.” – Peter Sands, Group Chief Executive. Women economic empowerment is uplifting the economic status of women by creating economic opportunities in the form of better jobs, better business climate and access to financial services. Economic empowerment helps women to depend on themselves and also to claim their legal rights especially to land and other properties. Economic empowerment will definitely, lead to political and social empowerment. UN in it’s sixteenth meeting of technical session of the commission highlighted the importance of women empowerment by giving technical and financial assistance to women. In continuation of the UN

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guidelines, Indian government has also taken a lot of initiatives for the economic empowerment of women. Reservation in education and jobs, special incentives for women, maternity leave facilities, special concessions for women entrepreneurs, women self help groups, income tax relief for women are some of the important welfare measures.\textsuperscript{10}

1.5.3. Educational Empowerment

It is often argued that education is a powerful tool in the emancipation and empowerment of women. Indeed, the different organs of United Nations (e.g. UNICEF) and experts on women’s liberation argue for women’s education as the basic step in women’s equality. Education is a milestone for women empowerment because it enables them to respond to opportunities, to challenge their traditional roles and to change their lives. Education is one of the most important means of empowering women with knowledge, skills and self confidence required to participate fully in the development process. The role of education is not only learning of three R’s, ("Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic") but also includes raising awareness and critical analysis of various structures and acquiring knowledge for empowerment at all levels.

\textsuperscript{10}www.infibeam.com,Empowerment-of-women–in–India-social/8177081551.html
Education is often used as an agent of basic change in the status of women. In order to neutralize the accumulated advantages of the past, there will be a well conceived edge in favour of women. The national education system will play a positive, interventionist role in the empowerment of women. It will foster the development of new values through redesigned curricula, textbooks, training and orientation of teachers, decision-makers and administrators.\textsuperscript{11}

\textbf{1.5.4. Political Empowerment}

Political rights have been denied to women throughout history, though history talks about the heroic queens of different period and civilization. The first constitutional state- the United States of America denied voting rights for women so many decades i.e. till 1921 and the English people introduced universal adult franchise to women only in 1928. The constant struggle for political rights by the feminist movement in the west helped the women to gain all the political rights in the west, though their role in public life is limited in most of the Western democracies. Indian nation building experience started with a lot of positive philosophy of treating all citizens in equal footing. The universal adult franchise and the abolition of all forms of disparity are the important initiatives guaranteed by the Indian constitution. However, the role of

\textsuperscript{11} ibid
women in the political arena is very negligible in India. Understanding the reality, the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendment guaranteed women 33% of reservation in Panjayatraj election. However, the percentage of women representatives in Parliament and state Legislatures is not encouraging. The initiative to guarantee women the long demanded 33 per cent is yet to be legalized because of so many hurdles. In this context, political empowerment for women means the role guaranteed to the women on par with men in the political affairs of the states from top to bottom. 12

1.5.5. Legal Empowerment

A 2003 paper for Washington, D.C. Policy Institute, the Carnegie Endowment of International Peace, defines legal empowerment as, “the Use of legal services and related development activities to increase disadvantaged population control over their lives”13

Legal empowerment is the legal guarantee given to the women on political, physical, social, economic, educational, employment and other opportunities of life. The legal guarantees should be simplified and people friendly. Indian constitution is called as ‘Layers paradise’ because of the hard

language and the complicated rules and regulations. Therefore, laws should be simplified and the government should create legal awareness program to inform the uninformed women about the legal guarantees given by the law of the land. Therefore, all women empowerment measures should be legalized and formalized for implementation.\textsuperscript{14}

\section*{1.6.0 Status of Women: A Historical Perspective}

Ever since the early civilization came into existence, women have been deprived of their rights to equality in almost every field, including education, the most vital element of overall human development. The Book Brothers\textsuperscript{15} because of the original sin concept, justify the unequal treatment of women, for Satan deceived Eve first and Adam through Eve. They justify their argument by quoting the Bible, which says, “To the woman God said, I will greatly increase your pain in child bearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.”\textsuperscript{16}

Since then the male dominated Society, the subordination of women and discrimination on the basis of gender prevail through the millennium.

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\textsuperscript{15} Muslims, the Jews and Christians are called Book Brothers. The Muslims, claim that they are the first children of Abraham and the Jews claim that they are the promised and original children of Abraham and the Christians claim that they are the real children of Abraham by faith.
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\textsuperscript{16} The Bible, Genesis 3:16
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irrespective of the country, culture, society and civilization and is not confined to a particular country or to India alone. However, the causes and consequences may vary from time to time and country to country and discrimination against women is widespread and deep-rooted in our social system itself.

It is necessary to mention here that India which is well known for its historical past is also known for the mixed treatment of women. At one side, people treat women as Goddesses and another side, women have been treated as inferior creatures. Against this background, this chapter intends to analyze the status of women from the roots of history. This section is divided into the following major sub sections: Women during Vedic period, Post Vedic period, Medieval period, Early Modern period, Modern period, Women in Jewish civilization, Christian culture, Islam and women, etc.,

1.6.1 Women During Vedic Period

“Women enjoyed far greater freedom in the Vedic period than in later India. She had more to say in the choice of her mate than the forms of marriage might suggest. She appeared freely at feasts and dances, and joined with men in religious sacrifice. She could Study, and like Gargi, engage in philosophical disputation. If she was left a widow, there was no restriction upon her remarriage”.
The period between 1500-1000 B.C. is identified as the early Vedic or Rig Vedic period by the scholars. Though one cannot empirically conclude that this age was characterized by total equality between men and women, it is evident from sources that many liberal attitudes and practices pertaining to women existed during this period. Women took part in social and religious activities and they had enjoyed some freedom in choosing their partner in marriage. Moreover, marriage was not compulsory for women. Further, the daughter was not considered a liability or an unwelcome guest in her parental household. Above all, girls enjoyed the privilege of education. The ancient scriptures in India glorified womanhood and treated women as equal as men. However, there are contradictions and different interpretations of the original Brhaminical text. On the one hand, the scriptures had glorified and on the other hand some sacred texts held women not only with disrespect but even with a positive hatred. For example, Manu has said that, “where women are honored, the Gods are based but where they are not honored, no sacred rite yields any reward”. But it is as clear as day light that the same Manu has formulated the theory of sacred tutelage of women when he said that a woman has to depend

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on her father in her childhood, on her husband in youth and on her sons during her old age and no woman is fit for freedom.

Further, according to Vedic scholars, Vedic times were free from many of the social evils that harmed the Indian society during the later era. Child marriage and a harsh dowry did not then exist. As mentioned above, widows were free to marry and they inherited rights to the dead husband’s properties. Social seclusion of women or notorious sati was not practiced. Above all, untouchability did not prevail and no man or woman was locked into a trade by birth. People were free to take different crafts and trades.\textsuperscript{18}

In general, during Vedic period, women were not discriminated on the ground of gender for they had equal status in matters of education, remarriage, managing the household, right to property, intellectual pursuit, participation in public debate and even participation in battles along with men.\textsuperscript{19}

It has been revealed by some scholars that Vedic society was also not a perfect society. It has been reported that Rig Vedic society too suffered from poverty, destitution, slavery and exploitation of the weak. There are references

\textsuperscript{18}The Rig Veda (IX, 112) says: A bard I am, my father a leech, /and my mother is a grinder of corn,/Diverse in means, but all wishing wealth/equality we strive for cattle”.

\textsuperscript{19}There is a mention of a certain warrior Queen Wishpla who lost her leg in a battle and was fitted with a metallic prosthesis, she returned to battle and continued to fight. There were women teachers, scholars, Brahmavadinis and highly respected rishis. There were also prostitutes who made living and followed certain regulations. http://www.stephen-knapp.com/women_invedic_culture.htm
to women in Rig Veda who were rendered poor and restitute by their husband’s addiction to gambling and liquor. There are poems sung by luckless gamblers in their drunken stupor lamenting the fate of their helpless wives and aged parents. The drunken gambler, poor and ever thirsty, sinks deeper into debts as a stone into a ditch. The destitute wife of the gambler is distressed and so too is the mother of a son, not knowing where her wayward son had gone. There are scenes of roguish creditor pestering the wife of an insolvent gambler. In general, according to the available literature, women in early Vedic India and Sangam period in Tamil Nadu enjoyed all privileges along with men. There was neither discriminatory practices nor gender bias existed in early India. We can say that the early Vedic period was a golden era for gender equality.

1.6.2 Post Vedic Period

The period between B.C. 1000 and B.C. 600 is generally known as Later Vedic period. This age is also called as the Epic age because the two great epics Ramayana and Mahabharata were written during this period. During the Later Vedic period, women were subordinated and submission was considered as an ideal virtue of a wife. Women could not own property and they were not allowed to participate in public affairs. Child marriage was not prevented and
widow remarriage was not allowed. Though monogamy was the rule, polygamy was practiced.

Education was provided only to the three upper castes. Pupils stayed with their teachers at the Gurukula. Women were not sent to the Gurukula. However, women like Gargi and Maitreyi were educated. Students were taught philosophy, logic, religion, grammar, astronomy, medicine, ethics and arithmetic. Dhanur Veda or war tactics was taught to princes. Pupils observed strict discipline, obedience and respect for the teacher.

However, Later Vedic period witnessed a lot of changes in the field of religion and the status of women. The Gods of early Vedic Age lost their significance and in the later Vedic Age, they worshipped new Gods like Prajapathi, Vishnu and Krishna. They worshipped God by prayers and sacrifices. The theory of Karma and the theory of incarnation were accepted. People believed that God is the Supreme head and not only a creator but also a destroyer. They also believed in the concept of Moksha.20

As the time passed, the position of women underwent changes in all spheres of life. Women lost their political rights of attending assemblies. Child marriages also came into existence. According to the Aitareya Brahmana a

20 www.indiaandindians.com/inid/later
daughter has been described as a source of misery. The Atharva Veda also
deplores the birth of daughters. Yet certain matrilineal elements are discernible
in this period also. The importance assigned to the wives of the Rajan in the
Rajasuya has been regarded as an indication of matrilineal influence and
Vamsavalis or genealogies of teachers attached to the Brihadaranyaka.
Upanishad, in which many seers bear metronymic, would also possibly indicate
a similar development. There are references to women seers like Gargi and
Maitreyi. However, this period clearly sees the growing tendency to stratify
society along gender lines. The position of women gradually deteriorated as the
golden Vedic ideals of unity and equality began to fade off through the passage
of time. During the period of Smritis women were bracketed with the Sudras
and were denied the rights to study the Vedas to utter Vedic mantras and to
perform Vedic rites. Marriage or domestic life became compulsory for women
and unquestioning devotion to husband their only duty.

The Mauryan period Brahmanican literature was severe particularly in
the treatment of women as it assigned them a very low status in the society.
Buddhist texts on the other hand were much more considerate in treating them.
Mgasthenes testifies to the growing practice of polygamy, employment of
women as palace guards, body guards to the kings, spies etc., permission of
widow remarriage and divorce. Thus the position of women though inferior was
not as bad as it came to be in the later periods such as the Gupta period. Owing to the suppressed condition of women in the society of his time it is possible that Asoka might have felt the need to appoint a special group of Mahamattas who would be concerned mainly with the welfare of women. Since women and property are bracketed together in several references in the epics, Smritis and Puranas, women came to be regarded as a sort of property. She could be given away or loaned as any item of property. This was like the attitude of a typical patriarchal society based on private property. Because of this the Brahminical law did not allow any proprietary rights to women; the provision of Stridhana is of a very limited character and doesn’t extend beyond the wife’s rights to jewels, ornaments and presents made to her. This took strong roots in Gupta and post Gupta period. The practice of using veils by women particularly in the so called high caste families was in vogue. In Kadambarai, Patralekha is described as wearing a veil of red cloth which was however not the general custom.

The position of women was deteriorated even in the South Indian empires. Widows were generally not allowed to remarry. Their position was very pathetic as they had to cut off their hair, discard all their ornaments and eat only plain food. Some wives preferred to die with their husbands. The torture of the widows like the tying of the Taliat in the marriage ceremony was obviously a pre Aryan Tamil Custom which came into existence in later Tamils. As
explained above, during the later Vedic period there was a decline in the status and the dignity of women in all walks of life. For instance, women were subordinated and submission was considered as an ideal virtue of a wife\textsuperscript{21}. They could not participate in public affairs or own any public property. As in the North Indian states, child marriage was in existence because of the insecurity of the young women and the widows were not allowed to marry. Understandably, women degradation in India really started from the later Vedic period. Because of the insecurity and the early marriage women were denied proper education during this period. Moreover, educational opportunities were denied to the other caste people and restricted as the property of the three upper castes.

1.6.3. Status of Women in Islam

There are controversies over the theory and practice of the principles related to the status of women in Islam and Islamic community. According to the Islamic scholars, Islam gives equality to women unlike most of the other religions. The status of women in Islam is something unique, something novel, and something that has no similarity in any other system.

The following are the valuable arguments popularized by the Islamic theologians:

1. Woman is recognized by Islam as a full and equal partner of man in the procreation of humankind. He is the father; she is the mother, and both are essential for life. Her role is not less vital than his. By this partnership she has an equal share in every aspect; she is entitled to equal rights; she undertakes equal responsibilities, and in her there are as many qualities and as much humanity as there are in her partner.\textsuperscript{22}

2. She is equal to man in bearing personal and common responsibilities and in receiving rewards for her deeds. She is acknowledged as an independent personality, in possession of human qualities and worthy of spiritual aspirations. Her human nature is neither inferior to nor deviant from that of man. Both are members of one another.\textsuperscript{23}

3. She is entitled to freedom of expression as much as man is. Her sound opinions are taken into consideration and cannot be disregarded just because she happens to belong to the female sex. It is reported in the Qur'an and history that woman not only expressed her opinion freely but also argued and participated in serious discussions with the Prophet himself as well as with other Muslim leaders.\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{22}Qur'an, 49:13; cf. 4:1, http://www.quranexplorer.com/.
\textsuperscript{24}Qur'an, 58:1-4; 60:10-12, http://www.quranexplorer.com/.
4. Historical records show that women participated in public life with the early Muslims, especially in times of emergencies. Women used to accompany the Muslim armies engaged in battles to nurse the wounded, prepare supplies, serve the warriors, and so on. They were not shut behind iron bars or considered worthless creatures and deprived of souls.

5. Islam grants woman equal rights to contract, to enterprise, to earn and possess independently. Her life, her property, her honor are as sacred as those of man. If she commits any offense, her penalty is no less or more than of man's in a similar case. If she is wronged or harmed, she gets due compensations equal to what a man in her position would get.\(^\text{25}\)

6. Apart from recognition of woman as an independent human being acknowledged as equally essential for the survival of humanity, Islam has given her a share of inheritance also.\(^\text{26}\)

7. Woman enjoys certain privileges of which man is deprived. She is exempt from some religious duties, i.e., prayers and fasting, in her regular periods


and at times of confinement. She is exempt from all financial liabilities. As a mother, she enjoys more recognition and higher honor in the sight of God.\textsuperscript{27}

8. The Muslim woman is always associated with an old tradition known as the "veil". It is Islamic that the woman should beautify herself with the veil of honor, dignity, chastity, purity and integrity. The veil which she must put on is one that can save her soul from weakness, her mind from indulgence, her eyes from lustful looks, and her personality from demoralization. Islam is most concerned with the integrity of woman, with the safeguarding of her morals and morale and with the protection of her character and personality.\textsuperscript{28}

9. By now it is clear that the status of woman in Islam is unprecedentedly high and realistically suitable to her nature. Her rights and duties are equal to those of man but not necessarily or absolutely identical with them. If she is deprived of one thing in some aspect, she is fully compensated for it with more things in many other aspects. The fact that she belongs to the female sex has no bearing on her human status or independent personality, and it is no basis for justification of prejudice against her or injustice to her person. Islam gives her as much as is required of her. Her rights match beautifully

with her duties. The balance between rights and duties is maintained, and no side overweighs the other.\textsuperscript{29}

\subsection*{1.6.4. Status of Women in Jewish and Christian Traditions}

From the dawn of Jewish civilization, Jews are the male dominated society. They believe that Eve was easily deceived by Satan and was responsible for the first sin. God said unto the woman,” I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception: in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.”\textsuperscript{30} Consequently, throughout history the Jews degraded and disrespected women in all walks of life. Therefore, Man has become the head of the woman and the family. The Jewish tradition expects the women to adore their husbands and the women were denied property rights and other privileges. Understandably Jewish laws, religious rituals, social practices and almost all the other traditions are male centered. Women were not allowed to perform religious rituals on par with men and were instructed to cover their head with scarf to show respect and also as a symbol of humility.

\textsuperscript{29} Qur'an, 4:1, \url{http://www.quranexplorer.com/}

\textsuperscript{30} Genesis 3:16, \url{http://www.biblegateway.com/versions/New-International-Version-NIV-Bible/}

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Even in the New Testament St. Paul insisted the importance of the subordination of women to men. He said, “Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and head of Woman is man, and the head of Christ is God….And every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head—it is just as though her head were shaved. If a woman does not cover her head, she should have her hair cut off; and if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut or shaved off, she should cover her head. A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. For this reason, and because of the angels, the woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head”. 31

The advent of Protestant religion and democracy also failed to give equal status to women in the west. Even in the first written constitution, the United States of America failed to give political rights to women. Women in America and England had to struggle a lot to get voting rights from the male dominated society. After a long struggle women were given voting rights only in 1922 in America and in 1928 in England. After a long struggle in the West women got the opportunity to perform religious rituals by acting as Priests and Bishops. It is a well known fact that in spite of propagating and preaching gender equality,

even the most developed Christian dominated state like America has failed to achieve gender equality in all walks of life. For instance, they have failed to elect a woman as their President or to nominate a woman as a Presidential candidate though the Americans are leading the feminist movement at the international level.

1.6.5. Women during the Medieval Period (500 - 1450 AD)

Even during the medieval period, women in India were deprived of different social and economic rights and were brought out under the overall control of the male family members. They became the victims of various social evils such as Sati, Purdah, child marriage, prostitution, female infanticide etc., Because of the continual foreign invasions, women were not allowed to participate in social functions, economic activities and most of them were denied even the privilege of education. Above all, they were denied their property rights. Consequently, the economic dependency of women on their father and mother increased rapidly. The Muslim invasion influenced the Indian social life. For instance, majority Hindu women were insecure for their lives mainly because the affluent Muslims started forced marriages with Hindu girls by converting them to Islam.\textsuperscript{32} Deepening of many social evils and practices

\textsuperscript{32}Balaji Pande, Women’s Education, \textit{Social Scientist}, Vol. 13, No. 10/11, October-November 1985, pp. 149-150
such as, seclusion of women, purdah system and keeping women out the sights of Muslim traders and invaders further reduced the status of women in India. While the upper caste Muslim women practiced purdah system, the lower caste women had to expose themselves before the superior male community. Consequently, child marriage became popular among the Hindu as well as Muslim girls. As a result, the honored place, which the women had been occupying in the prevailing social and cultural system during Vedic period received a greater set back from the post Vedic period and medieval period- mainly after the Muslim invasion. They had been denied the educational privileges and had to participate in most of the outdoor activities. However, the role of hundreds of saints which dotted the regions from Kashmir to Kanyakumari from 9th century to 16th century slowly changed the social structure of India. The saints who involved in so many social activities propagated against so many evils mainly based on caste and gender. They advocated equality among men and women on certain matters. The saint movement received great popularity throughout India and slightly changed the mind set of the dominating gender. However, the domination of the higher caste and the ruling Muslim elite influence further weakened the women folk in the medieval India.\textsuperscript{33}

\textsuperscript{33}Ibid.,
However, the following evil practices were practiced and justified because of the prevailing circumstances:

**Sati:** It is an old, largely defunct custom, in which the widow was immolated on her husband’s funeral pyre. Although the act was supposed to be voluntary on the widow’s part, it is believed to have been forced on the widow. However, with the help of social reformists like Raja Ram Mohan Roy it was abolished by the British in 1829. Since then also, there are reports of cases in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.  

**Jauhar:** It refers to the practice of the voluntary immolation of all wives and daughters of defeated warriors in order to avoid capture and consequent molestation by enemy. The practice was followed by the wives of defeated Rajput rulers, who were known to place a high premium on honor.

**Purdah:** Purdah is the practice of requiring women to cover their bodies so as to cover their skin and conceal their form. It imposes restrictions on the mobility of women. It curtails their right to interact freely and it is a symbol of the subordination of women.

**Devadasis:** Devadasi literally means God’s (Deva) female servant (Dasi), where according to the ancient Indian practice, young pre-pubertal girls

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34 [www.merinews.com](http://www.merinews.com)>www.indiamike.com/india/india/sati-today-in-madhya-pradesh-t25949/-
are ‘married off’, ‘given away’ in matrimony to God or Local religious deity of the temple. These girls are not allowed to marry, as they were supposedly married to the temple. She permanently ‘serves’ the priests and inmates of the temple, and the Zamindars and the other men of money and power, in the town and the village. The ‘service’, providing sexual satisfaction given to these men is considered akin to service of God. The Devadasi is dedicated to the service of the temple Deity for life and there is no escape for her. If she wants to escape, the society will not accept it.

The above mentioned evils are mercilessly still practiced and imposed on the women of different parts of India. Consequently they are treated as second rate citizens and have been denied all the privileges.

1. 6. 6. Status of Women in Colonial India (1773-1947)

The advent of the Europeans in general and the British in particular and the influence of Western education created a lot of positive impacts on the women in India. However, during the early period of British rule based on the prevailing traditions Indian women were denied the benefits of education, equality, property rights and even they were denied the opportunities to develop\(^{35}\). Therefore, they were forced to attend the household related indoor

activities such as, cooking food, washing clothes and to look after their children, the aged and animals. Above all, the conditions of the widows were very pitiable. At one side, in some part of North India, the notorious Sati practice never allowed them to live. In rest of India, widows were not allowed to participate in social functions and ceremonies and were forced to wear only white sarees without make up. Further, they were deprived of property rights throughout the British rule.\textsuperscript{36}

As mentioned elsewhere, the consolidation of British rule, the spread of Western education and the western culture created a lot of awareness among the educated and forward thinking Indians. Consequently, various reformers took up the cause of women’s oppression and passion. They did a commendable job of taking up the cause of women’s freedom from traditional modes of bondages like child marriage, Sati, female infanticide, polygamy, lack of women’s education etc., With the approval and support of the British regime the social reformers actively participated in the movement. Across India there is a long list of reformers who undertook major efforts on women’s behalf. Reformers were found throughout India and among all communities Inspite of strong opposition from the opinionated people with negative mind set. The reformers

\textsuperscript{36} Though the British were in the helm of affairs in India they were not able to break the social evils for the society at the local levels were dominated by the affluent castes and the land lords. However, the British introduced an important act in 1957 providing rights to the widows over the property of their husbands. However, Indian society rarely accepted and practiced the law. Ibid.
addressed a number of issues, most of them relating to marriage and the importance of female education.

In spite of the relentless efforts of various reformers, it was reported that in India one out of thousand women was illiterate in 1900. However, women education slowly strengthened their position. In 1921 over thirty nine million women or one third of the female population were in the work force. But very few of the women were professionals. The industrial economic sector that emerged with colonial rule provided women with new opportunities for employment. For example the professions of teaching and medicine were open for women. Further, factories, mines and plantations employed significant number of women. During 1920s and 1930s women’s organizations demanded educational and medical services for females managed by female professionals. After the First World War more and more men’s Medical colleges admitted women and they even started a Medical college for women also. Similarly, women started entering in to law professions. However, most of the women worked in established mills and factories, jute mills and even mines.

In general, the wave of Western feminism and Western education and availability of information across the world and the development of transport and communication crafted the position of Indian women during the British raj. Consequently, the tremendous development of women literacy, issues like early marriage, practice of Sati etc., were strongly dealt even by the women in British India. It is right to say that one way or other British India laid the real foundation of women liberation and empowerment by popularizing women education and legally abolishing so many evil practices against women by the male dominated society of India. The Western missionaries and Indian social reformers also took the lead in initiating so many women empowerment measures.

1.6.7. Women during the Post Independent Period (1947- till date)

The independent India assures a lot of new hopes for all the weaker sections in India particularly women. Provisions were made in the Indian constitution to provide equal rights and opportunities of socio economic development and betterment of living for men and women. The constitution also guarantees freedom of speech, and personal liberty to participate in every kind of welfare, social, economic and political activities to all Indian citizens. The constitution in its article 14 ensures equality before law and article 15
prohibits any discriminative practices, article 15(3) empowers states for making special provisions in favour of women and children and article 16(1) guarantees equality in matters relating to employment and appointment to any public office for all the citizens and article 16(2) forbids discriminative practices on account of religion, sex, descent, place of birth, residence or any of them in providing employment under any government or public department is concerned.

Further, in view of providing a concrete and actual shape to the initiatives and measures underlined in the constitutional provisions for social and economic upliftment of women, the economic development planning introduced in 1951 has also initiated several schemes and programs for the development and improvement of the socio-economic status of women. Greater emphasis has also been provided towards the expansion of various social services, such as the facilities of health, education and certain basic amenities of life at accessible distances for the people living in different backward and remote areas, with the expectation that different communities and groups of people would be in a position to avail these facilities at equitable manner, since the very beginning of the introduction of the first five year plan in India.

Considering the universal fact into account that the improvement in the social status of women cannot be easily brought out without bringing at least
some changes in their economic conditions, various development programs and schemes have also been introduced, specifically for women, during the past. Efforts have also been made to maximize the participation of women both in these women specific programs as well as in general community development programs. For the first time, a chapter on, ‘Women and Development’ was included in the sixth five year plan, introducing several women specific and related development projects which were mooted important for improving the economic conditions of rural women. Under the national perspective plan for women, on going Integrated Rural Development Programs and other programs were introduced providing self employment opportunities. During the seventh plan the Indira Mahila Yojana was introduced and Rastriya Mahila Kosh was established to encourage women to hold their own saving accounts and funds for productive activities.

Further, in 1982, the Government of India introduced a new development program as Development of Women in Rural Areas (DWRA) under the Integrated Rural Development Program (IRDP), which was later merged with SwarnaJayanthi Gram SwarojgarYojana for encouraging maximum participation of women in different economic activities. The objective of this scheme was also to bring improvement in the survival of young children (below 6 years) and women belonging to the age group of 14 to 45 years and the
quality of their lives. The women living below the poverty line were provided financial subsidies from the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) for the purpose of purchasing productive assets under this program. With the consideration that the collective efforts of women in the successful functioning of the identified activities for this program would be more effective, the groups of women consisting 15 to 20 individual members were formed in different villages to run the activity.

Later in 1986-87, women’s development Corporation was formed. The main objectives of the corporation were to work as catalytic agent for creating sustainable income generating activities, to promote variety of schemes and programs for women and women’s group of weaker sections of society, identification of women entrepreneurs, preparation of developments for initiating training facilities in different subjects of trade and service and finally to act as a facilitator in promoting and strengthening different women’s corporative societies.

In 1976, the Government promulgated an Equal Remuneration Act, which emphasized that the duty of an employer would be to pay equal remuneration to men and women workers for performing same or similar nature of work. According to this Act, no discrimination would be practiced at the
recruitment on the ground of sex among women and men labor force. However, this act covers only employment, which is provided under the public sector companies and banks, Central and State Governments, Corporations, mines, coal and oil fields and major ports. During this period, Bureau of women was also established by the Ministry of Social Welfare for assessing the problems of women and to suggest recommendations for solving these problems. In 1978, the Planning Commission had also constituted a working group for assessing the emerging employment situation of women and to provide suitable recommendations for their employment perspectives. The suggested recommendations of these groups were well considered in the Sixth Plan and, as a result, various women specific development schemes were introduced during this period. During the women decade the women were promised of introducing various development schemes and reforms at policy level so that the socio-economic status of women could be improved significantly.

The government had also framed various social legislations and passed several Acts in the past for raising the legal and social status of women. The major reforms in the direction were, Special Marriage Act, 1954, The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, The Hindu Succession Act, 1955, The Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act 1956, The Suppression of Immoral Traffic Women and Girls Act, 1956, Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, Medical Termination of Pregnancy
Act, 1971, the Comprehensive Family Court Act, 1984, Maternity Benefit Act etc., There is no doubt that the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendment which guaranteed 33% reservation for Indian women is an epoch making decision. However, the male dominated Indian Parliament is continuously denying women the long pending demand of 33% reservation in Indian Parliament.

1. 6.8. Current Status of Women

As mentioned earlier, Indian constitution guarantees equal rights to women with men through various provisions. However, even after sixty plus years of democratic experience the male dominated Indian society is not ready to accept the women on par with them in different walks of life. Consequently, women in India in general and the rural India in particular have been undergoing a lot of sufferings. Understandably, women are responsible for bearing children, but most of the rural women are malnourished and poor in health. Further, the rural women are over working at home –looking after the children, preparing food for all at home, cleaning the home and vessels apart from working in the field or in the landlord’s house as part time laborer. At home, in the poverty ridden rural India, most of the men eat major portion of the scarcely available food prepared by their life partners and the women have to satisfy with the left out. Suffering silently with limited food results in
different types of weaknesses and diseases. The situation is causing a lot of damage to the pregnant women. Further, inadequate and untimely medical care results in high material and infant mortality rates.

In most of the rural villages in India, from the first day of their birth, the rural girl children do not get as much care and commitment from the parents and from the society as the boys would. In some societies the girl babies are getting breast feeding only for a shorter period than the boys. By denying adequate feeding knowingly or unknowingly the mothers are discriminating the girl children. Of course there is legal guarantee for female education in India but in practice only thirty eight per cent girls attend the primary schools. This is mainly because of the negative opinion of the parents and the society as follows.

- First, most of the uneducated and daily wage parents feel that they will get nothing in return, in a short term or long term, by educating their daughters.

- Secondly, girls alone attend the household related routine works for both the parents have to attend other outside works.

- Thirdly, they feel that there is insecurity in the school because of the male dominated teaching community. Parents are worried about the
chastity of their daughters and they feel that home is a safer place than the school.

- Fourthly, the distance between the school and the house and lack of free transport facilities in many villages also discourage the parents to send their girls to schools.

- Fifthly, the responsibility of looking after the young ones at home compel them to attend the child care work as the parents have to go for their daily works to earn their livelihood. This responsibility of looking after their younger sister or brother forces the senior but young girls to forgo their educational ambition.

- Sixthly, no guarantee of job even after successfully completing their schooling or no possibility of getting free admission in higher educational institutions also discourage the poor parents from sending their girls to the schools.

- Seventhly, the fear of the parents about the liability in arranging a marriage for their educated daughters, in the form of dowry system and finding a suitable bridegroom prevent most of the poor rural parents from sending them to the schools.
• Eighthly, only male children are greatly revered by grandparents and relatives and in most of the families, including the educated families women have been denied property rights on par with the male children. Obviously, they get very little respect and standing in their families. For instance, in most of the uneducated families, girl children are required to prepare the meals for the men who eat most of the food. Only after the males finished eating, can the females eat. In most of the cases, the leftover food is meager and the families are very poor and have little to begin with.

• Ninthly, when the priority in choosing the education of the male child and female child arises, most of the poor families prefer to send their sons than their daughters.

• Tenthly, there is lack of basic facilities and good environment in the schools. According to the reports, many states in India simply do not have enough class rooms to accommodate all the enrolled children. Furthermore, even if the class rooms are available, often there are lack basic necessities such as sanitary facilities or water. Lack of latrines can be particularly detrimental to girls’ school attendance. (In Uttar Pradesh,
a recent survey found that 44 per cent of the schools did not have a water supply and eighty percent did not have latrines.\(^{38}\)

- Eleventh valid reason, the lack of adequate female teachers in most of the schools is a serious barrier. Most of the rural girls are more likely to attend school and have higher academic achievement if they have female teachers. This is particularly true in a highly gender-segregated society such as India.

According to the NHRD report women account for only 29% of the teachers at the primary level. The proportion of female teachers at the University level is 22% of the instructors. These proportions reflect the historic paucity of women with the educational qualifications to be teachers.\(^{39}\)

Finally, lack of motivation from the school teachers and society is another reason. It is necessary to point out here that the role of the teachers and the parents is very important in motivating the young girls for pursuing their education. The motivation from the school they are studying plays a very important role than any other factor.

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\(^{38}\) Times of India 12, December 2009, p.10

\(^{39}\) The Hindu 21, November 2010
1. 6. 9. Misery of Women Even in the 21st Century:

According to the latest report available, every year around 78,000 women die during pregnancy, childbirth or within forty two days after delivery.\textsuperscript{40} The report by the famous Lancet Medical Journal revealed that more than half of all maternal deaths in 2008 were reported from six countries: India, Nigeria, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Ethiopia and the democratic Republic of Congo. The findings confirmed that in India alone, every year about 78,000 women die during pregnancy, childbirth or within 42 days after delivery. And 75 percent of these deaths could have been prevented, say experts. Further National Mortality rate (NMR) in India is stark in comparison to that in the US and UK, which is 11 and 8 respectively. The lifetime risk of maternal death for an Indian Woman is 1 in 70 while it is 1 in 8,200 in the UK and 1 in 4800 in the US. China, which has a larger population than that of India, has an NMR of 45 and a lifetime risk of maternal death of 1, in 1300.\textsuperscript{41}

The report says that, many girls give birth before their bodies are ready

- Poverty and poor nutrition – high levels of anemia in pregnant women.
- Unsafe abortions—Inaccessibility to legal facilities

\textsuperscript{40} The Week, September 12, 2010 pp. 17-20
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.
• Unattended deliveries – often in unhygienic conditions
• Unavailability of affordable health care especially after delivery, to ensure that the mother and the child pull through the initial days.

The census report of 2011 reveals some disheartening figures. The Union Health Ministry registered only 107 cases of female infanticide under section 315 and 316 of IPC in 2010. However, this is an abysmally low figure in a country which scientists believe has seen over ten million female lives lost to abortion and sex selection in the past two decades. An Indo-Canadian scientist had reported in the Lancet that pre-natal selection and selective abortion was causing a loss of 500,000 girls annually in India. According to the scientists, in most countries, women slightly outnumber men. However, in India, for every 1,000 male babies born, there were just 927 girls (2001 census). The figure has further dipped to 914 girls, according to the latest 2011 census.\textsuperscript{42} Realizing the seriousness of the situation, the Union Health Ministry called for an emergency meeting of states to see how the Pre-Conception & Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act (PC & PNDT Act) can be better implemented.\textsuperscript{43}

However, the literacy rate of India in general and the female literacy in particular is encouraging. The census says that India’s literacy level has

\textsuperscript{42} Times of India (Chennai) 3, April 2011p. 7.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.,
increased by 9.21% in the past ten years to reach 74.04% according to provisional data of the 2011 Census. The data say that literates constitute 74% of the total population aged seven and above and illiterates form 26%. The literacy rate went up from 64.83% in 2001 to 74.04% in 2011 showing an increase of 9.21%. Interestingly, female literacy level saw a significant jump as compared to males between 2001-2011. While female literacy in 2001 stood at 53.67%, it has gone up to 65.46% in 2011. The male literacy in comparison rose from 75.26 to 82.14%. Kerala with 93.91% continues to occupy the top position among the states in the field of literacy while Mizoram’s Serchhip (98.76%) and Aizawal (98.5) recorded the highest literacy rates among districts while Bihar remained at the bottom of the ladder with literacy of 63.82% followed by Arunachal Pradesh at 66.95%. Ten states and union territories including Puducherry achieved literacy rate of above 85%.

1.7.0. Importance of Educational Empowerment

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru once said, “To awaken the people, it is women who must be awakened; once she is on the move, the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves”.

Researchers in the Harvard School of Public Health have recently worked out a comprehensive model to ensure that India meets United Nations
Millennium goal of bringing down its National Mortality Ratio (NMR) to 109 by 2015. Sve.J.Goldie and colleagues chose India for their study, as 25 per cent of maternal death world wide occurred here. The researchers used to computer-based model that stimulates women through pregnancy and child birth to estimate the effect of different strategies (for example, increased family planning or increased access obstetric care) on clinical outcomes (pregnancies, life birth or death) costs and cost-effectiveness (the cost of saving one year of life) in India. According to the study increased family planning was the most effective single intervention for reduction of pregnancy-related mortality. If the current unmet need for family planning in India could be fulfilled over the next five years, more than 1,50000 maternal deaths would be prevented it says. Further, an integrated and stepwise approach (increased family planning and safe abortion combined with consecutively increased skilled birth attendants, improved care before and after birth, reduced home births, and improved emergency obstetric care) could eventually prevent nearly eighty maternal deaths. The researcher emphasizes that the strategy would be cost-effective. The study, titled Alternative Strategies to Reduce Maternal Mortality in India – A Cost Effectiveness Analysis was recently published in U.S. Journal PLOS Medicine.
1.8.0. Need and Significance of the Study

The foregone discussion reveals the plight of the weaker sex from the dawn of history to the present day. As mentioned above, even in the 2011 Assembly election, women were denied election tickets by the major political parties in Puducherry. It shows that women have been sidelined by the male dominated and opinionated society. The 33 % reservation assurance given through Panchayat Raj provision for women is a non-starter in Puducherry though most of the states are successfully implementing this program. Further, majority of the school dropouts from VIII standard in Puducherry schools are girl students. The UN’s millennium goal of eradicating illiteracy from the earth before 2015 may be a day dream, if the governments fail to empower women. Empowerment of women consists of four important factors:

- First empowering the uneducated and unemployed women to encourage their future generation for better education. It needs a lot of awareness programs and incentive measures through monetary and other benefits.

- Secondly, empowering the educated, unemployed and underemployed women from the poor sectors by creating job opportunities and assisting them to be independent entrepreneurs. It needs a lot of innovative and
long term schemes like microfinance, self help groups, small industries, cottage industries etc. to be implemented.

• Thirdly, empowering the rural girl children, who belong to first generation and living below poverty line.

The school is the best catalyst for the children who belong to the poor and uneducated families from the rural and urban areas. To them it is the only source of information and inspiration for deciding their future career, for most of the parents are illiterates or indifferent or ignorant of the opportunities available for their children. Obviously, the positive attitude created by the schools in the minds of the children can alone help the poor children to go for a paradigm shift about their future. The teachers’ positive way of teaching, timely and necessary counseling, proper treatment of the students without any disparity on the basis of income or caste or location, the school infrastructure facilities, better school environment, sanitation facilities, separate toilet facilities, other extracurricular activities etc. will bring about a change in the minds of the poor children from the rural areas.

Keeping this background in mind, the researcher realizes that studying the women empowerment initiatives of Puducherry government and the empowerment measures initiated by the Government and Private schools is an
important area of research. This research is significant because this helps the new government to restructure the women oriented policies and programs in future. It also helps the Education Department to take special initiatives for strengthening the infrastructure facilities of government and private schools in Puducherry. Subsequently, the research will help the women of different groups and ages in Puducherry.