CHAPTER-1

Introduction and Methodology
Introduction

We are living in a critical juncture of human history, under the shades of ethnic and nuclear warfare and an essentially discriminatory economic regime. Some of the issues concerning human civilization are product of our consumerist lifestyle and others are the result of the doctrine of domination and power game. However, the crux of present world order is the issues of ecology, development and gender that need specific attention. Among all these issues, gender has gained primacy in recent discourses on social analysis because of its spread and effect. Women who constitute half of the population have been subjected to the tyranny of a patriarchal order for centuries, which continues largely even today. Throughout the world women, have usually fewer rights and lower social status than men. The traditional roles of a wife and a mother dominate most women’s lives. Hence, women the world over, are still demanding equality and justice because of the widespread discrimination they face in all lifestyles. This aspect of social development needs to be closely examined because the future of society in terms of its direction and pace largely depends on this question. Accordingly, many policies and programmes are being drafted in most of the countries with some awareness of their marginalized position. Therefore, gender analyst must pay special attention to the wide-ranging frameworks regarding the perspective, approach and strategies advocated at different forums for understanding and combating women’s unfavourable placement in the society if we have to get rid of gender discrimination.

What does empowerment means?

Empowerment is a concept that has become popular in recent times to describe an enabling process for socially marginalized persons and group to gain advantage and opportunities otherwise non-available to them. Serageldin describes it as follows:

“The empowerment idea manifests itself at all levels of societal interaction. It is found in giving a voice to the disenfranchised, in allowing the weak and the marginalized to have access to the tools and the materials they need to forge their own destinies”.

Empowerment is a process that helps people to gain control over their lives through raising awareness, taking action and working in order to exercise greater control. In other
Empowerment facilitates change and enable a person to do what one wants to do. Empowerment is a feeling that activates the psychological energy to accomplish one’s goals. From the institutional perspective empowerment is the process of setting the right environment and structure and creating the circumstances where people can use their facilities and abilities to fully actualize their potential. Women should get access to those modes and mediums of expression of their self and self-actualization and through that, they can achieve empowerment.²

Empowerment is also the process of building capacities and confidence for the taking decisions about one’s own life at an individual and collective level and gaining control over productive resources. Creating awareness about one’s right is responsibility and socio-economic, educational and political opportunities facilitate the empowerment process. The development of skills and utilizing productive resources and involving oneself in collective activities and community life is integral to the process. It is the concept that has become popular in recent times to describe an enabling process for socially marginalized persons and groups to gain advantage and opportunities otherwise non-available to them.

“The empowerment idea manifests itself at all levels of societal interaction. It is found in giving a voice to the disenfranchised, in allowing the weak and the marginalized to have access to the tools and the materials they need to forge their own destinies”.³

Besides, empowerment is a process, which helps the people to gain control over their lives through raising awareness, taking action and working in order to exercise greater control. In other words, empowerment facilitates changes and enables a person to do what one wants to do. Empowerment is the feeling that activates the psychological energy to accomplish one’s goals. From the institutional perspective empowerment is the process of setting the right environment and structure and creating the circumstances where people can use their facilities and abilities to fully actualize their potential. Women should get access to those modes and mediums of expression of their self and through that, they could achieve empowerment.
The concept of empowerment also incorporates a thought of empowering people either in the form of individual or group who has been facing the challenges of social and economic deprivation. In other words, the term ‘empowerment’ creates a sort of entrepreneurship or encouragement among the poor sections of the society who are physically and mentally willing to do certain activities in promotion of their lives but hierarchy, which is inbuilt in social system, prevents them to do so because of their poor socio-economic background. Empowerment generates power among poor sections of the society. In the perspective of social sciences the term ‘empowerment’ could be defined as the process of making people self-sufficient in all spheres of life such as social, religious, cultural, political, and economic for the betterment of their lives. In Gandhi’s view, empowerment is a power, which enables people to act outside of their house to the immense pride. The word empowerment is much suitable in the context of poor and vulnerable sections of society because it creates expansion of assets and capability of individual or group to promote participation, make negotiation, control over non-cooperative atmosphere, and generate influence and accountability towards the institutions, which promotes their lives. Empowerment is the process of self-strength, self-reliance and self-power which promote the dignity of the individual within the group or society. Empowerment makes persons efficient in the process of making fast decision and encourages them to protect their rights.

The word ‘empowerment’ is believed to have emerged from the Spanish word empoderamiento - those who were financing in the women’s projects, adopted the term demanding empowerment as the part of project. In the view of Serageldin (1991), “the idea of empowerment manifests all levels of societal interaction which allow weak and marginalized groups to have access to tools and materials for their own destinies”. In the word of Janice E. Olawaye (1996), “Empowerment is a concept that has become popular in recent times to describe an enabling process of the socially marginalized persons and groups to gain advantage and opportunities otherwise non-available to them. Udegbe (1996) emphasizes that “empowerment acquires adequate knowledge, capacity confidence and idea to decide what is good for person(s) and the same encourage them willing to function accordingly”.

3
Women and Empowerment

Women empowerment is a process of exposing the oppressive power of the existing gender relations critically challenging their roles in society and trying to shape different social relations.

Empowerment is the process that enhances ability of disadvantaged and powerless individuals or groups to challenge and change in their favour, existing power relationship that places them in subordinate economic, social and political position.

It is envisaged that empowerment is also an aid to help women achieve equality with men, or at least reduce gender discrimination considerably. Women participation in the political process of development is of crucial importance from the consideration of both equality and development. Political emancipation and social empowerment will also act as the catalysts in achieving the empowerment of women largely. There have been various shifts in policy approach during last 20 years from the concept of “welfare” in the 70’s to “development” in the 21st century. Empowerment denotes, building of positive self-image and self-confidence, developing ability to think critically, building group cohesion and improving decision making and action ensuring equal participation in the process and bringing about change in society and providing the resources for economic independence. Thus, the women will become empowered through collective reflection and decision-making.

Gender equality refers to that stage of human social development at which “the rights, responsibilities and opportunities of the individual will not be determined by the fact of being born male or female” In other words, a stage when both men and women realize their full potential. Throughout history and in many societies including India, greater inequality was part of an accepted male dominated culture. The family lineage and living arrangement are male centric and inheritance and succession practices tend to neglect women as well.

Women empowerment is essentially an effort to rectify this imbalance and attain gender equality. Gender equality is and will always remain an end in itself, but we must also
recognize that when women suffer abuse and discrimination, when they do not play an active role in shaping the world around them, everyone in the society loses out. Making headway in alleviating poverty and promoting equitable growth is inextricably linked to improving women’s lives and increasing their participation in decision making. Women’s empowerment helps raise economic productivity and reduce infant mortality. It contributes to improved health and nutrition. It increases chances of education, empowerment and ultimately equality for next generation.

Self-decision regarding education, 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 the personal limitations.

Empowerment is the word widely used but seldom defined. Long before the word became popular; women were speaking about gaining control over their lives and participating into the decisions that affect them in the home, community, governance and international development policies. The word empowerment captures this sense of gaining control, of participating and of decision-making.

More recently, the word has entered the vocabulary of the development agencies; NGO is leading the international organizations and even at the United Nations. Empowerment is a process and therefore it is not something that can be given to the people. In order to be empowered people have to go through the process itself by imbibing, application and redemption. The process of empowerment is both individual and collective, since it is through involvement, through groups that people usually begin to develop their awareness and the ability to take action and bring changes. Women empowerment can be viewed as the component of several inter-related and mutually reinforcing component.

- It is important to bring awareness building about woman’s situations, discrimination, rights and opportunities as a step towards gender equality. Collective awareness building provides a sense of group identity and the power of working as a group.
• Capacity building and the skills development, especially the ability to plan, make
decisions, organize, manage and execute activities to deal with people and the
institutions in the world around them.
• Participation, greater control and decision-making, power at home, community
and society.
• Steps to bring about greater equality between men and women.

In brief, empowerment is a process of awareness and capacity building leading to a
greater decision-making power, control towards a transformative action.

The mahila samkhyā project – (Mukhopadhyala '89) Education for women’s equality
took into account parameters of empowerment such as:

• Building a positive self image and Confidence
• Developing the ability to think critically
• Fostering group cohesion for decision and action
• Ensuring active and equal participation in the process of social change, and
• Providing the wherewithal for economic independence.

The social research envisions empowerment as autonomy, both collective and individual.
The empowerment process encompasses several mutually reinforcing components, but
begins with and supported by economic independence i.e an access to and control over
productive resources. The second component of empowerment is knowledge and
awareness of one’s self and society, of personal needs, health issues, legal rights,
technological innovations and the ability of socio-economic resources and how to take
advantage of them. Thirdly, it comprises self-image, which includes the realization of
one’s capabilities and the potential and confidence to take action in one’s life. Both
economic independence and the knowledge helps to create the positive self-image but
confidence in one’s self can also facilitate the acquisition of further knowledge and action
towards attaining greater economic freedom. The final component is autonomy, which in
its ultimate realization, is empowerment at the level of society. For women,
empowerment is the re-structuring of gender relations both within, the family and in the
society at large. It is society’s recognition of women’s equality with men in terms of their absolute worth to the society as independent individuals.

**Status of Women in Society**

Women and men both are the separate wheels of the same cart, which promotes human civilization on the earth. Without their biological and social coordination, the structure of society is not possible. In case of status of women in society, scholars have different opinions. One group of scholars consider that women are equal to men whereas other group of scholars understands that the women hold the secondary (subordinate) status in the society due to biological, physical and cultural factors (which make women weaker than men). Moreover, Because of this secondary status in the society, they have been suffering from the oppressed and inferior status. The division of labour, division of decision-making and division of distribution of wealth or inherited property are always kept in the hands of the men. The institution like home and family also oppresses women. Man keeps woman in the subordinate position because of his dominant position in the society.

Constituting half of the humanity, women are endowed with certain particular features both physical and temperamental. Men and women are complementary to each other. Their diverse physical and temperamental qualities together form the complete human race. Hence, logically both should have equal status. However, fortunate women have seen so many difficulties in the society as far as their social status is concerned. In Indian context, the Vedic period was better for women in society and family where they had equal status and were able to participate in all types of activities related to social, religious, economic, spiritual, political, etc. In the Rig Vedic period, a daughter was entitled to get a full education and inherit property of the father. The age of marriage was high and the system of widow marriage/ second marriage was prevalent. The position of women was high even within the framework of patriarchal system but in the post-Vedic period; the society has turned up in the form of rigidity as far as women status in the society was concerned. Manu the great lawgiver of this period depreciated the status of
women and conceded them inferior to men. In post-Vedic period the age of marriage was reduced.

Manu, who advocated domestic duties for women has also decided the role of women in four boundaries of house. He emphasized that father, husband and son should protect women in different stages of her life. Later on Buddhism gave freedom and equality to women in religious sphere. Again, the Mughal period has brought further degradation of the position of women in India. However, the Bhakti Movement proposed certain sympathies on humanitarian grounds and advocated equal status for women in the religious activities. The credit of upgrading Bhakti Movement in tribal (particularly central, northern, western parts of India) areas goes to Guru Govind who inspired tribals against social evils and promoted their lives towards religious devotism. The Bhakti Movement has been considered as a process of social change.

In the early part of the 19th century, the women in England had raised their voice against the basic unequal treatment, which was accorded to them. This was the first movement of women in history of world. This movement has helped them to secure democratic rights and initiate social reforms. Since 1948, women in the world have equal opportunities in education, employment and political arena. As a result, the status women of the west have collectively changed. In this regard, the impact of industrial institutions, humanitarian background and concept of equality, enthusiasm educational development, movements, etc., cannot be discarded.

However, in India, women still need attention for their overall development. The herald of 19th century and the leader of the Indian renaissance, Raja Ram Mohan Roy was one of the first protagonists of women cause. He carried vigorous campaigns against sati, which was ultimately legally prohibited in 1829. In recent years, focus of planning has shifted from equipping women of their traditional roles of homemakers and mothers to recognizing their worth as producers and contributors to the national income. Education of women has been recognized as primary measures to improve the status of women in society. The national policy of education envisages that education would be used as the strategy for achieving a basic change into the status of women in India. Education is a mode that creates equality among the women and persuades them to participate in the
different activities including generation of livelihood. Employment opportunities make them viable to lead life in better way. Education, employment and empowerment are the three significant weapons, in promoting purposeful life of the women. However, education and employment helps them to promote economic freedom and economic freedom edifies the empowerment among the women. The concept of empowering women incorporates freedom of women in taking decisions in all spheres of life such as education, employment, politics, society, religion, etc., by promoting self-confidence amongst them so they pursue their own development.

Empowerment of women is an active process enabling women to realize their full identity and powers in all spheres of life. Gandhiji gave great importance to women’s education and empowerment. He stressed equal opportunity should be give to both men and women for acquiring knowledge and skills. The National Movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi provided further necessary impetus towards restoration of position of women in Indian society. The spirit, with which Mahatma Gandhi had involved women in the struggle of freedom, has now come to be firmly enshrined in the Indian Constitution. It promises to secure all its citizens, “Justice – social, economical, political, liberty of thoughts, expression, belief, faith and worship, equality of status and opportunity”. He also felt that education should be related to self-employment to achieve betterment of rural life. He also emphasized that many of India’s programmes are not succeeded due to lack of low involvement of women in the development process. He advocated that woman should be empowered by liberation from mental slavery and economic upliftment.

Dimensions of Empowerment

The process of empowerment covers different dimensions such as economic, social, political, educational, physical and psychological in its purview to enable the poor to uplift their lives. The inclusion of each one in the process of empowerment is equally important for the poor or deprived sections. A meaningful empowerment covers following dimensions in its preview:
**Economic Empowerment**

Female’s roles are seen as reproductive and domestic in support of the male breadwinners of the family and this practice has conditioned women to accept a subservient role. In these circumstances, getting more girls into the schools is clearly not the priority but, of course, education is one of the important indicators of the women empowerment. The fact is that women though largely absent from the formal workplace and from the official labour statistics, are nevertheless heavily engaged in subsistence agricultural and informal sector of economy. There is constant effort to women’s income in bracket in order to consolidate the position that women are only reproducers and not producers.

The idea needs to be changed. Women economic right is definitely an important indicator for enhancement of their status. Therefore, women’s labour needs to be recognized. Education more employment avenues, political awareness etc., would all lead to the women economic emancipation. This dimension covers equal benefit of economic growth, credit, social cohesion, local participation and interaction of socially marginalized group, etc., for betterment of their lives. In this regard, developing countries give priority for economic growth to improve the living standard of their citizen.

**Social Empowerment**

A major limitation to the advancement of women is the institutionalized set of social prescriptions that limit their participation in socio-economic activities and their input in decision-making. Odejide recognizes that the emergence of female entrepreneur’s process depends upon closely interlinked economic, social, religious and psychological variables. Efforts to increase the potential for women social participation extend down to the level of the household. Intra-family dynamics affects use of income and decision over resource allocation along gender lines. Even though the realities of restricted social and economic participation at the household level may be recognized, it is understood that changing relationship at this level may be the most challenging, while empowering women requires fundamental changes at many levels of society; arguably, the most complex and elusive transformation may be within the household and the family. This dimension emphasizes institutional mechanism to promote cordial relationship among the
members and enforce to provide recognition capability to members in society. This dimension brings members close to each other from economic, cultural, religious and psychological point of view, which help them to promote their tie strong.

**Political Empowerment**

Political dimension of empowerment includes thought of decentralization of power, sharing ideas, transformation of information, and respect of each one, etc., with the inclusion of democratic values to maintain cordial relationship in the process of development. Political empowerment creates awareness about day-to-day activities of politics, which are taking place surrounding them. It encourages women participation in casting of their votes, contest election and sort out their problems through democratic and legal rights provided under the constitution. Political empowerment promotes social-economic development of women along with the concept of equity, equality and justice in all spheres of life.

The political empowerment is the only catalyst that will bring about the perceptible change in the lot of women. In this regard the Indian Constitution provides the legal protection to the women (common for Indian citizen) in India to enjoy the, freedom, liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith, worship, socio-economic and political justice, equality of status and opportunity, promote fraternity, assurance of dignity of the individual and unity of the nation.

**Educational Empowerment**

Education is the important means to improve the local activities of socially marginalized people. Education familiarizes towards advanced technology, Education is the basic tool for the empowering people by improving literacy, gender sensitivity, equal opportunities, awareness generation, entrepreneurship, leadership, teamwork approach, etc.

Education helps to increase knowledge and promotes thinking of generating income along with awareness about health and its related issues. Education is one of the significant components in improving the quality of life. Education promotes vertical mobility with the concept of quality. Education determines the parameter of socio-
economic development of human kind. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights regards education as one of the basic right of every human being.

**Physical Empowerment**

Physical empowerment promotes good health and capability for higher productivity. A good physical empowerment is helpful to generate more income and better living standard. Physical empowerment makes other dimensions strong. The appropriate technology is one of the dimensions of the physical empowerment, which helps in sparing of time and energy in the process of the production. Most women in the Third World Countries work very long hours at numerous tedious tasks as well as takes care of their children and homes. Given their low social status, there is usually more concern with their physical wellbeing. Yet, the health is inextricably linked to the well being of the household, including the level of food security. As Moma et al, note, when women are too exhausted (or ill) to work well, food production suffers, contributing to malnutrition and hunger. Another area of growing concern is the dangerous nature of many activities engaged in by women, by using traditional production and processing methods. Burns, smoke inhalation, excessive exposure to heat and sun, muscle fatigue and frequent headaches are regular risks to the health of the women in everyday life. In addition to this bearing kids further detoriate the physical condition of women and many a times they are not provided with the care and concern they deserve and thus this further affect them physically and mentally. Physical empowerment, therefore, is indivisible from other aspects of the empowerment.

Until we recognize the physical hardships endured by women from meeting there productive and reproductive responsibilities and make concerted effort to improve upon their health status, other advancement will have the limited impact on them. Physical empowerment is dependent upon each of the other dimensions as all have contributory effects.
Psychological Empowerment

It is a common occurrence for women in Third World countries to be little their position in the society and their contribution in the economy. When asked for their ‘occupation’, the majority of the rural women will say they have the none, despite the fact that they may engage in three or more incomes generating and productive activities to help meet the needs of their families. Due to cultural view of the low position of women in many societies, the women themselves often have a negative view of their potential and importance.

Udegbe recognizes that empowerment must also be seen as a ‘psychological process of transformation’ and that there is need to ‘reverse the feeling of learned helplessness’ among women leading to an ‘increase in the knowledge, capacity, self-confidence, high self-esteem, self-reliance and ultimately to the well-being of the empowered’ To accomplice these goals, Akande and Kuye state that women must understand the structural sources of their powerlessness and feel the need for changes, both as individual and groups. Education can be the powerful source to change the subordinate view that women have of themselves. This process creates moral support for the capabilities of the deprived sections. This process help to improve the knowledge, capability, self-confidence, self-reliance, mobilization towards the goal, etc. the psychological empowerment makes individual free from the fear, which otherwise become obstacle for participation of the individuals or group.

Indicators of Empowerment

The process of empowerment depends on both quantitative and qualitative values. The qualitative empowerment promotes interest, articulation, knowledge, participation, bargaining capacity, own contribution, latest information, cohesiveness attitude, etc., whereas qualitative indicators of empowerment influence demographic favours, size of group, supportive facilities, acceptable or visible development of members, etc. Both type of indicators lead towards, inner and outer progress of empowerment.
The Qualitative indicators incorporate:

- Increase in self-esteem,
- Increase in knowledge and awareness levels on issues affecting the community, such as women’s health, nutrition, reproductive rights, legal rights, literacy, etc.,
- Change in women’s role and responsibility in the family and community,
- Visible increase or decrease in level of domestic violence and other form of violence perpetrated on the woman and girl child,
- Change in social and other customs, e.g., child marriage, dowry, discrimination against widows,
- Visible change in women’s participation in negotiating power of the women as an individual as well as collective,
- Formation of cohesive women’s groups/collective at village, district and state level,
- Positive change in social attitudes amongst the community members,
- Recognition of women’s economic contribution within and outside household, and
- Women’s decision making over her work, income and expenditure in her control or will she sub-servant to male members in the family.16

The Quantitative Indicators are:

- Demographic trends like maternal mortality rates, fertility rates, sex-ratio, life expectancy at birth, average age of marriage,
- Numbers of women participating in different development programmes,
- Greater asses and control over community resources and government schemes,
- Visible change in health nutritional status, change in literacy, and
- Participation levels of women in political process at the local level.17
Need For Women Empowerment

Women constitute about half of the total population of the world. Women are integral and inalienable part of the society. The dream of all-round development and harmonious growth of any nation is not possible until and unless women are not given, equal priority compared to their counterpart men. Their services have been recognized in proper perspectives. Various reasons such as virtue of male dominated social structure, unequal treatment by the parents, illiteracy, lack of opportunities in different spheres of life, physical and biological causes, etc., developed a notion among the human beings that women are weak and vulnerable in nature compared to men and the same attitude gives secondary treatment to the women mass in the society. Their role is designed in four walls of family structure where they are supposed to render their services to the family members in the form of daughter, wife and mother. Women are considered as the well-wishers of the family and their counterpart’s recognize her suggestions and guidance. Because of this, men probably respect women in society despite of all unequal treatments. However, due to physical weakness in nature, women have become victims of many atrocities, torture, partiality, etc. To eliminate such criminal and social biasness, appropriate legislations are being formulated from time to time. This protects women against such humiliations. However, these legislations are not very helpful due to lack of proper implementation and male dominated structure of the society.

Even though women are being given equal status through legislations in different spheres of life such as political, economic, social, cultural, etc. and from development point of view, there are various programmes launched by the government from time to time, which promote overall development of women. The concept of empowerment has emerged in recent years through various movements, conferences, awareness, education of women mass, link between education and employment, economic priority to handle family situation, particularly when the cost of living is high, etc., has changed the role of women in modern era. These factors turned in the form of empowerment where women feel free in all spheres of life and make action to uplift themselves in the field of economic, social, political, cultural arena with competitive nature.
Empowerment of women is a holistic approach, which includes basic relation and awareness about individual’s power, potentialities, capabilities, competence of one’s rights, opportunities for upliftment, etc. The economic empowerment occupies higher significance for sustainable development; empowerment is a continuous process of radical changes and perceptions about women’s development. The approach of empowerment of women leads to economic independence, political participation and social development. The economic independence promotes social upliftment and political participation largely. Empowerment is the process of changing the ideas, perception and mode of awareness in the context of right opportunities for self-development in all fields of life. Empowerment creates circumstances and conditions in which people can use their potentialities and abilities in favour of common objectives. Empowerment involves delegation of power, assignment and authority of participation at different levels. The process of empowerment promotes accessibility to function on either individual basis or group wise.

Empowerment of women promotes sustainable development of a community. Sustainability develops and determines, based on equilibrium structure of society, a society that does not make discrimination or is biased against any social group or gender. Sustainable social structure comprises social and political empowerment, financial freedom of women and for other backward groups who live in society. These factors promote their active involvement in development of their own, society and whole nation. Women being the major proportions of society get chance in all spheres of life and definitely become the part of sustainable development. Women held responsibilities of many facets of family structure. Therefore, empowering women means empowering whole family, because women serve families on various aspects, which fall under the category of human resources development, etc. Women by sitting idle at home even watch the progress of the activity of the family members and interfere in the matter to promote their career.

The need for women empowerment is based on increasing poverty in many of the families, unemployment fully or partially in the society, problem of malnutrition, socio-economic inequalities in the society, particularly between men and women. To sort out
disparities in income, improving the living conditions of women, avoiding population crisis, which ultimately make women vulnerable and wounded in case if they give birth to more children, etc. To eliminate these entire problems many countries have now concentrated on empowering women under traditional social structure so that they may not face problems.22

Empowerment of the women is very much essential in day-to-day life because they face many problems related to their social, educational, economic and political carrier. Gender biasness in social, educational, economical and political fields still exist in many of the civilized societies of the world. Empowerment of the women serves as an essential input in development. The process of empowerment helps increasing awareness, capacity building, participation, decision-making power, etc. Empowerment of women means developing them as individuals, who are socially developed, politically active, economically productive and independent and are able to make informed choices and intelligent decisions in matters that affect them and the nation. Empowerment serves as the powerful instrument for women to achieve upward social and economic mobility and achieve power and status in society. Empowerment is a source of mobility, equality, and emancipation both at individual and community level. Gender development constitutes an important part of the development in this respect to bring women into the mainstream of development so that society benefits from the women empowerment.23

Empowerment of Women: The Global Perspective

In ancient Babylonia and Egypt, women had property rights. Women in Europe were allowed to attend craftwork. Women belonging to Siberian shamans and Rome were looking after the position of priestesses. They were also having authority in politics such as Egyptian and Byzantine queens were heads of nunneries and Iroquois. Similarly, some women belonging to elite or higher communities were enjoying freedom in socio-economic life of their families. They have been participating in politics and socio-cultural activities of the society.

In this context, women in India have also been enjoying political and educational freedom. But favorable climate of feminism emerged in the late 18th century and continue
even today. This development has emerged due to Industrial Revolution (1917) which has promoted the notion of liberty, equality and fraternity applicable to all irrespective of sex. The code of Napoleon and Roman laws had favoured with such hopes. Mary Wollstonecraft has started first feminist word by her right up ‘A Vindication of the Rights of Women’ in 1792. This thought has developed demands of women for equality, which later on emerged in the form of revolution. But Industrial Revolution changed the role of women from household activities to mass machine production. This process especially attracted the lower class women for earning the daily wages. This was the beginning of their independence. The Industrial Revolution has also given enough opportunities to those women who have little higher status in different types of jobs.

The women rights convention was held at Seneca Falls (New York) in 1848 were more than 100 persons had participated. In this convention the rights of women including franchise or power of vote has also been discussed. The equal right in property was raised in 1855. Rights of women regarding admission for development to different colleges such as Mount Holyoke in South Hedley, Mars, and Girton in Cambridge (England) were provided in 1937 and 1869 where only male students were supposed to study. In 1870 women’s rights over property has being promulgated in England, which was followed by other European countries.

In continuation of this provision, the right of divorce and child support was also introduced. For working women labour legislation were made flexible providing appropriate wages, conducive working environment and time schedule. The western countries have given franchise power to the women for World War I. based on women contribution in war and efforts the movement has grown up fast. After the World War II, Britain and United States has created enough empowerment opportunities for women in specific jobs like school teaching, clerical work, nursing, etc. Little opportunity was also given in high paying jobs against the male dominated professions and government post. These countries have also emphasized on birth control and family planning. By 1960s, the feminism has created the upward mobility in the field of social, educational and demographic aspects. The post 1960s period has developed the notion of the two incomes in case of many families.
Many working women throughout the world were facing different types of problems while women in the United States were getting good credit. In United States, a presidential communism was established in 1960 to consider equal opportunities for women in education, empowerment and legal rights. In 1964, the civil rights act was extended to promote rights of women. In late 1960s and early 1970s many active feminist groups have argued for advocating numerous rights and thus action league got popularity. The National Organization for Women Development came into existence by the effort of Betty Friedan between 1960s and 1970s. These women groups questioned about traditional values institution. These groups were keen to promote relationship between male, female, and put effort to design the role of women in family as equal partners in all other jobs along with sharing of domestic work, etc., and worked on to sort out problems of the women. In 1980s and 1990s American women gained equalities in many of the fields. Now in every nation, women have the right to vote and hold public office. The proceed of the industrialization has destroyed the traditional economic arrangements and absorbed women in different job charts.26

The year 1975 was recognized as international women’s year. The United Nation has launched number of programmes for women during entire decade. The UN development fund for women was founded in 1976 and it became a permanent organization with the UN development programmes. The united Nation general assembly adopted a women bill of rights in 1979. The UN sponsored major conference on women in 1975, 1980, 1985 and 1995. Because of the United Nations efforts, many countries have made changes in their legislative system. They are to prevent discrimination against women and promote education, health care, employment opportunities etc., for overall development of women along with protection of their basic rights. After World War II, the concept of human rights has emerged in powerful manner. The United Nations Charter proclaims that all human being are born free and equal. Similarly, the American constitution proclaimed that all men are born free and equal whereas Beijing declaration proclaims that women’s right, so the question does not arise to make any discrimination against women based on gender issue. 27
Feminist Theories

A crucial beginning for the different orientation of the several feminisms lies in difference between three major traditions. These traditions, like the ones that have come after them, are not discrete, and many feminist use a little from some or all of them. They are liberal’s feminism, radical feminism and Marxist/socialist feminism.

Liberal Feminism

Liberal feminism is believed to be the most widely know form of feminist thought and it is often seen as synonymous with feminism that is, responses to the question ‘what is feminism?’ or ‘are you a feminist?’ commonly draw upon liberal version of feminist thought. It is certainly the ‘moderate’ or ‘mainstream’ face of feminism. In its approach the explanation for women’s position in society is seen in terms of unequal rights or ‘artificial’ barriers to women participation in the public world, beyond the family and household. Thus in liberal feminist thought there is a focus on the public sphere, on legal, political and institutional struggles for the right of individuals to complete in the public marketplace. In liberal feminism, there are also a critical concern with the value of individual ‘autonomy’ and ‘freedom’ from supposedly unwarranted restrictions by others. However, sometimes this freedom from social restraints is understood In terms of freedom from ‘interference’ by the state or government, more often it is seen as freedom from the bonds of custom or prejudice. Public civilization and the attainment of equality with men in the public arena is the central thought of the liberal feminism.

There is a presumption of equality between men and women in liberal feminist thought. Liberal feminist political strategies reflect a conception of fundamentally sexually undifferentiated human nature—that is, since women are as much the same as men, women should be able to do whatever men can do.29 Given an assumed commonality between the genders and focus on access to what men have in society, liberal feminist do not perceive the same genders to be ‘at war’ or dismiss that which has been associated with men. Not surprisingly, liberal feminism involves an emphasis upon the reform of society rather than revolutionary change.31
Liberal feminism was drawn on welfare liberalism—a form of liberal political thought influenced by writers such as J.S. Mill—insofar as this feminist tradition does not challenge the organization of modern western societies but rather suggest some redistribution of benefits and opportunities equally between both the genders. Liberal feminist also take welfare liberalism as a limited acknowledgement of social or collective responsibilities. That is, they accept a need for some (possibly government) intervention in the completion between individuals for social opportunities and reject so called laissez-faire liberalism which argues that freedom and justice are the best served by nominal government and that a just natural inequality will emerge if individuals are left to their own choices.

Welfare liberals support certain restricted forms of state intervention on the assumption that, since unregulated inequality may lead to overly harsh social outcomes for some, a society in which inequality is tempered with benevolence towards those who are disadvantaged or less fortunate better advances the welfare of all. Welfare liberals also consider that certain unwarranted barriers hinder the emergence of an authentic merit-based (just and natural) hierarchy. Liberals feminism follows this line of thinking in specifically asserting that women are not fundamentally different to men and yet are denied opportunities based on their gender. Therefore, constitution does the reorganization of merit. Hence, women’s position in society may be legitimate subject of government intervention.

In this setting liberal feminism provides a framework for the development of ‘moderate’ feminist politics and practices which can be employed, for example, by the government agencies. However, the extent of liberal feminist interest in links with government is very context specific, ranging from the comparatively greater emphasis on individual rights and freedom-as against connection with the state—in the North American liberal feminism to the myriad of interaction between feminist and the government to be found in Australia. But whatever the concern with the working for the attainable social changes with the existing confines of modern perforce made use of this framework. Indeed liberal feminism is the most commonly borrowed—even if only temporarily—approach in the feminist pantheon.
Radical Feminism

Radical feminism, unlike liberal and Marxist/socialist feminism is not drawn directly from previous bodies of ‘male stream’ thought. It offers a challenge to and rejection of the liberal orientation towards the public word of men. Indeed, it gives a positive womanhood rather than supporting a notion of assimilating woman into arenas of activity associated with men. Radical feminism pays attention to women’s oppression as women in social order dominated by men. According to this approach, the distinguishing character of oppression as women, not as members of other groups such as their social class. Hence, the explanation for women oppression is seen as laying in sexual oppression. Women are oppressed because of their gender.36

Notion of shared oppression is intimately connected with a strong emphasis on the sisterhood of women. While differences between women are sometimes particularly recently acknowledged, there is a strategic focus on women similarities and the pleasures of forming political and other bonds between women in other world were such bonds are marginalized or dismissed. In this context, Johnson comments one of the basic tenets of Radical Feminism is that any woman…… has more in common with any other woman regardless of race, class, age, ethnic, group, nationality- than any women has with any men.37

Such an agenda encourages some degree of ‘separatism’ from men which may range from simply supporting other women to living as far as possible in the exclusive company of the women. Furthermore, this identification with women and rejection of male dominance involves both a critique of existing organization of heterosexuality as prioritizing men and recognition of lesbianism as a challenge to that priority.38 Radical Feminism stresses that in a social order dominated by men the process of changing oppression must, as a political necessity, involve a focus on women. And because radical feminism recommends putting women first, making them the primary concern, this approach is inclined to accord lesbianism ‘an honored place’ as a form of ‘mutual recognition between women’.39
Sexual oppression is seen as the oldest and even the most profound form of inequality. Radical feminists often view other forms of power for example, unequal power relations within capitalism- as derived from patriarchy. Given the significance of patriarchy to radical feminism, it is appropriate to provide a brief account of the term. Although this is the subject of considerable debate, this term remains widely used and refers to the systematic ‘organization of male supremacy and female subordination’. Stacy summarizes three major instances of its usages: historical, materialistic and psychological. She notes that some feminist employ patriarchy to trace the historical emergence and development of system of male domination. Others use the term to explore the sexual division of labour. And, finally certain feminist perceive the term as enabling a recognition of the deep-rooted nature of male-dominance in very formation and organization of ourselves, (the psychological or unconscious internalizing of social pattern of sexual hierarchy). Radical feminists draw upon all three of usages of patriarchy as well as other and are among the most committed to its continued employment because of its centrality to their analysis.

Radical feminist adopted an approach in which recognition of sexual oppression is crucial, in part or at least, as a counter to the politics of the radical left in the 1960s and 1970s which either ignored sexual inequality or deemed it of secondary importance. Radical feminism describes sexual oppression as the or at the very least the fundamental form of oppression (usually the former) and the primary oppression for women. Men as a group are considered to be the beneficiaries of this systematic and systemic form of power. Radical feminists state that the most strongly of all feminist tradition that men as a group are the “main enemy”. In radical feminist all men are unambiguously viewed as having power over at least some women. Indeed this approach commonly suggests that any man is in a position of power relative to all women, and possibly some men. Perhaps the most useful way of summarizing this point, to allow for some potential differences within radical feminism, is to state that radical feminists perceive all men without exception as sharing benefits of a social system of male supremacy. This ‘does not mean that all men are invariably oppressive to all women all the time’, nor does this approach deny that some men at least may struggle to overcome this system of domination.
Since radical feminist thinkers consider sexual oppression to be profoundly entrenched, frequently depicting it as the original form of coercive power, they also present the social and political changes required to over through the system of male domination as far reaching. Radical feminist may pursue a revolutionary agenda but, like liberal feminists, they stress practical political strategies. Nevertheless, in contrast to liberal feminist frameworks, radical feminism is inclined towards the suspicious of government intervention, perceiving the state itself as being intrinsically patriarchal, and also tends to focus on the politics of the private sphere, in particular sexuality, motherhood and bodies. Radical feminism usually deals with ideas, attitudes or psychological patterns and cultural values rather than with the economics of the male domination, and the body is often the only concretely material element in the analysis.

Radical feminism’s relative disinterest in material and social issues such as wage work was, and is, often the subject of rebuke by liberal and Marxist/Socialist feminists. However radical feminists in many ways pioneered a stress on the significance of the politics of bodily materiality with feminist thought which is now well accepted within most feminist approaches. Their focus on the body as the critical site of oppression for women but also as representing women’s difference and therefore to be celebrated, stand in sharp contrast to liberal feminism general aim of reducing or preferably eradicating attention to bodies and bodily differences as politically retrograde.

Radical and Marxist/Socialist feminist have more in common here in the sense of acknowledging that social life is embodied but, as will shortly become evident, the inclination of the latter feminist approach is frequently to limit interest in embodiment to the laboring body of the paid (or less often, the unpaid) worker and more specifically to investigation of the sexually differentiated activities and jobs undertaken by women waged workers. Radical feminists tend to leave workforce activities to one side but are less unidimensional regarding the body, ranging over sexuality, sexual violence, the reproductive body, the feminine body as the source of creativity and spirituality, and the meaning of an embodied self. Indeed, unlike Marxist/Socialist feminism, radical feminism conceives the body-and, in particular, the sexually specific body-as critical to social analysis. Sexual difference (evident in the form of women’s capacity to give birth)
is not socially significant nor is something that will become irrelevant once old-fashion prejudices restricting women opportunities abandoned.\textsuperscript{54}

Rather than perceiving the body as mere, inanimate ‘meat’ separate from social practices, power relations or social change, this form of feminism stresses the interconnection between bodies and society. The agenda of radical feminist writing is to counter women’s supposedly natural, biological, inferiority and subordination within patriarchal society by asserting their at least equal (or superior) status in relation to men. A crucial aspect of that agenda is for women to gain control over their own bodies and relatedly the value and celebrate women’s bodies.\textsuperscript{55} Many aspects of radical feminism’s emphasis on body politics have been taken up with enthusiasm by emerging groupings of feminists, such as psychoanalytic and postmodern/poststructuralist feminists. In focusing on the issues of ‘control’ over bodies, radical feminism is inclined to distinguish the self (who might take control) from the body (the object of that control) in certain respects.\textsuperscript{56} By comparison, the latter groupings tend to give more attention to the ways in which the self and body are indistinguishably bound up.

\textbf{Marxist Feminism}

The third major feminist tradition is Marxist feminism. Marxist feminism was an influential school of western feminist thought in the 1960s and 1970s. While the impact of Marxism on feminist theory remains evident in a number of contemporary approaches (such as psychoanalytic and the postmodern/poststructuralist feminism, as well as those concerned with race/ethnicity), the Marxist feminist tradition is declining.\textsuperscript{57} Its place in advocating the significance of Marxism/socialism and class analysis for feminism have now largely been overtaken by arrange of socialist feminism.\textsuperscript{58}

In order to understand the impact of socialism in feminist thought it is necessary to consider first the approach taken in Marxist feminism, since it was this form which becomes the subject of revived feminist interest in the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{59} In Marxist feminism, following the work of Karl Marx, hierarchical class relations (built on unequally distributed or owned sources of wealth, including monetary and other resources) are seen as the sources of coercive power and oppression, of all inequalities
ultimately. Sexual oppression is seen as the dimension of the class power. In this model the earliest forms of class division historically gave rise to male dominance; class oppression pre dates gender oppression. The emerging organization of the first form of the private wealth, and therefore of class hierarchy, led to the treatment of women as property. In other words Marxist feminism offers a version of history and society which is in some ways the opposite of that proposed by radical feminism. (In radical feminism the earliest forms of male domination over women produce a framework of hierarchical social relations in which class division arises; sexual oppression predates class power.) Clearly what is at stake in this difference of views is the question of which is the primary oppression for women, and hence which should be given the highest priority in feminist political struggle.

By comparison with radical feminism there is typically less concern with the Marxist feminism with ideas and attitudes and more of a focus on labour and economics when exploring women’s positioning. Since labour is viewed as fundamental to all economic activity, (historically specific) analysis of the organization of labour is crucial to Marxist feminist approaches. Indeed, the organization of labour and the tools of technologies associated with the labour are perceived in concern as constituting the underlying economic structure or system of society. This economic structure conditions the form of other social relation in that society and in this sense the basis of society. Hence Marxist feminist, in common with other Marxists, generally accept some version of what is called the base-superstructure of model of society, that is social relations – including those related to sexual inequality – are conceived as crucially shaped by the economic base of the society, rather than by ideas and attitudes.

The Marxist feminist approach tends, like liberal feminism to be oriented towards the public sphere and, given its concern with the organization of labour, generally pays particular attention to women’s position in relation to waged labour. The significance of unpaid labour undertaken in the private realm, which is very much associated with women, is controversial in Marxist feminism because Marxism largely equates the ‘economy’ with the capitalist market-place. However, unlike liberal feminist Marxist feminist thinkers are deeply antagonist to the capitalist economy and advocate a
revolutionary approach in which the overthrow of the capitalist is viewed as the necessary precondition to dismantling male privilege.

Relatedly, there is less emphasis in this model than in radical feminist upon men’s involvement in power or the benefits of the men of unequal power relations. Power is not primarily associated with genders but with the imperatives of the class, private wealth, property and profit. One example of this inclination to describe women subordination within the terms of the Marxist account of the requirements of class society may be found in the work of Lise Vogel.67

The ‘main enemy’ in this form of analysis is the class system which creates division between men and women.68 Marxist feminism shares with liberal feminism, an assumption that there is an underlying sameness between men and women. While women seem to be oppressed by the men around them, they – like men – are ultimately oppressed by capitalism, and hence the ‘interest’ of men and women are not crucially different.69

**Socialist Feminism**

Debates between radical feminist and Marxist feminist in the 1960s and 1970s concerning the fundamental cause of social inequality were important in the formation of the new groupings of the socialist feminism. Socialist feminism attempted to maintain some element of Marxism regarding the significance of class distinctions and labour, while incorporating the radical feminist view that sexual oppression is not historically a consequence of class division. In other words all socialist feminist assert, along with radical feminists, that women sub-ordination predated the development of class based societies and hence that women’s oppression cannot be caused by class division. There are several version of socialist feminism which involve different combination of radical and Marxist feminism, and which sometime incorporate the influence of psychoanalytic feminisms.

In brief, three major socialist feminist traditions may be described as deriving from debates between radical and Marxist feminist. The first strand involves a concern with the social construction of gender. This approach trends not to perceive sexual oppression
through the lens of women’s unequal socio-economic position – in Marxist term in so-called ‘material’ organization of social life but rather conceives that oppression as the effects of the psychological functions.

Hence this first strand of socialist feminist offers what had been termed as a dual systems model of social analysis, investigating sex and class power according to the different procedures and identifying two ‘systems’ of social organization corresponding to these forms of power, that is, patriarchy and capitalism. It tends to adopt a version of the Marxist base – superstructure model in which class is still ultimately fundamental (base) since gender is (merely) psychological (superstructure). Hence, in some ways this is more two-tier, rather than a mutual or dual, theory of social relations.\(^7\)

The second major strand of socialist feminist attempts to draw the work of radical and Marxist feminists in one theory of power and describes a unified system sometimes referred to as a capitalist patriarchy (although this term is also used by other feminists, including other socialist feminist). By contrast, the third strand – like the first – describes the ‘dual system’ model of social organization. However, in this case both sex and class power have a material aspect that is, they both are conceived as having an economic form. In other words, patriarchy is not seen as simply psychological, as in the case of the first variant. The third form of socialist feminism offers a more full-blown account of both systems in which sexual and class oppression interact but are not cast as the dependent forms. Neither is viewed as more fundamental than the other in the overall shaping of social relations.\(^7\)

These versions of socialist feminism are identified by their views of the relationship between class and sex that is the relationship between capitalism and patriarchy. Other categories of power such as race tended to be marginalized in initial accounts of debates among socialist feminists. Indeed the issues of race or ethnicity, for example, increasingly become a point of contention within socialist feminism given its concern with forms of power that cut across both class division and sexual difference. \(^72\)
Defining Feminism in the Indian Context

Pre-colonial social structures and women’s role in them reveal that feminism was theorized differently in India than in the west. Colonial essentialization of “Indian culture” and reconstruction of Indian womanhood as the epitome of that culture through social reform movement resulted in political theorization in the form of nationalism rather than a feminism alone.

Historical circumstances and values in India make women’s issues different from the western feminist rhetoric. The idea of women as “powerful” is accommodated into patriarchal culture through religion. This has retained visibility in all sections of society; by providing women with traditional “cultural spaces”. Another consideration is that whereas in west the notion of “self” rest in competitive individualism where people are described as “born free yet everywhere in chains”, by contrast in India the individual is usually considered to be just one part of the larger social collective, dependent for its survival upon cooperation and self-denial for the greater good.

Most urban English speaking Indians are familiar with the world ‘feminism’, but their understanding of it remains vague and there is general rejection of its relevance to the Indian context. Patriarchal-religious traditions of India and overt or covert conservative super structures have kept it from becoming a widely apprehended phenomenon. There is still a tendency to perceive it as the result of ‘moral corruption’ of women imitating ‘foreign’ or ‘western’ trends, arising from their unrestrained freedom and leading to promiscuous sexual behavior. Indian feminist scholars and activists have to struggle to carve a separate identity for feminism in India. They define feminism in time and space in order to avoid the uncritically following western ideas. Indian women negotiate survival through an array of oppressive patriarchal family structures: age, ordinal status, and relationship to men through the family of origin marriage and procreation as well as patriarchal attributes- dowry, siring sons etc – kinship, caste, community, village, market and the state. It should however be noted that several communities in India, such as Nairs of Kerala, certain Maratha clans, and Bengali families exhibit matriarchal tendencies, with the head of the family being the oldest women rather than the oldest man. Sikh culture is also regarded as relatively gender-neutral.
The heterogeneity of Indian experience reveals that there are multiple patriarchies and also are there multiple feminisms. Hence feminism in India is not a singular theoretical orientation; it has changed over time in relation to historical and cultural realities, level of consciousness, perceptions and actions of individual women and women as a group. A critical analysis of the Indian situation would make it apparent that the aims of ‘Indian feminism’ should lie in the spread of the education, economic self-sufficiency preservation of human rights in the awareness of desire for liberalization from mythical and social values which constrain women as well as men: socially, psychically and physically. Such idea of emancipation or in other words ‘feminism’ is tentatively prevalent only in the elitist masses that have had the privilege of education. To quote Judith Butler, a western critic, for an Indian issue will not be out of place:

“Do the exclusionary practices that ground feminist theory in a notion of ‘women’ as subject, paradoxically undercut feminist goals to extend its claims to representation?”73

In the Indian context ‘representational feminism’ is the need of the hour to liberate women from their enclosed space so that they can refine their secular identity and realize their claims and rights. The ultimate goal of such representational politics is in the preservation of human rights or else, in the long run, such representational feminism could be self-defeating.

Simone de Beauvoir’s The Second Sex, which has been regarded as the Bible of the feminist, may also be termed as ‘Gita’ for Indian feminists. The question raised by her in the introduction of the book, long time back, is still relevant in the Indian scenario. “Enough ink had been spilled in quarrelling over feminism, and perhaps we should say no more about it. It is still talked about…. Are their women, really? Most assured the theory of the eternal feminine still had its adherents who will whisper in your ear….. Women is losing her way, woman is lost: One wonders if women still exist, if they will always exist, whether or not it is desirable that they should, what place they occupy in this world, what their place should be, ‘what has become of women?’ was asked recently in an ephemeral magazine.”74
But first we must ask: What is a woman? “‘Tota Mulier in Utero’ says one, ‘woman is a womb’… And yet we are told that feminity is in danger; we are exhorted to be women. It would appear, then, that every female human being is not necessarily a woman; to be so considered she must share in that mysterious and threatened reality known as feminity.”

Simone’s further discussion about the women has universal significance. It is absolutely applicable on Indian woman in general. She says: “They are women in virtue of their anatomy and physiology. Throughout history they have always been subordinated to men, and hence their dependency is not the result of a historical event or a social change—it was not something that occurred…. They have gained only what men have been willing to grant, they have taken nothing, they have only received.”

No doubt that the availability of the Western feminist theory should not lead us to its indiscriminate application because cultural contexts must be considered first. This is inevitable because we have a different history, different ethos, different forms of social stratification and patriarchal domination and if we need a feminism specific to our social situation, we also ought to develop, as K. Satchidanandan observes, “a feminist literary theory specific to our own creative and critical situation by which is not meant an unconsidered abandonment of shared patterns of reading and writing.”

Thus, Elaine Showalter’s tripartite diachronic phases of the Western women’s writing into the Feminine (consisting of a prolonged phase of imitation of the prevailing modes of the dominant tradition), Feminist (consisting of a phase of protest against these standards and values, including a demand for autonomy) and Female (consisting of a phase of a self-discovery) cannot help us in totality because there is no such historical linearity in the evolution of the Indian female consciousness. Vrinda Nabar observes that the “vastly different scenario in India encompasses contradiction of a kind undreamed of in mainstream (Western) feminist philosophy.”

Factors such as caste, class, economic deprivation, sectarian fragmentedness, size and numbers, over population, the growing power of the fundamentalist forces, the sway of superstition, female feticide, and above all, the essential nature of what broadly termed as Hinduism, which combine to create a situation which defies any easy solution. The
Western individualism may prove to be impractical in the Indian context because the collective unconscious still operates on the principle of faith and dogmas. In India, gender is still a threat to women, who are exposed to murder, rape, torture, molestation and a variety of other crimes. Feminism is often political when women stake claim to their rights and privileges. Sensitive women writers do not lose sight of their plight in society, and feminist agenda is based on the principle of similarity and difference.

With the rise of feminism in India in seventies, the feminist literary critics came to believe that the women had to create the literature of their own, in which the feminine sensibility could consider and confront the peculiarly feminine issues and experiences. It was essential to do so, because a large part of feminine experience is out of the reach of the male psyche and, therefore, only the women writers could achieve an authentic and sensitive portrayal of the conflicts and traumas, in all their nuances, ambiguities and contradictions. Thus later part of the seventies and eighties saw a burst in feminist writing which explored exploitation of female against the ‘male domination’ that characterizes the both Western and Eastern patriarchal cultures. Such works presented women as oppressed, exploited, tortured, cheated, angry, alienated and rebellious; taking different forms mostly sexual promiscuity. However, this towering range against the patriarchal categories and male domination resulted in biased and distorted presentation of man in the fiction. In India, to study female psyche is an effort to liberate women from structures that have restrained them; from achieving what they can it is also an attempt to reinterpret their status in the world. Feminist consciousness has certainly given a fresh ardors and excitement to literary studies.

Modern India is today have the scene of feminisms. Various movements regarding feminism grow every year, but so do the factions within it: feminist fiction and journals carry on bitter debates; a group of women writers is occupying the front seat. Men and women at conferences contradict each other’s positions at top volume. Even if scenario is changing efforts to change, the position of common woman is becoming part of the basic structure of the culture. Most of the people in general feel that Western thought is creating courage in the common Indian women to voice her feeling and express her inner most desires. This position, turn to ‘feminine’ as a challenge to male centered thinking.
has stirred up curiosity and set off resonances among feminists. Modern critical theories lay emphasis on psychoanalysis because gender differences are now based more on mental life than on anything else.

Equality and liberation are the two words the Indian women is well acquainted with but she is also aware of the reality of her life realizing the absence of easy solution or smooth exist, and yet refuses to escape meekly from the seemingly, bleak scenario. Even those women, who are fortunate as far as class, race, wealth, education and opportunity are concerned, cannot come to terms with the idea of male dominated society while those women who are less fortunate are contented when their survival needs are met; yet behind the mask they are the victims of loneliness and isolation. In both the cases women remains the weaker gender struggling to tackle with the conflicting situations. They fail in most cases to assert their individuality, to overcome the sense of loss in tortured Indian women, as presented through various novels, stands a resilient creature prepare to endure and prevail with the help of her inner strength and integrity.

The post-independence travails expanding educational opportunities, economic aspirations, and the fast breakdown of the traditional norms and the impact of the Western culture posit the urban Indian woman’s consciousness in the wave of an awakening, a confrontation against male-dominated, traditional society. The pattern of evolution of images of women from romantic idealization to a realistic portraiture has caught a great deal of critical attention. The study of a literary articulation of feminine experience has to be undertaken by the critics as an exploration of an individual destiny in its bare, unbiased and real context. Women’s own unconscious is shaped by patriarchy and has been shying from the artistic delineation of her own experiences as woman.

Mostly Indian view feminism as an offshoot of western women liberalization movement or Marxism and looked down on it as a disrespect of traditions. India too needs feminism as a social and literary movement. It is essential for women’s emancipation. At one end, women are successful in space research and technical projects and at the other end; they are the target of sexual exploitation and being ‘burnt’ for the sake of dowry. It was felt that time has come for women to unite and strive towards a set goal where men and women enjoy equal status.
In fact, the women’s psyche and their problem in India are very different from that of South America or North America. The lower middle class, rural based women who contribute their labour for agriculture and industrial production, are illiterate and bound of superstition. They are not even aware of the extra burden put on them and they suffer willingly. The middle class face different kind of problem. Their education and employment have not given them much relief and equal status. These women have to cope with burden of domestic responsibilities as well as the demand of the career, i.e. double jeopardy of the upper class, a few of them are aristocrats and rest are the neo-rich and the first generation educated. They have leisure and money more than they could digest. The Indian feminism spans all these categories. Kamala Das, Anita Desai, Shashi Despande, Shoba De and few more writers represent how Indian women writers are weaving feminism in their works. Shasi Despande said, “But to me feminism isn’t a matter of theory; it is difficult to apply Kate Millet or Simone de Beauvoir or whosoever to the reality of our daily lives in India. Then there are such terrible misconceptions about feminism by people here. They often think burning bras and walking out on your husband, children etc. I always try to make the point now about what feminism is not, and to say that we have to discover what it is in over own lives, our experiences. And actually feel that a lot of women in India are feminist without realizing it.”

Despande, unlike hard-core feminists, does not agree that being a wife or mother is something that is unnecessarily imposed on a women. According to her, “it’s needed”. She craves for a greater sense of balance, self confessedly she feels trapped in the woman’s world. The strong point about Despande’s novels is her delineation of the women’s inner world, her female psyche. In order to make the process smooth and meaningful, woman writers have taken upon themselves this grate task of their crusade against established traditions. No wonder, most of women writers have given expression to their feelings in the form of fiction only.

Malashree Lal in ‘The Law of the Threshold’ makes a study of the patriarchal forces which explores the Indian women’s situation. She analysis three stages of Indian feminism, which move from interior space to ‘doorway poise’ to ‘exterior adjuncts’. Anita Desai’s first two novels explore the story of interior space. While the ‘interior
space’ of Indian women could be the fulfilling role of a mother, wife and daughter-in-law, the problems of woman’s identity in family and society becomes more complex in the following generations. One has to consider Anita Desai’s novels in such a social context or in such a transitional stage of Indian feminism. As her novel deal with the middle and upper-middle class society, the complexities of the ‘have not’ section could be safely left out for considering the feminist issue in her writing. In Desai’s vision, “The Indian woman is always working towards an adjustment and compromise. Few Indian feminists really contemplate total change. Working towards and adjustment through the traditional role is much less drastic much more Indian. I think Indian feminism is more practical than theoretical. It is expedient rather than ideological.”

One question such ideas of ‘adjustment and ‘compromise’ as these traditional ‘values’ do not offer woman any respite from their pain and from the injustice done to them. One also question Desai’s narrow-minded vision of western feminism. To consider western feminism as a departure from traditionalism is a superficial observation. Probably it is the western radical feminism, which is opposed by Desai and which is more theatrical than practical. The ultimate aim of any feminism is to do away with gender oppression, for a healthy and equality based community existence. Depending on the nature of complexities in a culture, the nature of the feminist struggle is different. Anita Desai has no such romantic vision of a Utopia to include heterogeneity of feminine desire. The psychic dimensions of gender oppression in the Indian context are too acute even to dream of a gender free society or an accommodative paradise.

Her women protagonists, unlike her contemporary women writer Shashi Deshpande’s women characters, are not feminist who challenge male authorities. Desai’s novels explore the neurotic explosions due to sexual repression in women. Men are either rendered as sexless or gendered as ‘feminized’ beings. As a feminist critique, Anita Desai’s novel seek to analyze how the category of women as the subject of feminism is produced and restrained by the power structures through which emancipation is sought. Shashi Deshpande defines the liberation in context of Indian feminism. She says, “Liberation does not mean casting of your humanity. Liberation never means doing without the family. No, no, not to me. Liberation does not mean leaving your marriage.
We are human beings. Human beings are social animals and we all need these ties.... My only thing about liberation is that you do not give into oppression and cruelty. Liberation means you refused to be oppressed, you refuse to give up your individuality, and you refuse to do things, which go against your conscience. You realize the potential you have within you; you do not let other people tell you what to do. You know what you are worth. You know what your value is. You consider those, and this is liberation. This does not mean doing away with all ties."\(^{16}\)

Shashi Deshpande considers herself as a hard-core feminist but not a feminist writer. She said, “I am a feminist, I am a very staunch feminist in my personal life. A woman is also born like a man with lot of capabilities and potentials. She has every right to develop all that; se should not be oppressed just because she is a female. She has every life to live her life, to develop her qualities, to take her decision to be independent, and to take charge of her own destiny. So all these things to me a part of my being a feminist. You may want to live with a partner; it may not be a husband, you may want to have a child without having a marriage- all these things are also a part of it. I do not deny that, but the important thing to me is that you as a women are in charge of your own destiny, but nobody should oppress you. Cruelty and oppression should not be there between the two genders. This is my idea of feminism. I am a feminist very much, and I strongly react against any kind of cruelty or oppression against women or any kind of denial of opportunities to women because they are.... But as a writer I’m not going to use my novel to carry the message of feminism. Then it becomes propaganda. If u calls me a feminist writer, you are wronging me because I see people as human being.”\(^{82}\)

Anita Desai along with Shashi Deshpande and Shoba De is in the jocund company of Bharati Mukherjee, Rama Mehta, Geeta Mehta and the host of others like Nine Sibal, Anuradha Marwah and Namita Gokhale, caring to join the select band of feminist in India. Their contribution as feminist writers does not merely involve revalidating the French theories on the Western model. Each one of them has daringly and realistically portrayed the feminist issues in the post-independence Indian parameter. While studying these novelist one can get a complete but unprejudiced picture of what an Indian woman faces in a social set up which is continuously struggling to maintain a relationship
between the tradition and the modernity. These post-modern Indian women novelist indulge in exploring the feminine consciousness of the women characters, their evolution towards awakening conscience and how eventually this leads to enrichment of their inner self in a male dominated society. Self-introspection and self discovery help the women characters to realize their veiled inner strength. That’s why fiction by these women writers constitutes a major segment of the contemporary Indian writing in English. It provides insights, a wealth of understanding, a reservoir of meanings and a basis for discussion. The women novelists focus on women’s issues. It is essential for them to do so, because a large part of the feminine experience is out of the reach of the male psyche and therefore, an authentic and sensitive portrayal of the conflicts and traumas in all their nuances, ambiguities and contradictions could be achieved only by women writers. It is in fact the way Indian social milieu is becoming more intelligible and gender more comprehensible through recent studies on woman and their artistic presentations.83

Thus ‘Feminism’ in Indian scenario has already been started talking, reacting against the suppressing forces and protesting against unjust patriarchal practices. In order to make the process of change smooth and really meaningful, women writers have taken upon themselves this great task of their crusade against established traditions. Scenario is changing, and it can be noticed; as efforts to change the position of common woman is becoming part of the basic structure of culture. The problems before Indian women are real, but Western feminism is not the solution for their problem it is only a luxury for a microscopic minority of educated elite women. This small minority is completely divorced from the real interests of the majority of women steeped in poverty and lack of education in rural India. They are unemployed, superstitious and victims of different types of exploitation. The educated elite who are basking in the sunshine of plenty and pleasure are oblivious of these poor women’s problems. In addition, the country’s women are making noises of gender-equality, ‘sex-subordination’ and subjugation. The Indian women are fully protected by laws; more than in women in the west. Now women have to wake up and look around and start doing things for themselves. Preaching the feminist philosophy will not solve their problems. This change must come from within.84
The story of the fairer gender in this country is one of duality. There is still much poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, and discrimination when it comes to women, but there is a certain segment of them which is making a mark in corporate world, media, literature and many are making a huge impact in the IT sector. Globalization has provided opportunities for the educated, middle class woman to build her own dreams and excel in fields, which were earlier supposed to be male domains. Indian women professionals are definitely on the rise and are paving the way for future generations. Indian women are becoming increasingly visible and successful in the professional and public sphere. Whether it is Barkha Dutt, who has become a idol for several journalists, Arundhati Roy, a Booker Prize Winner and a social activist, or Kiran Mazumdar Shaw, who became the wealthiest Indian woman after the initial public offering of her company, Biocon, they have all heralded the arrival of Indian women professionals.

Not to be ignored Indian women achievement in IT sector, where approximately one third of employees at Indian software companies today are women. In fact, NASSCOM puts the figure at 38%, which is a higher figure than their western counterparts. Another area where Indian women are making their mark is literature. International recognition has come in the form of the Booker Prize for Arundhati Roy, the Onassis International Competition Prize to Manjula Padmanabhan, and the Pulitzer Prize to Jhumpa Lahiri. There is definite rise in the number of women managers and entrepreneurs in the corporate sector. Kiran Mazumdar Shaw's Biocon, a biotech firm is worth over $1.1 billion, with her stake at $449 million. Vidya Mohan Chhabria, chairperson of the $2 billion Jumbo Group, and Naina Lal Kidwai, vice chairperson and managing director of HSBC Securities and Capital markets, are the two Indian women to feature on the list of the 50 most powerful women in international business by Fortune magazine. There are several others like Sulaiija Firodia Motwani and Mallika Srinivasan who figure prominently in the automotive industry while there are many other women who are successfully managing family run businesses therefore, we can clearly see that Indian women are successfully caring the name and fame of the family as any other male child would do.
Here I would like to mention some of the women who either broke erstwhile largely male bastions or created a dent in their chosen fields and made world easier for the future generations who are at times not talked about their great deal of courage and contribution has changed a view towards women role the few among them are:

**Durga Khote:** Indian cinema entered a new phase with the entry of this fiery young actress in 1931 when she made her debut in a silent film. The first woman from a ‘good’ family who entered films, Durga Khote broke the notion that movies were a taboo profession for Indian women. A leading Indian magazine, rated her among 100 people Who Shaped India, as it noted, "Durga Khote marks the pioneering phase for woman in Indian cinema”

**Homai Vyarawalla:** India’s first woman photojournalist, Homai Vyarawalla took the first picture of her career at the age of 26 in 1938. She has worked for the Illustrated Weekly of India and by clicking some historical pictures herself became a historical figure. She only passed away this year.

**Sarojini Naidu:** The governor of erstwhile United Provinces, Sarojini Naidu became the first Indian woman to be made the Governor of a state when Indian attained independence from British rule on August 15, 1947. She was also the first Indian woman to become the president of the Indian National Congress in pre-independent India.

**Vijay Lakshmi Pandit:** She was not only the first Indian but also the first woman president of the United Nations General Assembly in 1953. Besides, she had served as envoy to the USSR before her appointment to this coveted post. Vijay Lakshmi was the younger sister of ex-Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

**I B Joshi:** The first woman IAS officer of independent India, Isha Basant Joshi was posted as Magistrate and then as Assistant Commissioner in Delhi, followed by her appointment as Commissioner-cum-State Editor of District Gazette. She retired in 1966.

**Sucheta Kriplani:** First woman Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh in independent India in 1963, Sucheta was a freedom fighter as also one of the few women who were elected to
the Constituent Assembly and was part of the subcommittee that drafted the Constitution of free India.

**Reita Faria:** The first Indian woman to win the Miss World title in 1966, she serves as a role model for women who aspire for glamour. Reita Faria gave up modeling after her tenure as Miss World ended. She took up medical studies after that and became a doctor.

**Maharani Gayatri Dev:** The Rajmata of Jaipur was born as Princess Gayatri Devi of Cooch Behar. She was the third Maharani of Jaipur from 1939 to 1970 through her marriage to Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II. Following India's independence, she became an extremely successful politician and was a 15-time MP. Known for her beauty, she championed the cause of women’s education and uplift. She was also the first to step out of Purdah in her state, paving the way for other women’s freedom.

**Bachendri Pal** This bold Indian from the North-East braved the onslaught of an injury to become famous as the first Indian woman who successfully surmounted the highest mountain peak Mt Everest in 1984. She was also the fifth woman of the world to have achieved this remarkable feat.

**Fathima Beevi:** The first woman judge of the Supreme Court, Fathima Beevi was also the first one to be appointed as a judge of the apex court in the whole of Asia. It is an achievement for an Indian woman and a feat indeed for a Muslim woman during 1989. Her accomplishment lay in the fact that she facilitated the entry of other women in the apex court.

**Priya Jhingan:** Erstwhile male bastion the Indian Army was broken by Priya Jhingan-Army’s first woman. In fact she even wrote to the then Chief of Army Staff, General Sunith Francis Rodrigues requesting him to open doors of the Army to the Indian woman.

**Padmavathy Bandopadhyay:** With a list of accomplishments to her credit, Padma Bandopadhyay- an IAF officer who rose to be India’s first woman Air Vice Marshal in 2002, Bandopadhyay also served as the first woman Fellow of the Aerospace Medical Society of India and the first Indian woman to have conducted scientific research at the North Pole as also the first woman officer to have completed the Defence Service Staff
College course - in 1978 - and to command the IAF's Central Medical Establishment (CME).

Naina Lal Kidwai: The first Indian woman to graduate from the Harvard Business School, Naina Lal Kidwai was appointed as the country head of HSBC (India) this year. Kidwai was bestowed with the Padma Shri in 2007 and was also in WSJ’s list of world’s top 50 businesswomen. Not only this, the woman was listed as one of the 15 global influential of 2002 by Time magazine.

Divya: the first women to get sword of honour, the best all-round cadet award, at the passing out parade of officers training academy. It was in the history of India army that the lady cadet received the honour.

Not to forget our first lady Prime Minister Mrs Indira Gandhi, our first lady President Mrs Pratibha Patel and very first speaker of lok sabha Meira kumar, Sania Nehwal, Sania Mirza, Mary Kom, Kalpana Chawal, Ashirwarya Rai Bachchan, Sushmita Sen, these all are the name which would always inspire us to look forward.

Still the numbers of women at the top are few mainly because of the parallel profession of the home where several women are often not willing to take on more or compromise on their careers. Indian multi nationals still have to design women friendly schemes that account for working mothers and institutional support such as the availability of quality childcare.

Whereas we cannot ignore the other side of the coin as everything comes with cost of something as looking towards the empowerment of women and propagating time and again for the upliftment of women what cost our society is paying for this. There are rise in level of divorce in Indian society, as the empowerment of women has brought such dependence to women that they have lost patience to hold on the relation. As women are growing financially, emotionally independent and so they would not tolerate any type of compromise in their relations. This has also raised the level of single women in society, as they would prefer to live their life on their own on their own terms and conditions rather than guided by someone else. In addition, this would certainly bring a disbalance in the society in near future. Moreover, not to forget how unsafe these women are at times.
while they are away from their homes. Late night party and large friend circles of males are considered as self-dependence, cool and happening with the younger generation but it comes with rise in sexual abuse, rapes and eve-teasing the latest example of this is the molestation case of Assam which took place in Guwahati and many more.

The carrier-oriented women also delay their marriages, as they do not want to hamper their professional life and further delay in bearing kids. Thus this disturb the whole biological cycle and many of the women who face problems in bearing kids because of delay in having one have no choice but have to opt for IVF kids or have to go for some other medical solutions. Again we can see that opting for such expensive measures is not always a solution for all an so they have to go through the metal trauma of society and family. As not bearing kids is still a stigma for Indian women. Thus, the women have to make the balance between their household and professional work that have brought double burden on them. Thus, we can clearly see that the empowerment is the two-sided sword, which has to be handled properly.

**Review of Literature**

Shakuntala rao shastri in her book, Women in vedic age (1951) discusses that with the advent of age of sutras, epics and early samritis (500 BC) the position of women underwent a transition. The birth of daughter came to be looked down and various ceremonies came into existence to avoid it. Due to adoption of cremation instead of burial, it was thought that one could secure good in the other world only through oblation offered by a son. The new forces in the society clamoured for early marriage. The discontinuance of the upanayana, the neglect of education and lowering of the marriage age produced disastrous consequences upon the position and status of women secular notion of marriage were against the institution of sati and did what they could do to abolish it. In Islamic laws the position of medieval women, had been, in certain respects better than that of contemporary Hindu women, but in actual working it feel far short of its aims because of the rigidity of purdha system and ignorance of women. Marriage of minors was valid if performed with permission of parents or guardian.
Joan Rothchild in his book women under British rule, (1972)\textsuperscript{86} concludes that when British started ruling India the position of the women was worst in the history of the country. Child marriage was the general rule of all respectable caste of Hindus. Sati was widely prevalent and purdah was strictly enforced on Muslim and to some extends on the Hindu women too. Female literacy was regarded as moral danger. By the time, the British left the country in 1947, child marriage and widow burning was affectively stopped throughout the country and widow remarriage was legally permitted, female education was introduced and encouraged. Political equality of women was acceptable.

Kumar (1993)\textsuperscript{87} states that in determining the status of women in India, factor such as role of women in decision making in the family as well as in the community, their educational status, participation in social, political and economic activities and position in various profession as well as their legal status in terms of marriage, divorce and inheritance of property should be taken into consideration.

Kumar (1994)\textsuperscript{88} emphasize that in order to bring about women empowerment, female literacy has to be promoted. Education plays the vital role in enabling the classes and castes to function on equal plan with representative holding, traditional high castes, status and influence. Empowerment may be supported by economic independence. A crucial component to support economic independence is control on reproductive resources particularly land. According to these strategies would go a long way in strengthening political empowerment of women in panchayati raj bodies. She suggested that in the existing political mileage and prevailing socio-economic structures, PRI’S cannot act as an agent of the social transformation unless government NGO’s and the people themselves are committed to it and are in position to work against the growth of obstructionist and retro forces. Women empowerment means having control, having a say, organizing further control, being able to define an create from a women prospective, being able to influence social choices and decision affecting the whole society. Being organized and respected as an equal, a citizen and human being with a contribution to make.

Sen (1995)\textsuperscript{89} discusses that though UN summit and conferences e.g Beijing world conference women offer rhetoric of transformation but on this platform of action is not
binding on the government of member countries. Thus effective monitoring is necessary to evaluate the progress of implementation so that burning issues like empowerment and equality get realized. This will eliminate the need for setting same goal for women again and again.

Sen and Verma (1996)\(^9\) states that, the principle of gender equality in the constitution of India. Our laws, development policies, plans and programmes aimed at women advancement in different in different sphere. In recent years, the empowerment of women has been recognized as the central issue in determining the status of women. Amendment of the constitution of India which has provided for reservation of women in local bodies lays a strong foundation on the process of their decision-making in the local government.

Mitra (1997)\(^9\) in her book assert that there are two facets to a basic needs strategy for women empowerment in developing country like India. One being to enable them to contribute effectively to family basic need and the other is to ease their work burden while further their economic independence and equitable integration into the community, beyond narrow circle of the family. The world conference of the U.N decade for the women held in Copenhagen in July 1980 further demonstrated that government are essentially men run institutions. Modern experiences show that it is impossible for a nation to march forward on one, masculine leg. Either women participate in development or they act as a brake upon a rate of progress. The idea of development from the grass-root up needs to be matched by a commitment of economic and social structures which do not handicap women from the start, at the level of family. Joyati Mitra asserts that the guaranteed gender equality and justice preamble in the constitution of India as well as the Article 14, 15, 16 with emphasis on equality of men and women before law, prohibition of discrimination on ground of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth or any of them and equality of opportunity in matters of public employment.

Giri (1999)\(^9\) discusses that women have been subjected by the society to inequality, injustice and oppression through ages. In recent time women have absolute been firm and determined to up-root these evils from society and thus role played by the NGO’s are of utmost importance.
Menon (1999)\(^3\) points out that since 80’s there has been a large scale co-option of feminist rhetoric by the, and ‘empowerment of women’ is a slogan glibly rattled in government documents. However, it is increasingly being recognized that this kind of programmes aims at empowering women only to a extent that it serves to lower down the fire of gender bias and discrimination. The focus is now from ‘struggle’ to ‘development’ in agenda of women organization and there is a growing statism and negation of women’s movement resulting in acrimonious debates, number of women level political parties have emerged, i.e. is All India Democratic Women Association, National Federation of Indian Women, Mahila Daksata Samiti and three important women’s organization i.e Y.W.C.A, the joint women programme and center of women development studies. Issues of reservation has been mast successful in PRI’s where there is active politicization through women’s groups feminist arguments for reservation are made in terms of needs for affirmative action, reaffirming the principle of equal rights and making the link between the presence of women in decision-making and gender-bias.

Mohanty and Mohanty (1999)\(^4\) points out that training and continuous exposure to the realities of a fast changing world are of utmost importance in the process of empowering women to handle their newly acquired power. Illiteracy, ignorance, and economic deprivation have long prevented them from taking an active part in decision making process. A training programme can bring the kind of empowerment women required to run the panchayat system effectively. Until they reach a stage when they can effectively counter the hurdles to emancipation. There should be repeated exposure to empowerment exercise.

Chakraborty (1999)\(^4\) discuss study of the various crimes, which are committed against women in India. The book tries to eradicate the ignorance amongst women about the laws, which have been enacted in India to prevent them from being exploited. The book also tries to take a psychological approach to the various crimes which are committed against women by analyzing the reasons as to why these crimes are committed and trying to provide a solution to this burning problem.”

Narsimha (1999)\(^5\) discuss an evaluation of strategy of empowerment, adopted by Ngo named an action for welfare and wakening in rural environment (AWARE).
alternative strategy adopted for empowerment begins with awareness generation, mobilization, psychological priming rather than economic interventions. In other words, instead of imposing decision on women as conventional strategies assume, the decision come from women themselves in the form of their own perception and conventions. The AWARE strategy of empowerment is primarily based on its two programmes ‘Chantanya Shakti’ and ‘Chantanya Nidhi’. The former addresses the socio-psychological dimensions of motivation for betterment while the latter concentrates on economic dimensions of development.

Sanghvi and Chakravati (1999) criticizes the present model of women’s empowerment in the development paradigm and points out that it deals with the cultural construction of ‘empowered’ women that is basically upper caste and class, and has the better life than the poor and the labouring women. There are plenty of programmes for rural women. The reservation seats in PRI’s may be a booster but not an ultimate aim and measure for the empowerment of the rural women. The women should be organized, educated and encouraged for self-help and independence. The government should make change from ‘giver’ to ‘facilitator’. The community especially women should be ‘developed’ rather than being ‘improved’. There is a need to adopt a participatory planning process.

Ramchandran (2000) critically evaluate Mahila Samakhaya Education Programme for empowerment and kutch mahila vikas sanghatan an NGO working in Gujarat. It is seen that literacy activities that don’t include empowerment programmes, that have not encouraged women to read and write, are both ultimately found incomplete. The problem lies with organizing the balance between the two streams. Sustaining lifelong learning requires pain staking work over a long period, at least till the time we can create structures that can become self-sustaining.

Thomas (2000) points out the Satis through Hindu eyes, providing a wide-ranging experiential and psychoanalytic account of ritual self-sacrifice and self-mutilation in South Asia. Based on fifteen years of fieldwork in northern India, where the state-banned practice of Sati reemerged in the 1970s, as well as extensive textual analysis, Catherine Weinberger-Thomas Constructs a radically new interpretation of Satis. She invites readers to set aside their personal prejudices and worldviews and enter the Hindu
universe, in which humans and deities freely cross the borderline between heaven and earth, people are born and die again and again according to the laws of Karma, and violent self-sacrifice is perceived as a path to immortality.

Murthy (2001) discusses in spite of constitutional guarantees and considerable development efforts, the position of rural Indian women has barely improved since independence. With the onset of economic liberalisation and the globalisation of the Indian economy, it is likely that women from the disadvantaged sections of Indian society will be further marginalised. Against this background, this important volume brings together experiences from around the country aimed at strengthening the capacities of women and thereby empowering them. An equally important theme is the sensitisation of men to gender issues. The contributors describe the challenges they encountered in gender training and participation and in building gender transformative capacities, as the strategies they adopted to overcome them. A significant feature of this collection is that it views women’s empowerment not as an isolated phenomenon but as part of a wider process of social change. To this end, the case studies dwell on the different social identities of women and on various spheres of empowerment including the economic, the social and the political. They also explore women’s control over resources, decision-making processes and their bodies.

Goetz (2001) points out that women right to equality with men is accepted and promoted in international development organisations and in the development plans and policies of many developing countries. Yet achieving equal rights has proven difficult. Notion of gender equality are profoundly counter culture in many societies. Efforts to promote women equal entitlement to resources and equal opportunities to flourish in their productive and private lives, encounter considerable social resistance. Development workers- from top-level decision makers to the street level workers who implement policy often share the resistance. In such circumstances, how is it that development worker ever came to change their perceptions about women’s entitlements and capabilities? In addition, how do they begin to champion women’s rights and counter the widespread tendency to downplay gender and development goals?
Madheswaran and Dharmadhikary (2001) have studied the impact of SHG’s in empowerment and poverty elevation of rural women. They found out that intervention should be a continuous process rather than target oriented intense effort at sporadic interval. This will be the best way for the uplifting of the economic women.

Sundari and Geetha (2001) have analyzed the status of women in terms of demographic and economic factor before and after independence particularly in the state of Tamilnadu and also the state of performance appraisal of various development programmes implemented for empowerment of women. It is determined that though there is slight empowerment in the area of literacy, work participation and life expectancy, the parameters of the occupational distribution, sex-ratio and maternal mortality rate does not reveal any significant progress.

UNICEF Policy (2001) on gender equality and empowerment of women and girls calls for a shift from women in development approach to gender approach, whereby changing women’s status involves the analysis of structure that determines the status and role of the men and women and action to overcome that perpetuate the inequalities that women face throughout their lives.

Dhall (2002) seeks to look at Amartya Sen prospective on ‘Women Empowerment’ Sen look at the concept in a holistic way and says that education is the most powerful intervention for girls. Amartya Sen refers to capability as the capacity, which when armed with the information help us to make informed choices. He says in the wider context of human development, the function of development is to promote capabilities of all human beings, particularly those neglected by the society. Knowledge and information will empower women and will give them control over their environment. The capability approach to quality of life underscores the need for a basic minimum that Indian government should provide in rural women empowerment context.

Sharma (2002) seeks to look that women constitute nearly half of the total population of the country; development of country is not possible without the development of this vast segment of population. For century’s women in India had been suffering due to discrimination, exploitation and exposed to various kind of harassment at various level.
Empowerment of women implies the process by which the women power of self-organization is promoted and reinforced; they develop the capacity of self-reliance out crossing the relationship of sub-ordinate on account of gender, social and economic status and society. Technological advances have meant the decline of employment in manufacturing and growing dominance of service industries. This has meant more jobs for women, but not necessarily better working conditions. Most women are still in lower paid jobs. Women are still under represented in many sectors of industry, profession and public services.

Dutta (2003)\textsuperscript{106} points out that society is generally sensitized to the justice perpetuated on women over the centuries, the problem of women reared in a traditional setup and ethos remain even when they take up employment. The face of the managerial superiority of the father, brother, husband, are so deep-rooted in the society that even the thought of the young women become the bread winner or one more earning member of the family, she does not enjoy the economic independence that ought to be her right. The book intended to provide detailed account of women problems discusses the strategies for their empowerment and tries to awaken them to work for their rights, power and progress.

Singh (2003)\textsuperscript{107} points out that empowerment of women has emerged as an important issue in our society in recent times. The economic empowerment of women is being regarded these days as a sine qua non of progress for a country, hence the issue of economic empowerment of women is of paramount importance to political thinkers, social scientists and reformers, women activists, politicians academicians and administrators.

Mohanty (2004)\textsuperscript{108} discusses that Contemporary India’s political landscape is characterized by a great deal of social upheaval. This is the result of growing democratic consciousness which is increasingly conflicting with the forces of domination, authoritarianism and hegemony. Against this backdrop, this volume provides an understanding of these forces in both historical and analytical terms. In particular, the seminal essays gathered here explore the specificities of the crucial social categories of class, caste and gender, while simultaneously drawing attention to the arenas in which they intersect.
Bhattacharya (2004) discusses assaulted, abused and raped women by someone as intimate as a husband, or lover, is the most degrading experience for a woman. Not recognized as 'real' violence, abuse of this nature is experienced daily by countless women in every culture. Behind closed doors of family, custom, values, traditions that are taken for granted and never questioned--are muffled voices of terror and trauma, which do not reach beyond the threshold nor attract the attention of lawmakers or redress agents. It puts together the life stories of seventeen women from diverse cultural, class, education and religious backgrounds in India who were victims of domestic violence.

Ramani (2005) discuss the issue of women’s socio-economic empowerment or women’s capacity to join in as equal partners in cultural, social, economic and political aspects of society. This book also discusses women empowerment and related issues, opportunities for women to achieve political, economic and social equality in the world, and their related experiences.

Reddy (2005) discuss comprehensive and analytical account of the progress made with particular reference to the women in developing India. It mainly focuses on five important issues: Empowerment and Development; Participation and Development; Employment and Development; Health, Education and Development and Legal Rights and Development. With issue based thematic discussions all the paper writers have contributed socially significant additions to the social science research and could be much useful to the activists, social workers and those interested in social science research focusing on women in India.

Rao (2005) discusses advent of globalization and economic development process has intensified the ongoing intellectual discussion on the gender development interface. Integration of gender issues with economic reforms process is essential for women employment in the developing countries like India. Women in the development process particularly in the labour market are playing a dominant role in India. Empowerment of women is the slogan of the day. Gender dimension and poverty, decline in landsman ratio, small and fragmented holdings, highly inequitable land distribution, increasing application of labour saving techniques etc. cannot provide the ultimate solution to the
problems of unemployment, underemployment prevailing in the farm sector. This book addresses the vital issues of women welfare and women empowerment in the light of the globalization, liberalization and privatization. This book is useful to the planners, administrators, policy makers and those who are concerned with the issues of women welfare and women empowerment apart from academicians. It is highly useful to the scholars and students of economics, applied economic, rural development, sociology and social work, political science and public administration and other social sciences.

Adhikary, Nath and Kumar (2006)\textsuperscript{113} discusses in their book discrimination against women and removal of discrimination through empowerment of women. Discrimination against women is found in every culture and society in varying degrees. It is manifested in various domains of life and activity: economic, social, political and religious. As a result of gender discrimination, the status of women is subordinate to men and they have little access to education, food, nutrition, health care, employment and wages.

Prasad (2006)\textsuperscript{114} states that there is growing international concern about the quality of life about women. The progress made by the different countries including India is marked by gender inequality in many dimensions of life. Rural women are among the most vulnerable and marginalized section of India. The low status of women stem from a complex intersection of class, caste, cultural and patriarchal systems that subjugate them and deprive them of full access and control over resources necessary for their well-being. The book examines the difficulties and struggles of rural women and provides correctives for their development and enhanced quality of life.

Sarojani (2006)\textsuperscript{115} discusses that the neglect of women in the development process and the immediate need for appropriate on women to enable them to attain their requisite position in the society has been emphasized. Realizing the need government of India initiated exclusive development programmes for women with active association of state government. The study analyses the issues pertaining to the very formation process of sustainability of SHG’s among women. In the process various psycho, social and economic issues were probed. The study also encompasses on in depth understanding of social and economic factors influencing SHG movement. The analytical perspectives of
the study in this regard pave the way for diagnosing the prevailing social and economic aspects of women.

Ramchandran (2007)\textsuperscript{116} states that India was a pioneer in legalizing induced abortion, or Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) in 1971. Yet, after three decades, morbidity and mortality due to unsafe abortion remain a serious problem. There is little public debate on the issue despite several national campaigns on safe motherhood. Instead, discussion on abortion has mainly centred on declining sex ratio, sex-selective abortion, and the proliferation of abortion clinics in urban areas. Adding to the problem is that abortion continues to be a sensitive, private matter, often with ethical/moral/religious connotations that sets it apart from other reproductive health-seeking behaviour. This book fills a gap in our understanding of the ground realities with respect to induced abortion in India to create an evidence-based body of knowledge. Using both quantitative and qualitative research methods, the case studies show why and under what circumstances women seek abortion and the quality of services available to them. They also explore inter-generational differences in attitudes and practices, the perceptions and selection of providers, female-selective abortion, and informal abortion practitioners. Among other issues, the contributors show that strong preference for sons, availability of modern techniques for diagnostic tests, widespread acceptance of the small family norm, and heavy reliance on female sterilisation as the primary method of contraception lead women to abort unwanted pregnancies.

Gopalan (2008)\textsuperscript{117} states that according to the 2001 census, women constitute 48\% of the Indian population. They form a valuable human resource for the country and their socio-economic status plays an important role in the sustainable growth of the entire nation. Notwithstanding their numbers, the social status of women in India continues to be deplorable. They often face disparities with regard to access to resources, which is reflected in parameters like health, nutrition and literacy. Gender specific barriers continue to be the lead role in the prevention of flow of public good and services to women. Gender budgeting is one of the major steps the Indian Government has introduced, in recent years, as a means to counter gender-related issues in the country. It involves looking beyond the balance sheet figures to study how differently men and
women fare under the existing revenue and expenditure system. Such an analysis helps the Government understand the changes required to prioritize allocations to achieve targets pertaining to women’s empowerment as promised. The book attempts to capture the progress made by India on the gender budgeting front as a means towards empowerment of women.

Ganesamurthy (2008)\textsuperscript{118} discusses the extent of empowerment of women in a nation is largely determined by three factors economic, social, and political identity. India's Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-07) called for a three-pronged strategy of social empowerment, economic empowerment, and providing gender justice to create a positive environment of economic, and social policies for women, and eliminating all forms of discrimination against them. The government of India has initiated various schemes spread across a broad spectrum, such as women's need for shelter, security, safety, legal aid, justice, information, maternal health, food, nutrition etc., as well as their need for economic sustenance through skill development, education, and access to credit and marketing. In order to address the phenomenon of domestic violence, which is widely prevalent but remains largely invisible in the public domain, the Protection from Domestic Violence Act, 2006 was enacted by the Indian Parliament.

Ranadive (2008)\textsuperscript{119} points out in Democracy in the Family. Insights from India is unique in the way it employs diverse research methods to address the issue of justice in the family under the common theme of examining whether the ethos of democracy is relevant to it. The interface between principles of democracy inside and outside the home is explored through the sub-themes of 'Experiencing the Family’, ‘Expressing the Family’, ‘Seeking Justice’ and ‘Including the Excluded’. The topics covered range from examinations of the institution of the family, the site of the household, practices of house holding and relationships between members, the impact of non-democratic norms and attempts to seek justice in the face of domestic strife and violence, to the advocacy of inclusive strategies that involve men and entire communities in democratizing the family.

Mehta (2008)\textsuperscript{120} discusses that gender analysis to development-induced-displacement and resettlement in the Indian context. It brings together leading scholar-activists,
researchers and contributors from people’s movements to critique and draw attention to the injustices perpetrated during such processes. Facing up to the need to focus specifically on how displacement and resettlement affect social groups differently with regard to axes such as gender, class, caste and tribe, the articles show that disenfranchised groups are deemed dispensable and tend to be affected the most, and that women and children among them suffer disproportionately.

Pandya (2008)\textsuperscript{121} analyzed that in India, policies and programmes of the government at different levels cover various dimensions and strategies of gender development. Over the years, efforts have been made to empower women socially, economically and politically. However, due to lack of synergy and coordination, the achievements are not satisfactory. It is imperative that an integrated policy and strategy be formulated to address economic, social and political issues related to women along with the requisite programmes and schemes. Though India has created protective legislations for women, the enactments have not been easy to implement. The vastness of the country, the scattered nature of women workers, their lack of education and legal literacy, the indifferent attitude of government bureaucracy have all contributed to the continuing vulnerability of women. This is true not only of rural unorganised women, but also of urban women workers.

Although the Constitutional commitments to women find reflections in the planning process, legislations, policies and programmes of the Central and State Governments yet the current socio-economic status of women is unsatisfactory in terms of almost all important indicators of human development. This book has emerged from the research papers contributed by social scientists and academicians from different parts of India, focusing on specific gender-related issues. The volume will provide valuable information and inputs to academicians, researchers, NGOs, and government agencies and functionaries. It contains 42 research contributions related to women issues. These contributions have been categorised into the following 6 Theme Parts. (a) Health, Nutrition and Fertility of Women, (b) Education and Training of Women, (c) Employment of Women, (d) Self-help Groups (SHGs) and Empowerment of Women, (e) Problems of Rural Women and (f) Women, Media, Politics and Human Rights.

Basu (2008)\textsuperscript{122} analyzed that only an insignificant percentage of women managers ever reach the higher echelons of management in most organizations—a phenomenon which
can be attributed to the glass ceiling, and the differential treatment meted out to women managers in terms of career mobility, recruitment, evaluation, compensation and other factors. Studies also suggest that gender stereotypes contribute largely to such phenomena. Through three broad studies, the book, a first of its kind, explores existing managerial gender stereotypes in Indian corporates, the antecedents of such stereotypes and the possibility of reducing such stereotypical inaccuracies. The book argues that a basic transformation at the level of policy making, along with a collective will for changing the mindset of the people, is needed to overcome gender differences in organizations as well as educational institutions. This book will interest a wide readership including women professionals, students and trainers in corporate training schools and business schools, sociologists, and organizational psychologists.

Singh (2008) analyzed that the history of men’s oppression towards women from womb to death and discrimination against women in India, although there are laws of protection of women under the constitution there are also women related laws. It has illustrated the judicial response to gender justice in favour of women by citing the cases of Supreme Court of India. However despite plethora of laws the position of women is no better than ever and therefore the strict enforcement of laws is required. But again laws are not sufficient to fight the evil of gender issues unless there is contribution of individuals and community for the full enjoyment of women rights.

Srivastava (2008) states that the Women constitute about half of the human population. They play a significant role in development of our society. Every woman has her own job or duty in this modern society in which men are still the strongest gender. We can't forget that women's life is a lot more complicated than a man's life. A woman has to take care of her own personal life and if she is a mother, she has to take care also about her children's life too. Married women have lots of worries and believe it or not, they carry out a more stressful life than married men.

Singh (2008) recognize that the adoption of women empowerment as an objective for sustainable, people-centered development implies a more comprehensive approach than previously followed development approaches. This research explores two primary areas women empowerment as a tool to sustain the development as an ongoing process. In the
first chapter, the concepts of Women Empowerment and Sustainable Development are discussed. An attempt has been made to trace the evolution of both the concepts and their meaning to people even at the local level. The focus of the study is women empowerment and how this issue is encountered in their lives as agents of change and development. It is recognized that there is no acknowledgements of their contribution to agriculture and household services.

Jan (2009) recognise that women’s empowerment is seen as an entry point for women’s integration into development. Majority of women in India need income for survival. Both in rural and urban areas, more females than males are reported as marginal workers, who form a substantial proportion in all age groups among females. In this context, this book attempts to improve the status of women through cooperative sector of economy. The book identifies major thrust areas where women have god entrepreneurship quality and which cooperatives can explore for the development of women. This book also presents status of women’s cooperatives vis-à-vis men’s cooperatives in order to assess who among them are the potential stakeholders in economic development. The book has necessitated the organization of women’s cooperatives around their occupational tasks and measures for facilitating credited facilities to them for their empowerment.

Nayak and Mahanta(2009) analyze the status of women empowerment in India using various indicators like women’s household decision making power, financial autonomy, freedom of movement, political participation, acceptance of unequal gender role, exposure to media, access to education, experience of domestic violence etc based on data from different sources. The study reveals that women of India are relatively disempowered and they enjoy somewhat lower status than that of men in spite of many efforts undertaken by government. Gender gap exists regarding access to education and employment. Household decision making power and freedom of movement of women vary considerably with their age, education and employment status. It is found that acceptance of unequal gender norms by women are still prevailing in the society. More than half of the women believe wife beating to be justified for one reason or the other. Fewer women have final say on how to spend their earnings. Control over cash earnings
increases with age, education and with place of residence. Women’s exposure to media is also less relative to men. Rural women are more prone to domestic violence than that of urban women. A large gender gap exists in political participation too. The study concludes by an observation that access to education and employment are only the enabling factors to empowerment, achievement towards the goal, however, depends largely on the attitude of the people towards gender equality.

**Kilby (2010)**\(^{128}\) By examining how NGOs operate in Southern India in the early 2000's, this book discusses the challenges faced by small, local NGOs in the uncertain times of changing aid dynamics. The key findings focus on what empowerment means for Indian women, and how NGO accountability to these groups is an important part of the empowerment being realised. The notion of community empowerment, in which the 'solidarity' of a group can be a path to individual empowerment, is discussed, as well as analyzing how empowerment can be a useful concept in development. Based on case studies of 15 NGOs as well as in-depth interviews with 80 women's self-help groups, the book highlights the key features of effective empowerment programs. The author uses innovative statistical analysis tools to show how a key factor in empowerment of marginalised women is the accountability relationship between themselves and the supporting NGO. The book goes on to discuss the ways that NGOs can work with communities in the future, and recognises the limitations of a donor-centric accountability framework. It provides a useful contribution to studies on South Asia as well as Gender and Development studies.

**Lavanya (2010)**\(^{129}\) discusses India's Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012) has recognized for the first time that women are not just equal citizens, but are also acknowledged as agents of economic and social growth. The approach to gender equity in the Plan is based on the recognition that interventions in favor of women must be multi-pronged and they must: provide women with basic entitlements address the reality of globalization and its impact on women ensure an environment free from all forms of violence against women (physical, economic, social, and psychological) ensure the participation and adequate representation of women at the highest policy levels strengthen existing institutional mechanisms and create new ones for gender
mainstreaming and effective policy implementation. Any development strategy will be lop-sided without involving women, who constitute half of the world population. Women entrepreneurship has gained momentum since the early 1980s when countries in Asia - particularly India and China - and elsewhere started liberalizing their economies. The resultant globalization - propelled by foreign direct investment, technological innovations, and manufactured exports - has brought a wide range of economic and social opportunities to women entrepreneurs. This book examines the various aspects of women entrepreneurship in India. It also explains the experience of other countries in this regard. Moreover, it details the activities and problems of women entrepreneurs in the Indian State of Andhra Pradesh.

**Natrajan** (2010) state a fascinating account of the development of women police over the past twenty years. It draws on the author's extended research in India, during a period of massive social change from a traditional society to a democratic, capitalist state. The author demonstrates how the Indian experience offers a valuable alternative model to the Anglo-American experience, not only for traditional societies but for women police in the West as well.

**Dhillon** (2010) states that gone are the days when the life of an average Indian Women was restricted to just the household work, today Indian women are not just working shoulder to shoulder with men but also outshining them in various walks of life. This book is a dedicated account of the transition of the Indian women from a homemaker to a torchbearer of the Indian economy and political system. This book captures the insight of women aspirations and its contribution to various fields like science and technology, politics, leadership etc.

**Patel** (2010) states that India is one of the developing nations of the modern world. It has become an Independent country a republic more than a half century ago. During this period, the country has been engaged in efforts to attain development and growth in various areas such as building infrastructure production of food grains science and technology and spread of education. The life expectancy has increased and many diseases have been controlled. However, Indian society is experiencing a variety of problems in
many areas. Some of these problems have their roots in our colonial past while others are related to demographic changes socio political conditions and cultural processes. This lesson tries to acquaint you with some of the problems and the psychological factors involved in them. Bride burning sati Pratha, Devdasi, female foeticide, alcoholism, drug abuse, poverty, child marriages are the major social problems in India. You will learn about some of the possible ways in which psychological interventions can help dealing with the problems.

Tiwari (2010) points out that in the last few decades have seen tremendous changes in the lifestyles of men and women across all over the globe and particularly so in our own country. Globalization market economics and above all fast strides in technology have affected virtually all facets of life be it religion or education politics or employment fashion or health care. With the advent of computers and telecommunications media has also undergone a sea of change. However, in spite of all these changes the media has not managed to overcome the typical stereotypes that are associated with women in India. The status of women in India has been subject to many great changes over the past few millennia.

Verma (2011) states that gender has several definitions it usually refers to a set of characteristics that are considered to distinguish between male and female, reflect one's biological sex, or reflect one's gender identity. Gender identity is the gender(s), or lack thereof, a person self-identifies as; it is not necessarily based on biological sex, either real or perceived, and it is distinct from sexual orientation. Many anthropologists claim that male’s holds formal authority over females in every society. Although the degree of masculine authority may vary from one group to the next, males always have more power. For some researchers, this unequal male-female relationship is the result of biological inheritance. The world today has changed in many aspects of gender related life style. Yet there is an area of improvement in the focus of gender: based on labour and the patriarchal workingwoman. The class society has a great impact on the behaviour women carry out. The different theories and definitions help to explain the relationship of the construction of the gender. Feminism has a great impact on the gender role in our
society. Feminists have been fighting for a long time for power and control in this man’s world.

_Narang, Vaishnav, Karodia_ (2011)\(^{135}\) discusses that child Marriage is a matter of great concern today especially for stake like Rajasthan which accounts for more than half of the rural females married below 18 years. The practice makes them more vulnerable and deprived. This book is written with the objective to develop understanding on plight of rural women in context of child marriage. The content of this book enlighten the most important and empirical data on age at marriage and highlights socio cultural determinants and psychosocial consequences of child marriage. This book would be useful for academicians, researchers, students’ policy planners and for all those who feel concerned with the women and children. Besides the women, activists and NGOs will find this book most informative and useful.

_Jones and Jackson_ (2011)\(^{136}\) states that Feminist theory, as it has emerged in the last twenty-five years, is now a highly influential from of social thought. In its academic form, feminist thinking has both challenged the authority of male theory and produced a new body of knowledge concerned with issues of difference and diversity, identity and inequality, ethnicity, ‘race’ and class, as well as gender. Feminist theory has also shaped and been shaped by feminist activism. The volume maps the development of feminist thought from the ‘Second Wave’ to the present, and suggests future directions. It is multidisciplinary and covers the full spectrum of feminist theory from anthropology to media and from law to literature. It also covers the different political and theoretical positions feminists have taken up and introduces the key feminist thinkers in each area. Each chapter is written by an expert in her field, in this way producing a more comprehensive and incisive text than any existing single-authored work.

_Singh_ (2011)\(^{137}\) discusses in his book crime against women will provide an in-depth study and analyzes of different types of crimes committing against women. It will help the teaching and researching communities of criminology, forensic sciences and social sciences in their academic pursuits. This will also help the policing system to control crime against women. 32000 murders, 19000 rapes, 7500 dowry deaths and 36500
molestation cases are the violent crimes reported in India in 2006 against women. There are many instances of crime especially against women go unreported in India. These are figures released by the National Crime Records Bureau recently.

Jain (2011)\textsuperscript{138} points out historical sources across India’s composite culture that has shaped the female self. Beginning with the Upanisads, it works with several foundational texts such as the epics and their retellings, Manusmriti, Natyasastra and the literature of the Bhakti Movement in order to trace the histories of feminist questionings. The constant interweaving of literary and social texts and the tracing of both continuities and disruptions across time and space enables a perception of the way in which individual struggles have merged with collective resistance and allowed a questioning of relationships, institutional frameworks and traditional role models. Feminism as an ideology is invariably linked to culture as it works with both the body and the consciousness. Indigenous Roots, without allowing it to be submerged in excessive data, examines the validity of this belief across time to trace connectivity with cultural formations.

Makwana (2012)\textsuperscript{139} states that how every day politics was being played and negotiated by different social groups remained an unexplored question. Voices of the subaltern groups remained submerged in most of the analysis of the functioning of the democratic institutions at local level. Thus mainstream social analysts failed to capture the Indian rural society ridden with caste, class and gender differentiations and hierarchies. This was largely a situation in sociological literature on Panchayati Raj system in India also. Gender question posits a critical challenge to our notions of power, participation, consent and legitimacy. Gender question has also assumed sociological significance in the functioning of the Panchayati Raj systems in last few decades. This problematic is not one that relates to only additive or incremental change in rural social fabric, but rather it looks into modalities, i.e. how it brings about social change and transformation. This cognitive shift has also brought into limelight the structural and cultural bottlenecks hampering the women and their movement for liberal democratic change.
Bakshi (2012) states that Empowerment is now increasingly seen as a process by which the one is without power gain greater control over their lives. It involves power to, power with and power within. With reference to women, the power relation that has to be involved includes their lives at multiple levels, family, community, market and the state. Importantly it involves at the psychological level women's ability to assert them and this is constructed by the gender roles assigned to her especially in a cultural, which resists change like India. The questions surrounding women's empowerment the condition and position of women have now become critical to the human rights based approaches to development.

### Gist of review of literature (Table 1.1)

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<th>Theme</th>
<th>Authors / Publication</th>
<th>Gist of analysis</th>
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| Social conditions    | Shastri(1951), Rothchild (1972), Mohanty and Mohanty(1999), Chakraborty(1999), Thomas(2000), Goetz(2001), Dhall(2002), Sharma(2002), Dutta(2003), Bhattacharya (2004), Prasad(2006), Adhikary, Nath and Kumar (2006), Ramchandran(2007), Randive(2008), Srivastava(2008), Mehta(2008), Singh(2008), Nayak and Mahanta(2009), Dhillon(2010), Tiwari(2010), Verma(2011), Narang, Vaisnav and Karodia(2011), Jones and Jackson(2011), Singh(2011), Jain(2011), Bakshi(2012) | Position of women underwent an transition since from the time of sutras to 21st century, due to adoption of cremation instead of burial. It was thought that one could secure good in the other world only if his son cremates him and thus birth of daughter was looked down upon. By the time British left the country in 1947, child marriages, sati pratha, devdasi was effectively stopped, widow remarriages was legally permitted and female education was promoted these were the efforts of social leaders of that time Raja Ram Mohan Roy, vidya sagar, swami Vivekananda. Political equality of female was acceptable, it is
determined that though there is slight empowerment in the area of literacy, work participation, life acceptancy. The parameters of occupational distribution, sex-ratio, MMR and IMR does not reveal any significant progress. While empowering women requires fundamental changes at many levels of society, arguably the most complex and elusive transformation may be within the household and the family. Thus, it emphasizes on institutional mechanism to promote cordial relationship among the members and enforce to provide recognition capability to members in society.


The political empowerment is the only catalyst, which will bring about the perceptible change in the lot of women. In this regard the Indian Constitution provides the legal protection to the women. The government has passed various laws to protect and promote women. In addition, many more bills which are still pending. Various vocational Trainings have also been organized by government to
empower women economically.
The government has changed
from giver to facilitator and
women are developed rather than
improved. As now, they play an
important role in the economy.

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<td>The alternate step adopted to empower women is Nigos. In other words instead of imposing decision on women as conventional strategies, the decision has come from women themselves in the form of their own perception and conventions. It helps them to achieve the requisite position on the society.</td>
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**Inference from Review of Literature**

By the review of the literature on women empowerment, it is inferred that, the process of women’s empowerment has not followed a logical sequence of thought and action. It needs a deliberate process of organization and mobilization of the women. Though strong women organization with drive and urge are far and few, it has been suggested that organizations of women serve as a collective force to mobilize power and resources for their development. For participation, being meaningful women must possess knowledge and skills related to reproductive, productive and emancipator roles.

The role of the state in empowering women through affirmative action is crucial to accelerate the process towards gender equality. It is necessary to bring them in the center of the public state politics, which can enhance their participation for change. In India, both governmental and non-governmental agencies at their respective level have therefore aimed to work for and towards women empowerment. Government has
undertaken various policies and programmes for women development, and the voluntary agencies have worked closely with the women at grassroots. Studying women status means a sensitive diagnosis of the nature of gender subordination through the study of gender relation in specific context.

**Inadequacies of Earlier Studies**

Earlier studies on women studies could not depict the holistic picture of women’s socio-economic, political and legal conditions. These studies focus much of their attention on rural and under-privileged population and ignore most of the women in the middle class or higher-class family as with the higher education and strong economic conditions women are considered empowered but it is not always the same. As most of the household women of these families and their contribution to the family are ignored. In most of the parts of India, women’s only recognized contribution is reproduction, in that also they could expect very little support from their families. The earlier researchers also could not give reasons why various central and state government schemes/policies could not benefit rural as well as urban women up to the mark.

**Rationale for the Present Study**

The reason to take up present study is to find out the difficulties faced by the women in the metropolitan cities in spite of the education, job and high social status. The study also finds out, is women in the fast track of the life, is satisfied with the multiple roles they are playing at home and at workplace. The present study comprises the socio-economic, political and legal dimensions of the women. It analyzes various government policies, which helped in the upliftment of the women in India and specifically Delhi, the Union Capital Territory. The certain significant NGOs working for empowering women are also studied.

**Scope of the Study**

The area is wide and complex. The present study, due to time and resource constraints, has been confined to working as well as non-working women of North (Model Town and Malkaganj) and South Delhi (C.R.Park and Amar Colony). These areas had specifically
been taken for the study because they comprise the middle class, upper middle class and upper class population, therefore the all sections of the society could be tested on the hypothesis. The present study has taken into consideration a section of women in Delhi where as in a representative sample of 200 from total population of women of north and south Delhi. The sample of 200 will suffice the study, as it is the 2% of the women population of the prescribed area.

Period of Study

The Period of study will include from 2001 to 2010, as 2001 was declared “Women Empowerment Year” and in 2010 “Mission for Women Empowerment” and so it is considered that major policies are formed after 2001. Therefore, it is proposed that the study period would cover a span of ten years i.e from 2001 to 2010.

Objectives of Study

- To examine the empowerment of women by observing the existing socio-economic-political conditions.
- To analyze the role of government in the improvement of empowerment of women with special reference to Delhi.
- To examine the role of NGOs in women empowerment with reference to Delhi.
- To examine the impact of education level on the empowerment of women.
- To analyze the relationship of occupation with empowerment of women.
- To analyze the relationship of decision-making on family matters with empowerment of women.
- To suggest measures to strength the women empowerment.

Hypothesis

- Government policies have led to the empowerment of women.
- NGOs have significantly contributed in improving the empowerment of women.
- Higher the education level of women, higher is their empowerment.
• Higher the control of women in occupational matters, greater the level of empowerment.
• Higher the participation of women in family decisions, higher the level of empowerment.

Research Methodology
The present study employs the qualitative analysis, which ensures the direction of each factor’s influence on the level of empowerment. The study looked into determinants of empowerment by employing logit model, where the dependent variable is obtained from the respondent perception about whether they feel empowered or not. Thus, in the present analysis if the respondent perceives that she is empowered then the value is given 1, and 0 if otherwise.

Techniques of data Collection
The present study is based on the primary and secondary data. For the purpose of the primary data, structured questionnaire is developed by searching relevant literature on the respective subjects. The questionnaire comprises both open-ended and close-ended questions.
For the purpose of secondary data, various books, journals, newspapers are used. The government of India and state government reports is also referred. Various internet sites are also referred for the relevant data.
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28. NIRD, Rural Development Statistic, Hyderabad.
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37. Ibid, P.282.
47. Thompson, “Defining Feminism”, P.173.
48. Both Ti-Grace Atkinson and Shulemith Firestone argue that the original cause of male domination resides in men’s ability to reside in men’s ability to take


53. However, some radical feminist writers have undertaken analysis of the economic organization of male dominance, notably Christine Delphy

54. Tapper, ‘can a feminist be a liberal?’ Diverging approaches to biopolitics in radical and liberal feminism become evident in their rather different ways of dealing with bodily issues like sexual harassment, rape and abortion.


63. Karl Marx (1818-83) was a revolutionary activist and social theorist who believed that class based societies, because inequitable are politically unstable. Class struggle, in his views, could produce necessary social change. His work was
aimed at intensifying that struggle and overthrow of inequitable class division in the modern societies. N. Abercrombie et al., The Penguin Dictionary of Sociology, London, 1988, P.146.

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