CHAPTER II

SOCIO ECONOMIC STATUS OF WOMEN IN INDIA
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Women are the key input of household at first, then partner in agriculture, industry and service sectors. Women are not only a reproductive agent of civilizations but also a strong living supporter of sustainable development of any society. Since inception of the Universe, women activities are basically linked with controlling of food of the family, cash managed by man and women have not yet gained liberty, equality, fraternity, education and health. In fact, historical lessons have proved that women are more rational in utilization of resources than men. An educated and disciplined woman would serve as an honest friend, philosopher and guide to a family and nation. On the other side of the coin, ecology-flora and fauna- of the globe is alarmingly deteriorating and disturbing the every rightful thinker. Women activism in the nature would bring back glory of the mother earth as ‘plenty of all’. The direct concern of Indian women with environment protection can be traced back to 1731 A.D., when Amrita Bai of Khejarahalli village of Jodhpur District of Rajasthan sacrificed her life, and family for saving the trees of her village.

Empowerment of women are gaining added significance in the Indian context owing to their greater participation in developmental activities. Women empowerment cannot be rigidity defined, particularly, in a situation like ours, where there exists a lot of difference among women in different sectors such as rural v/s urban women, women in organized sector v/s women in unorganized sector or informal sector, women in Government/Public Sector v/s those in Private sector, educated women v/s uneducated women both in
rural and urban sectors and women higher income group. Above all, one finds glaring differences between women belonging to upper caste, class and religions those belonging to lower classes. All these differences cited above are crucial factors to reckon with before any one attempts to define the concept empowerment of women and then analyzing the determinants of the same.

In other words, empowerment is influenced by a host of socio-economic, political and cultural factors. In the words of Bharadwaj, empowerment of women is basically determined by their socio-economic status. Socio-economic status would therefore be a ranking of an individual by the society she lives in, in terms of her material belongings and cultural possessions along with the degree of respect power and influence she wields.¹

Views of Mahatma Gandhi on Women

Mahatma Gandhi had brought out the nature, role, and significance of women in the human societal set up in unequivocal terms. Gandhiji stated that, "Women are a companion of man gifted with equal mental capacities. She has the right to participate in the minutest details of the activities of man and she has the same right to freedom and liberation of man". The meaning and implication of the observation of the Father of the Nation not only holds good for the previous century but also for the present 21st Century since there has been no marked improvement over the status of the women particularly in the Indian scene.
Historical Perspective of Women in India

The status of women from Ramayana to present days is similar in many ways. However, the status of women among the various religions has been different from one period to another period and from one ruler to another ruler since the Vedic period in India. From puranas to modern age, women got a very significant place in maintained of family affairs and social activities.

Status of Women in the Indian Vedic Period

Vedic period was the golden age of women. Women had as much rights to enjoy life as man. In every sphere and aspect of life, whether it was education, political, social or religious activities, women had equal opportunities and status. Girls were given education with boys and they had to pass through the period of Brahamacharya. Women in the field of intellect were man’s equal. The women used to discuss the political and social problems freely. They were free to choose, the selection of life-partner. She had a high sense of security regarding women’s right property, an unmarried daughter usually had a right of maintenance in her father’s house. The issueless widow had a share deceased husband’s property but the married women had no share in the property of her father or husband. However, she had complete control over ‘Stridhan’ or her personal property (Altekar-1962).

They were treated with “dignity and respect”.

A widow enjoyed considerable status and authority. She was neither discriminated nor was her status lowered. She was not disfigured. But after
this period, these beliefs and values deteriorated and proved worse and worse for women and widows in particular. During the Vedic Period, women in India had held equal position with men, inheriting and possessing properties and participating in cultural activities, and state functions. The principle of “one to one relationship was in vogue in marital arrangement” and childless widows were permitted to remarry. In the subsequent Upanishad period, the equality between two sexes continued. However, women had good amount of education and they were popular in sports also. There was a gradual decline in the status of women from this period. Female births were not welcome and polygamy slowly had crept in the society. Women had lost their freedom even to choose their husbands. Arthasasthra had assigned only biological role for women in the society, that “Women are created for the sake of sons”.

Women in Post-Vedic Period

The age of the sutras, Epic and early smritis extending from 500 BC to about 500 A.D., definite deterioration is noticed in the status of women. Many disapproved niyog, Widow re-marriage and inter-caste marriages. The Hindu law giver Manu’s rulings made women entirely dependent on man and subjected her to the authority of a father, husband, and son in the respective periods of her life as daughter, wife and mother. Altekar, A, S (1962) sees the period between 500 A.D. to 1800 A. D as one of the progressive deterioration in the position of women in society. The condition of single women also
started deteriorating. Child marriage was common in the society. This practice gave birth to the problem of widowhood.

**Women in Puranas and Dharma Shastra Period**

During the Epic period i.e. Ramayana and Mahabharata, women specially mothers held a very honoured position in the home. The wife was in charge of the finance. Women attended tournaments and feats in which their husbands took part. In Ramayana, women were respected. Women had right to choose their husband. Nothing is available about widows in Valmiki Ramayana. In the great epic, Mahabharata, women did not enjoy much status. Sati can be seen when Madri, one of two wives of the Pandu died on the husband’s pyre. During the time of Gupta Emperors, the civil law dealt with marriage, dowry inheritance and widows. During Harshavardhana’s time, women’s position got boost and remained quite emancipated. Love marriage was common practice and there was no restriction from society.

**Women in Buddha Period**

Buddha believed in social and religious equality of men and women. The women were assigned an honoured place in society. Buddhism aroused in women feeling of self-confidence and self-respect.

**Women in the Mediaeval Period**

In the beginning, the real deterioration in their status started with the invasion of Mughals. Altekar (1973) finds 500 A.D. to 1800 A.D. as the worst period for women. The society was characterized by seclusion of women,
through lower caste women did enjoy a certain measure of freedom. Among the upper caste women 'sati' became a mark of prestige.

Women in Muslim Period

Hindu society became more rigid. Women were forcibly converted to Islam and married. The position of widows was deplorable. Widows were looked down upon and were not allowed to remarry. They were forced to commit sati. She was disfigured, unattractive kept in isolation. She was prevented from participating in social and religious rituals. Bhakti (mediaeval) period gave some relief to Indian women. Teaching of Sanskrit was also allowed to women. Women were known for their sacrifice and bravery. Sati was common among these women. Sikh Gurus assigned respectable place to women.

Women in the British Period

This period of British rule was called as social reform Era. Social evils like sati, problems of widowhood, infanticide, purdha, dowry system, child marriage, unequals 'marriage, polygamy, polyandry', devdasi system had inflicted the society badly. Sati was prevalent among the high castes. Social evils which were mentioned above so far are connected to women but there were other social evils also. We shall find all these evils directly or indirectly related to women. So the conditions of women were miserable. Mr. Parikh Chandra Ghose (1918) says that the presence of social evils was such a great hindrance to freedom fighters, educationists and social thinkers in their
freedom movement and society's development that many social thinkers came
to eradicate the social evils.

**Traditional Family System**

The traditional family system with male domination had followed. After
Aryan invasion, the Varna System had created four-fold classification of
society, which also had determined a society of sexual division of labour. This
was followed by the emergence of feudal system that kept the women in a
subordinate position. As per the Manu Shasthra, the females must be under the
father's protection in the childhood and early teenagehood under the husband's
care during the adulthood and under the protection of the son in the old age.
The Hindu philosophies' development had further prohibited females for
enjoying the rights of education, and property. The practice of "Sati", i.e., the
widow going into the pyre of the deceased husband came into practice.

**Social Movements**

The colonial regime had reinforced "the existing patriarchal system',
while the British rule had created awareness of common interest that saw two
important movements (a) The social Reform Movement of Raja Ram Mohan
Roy and (b) Mahatma Gandhi National Movement that helped to change laws
on "Sati", to prevent ill-treatment of widows, polygamy, child marriage, denial
of rights including property and education, temple prostitution and system of
purdah and to encourage widow remarriage.
Post-Independence Period

Indian Constitution had guaranteed "equality" among all sections of the society through suitable economic policy and social welfare programmes. Even after 50 years of Independence, women of the nation, constituting around 50 per cent of the population have to face the problems of poverty, social discrimination, violence, oppression and marginalization.

Women in the Modern Period

Greater participation of women in social and political life is equally important for their integration in the development process. Because development is not merely economic but also participation in social and political life which carries its own status. The increasing awareness of the existence of significant relationship between the role and status of women and the ultimate economic well being of the family is reflected in the growing volume of literature on women studies. However, in view of the special nature of most of the work done by women and the total contribution they make towards the family and the nation economy, employment of women increases day by day.

Hindu Law and Women

Hindu law as administered by the courts in the period of British rule was not completely or solely based on texts of Hindu Dharma. It was a mixture of shastric law, custom and case law with a hardly dose of English legal concepts and nations simplified and standardized for ease of application and
convenience. The Govt. of British India through its legislative powers introduces new concepts, principles and laws which may be significant deviations from the traditional Hindu personal law. The permanent establishment of the British rule in India by the middle of the 19th century and the impact of their culture on the Hindus, invoked agitation for social reforms in all spheres, particularly in the uplift of the Hindu women. Law is a potent tool of capable of establishing gender justice and so the destiny of women is naturally and inevitably tied with it. This work is concerned the changing position of Hindu women in modern period from historical perspective on the basis of the rights accorded by law to them in regard to marriage, divorce widow remarriage, sati regulation, property, succession, adoption and minority and guardianship. There are much legislation passed both before and after the independence in order to improve and empower women particularly Widows.

**Legislation before Independence**

The Hindu concept of marriage was that of a holy union which is permanent, eternal and undissolvable. So "second marriage, after the death of the first husband a espoused unknown to the Hindu law".  

➢ In 1829 Lord William Bethink the Governor General of India abolished Sati by regulation No. (XVIII), 1829. This was actively supported by social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy. ‘Sati’ means the Hindu practice of widow burning.
With initiative from, Pandit Eshwar Chandra Vidya Sagar on 17th November 1855, a member of the Governor General's council introduced the Hindu widows’ remarriage bill. The bill was passed into the Hindu widow Re-marriage Act 1856.

Law came to be the aid of the female species in 1870 when the Female Infanticide Prevention Act was passed. This Act made it illegal the monstrous practice of killing female infants.

In Indian Succession Act 1925, there was no distinction between those related through the father and through mother. The husband surviving his wife has the same rights in her property as she would have in property if she survives him.

The Child Marriage Restraint Act or Sarada Act was passed in 1929. It fixed the minimum age of marriage at 18 years for boys and 15 years for girls.

The Hindu women rights to property Act, was amended in 1938.

In regard to maintenance Act 1946, the Hindu married women’s rights to separate residence and maintenance Act granted the right to claim maintenance from the husband and also to line separately to certain circumstances.

Constitution of India

"The Constitution of Free India juristically negated the premise of inequality of women which lay at the heart of the Indian social system". The
preamble and the fundamental rights of the Constitution declare unequivocally
equality, liberty and justice to all the citizens of India. Infact, the Constitution
of India not only prohibits discrimination on the ground of sex, but also
contains special provisions of safeguards and privileges for women
constructive and concrete policies. Though legislative enactments,
revolutionary changes were made in order to elevate in position and status of
the Hindu women.

In Independent India “the women’s problems were never sought to be
treated on a sex basis but as a social maladies of a common society to be cured
by the effects of all members of society, men and women alike,”\textsuperscript{12}

The various enactments made by the parliament in regard to Hindu law
was made with the interaction of relieving the Hindu society from a variety of
social evils, prejudices, inequalities and injustice that had been perpetuated by
the old mother eaten and conservative static laws.\textsuperscript{13}

**Legislation after Independence**

➢ The first installment of Hindu code bill, 1955. At present it fixes the
minimum age for marriage as 21 years for girls and 25 years for boys. It
enforced monogamy, outlawed polygamy and conferred equal rights of
divorce on both men and women.

➢ Hindu Succession Act’ 1956:

* It confers the right of absolute ownership property and the women
can make with will leaving her share of property to the heirs. The
life interest of female heirs was abolished and in its place, widows and daughters were given equal inheritance rights on sons.

➤ The Hindu Minority and Maintenance Act was passed in August 1956:

* The mother's right, second to that of the father is recognized as having the priority only where the custody of minor children is involved. When an illegitimate child is involved the priority of the mother's claim over the father's is recognized. This Act enabled the widow to lead an independent life with her children without being dictated to or influence by the kinsmen of her husband.

➤ The Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act was passed in 1956:

* This act has made fundamental departures from Hindu law in three ways. (1) Consent of the wife is necessary, (2) A daughter can be taken in adoption, (3) A Hindu women unmarried, widow or divorce has capacity to adopt.

* The law of maintenance has a special significance in Hindu law. Under this modern law a Hindu wife is entitled to be maintained by her husband during her life time, she can claim maintenance from her husband even if she lives separately. The widowed daughter-in-law has the right to claim maintenance from her father-in-law provided she has no other source of income. Even an illegitimate daughter is granted the right to claim maintenance from the father.

➤ The sheet anchor of women's liberation is the provision for divorce.

Divorce, a revolutionary principle was introduced in Hindu law as a
relief to unhappy marriages almost an equal partnership contract. The marriage laws (amendment) Act of 1979 thoroughly revised the Hindu marriage Act.

➤ Dowry Prohibition Act 1961 was passed and it was amended in 1984 and 1986. Dowries are gifts of valuables given to women at the time of marriage as a "protective measure".

* Dowry has inevitable part of marriage. It has become a "menace to society often compelling girl to commit suicide". This appealing evil was legally prohibited in 1961 by Dowry Prohibition Act.

These recent and important Acts have not only eradicated the handicaps of the Hindu widow, but have also raised the status and rights of women. The facts that more important is given to the social conventions than to law among the Hindus, has made Hindu women in general and Hindu widows in particular behind still in the fast changing world.

Gender Inequality at Global Level

Inequality among men and women is found Universal, but it is on fast decline in developed countries comparing with the developing country like India. The Gender Development Index (GDI) measures achievement in basic capabilities, viz longevity knowledge and income, as in the case of the Human Development Index (HDI), it also takes into account inequality in achievements between women and men. The greater the gender disparity in basic capabilities, the lower is a country's GDI compared with its HDI. The
GDI measured for 174 countries in 1997 and 79 countries in 1970. The Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) measures the participation of women vis-a-vis men in economic, political and professional areas. The table 2.1 explains Gender Development Index position of India.

**TABLE 2.1**

**SELECTED INDICES OF GENDER INEQUALITY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No</th>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Gender Development Index</th>
<th>Gender Empowerment Measure</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>1970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>India</td>
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<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>0.928</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>0.927</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>U.S.A.</td>
<td>0.926</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>U.K.</td>
<td>0.917</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
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</table>


**Women Empowerment and Planning Process**

The Constitution of India has guaranteed the right of equality to all its citizens irrespective of their sex, caste, creed and religion. Indian democracy, right from the days of Independence, has been thriving on these basic principles for the last more than five decades. The national movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi was one the first attempts to draw Indian
women out of the restricted circles of domestic life into equal role with men. Writing in ‘Young Indian’ in 1918, Gandhiji said, Woman is the companion of man gifted with equal mental capacities. She has the right to participate in the minutest details of the activities of man. She has the same right of freedom and liberty.

Empowerment is a multi-dimensional process, which should enable the individuals to realize their full identity and powers in all spheres of life. It consists of greater access to knowledge and resources, greater autonomy in decision making to enable them to have greater ability to plan their lives, or have greater control over circumstances that influence their lives and free them from the shackles imposed on them by custom, belief and practice. Empowerment of women also means equal status to women. Empowering women socio-economically through increased awareness of their rights and duties as well as access to resources is a decisive step towards greater security for them. Empowerment includes higher literacy level and education for women, better health care for women and children. Equal ownership of productive resources increased participation in economic and commercial sectors, awareness of their rights and responsibilities, improved standards of living and acquiring self-reliance, self-esteem and self-confidence.

All round development of women has been one of the focal points of planning process in India. The First Five Year Plan (1951-56) envisaged a number of welfare measures for women. Establishment of the Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB), organization of Mahila Mandals or Women’s Clubs
and the Community Development Programmes were a few steps in this direction. In the Second Five-Year Plan (1956-61), the empowerment of women was closely linked with the overall approach of intensive agricultural development programmes. The Third and Fourth Five Year Plan (1961-66 and 1969-74) supported female education as a major welfare measure. Similarly, the Fourth Five Year Plan (1969-74) continued the emphasis on women’s education.

The Fifth Five Year Plan (1975-79) emphasized training of women, who were in need of income and protection. Functional literacy programmes got priority. This plan coincided, with international Women’s Decade and the submission of Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India. In 1976, Women’s Welfare and Development Bureau was set up under the Ministry of Social Welfare. It was to act as a nodal point to coordinate policies and programmes for women’s development. The Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-85) saw a definite shift from welfare to development. It recognized women’s lack of access to resources as a critical factor impending their growth.

The Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-90) emphasized the need for gender equality and empowerment. For the first time, emphasis was placed upon qualitative aspects such as inculcation of confidence, generation of awareness with regards to rights and training in skills for better employment. The Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-97) focused on empowering women, especially at the grassroots level, through Panchayati Raj institutions.
The Ninth Five Year Plan (1995-2000) adopted a strategy of Women’s Component Plan, under which not less than 30 per cent of funds/benefits were earmarked for women-specific programmes. The Tenth Plan (2002-2007) approach aims at empowering women through translating the recently adopted National Policy for Empowerment of Women (2001) into action and ensuring Survival, Protection and Development of Women and Children though Rights Based Approach.

**Women Development – NABARD’s Experience**

- Women need credit and credit plus service
- Need for strengthening institutional capabilities to deal with gender issues in credit and support services
- Gender planning and maintenance of gender disaggregated data are of utmost importance and need to be built up on an on-going basis
- Women related action research projects and area programmes to be supported
- Support for conducting skill training, skill up gradation, REDP’s and other economic training for rural poor women assume significance in the context of women empowerment
- Supplementary and alternative models for effective credit delivery system for women need to be encouraged and supported
NABARD’s SHG linkage programmes would safe the Group approach as an effective intervention for women development. Group approach facilitates

* Larger outreach
* Reduces transaction costs for banks
* Group savings act as collateral
* Peer pressure ensures timely repayment

Use of second tier financial intermediaries such as GOs and NGO’s yields better results.

Women’s Contribution to National Economy

Women have been working in many frontiers of economy. In ancient days they were also bread winners. Women have been working and contributing to the family survival since time immemorial. In a subsidence economy, family being the unit of production centre and house women participate in economic activities has been accepted. In the modern sector and at late earlier stages of industrial development, women were allowed in plantations and textile mills. In continuing stages there is no place for women where women are not working. Gainful employment of women is identified as a major entry point in promoting their economic conditions. Realising this fact, some young women entered the fields of industry, public service as well as business, and are successful in these fields.
The vital role of women in the Indian labour force and their contributions to the national economy have been established beyond doubt. Women are engaged in a wide variety of occupations especially in the unorganised sector. In the rural unorganised sector, women takes care of cattle, sowing, transplanting, harvesting, weaving, working in the handlooms and producing handicrafts mostly as low paid wage earners or unpaid family workers. In the urban informal sector, women are working as petty traders. They are also engaged in producing and selling a variety of goods such as vegetables, fruits, flowers, cooked food, groceries etc or work as domestic workers. In both rural and urban areas, they are also engaged as construction workers. In addition to this on an average women spend, seven to ten hours a day in domestic chores activities.

According to 2001 census, out of the total population of 1,027,015,247, the female population was 495,732,169 accounting for 48.2 per cent of the total population in India. But, their participation in economically productive activities is often underestimated. For last two decades, women’s work participation rate increased from 22.73 per cent in 1991 to 28.6 percent during 2001. Women workforce in the service sector is much merged compared to the total employable population of women. Hence, it is necessary to encourage and guide women to organize business and services to enable them to join business and services in large number.
Work share of women in Agriculture

The male cultivators have increased in the country from 7.67 crores in 1981 to 8.55 crores in 1991. However, the number of female cultivator increased at much faster rate of 1.48 crores in 1981 to 2.15 crores in 1991. The number of male agricultural labourers increased from 3.47 crores in 1981 to 4.55 crores in 1991. The number of female agricultural labourers increased from 2.08 crores in 1981 to 2.82 crores in 1991. The data clearly indicate that the women involvement in agriculture is high and women are engaged in various agricultural activities. The recent census figures point out that out of the 50 per cent female population of India, 77 per cent belongs to rural women. Of these, about 81.23 per cent are engaged in agriculture and agro-based enterprises. Of the total Indian population, 31.39 per cent are main workers and 3.49 per cent marginal workers. The percentage of female main workers and female marginal workers is 16.8 and 6.26 per cent respectively. Of the female workers, 34.55 per cent are cultivators, 43.56 per cent are agricultural labourers and 4.65 per cent are engaged in livestock, forestry and fisheries. Of the female marginal workers, 47.91 per cent are cultivators, 41.43 per cent are agricultural labourers and 1.64 per cent are engaged in livestock, fisheries and forestry. Thus in India, women work forces is overwhelmingly engaged in agriculture both as main and marginal workers and played a very important role from ancient times.
Changing Status of Women in Panchayati Raj

In Indian women is the Goddess of Sakhti. She has respected and worshipped at times feared. According to Manu, where women are revered Gods adored. Many gods are revered with their wives. We know that there is an intimate relationship between mother and son. She propelled him into action. Women in the lower economic level in towns or villages and from the tribal areas have by and large enjoyed more freedom and less social mobility. But there are millions of women, who shaped the course of nation by their own activities or by their influence. We are fortunate to have their leadership. According to 73rd Amendment Act, the participation of women in Panchayati Raj Institution has been increased. Due to this decision making power of women in Panchayati Raj Institutions and participatory approach of women in various income and employment generation programmes in rural economy has been increased and this results the empowerment in Panchayati Raj.

Role of Women in Rural Development

The vast majority of the people in India lives in rural areas and are engaged in agricultural earning, a subsistence wage development, which has been focused on them, seems to have just passed them by, rural population involves women folk also to make almost half of it. However, rural women have acquired a secondary status in social life, economic activities and decision making among their families. Their role in work productivity, employment generation and income oriented activities are hindered by many socio-
economic considerations. Now let us look into the statistical data of women at global level.

- Of the world’s 1.3 billion poor, nearly 70 per cent are women.
- Between 75-80 per cent of the world’s 27 billion refugees are women and children.
- Only 24 women have been elected as heads of governments in the last century.
- Women hold only 10.5 per cent of the seats in world’s parliament.
- Of the world’s one billion illiterate, two thirds are women.
- Two thirds of 130 million children world sides, who are not in school, are girls.
- In most countries, women works approximately twice the unpaid time men do.
- Rural women produce more than 55 per cent of all food grown in developing countries.
- World wide the value of women’s unpaid house work and community work is estimated at 35 per cent of GDP.
- HIV is increasingly affecting women. Today, about 42 per cent of the estimated cases are those of women.
- 20 million unsafe abortions are performed every year resulting in the deaths of 70,000 women.
Feminization of Poverty

In 1995, the Human Development Report quoted that out of 1.3 billion poor people living in developing countries, 70 per cent are women. Poverty among rural women is growing faster than among rural men. Over the past 20 years, for example, the number of women in absolute poverty increased by 50 per cent as against 30 per cent for men in rural India. Women in India form 89 per cent of the informal and unrecognized sector. Women’s work participation rate is higher in rural areas. Women make up for one third of the labour force of India and 90 per cent of the rural and 10 per cent of the urban women workers are unskilled.

Poverty Alleviation and Development Strategy

There are two major approaches to women’s development, governmental and non-governmental (NGO). Government programmes for women development began as early as 1954 in India but the actual participation began only in 1974. Poverty alleviation and development strategy should address women’s practical as well as strategic needs. In fact both the needs are interlinked. In general five different modes exist for the upliftment of women in rural areas viz-welfare mode, equality mode, anti-poverty mode, efficiency mode and empowerment mode.

Welfare mode is one that benefits the most vulnerable group as passive recipients and is suitable at the initial stage of development. The gender needs and redistributing powers can be taken up by equity mode.
Anti-poverty mode recognizes that a majority of women falls in the category of deprivation and reflects on the necessity of providing women with better access to resources.

Efficiency mode takes care by improving the skills by training, imparting education etc. Once economic empowerment is achieved, it would lead to overall development of women at large and it is called as Empowerment mode.

Rural women are subjected to some hindrances, which impose limitations on their potential to play their role effectively. Women are said to have equal status in the society, but when it comes to the actual decision making, men have final, while the women have to accept subservient status. In general, rural women have low level of literacy, which in turn affects the attitude of women to be socially moved. Education widens the individual’s mental horizon and releases him from the clutches of ignorance and superstitions. Therefore, education among the rural women could be increased. Excessive illiteracy among rural women has given them a primary role in home making and in household activities. It is known that household work is unrecognized and unpaid consuming more than half of their energy and time. It is estimated that the household work done by rural women in developed countries constitutes about 35 per cent of Gross National Product (GNP) while the work of the rural women in developing countries are not being accounted for.
Besides attending to their routine household activities, rural women are involved in agriculture and allied activities like livestock, rearing, food processing etc. In addition, women have successfully diversified to farm activities such as poultry rearing, animal husbandry, bee keeping, tailoring, besides rolling, house construction labour, working in factories etc. And of course, above all these, agriculture is the main source of employment for these rural women as agricultural labour and this is to the tune of 5 per cent.

Being involved in the above expressed off-farm activities, the income generating potential gets limited. Even while working as agricultural labour, their works are confined to sowing of seed, weeding, cutting of fodder, harvesting etc which in turn limit their earning. The introduction of mechanical farming has reduced the demand for labour which has indirectly affected the opportunities for both work and income of the rural women.

Women Development Programmes

The main obstruction to socio-economic development of rural women are due to illiteracy, poverty, lack of employment opportunities, resistance to change, lack of infrastructural facilities etc. To overcome these drawbacks, an integrated and balanced development oriented policy must be channelised. Much economic growth can be recorded by providing employment opportunities and utilizing the available resources of that area. These changes can be achieved with the joint efforts of the government and the rural women.
The government has implemented many development programmes through Five-Year Plans, they were found to be unfruitful due to social and cultural constraints of the rural population. The major factors which hinder the development activities are low level of literacy, lack of exposure and contact with the outside world immediate their environs.

- Developmental programmes in the form of benefits are not reaching the large human population at the grass root level.
- Time bound nature of these programmes is a limiting factor to implement it to the full extent and to get the expected results.
- Big communication gap exists between the different stages of implementing the programmes.
- Lack of commitment by the implementing officers.

Lastly one can say that if the work of the rural women in off-farm activities are accounted and recognized, their power can be utilized for improving their socio-economic conditions.

Schemes for Women's Entrepreneurship

Women's welfare is an integral part of the planning process in our country but for the first time in India’s planning history, a chapter on Women and Development was included as late as the Sixth Five Year Plan. It is clear from the recent experiences of women’s development that a woman like a man can represent an economic unit or do business or service thereby giving more opportunities for women's development. The Government has introduced
many development and welfare programmes for women. These programmes are aimed at providing financial and technical assistance to poor women to start self-employment units. Integrated Rural Development programme (IRDP), Training of Rural Youth for Self Employment (TRYSEM) now renamed as Swarna Jayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY), Socio-Economic Programme (SEP), Support to Training and Employment Programme (STEP), Development of Women and Children (DWC) are some of the important programmes implemented by the Government with reference to women’s development. Likewise Women Development Corporation, Central Social Welfare Board and State Social Welfare Boards are also entrusted with women development schemes through financial assistance and generate employment for women.

Women Development Corporations were established in 11 states and union territories to improve the economic conditions of women by organizing training and generate employment. The Central Social Welfare Board through its programmes established agro-based productive self employment units and ancillary units. Apart from these programmes, some other incentive schemes were also started like TEP centers, Mahila Samriddhi Yojana, Rashtriya Mahila Kosh, etc. However, the expected results have not been achieved till date, because majority of these programmes had aimed at creating employment by starting production centers or big factories. It is marketing their products, because consumers are attracted towards wide publicity and colorful advertisements, which need huge investments.
Women Empowerment and DWCRA Programme

The word "Empowerment" has been given during recent years. It is beginning to get Empowerment is basically concerned with individuality. The issue of empowerment has ar
man-dominated world women have been denied equality of status and opportunities for centuries. It is an integral part of the development process which ought to integrate economic, political, legal and cultural aspects. Such a process of necessity involved the democratization process. Constitutions and legislations do not always bring about social change. What is needed is a more holistic perception of the development process and the conditions of the operations of the democratic system. Further, there cannot possibly be, from the women's point of view, a socio-political-economic programme for women alone but the need would arise to develop a comprehensive programme for the society as a whole from women's perspectives. This obviously relates to gender equality as a human development objective'.

Conclusions

Women are the companion of man gifted with equal mental capacities women are not only a reproductive agent of civilizations but also a strong living supporter of sustainable development of any society. The socio-economic and cultural development of any society depends on the direct or indirect participation of women. Women are the rightful thinker. Since the
inception of the universe, women activities are basically linked with controlling of food of the family, cash managed by head of the household, decisions in agricultural activities or business activities, education of the children and health care of the family members. Empowerment of women is gaining an important place in the Indian contest owing to their greater participation in developmental activities.

During the Vedic period, also women have equal opportunities and status. They were free to choose in selection of their life partner. During the Vedic Period, women in India had held equal position with men. As per Manu Shastra, the females must be under the father’s protection in the childhood and early teenagehood under the husband’s care during the adulthood and under the protection of the son in the old age.

Due to the social movements during the Pre-Independence and the Post-Independence period the rights of the women in the society increased in all aspects. The permanent establishment of British rule in India by the middle of the 19th century and the impact of their culture on the Hindus invoked agitation for social reforms in all spheres, particularly in the uplift of the Hindu Women. In Independent India, the problems of women were never sought to be treated on a sex basis but as a social maladies of a common society to be cured by the effects of all members of society. Inequality among man and women is found universal, but it is on fast decline in developed countries comparing with the developing countries like India.
Empowerment of women means equal status of women in all respects. Empowerment includes higher literacy level and education for women, later health care for women and children. All round development of women has been one of the focal points of planning process in India. The First Plan to the Third Plan steps were taken for the welfare of the women. Fourth Plan concentrated on women’s education and Fifth Plan emphasized the training of women to provide income and employment. Sixth and Seventh Plans concentrated on the development of women. Eighth Plan focused on empowering women and the Ninth and Tenth Plans contemned with the policy of Women Empowerment with DWCRA and SHG’s

In recent years in all the rural development programmes and in income and employment, generating activities priority has been given to women work force. The government has introduced many development and welfare programmes for women. There programmes are aimed at providing financial and technical assistance to poor women to start self-employment units. Integrated Rural Development Programme, Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment and Swarna Jayanthi Gram Swarozgar Yojana are some of the important programmes implemented by the government with reference to women’s empowerment. Recently for the Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas DWCRA programme and Self-Help Groups Programme has been implementing in the country as a whole. Through these schemes, the rural women have been benefiting through self-employment programmes. With this programme the socio-economic conditions of the rural
women are transplanting with their increased income levels. The income and employment along with their saving capacities has been increasing with the formation of DWCRA groups in rural areas.
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3. Dr. Sadhiya (1994), Widowhood-A Socio-psychiatric Study, New Delhi, p.11.

4. Ibid, p.30

5. Ibid, p.52


