

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Poverty has now become a challenge to human civilization, as it has been quenching the arduous and vital forces and freezing the life giving stream of humanity. Poverty curtain had descended right across the face of the world dividing it into two different worlds.¹ The most formidable challenge of our time now is to lift this poverty curtain. It is estimated that the world with a total population of about 5.3 billion people has more than 900 millions, i.e. 17 per cent of the total living in absolute poverty. In developing countries about 33 per cent of the population (over a billion) is below the poverty line even in 1985 according to the world development report 1990.²

In India, the main concern is to eradicate absolute poverty. The estimates of the incidence of poverty in the country currently vary around 30 per cent. In poor households, it is generally women who suffer from greater deprivation studies indicate that female suffer a higher incidence of poverty. The number of female headed house holds is constantly increasing and majority of these families live below the poverty line. These households also suffer

from other social deprivations, which further reduces their access to developmental opportunities. According to the National survey 43rd round data (1987-88) one-fourth of the female headed households, have no working members, while in more than half such households, there is only one working member. This is a broad indicator of the poor economic situation of women. The survey has also highlighted that 60 per cent of female headed households live on monthly per capita expenditure of less than Rs. 160/-³.

In India, female casual labourers in rural areas have the highest incidence of poverty. 90 per cent of rural female workers are unskilled; and 88 per cent are illiterates. Consequently, they are more vulnerable malnourished and prone to diseases which makes their ability even to work the poorer. Hence the greater its dependence on the women's income. Thus women's economic productivity is an important one and a strategy is necessary for improving the welfare of the estimated 40 million households who are still below the poverty line. Not only is the lack of money a problem for women of poor households, they are often cheated of the full value of money they possess or could earn, due to exploitation, underpayment of wages, cheating by rationshop owners and other shop-keepers, looting by money lenders, bribes

extracted by the police, forest and revenue department workers are common in the lives of poor women.

ECONOMIC STATUS

The economic role of women in the traditional rural society, largely depends upon two important factors, namely: (1) the need for augmenting the family income, (2) opportunities available for participation in such economic activities. The various activities of women consists of market activities and "Non-market activities". Market activities consist of a women in agriculture, cottage industries and non-agricultural labour activities including both self-employed and wage employed activities. Non-market activities include personal care of children, cooking, washing clothes, washing utensils, religious activities, sweeping, fetching water and animal care.

WOMEN AND EMPLOYMENT STATUS

Our constitution states that there shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the state. According to census data, the proportion of employed women to total population steadily rose from 14.22 per cent in 1971 to 19.67 per cent in 1981 and to 22.27 per cent in 1991.⁴ Regional variations are wide as

the female employment in major states is ranging from as high as 34 per cent to as low as 4 per cent. In 1993, 4.0 million were employed, constituting 14.6 per cent of the total employment of 27.18 million of these about 62 per cent were employed in the public sector and 38 per cent in the private sector.

WOMENS' WELFARE

Forty-nine per cent of India's population are women, of which eighty per cent are in the villages. The overall context of human resource development requires, that they must meet their rightful share of the development allocations and their rightful role in the society. One of the means to infuse confidence in women is to raise their economic status and bring them into the mainstream of national development. For the development of women and children, the Government of India implements and co-ordinate the programmes for women and see their welfare and development. It also intensifies measures to promote voluntary efforts in the field of women's development. The department besides playing a model role also implements the various schemes for the welfare and development of women.

After independence the Government of India has mainly adopted the welfare oriented approach as far as women's issues were concerned. In fifth five year plan, there was shift in the

approach from 'welfare to development'. The new approach integrated welfare with developmental services. The sixth five year plan adopted a multi-disciplinary approach with thrust on health, education and employment. In the seventh plan, developmental programmes for women were continued, with the objective of raising their economic and social status by beneficiary oriented programmes, which extended direct benefits to women. The Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-97) marks a definite shift for development of women. In order to fulfil the aim to meet the needs of women and children, the plan out lays of Rs. 4 crores in the First Plan (1951-56) has gone upto Rs. 2,000 cores in the Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-97).

DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL WOMEN AFTER THE INDEPENDENCE

THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The Community Development Programme was formulated soon after the independence on the basis of experience gained from number of earlier indigenous experiments. This programme was launched in 1992 with the help of American aid both public and private. America contributed funds for training personnel, supplies and equipment. The Ford foundation was associated with this rural development scheme from the beginning and its major contribution was the financing of the first fifty 'pilot' projects

established on an experimental basis. These were soon judged successful and became the model for the extension of the programme throughout the community.

FORMULATION OF THE WOMEN'S COMPONENT

As originally conceived, the programme had no special provision for the integration of rural women in development. In fact, there is some evidence to show that policy maker deliberately avoided committing themselves in connection with womens' work. The planner thought that it is deficient that the Social Education Organization (SEO) entrusted with the task of community organization in each development block and would try to draw women into such community. Central activities as adult literacy, crafts, etc. other needs of women such as health care were provided by the women health visitors and midwives attached to the health services.

THE MAHILA MANDAL SCHEME

The Mahila Mandal was conceived as an institution for bringing new ideas and skills to village women and the agents of Mahila Mandals were women workers known as Gram Sevikas who worked directly with the women at the village level. They were supervised by other women known as Mukhya-Sevikas, and

sometimes, by the Social Education Organizer, if the post was held by a women. The Government itself, in the first instance undertook the establishment of Mahila Mandals in the developed blocks. The tasks assigned to the Gram sevikas were two-fold; firstly, they were expected to teach village women certain practical skills and secondly the Gram Sevikas were supposed to help them to organise for collective action in their own behalf by starting and running their own Mahila Mandals. Thereafter, the women themselves would become responsible for instituting and running their own programmes and the Gram sevikas would play only a marginal role. They would become, basically resource people linking the local women's institutions with the larger organisation of the CDP which initially would provide equipment, personnel, and access to other appropriate agencies from which the women might required help.

The Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB) was formed as a Government agency to look after the welfare needs of women. Through a system of grant-in-aid, the CSWB helped voluntary social service agencies to expand and improve their work but, at first, the focus was chiefly on urban areas. In 1954, the CSWB instituted the Welfare Extension Project (WEP) to bring social services to the rural areas. The Welfare Extension Project (WEP) was first started in non-CDP blocks with an intention of bringing

at least some service to as many villages as possible under the scheme. Each extension Centre covering two to five villages offered childcare, supplementary feeding for children and pregnant women.

FAILURE OF THE MAHILA MANDAL SCHEME

The evaluation of women's programme has been cited in numerous studies and reports since 1950's and a variety of factors have been attributed for its failure.⁵ These evaluations, have used basically three different approaches to the problem. The earliest of them focussed on the socio-cultural factors such as the ignorance and isolation of village women that inhibited them from becoming involved in Mahila Mandal activities.

INTERNATIONAL AID TO WOMEN

There are two major aspects to the role of international aid agencies. (i) The Ford Foundation in the overall conceptualization of the programme and in the training of village workers. (ii) The role of project aid given for specific types of work concerning women. Eg the ANP of the UNICEF, the effects of American influence upon the training of women worker are discussed below.

Because of American aid and the adoption of the American approach for women's work, it is not surprising, that the training

for it was also entirely American. Ford Foundation grants the costs of training women workers at selected Home Science Colleges whose principals have been trained in American methods with the help of foundation, sponsored travel study grants in the USA, American text books were used for the training in India, and likewise American equipment for demonstrating home science techniques. The earliest criticism made by outside observers was that much of this training was quite inappropriate for India. For example, there was little point in demonstrating the use of pressure cookers and refrigerators when both devices were ridiculously beyond the financial reach of rural women.

Of course, as they acquired experience of village life, trainers and workers adopted their training to suit Indian conditions but because of the emphasis on home management techniques, the initial impression given to rural women was that of irrelevance. This was one of the reasons why the programme could not originally attract rural women. The failure of the womens' programme lies in the adoption of a middle class model biased towards home economics and welfare. This was due to the result of the policy makers University-dimensional view on the role of women as home maker and neglect of their contribution in macro productive work outside the home, whether remunerative or otherwise. They regarded women as weaker, disadvantaged and

dependent members of the society, and the kind of help they planned for them consigned them even more definitely to the restrictive sphere in which they were believed to live and work. Their disadvantaged status was provided for through welfare measures that attempted only to treat the symptoms of women's inferior status, while they ignored its causes. The Mahila Mandal as an agency for implementing these plans reflected their shortcomings by becoming an organisation for channeling welfare aid-not an instrument for mobilizing women for development.⁶

The adoption of welfare rather than developmental approach to women's problems ensured the failure of the programme. The success of welfarism is dependent upon the availability of financial resources with which to carry on these services. But the government simply did not have enough resources to continue its support to such welfare programme of the magnitude or for the length of time required, perhaps the policy makers hoped to circumvent this problem by stating their intention to make the Mahilamandals independent, self-sustaining organisations supported by communities of local women.

To rehabilitate such women and their dependent children, Government launched a scheme in 1977 to provide vocational training-cum-employment and residential care so that these

women could become economically independent. This envisages training of short duration not exceeding a year. The expenditure for this scheme is shared by the Central Government, State Government and the employment organisations. Voluntary agencies registered as societies/trusts, District Rural Development Agencies, Panchayats and other local bodies are eligible for assistance under this programme. Since the inception of the scheme, 473 training course benefiting 16,450 women have been sanctioned for support training and employment programmes for women (STEP). This scheme was launched in 1987, with the aims to upgrade the skills of poor and assetless women and to provide training and employment on a sustainable basis in the traditional sectors of agriculture, fisheries, handlooms, handicrafts, animal husbandry, social forestry, wasteland development etc. Since, inception of this programme, it has provided an employment opportunities to lakhs of women.

To train women belonging to weaker section of society and provide them employment on sustained basis, the Government of India has launched an employment and income generating production units programme in 1982-83. This programme implemented through public sector undertakings. Corporation autonomous bodies and Voluntary organisations.

With the aim at developing a new sense of awareness among women, particularly those in rural areas, and empower them to become active participants in the process of social transformation and regeneration, the Government of India implemented Indira Mahila Yojana. The scheme visualizes an integrated delivery of services to women and children.

The Government has finalised a proposal to set-up a national resource centre for women which will act as an apex body for promoting and incorporating gender perspectives in policies and programmes of the Government. A pilot project to test the concepts and methodologies underlying the National Resource Centre has been successfully implemented recently.

Rural development is the top most priority of the age and hence a matter of global concern. The concept of Rural Development in its true scientific meaning has gained momentum only during the past few years. Development has been described as a genetic term meaning, growth evolution, stage of inducement or progress. It is because, most of the population resides in rural areas. Women constitutes nearly half of the total rural population. According to the 1991 Census, the total population of India was 844.32 millions of which rural population accounted to 627.14 millions, among the total rural population, 323.11 millions or

51.52 per cent were males and 304.04 millions or 48.48 per cent were females.

In the above conditions several development programmes have been launched to improve the socio-economic conditions of the rural women during the sixth five year plan period namely "Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA), a sub-scheme of Integrated Rural Development Programme in 1982-83. The main objective of this programme is to provide income generating activities for women, which will have a positive impact on the economic and nutritional status of the family. It also attempts to provide an organisational support in terms of a delivery system for the assisted women, so that they can become effective recipients of goods and services available in that area. The scheme is being implemented in 50 selected districts of India on a pilot basis and later on extended to 240 districts all over the country.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Various studies have been undertaken to study the role and status of women in India and participation of women in rural development programme.

Gandhiji (1918) observed that "Woman is the companion of men gifted with equal mental capacities. She has the right to participate in minutest details of the activities of man and she has the same right of freedom and liberty. By sheer force of a vicious custom, even the most ignorant and worthless men have been enjoying a superiority over women which they do not deserve and ought not to have."

N.J. Usha Rao (1960), in her book "Women in a Developing Society" mentions that the Mahila Mandals were formed to act as a nucleus of centre around which a number of activities for women were organised to improve the socio-economic status of the rural women. A number of voluntary agencies both local based as well as branches of central organisation like All India Womens' Conference, National Womens' Council, Bharatiya Gramina Mahila Sangh, Indian Council for Social Work etc., have been rendering useful service in the welfare women.

The declaration of 1975 as the Inter-national Womens' Year the United Nations decade for women by the International Community is perhaps the most important development which resulted a turning point. It may be recalled at this juncture that discrimination against women violates the principle of equality of rights and respect for human dignity is an obstacle to the

participation of women, an equal terms with men in the political, social, economic and cultural life of their countries, hampers the growth of the prosperity of society and the family and makes more difficulties the full development of the potentialities of women in the service of their countries and of humanity.

See Tinker, I. (1976). In his book "the adverse impact of Development on women," stated that women are a part of labour force. She produces not merely goods and services, but is a prime source of accelerating human race. Thus, from the point of view of increasing labour force as well as of involving them selves in production and service activities. Their active and positive participation cannot be over looked. But throughout the world, the rural women have been under-represented in the development process.

Brachlaus (1978) pointed out that in developing countries there are hardly any project to train women in modern techniques of production, or to inform them about market and credit facilities inspite of the fact that women plays an important role in economic activities.

R.C. Aggarwal (1979) observed that in India, women have played a dominant role in national construction during the last decade. They are closely associated and integrated into the social

and economic development of the country, and are actively participating in the planning and implementation of various national programmes.

Netranji rightly observed (1982) that "In order to awaken the people, it is the women who has to be awakened once she is on the move, the household moves, the villages moves and the community moves and through the women the children are brought into the picture and the given the opportunities of health year life and better training." In order to encourage the women into the main stream of the development several areas of interventions have been identified for their upliftment.

Anitha Anand (1983) in her book "employment and education" stated that "rural women contribute, both directly and indirectly towards productive tasks in a rural society in India, women mark upto 80 to 90 per cent of the agricultural labour force and produce 44 per cent of the total food. Government of India (1988) reported that, women contribute largely to country's economy which is mainly agriculture based. Although distribute justice has been categorically underlined in all the development plans, the needs of women have not been adequately addressed.

S.P. Jain (1985) stated that a majority of women in rural areas attend to domestic work and those who are engaged in free

collection of goods (Vegetable, roots, fish, firewood, cattle feed etc.) and providing services (Sewing, weaving, maintenance of kitchen gardens, orchards, poultry etc.). The number of rural women in the age group 15-49 years, engaged in domestic work is estimated at 43.8 million, and those engaged in free collection of goods and services is 26.6 million.

Nayak, J.T. (1988) stated that, Man and woman are born equal and both play vital role in the creation and development of their families in particular and the society in general. Woman is not only a bread distributor but she is also as bread winner. She is working shoulder to shoulder with men. The greatest contribution of the Indian women like her counter part in other parts of the world is through home, husband and children.

Recent studies and experiences of NGO's "Various studies by self-employed womens' Association (SEWA)" (Ahmedabad, Sharmshakti, 1988) working with rural poor women have revealed, (a) Women are engaged in more occupations than their men; (b) By measures of hours and days women work more than men (c) such women have a natural gift of adaptability to all kinds of situations and occupations. They tend to under-value personal disadvantages for the benefit of the family (d) receptivity to new ideas, technologies, employment, training and secular social

concern for others in similar situation are more pronounced in women than men.

According to Pushpa Joshi (Compiled) "Centre for Womens' Development Studies", (New Delhi, Navjivan Press, 1988), women in poverty remain unrepresented not only on traditional institutions of power but also on the statutory bodies of local government and decision-making process. Trade unionism has hardly penetrated the hard core of the unorganised sector making poor women, politically invisible.

Roma Majundar (1988) observed that the task force after analysing the present situation regarding womens' development programmes suggested that the key components of all training programmes for development administrators should be as follows:

1. The understanding to key concepts of the goals underlying development policies of the country.
2. Articulating the multiple role of the administrators such as informant, co-ordinator, promoter, mobiliser, linkage builder, educator, monitor etc. Examining their perceptions and biases regarding women through a process of dialogue and exposure to realities.
3. Broadening the possibilities for women's involvement in various type of development activities by questioning the established frame work.

Veenakumari (1998) in her article "Socio-economic status of women in India," has stated that, the orientation of a society as a whole regarding the desirability that women should play an equal part in the country's development was taken as a very important pre-condition for the advancement not only of women but the country as a whole.

The importance attached to development of women can be gauged from the fact that it is included as one of the agenda items of the World Conference on Agrarian Reforms and Rural Development held ;in 1979. It formed part of the declaration of principles and programme of action adopted by the Conference. The principle relating to workers emphasise that women should participate and contribute on equal basis with men in the social, economic and political process of rural development and share fully in improved conditions of life in rural areas.

STUDIES ON DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN RURAL AREAS

The government of India sponsored four evaluation studies by four institutions. These institutions have conducted studies on DWCRA programme with limited geographical coverage, the conclusions differ from one another. Some other important studies are discussed below.

The Centre for Regional Ecological and Science studies in Development Alternatives (CRESSIDA) had undertaken a study of DWCRA in Sikkim, Tripura and West Bengal (1985), the main findings of the study are as follows.

1. The performance of Sikkim in the field of DWCRA is not very impressive in the qualitative terms but quantitatively the progress in the state has been much better than in the neighbouring states of Tripura and West Bengal.
2. The slow progress in Tripura has been attributed to inadequate ground work at the policy and implementation levels.
3. In West Bengal, while the scheme has made little progress in Bankura. The study team report has appreciated the approach of west Bengal Government in the implementation of the programme. The schemes selected were those for which capital investment is low.

Punjab state Institute of Public Administration (PSIPA), Chandigarh has under taken an evaluation study and concluded the failures of DWCRA in Punjab due to non-release of matching financial allocations by the State Government during 1983-84 and 1984-85 official red-tapism and dominance of white women group in Mahila Mandals of Punjab, enthusiastic official machinery and lack of involvement of Voluntary agencies are also responsible for poor performance of DWCRA programme.

National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD) in its (1985) evaluation study covering Bihar, Manipur, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu conducted and observed that:

1. It was found that a large percentage of DWCRA beneficiaries were in agriculture and allied activity sector.
2. A majority of DWCRA respondents were prompt in repaying the loans. Further, a very high percentage, repaid the loan from the income generated by schemes. The factors identified for delay in repayment of loans were delay on the part of the Block Development Officer (B.D.O) followed by bankers.
3. In DWCRA, individual preference for choice of schemes was not given due weightage. This calls for careful identification of women's schemes to be given to them.

It is quite clear that the above studies touched on various aspects related to the scheme of DWCRA in India, but were mostly in a general way covering the problems of women and the implementation of the programme but did not touch the impact of DWCRA on specific categories of people. I.e. the Scheduled Caste Women and Scheduled tribes women and how far this programme has helped them to generate income and employment in rural areas.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

An attempt is made to have a micro level study in selected villages of the Narpala Mandal of Anantapur district. Various aspects relating to the socio-economic, background of the selected Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe and Backward Caste women, fruitfulness of the programme already effected, reasons for the failure in safe guarding the benefits accrued through this preframe, estimation of the number of beneficiaries who could generate additional income and employment especially for SC,Scheduled Tribe and Backward Caste women through each scheme and to suggest suitable ways which can really generate income and employment to the SC,Scheduled Tribe and Backward Caste women in Narpala Mandal of Anantapur district with following objectives.

1. To analyse the functions of DWCRA programme in Anantapur District.
2. To examine the socio-economic conditions of the selected Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and rural women who were covered under DWCRA.
3. To study the impact of the DWCRA programme on Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribe and Backward Caste women and the income and employment generation.

4. To assess the number of rural women, who could generate income through DWCRA programme.
5. To suggest the suitable measures for the effective implementative of DWCRA for the development of women.

The present study is based on the data from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data was collected from the SC, ST, BC and OC women purposefully selected for the present study and from these beneficiaries who were provided assistance under DWCRA during the years 1995-96 1996-97. A well structural Questionnaire was prepared and administered to the beneficiaries of DWCRA, personal visits were made to the selected villages to make on the spot study of various socio-economic conditions of SC, ST, BC and OC women.

The secondary data was collected from Annual reports, action plans, Reports of various studies and Government publications. The basic literature relating to rural poverty, status of SC, ST women and various aspects of rural development programmes and strategies was collected from various books an journal. Data also collected from various offices like the DRDA, mandal officers, legislatives, State Government and Research Institutions.

SAMPLING DESIGN

For the present study, a Developed Mandal was selected. From this mandal, 3 villages were selected, where the DWCRA programmes were implemented. From each activity 25 beneficiaries belong to SC, ST, BC and OC were selected. For the purpose of arriving at the effectiveness of the DWCRA the information regarding the income and employment generated before the DWCRA, programme and after the implementation of the DWCRA programme was collected and compared to find out whether the beneficiaries could generate additional income and employment.

TABLE 1.1

SELECTED VILLAGES OF NARPALA MANDAL

Sl.No.	Name of the mandal	Name of the selected villages
1.	Narpala	Bandla palli Gugudu Narasapuram

Caste-wise and activity-wise distribution of sample beneficiaries are presented in Table 1.2.

TABLE 1.2
CASTE-WISE AND ACTIVITY-WISE DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLE
BENEFICIARIES

Name of the mandal	Caste-wise	Activity wise	No. of women beneficiaries
Narpala	S.C.	Fruit & Vegetable vending	25
	S.T.	Milk & Curd vending	25
	B.C.	Vegetable vending	25
	O.C.	Business	25

SURVEY

A household survey was conducted to study the socio-economic conditions of the beneficiaries and to find out the extent of in income and employment generated from the given assistance under DWCRA.

TOOLS OF ANALYSIS

Based on the objectives of the study, simple percentages were calculated and tabulated the data to bring out a systematic analysis.

LIMITATIONS

The present study is mandal specific and time specific. The field data collected pertaining to the DWCRA for the period of 1993-97. The Quality and reliability of the data were ensured by

respected visits to the beneficiaries. The conclusions arrived at and the inferences drawn are applicable to the selected beneficiaries in the mandal during the period of operation of the programme.

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