CHAPTER-II

EMPOWERMENT: A CONCEPTUAL ASSESSMENT

Women constitute almost 50% of the world’s population. As far as their social status is concerned, they are not treated as equal to men in all the places, through in the Western countries women are treated on par with men in most of the fields, their counterpart in the east suffers from many disabilities.

The disabilities on the one hand and the inequalities between men and women on the other, have given rise to what is known Gender problem. All one the world and particularly in South and East Asia and Africa the gender problem has assumed importance during the recent years the gender issue has become virtually a crucial point of argument. It is now widely believed that empowerment of women
i.e., providing equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities to women, will go a long way in removing the existing gender discrimination. Women empowerment in contemporary Indian society in forms of their work, education, health and media images in the context of lineage, rule of residence and household chores, their participation in social and political activities, their legal status in terms of marriage, divorce and inheritance of property, seeking wealth care should be taken into consideration. Empowerment in terms of knowledge and awareness of ones own life and society including legal raise their status with regarded to the lives.

**Meaning**

Before thinking about the empowerment of women, one need to understand the exact meaning of the word empowerment. According to Cambridge English Dictionary empowerment means "to authorize". In the
context of the people they have to be authorized to have control over their lives. When applied in the context of development the particular segment of population, the poor the women, the vulnerable, the weak, the oppressed and the discriminated have to be "empowered" to have control over their lives to better their socio-economic and political conditions. But the questions raised are, who empowers them and how to empower them? Ideally speaking no one empowers any one, the best way is self empowerment, but the segments of populations mentioned above are handicapped both structurally and culturally to empower themselves without any outside help and affirmative action by the State and others. But still as long as these segments of population does not make any effort at self employment. It would be long and arduous task and process for the outsiders to empower them.
Women in development process

The principal of gender equality was recognized in the United Nations Charter in 1945 and the UN Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, the majority of development planners did not fully address the role of women in development process.¹ In 1975, the first UN Conference of Women and Development was held at Mexico city under the motto, “Equality, Development and Peace”. The need to integrate women into development was internationally proclaimed in the 1995 Beijing Conference. The Economic Survey (1999-2000) used an entire section on gender inequality. It began with a reminder of the commitment made in the Ninth plan document of allocating 30 percent of resources for women’s development schemes through “Women’s Component Plans”.

According to Menon and Prabhu (2001), there was a strong plea for investing in women’s equality on
the ground that this made economic sense and spoke of "the social rate of return on investment in women being greater than the corresponding rate for men.

According to Patel (2002), women's development can be attained by improving here status and bargaining power in the economy.²

Sushma Sachay (1998) argues that approaches and strategic for women empowerment could be possible by outlining the mechanisms and tools that till influence for women empowerment. Decisions making processes, multidimensional process that are enable women to realize their full identity and powers in all walks of life.

The union budget 2004-05, the Finance Minister is reported to have stated that tone of India's greatest assets in its human resources the people. Empowering the people especially the poor with
universal access to education, health and facilitating their full participation in the growth process through gainful employment would enhance their welfare. It would also reinforce the growth process itself.

Women Empowerment: A Conceptual Discussion

Empowering may be understood as enabling people, especially women to acquire and possess power resources, in order to make decision on their own or resist decisions that are made by others that affect them. A person may said to be powerful when he/she has control over a large portion of power resources in society. The extent of possession of various resources such as personal wealth, assets, land skills, education, information, knowledge, social status, position held, leadership traits, capabilities for mobilization.
The National Policy on Education (1986) suggested certain strategies to empower women. Accordingly, women become empowered through collective reflections and decision making enabling them to become agents of social change. The global conference on women empowerment (1988) highlighted empowerment as the best way of making women partners in development. The development of women and children in rural area (DWCRA) program was initiated as a sub scheme of the nation wide poverty alleviation program i.e., the Integrated Rural Development Program (IRDP). It aims at imparting self-reliance to rural areas through income generating skills along with group organization skills. Keeping this in view the year 2001 was celebrated as "The Women’s Empowerment Year". Human resource development and empowerment of women unlock the door for modernization of society. Instead of remaining as passive beneficiaries, women must become active partners. Participation and control
over resources of power are considered as the critical indicators in the process of development. Disadvantaged women especially in rural areas, possess the least proportion of these resources and as a result they are powerless and dependent on the powerful and wealthy.

We now realize the vital importance of the terms such as role, empowerment and function for an understanding of society. These terms tell us how individuals and groups organize themselves as well as relate to each other. Very simple, role tells us about what is expected from an individual in a particular situation. While empowerment deals with her or his expectation arising out of the situation. Similarly, a role deals with duties and obligations while empowerment deals with rights. For instance it is commonly assumed that the mother is a woman, a wife, a cook, a teacher of her children, a daughter-in-law and so on. What happens when the mother is
also the principal of the local village school? Not only does she have to deal with a range of roles and empowerments, but also with the tensions that may raise out of her role as mother and her role as an administrator.

**Development paradigms: Empowerment**

Caroline Moser (1989) has identified the five following paradigms towards women in the developing countries.

a. Welfare Paradigm
b. Equity Paradigm
c. Anti-Poverty Paradigm
d. Efficiency paradigm and
e. Empowerment Paradigm

A) This approach was most popular in 1950, but still continue to be used along with other approaches. This paradigm is based on the traditional view of
marking the women better mothers and this is considered as the women most important role in development on the basis of customary gender division of labour.

B) The paradigm came into existence between 1975-85, which is the decade of women. This paradigm follows “Women in development” approach and the objective was to gain equity to women in development process and women is seen as active participants in the development. It is also a “top down” approach but aimed giving political and economic autonomy to women by reducing inequality with men.

C) Began in 1970, directed at poor women to ensure and increase their productivity. This approach being followed even today assumes that women problems arise out of under development.
D) Now most popular is “Women in Development” paradigm, this paradigm depends on the belief that polices of economic stabilization and adjustment rely on women’s economic contribution to development and women’s economic participation seen as a mechanism towards equity.

E) This is the most result-oriented approach about which every one is talking now. The impetus to this approach came from the feminist writers and grass roots organizations of the developing world. This paradigm envisages greater self-reliance among women and their subordination is seen not only as problem of men but also for colonialism and neo colonialism.

Women’s culture is supposed to be different from that of the culture of the men and is characterized by softness, tenderness, love and affection. Unlike men’s culture, which is of conquering and aggressive nature, culture of women
protects life and nature on this planet; Walter Schubart (1978) brings out admirably in the following two paragraphs the difference between men and women:

"Woman reposes more closely on the central surface of life, while man hunts it in the boundaries of existence, always concerned to overcome, and in the last analysis, to kill. Women have a secret alliance with eternal life, and man with the principle of death. Woman wants to embrace the contradictions of life and to reconcile them in the act of degree so. Man on the other hand release the tension between opposites by annihilating one of the sides, the one he finds unpleasant. He seeks the solution not in love and reconciliation, but in overcoming and annihilation. He has a militant and not on erotic manner."
The male principle borne of isolation, makes solitude eternal, seeks being in itself and disturbs life as a whole. His being is battle and self-service, his will to life is concerned with ascertaining his own person or overthrowing that of the stranger until the motive of salvation kindles with in him. Woman with her sustaining constitution is at one and is harmony with the basis of the world. But man wants to change the world to bring it forward to overcome it”.

Empowerment in Contemporary India

The form and extent of work and political participation, levels of education, state of health, representation in decision-making bodies, access to property etc., are some relevant indicators of empowerment of the individual members in a society. However, not all members of a society have got equal access to the factors, which constitute these
indicators of empowerment. Gender is one of the crucial dimensions behind this inequality. Hence, due to various socio cultural factors the economic and political rules of women have remained mostly unrecognized. In our society they are marginalized and economically discriminated against.

Contemporary Indian society has been exposed to the broad processes of social transformation, agricultural modernization and economic development, urbanization and globalization. However, these processes have generated regional imbalances, sharpened class inequalities and augmented the gender disparities. Hence, women have become critical symbols of these growing imbalances. All these have affected adversely the various aspects of women’s empowerment in the contemporary Indian society.
The family and women's work is not enough to say that any society consists of men and women. It is equally important to look at how the two groups of people interact as well as at the role and expectations each group has of the other. Such roles and expectations are a product of the stereotypes of each gender. By gender stereotype we mean attributes and qualities commonly associated with a gender.

Thus, the first idea on gender role differences which a child acquires is that of women of one's family marrying and leaving their homes to live with different groups of people. Secondly, men appear to exercise far greater influence in decision making and are far more visible and audible than their wives. Third most of the tasks within the home are done by the mother, grand mother, sisters and so on. At meal times they carry food to the fields for the men. All these tasks which consume time and energy
are not counted as work and there is no payment involved. In Western countries, women's groups, politicians and other concerned individuals have been arguing for payment for house work and childcare. In India, the question of payment for household jobs has not really been an important issue or demand. As we shall see, there are many other issues, which require urgent attention. At the same time, it is important for us to remember that non payment should not also mean non recognition. The fact that women are expected to perform all these tasks as a part of their conventional roles and on special merit is awarded to them for these tiring and tiresome jobs.7

As per to 1981 figures 19.7 per cent Indian women were recorded as paid workers. Of whom over 87 per cent were in the unorganized or informal sector of the economy. The work participation rate of women in 1991 and 2001 was 22.3 and 25.7 per cent,
respectively. The increase in the work participation of women during the decade 1991-2001 is mainly due to the increase in the proportion of marginal workers (6.3 per cent to 11 per cent) in the total female work force. The proportion of the main workers, in fact, decreased from 15.9 per cent to 14.7 per cent. It is held by many observations of Indian economy that without women’s paid or unpaid labour the Indian agricultural economy would not be able to function. In the informal sector, there is no legal redressal for problems; no maternity or other leave benefits and little security of service. Working long hours as domestic servants, stitching clothes for the garment export industry, working on the assembly line of small electronics manufacturing units or the beedi, tobacco, cashew nut factories. Women live in fear of retrenchment, exploitation and low wages."
According to Maithreyi Krishna Raj (1978) that though women were concerned about continuing their jobs, they were not looking for better prospects nor have they begun with a long range career strategy. Once in a job, women rarely attempted to acquire further qualifications was by no means clear-cut. T.s.Papola's (1982) study of workingwomen, which covered a range from those in supervisory posts in industrial establishments to unskilled workers in Lucknow city, showed that women were more different than men in respect of their promotion prospects. They felt increase about their qualifications, personal attribute sand ability to pass requisite in service examinations. A small proportion said that is promotions involved transfers outside the city or giving more time to the job, they would not be in a position to apply.

Apart form not applying for promotions because it would conflict with one's family commitment, some
women do not even enter the profession for which they have been trained. For instance according to 1971 census, 7.1 per cent of doctors were women, though the number of women actually qualified was about 25 per hundred. While some may have migrated to other countries or been temporarily unemployed for a variety of reasons, the likelihood of voluntary absence from the profession of their choice cannot be ruled out. It is not improbable that a work environment which involves interacting with male colleagues and patients in a variety of situations as well as being on night duty would deter parents and conjugal families from allowing women to practice as doctors.

Papola's (1982) study showed that women were discriminated against at the time of promotions and tended to be crowded into lower status electrical and primary schools jobs. They were rarely promoted to executive and supervisory posts. Among skilled
and unskilled workers, the reasons put forth for preferring men were their greater physical strength and lower rate of absenteeism. As regards employment and promotion to supervisory and electrical categories, male employers defended themselves by pointing out that women did not come forth to be recruited or promoted.

In the areas, the working class, and men in particular have a wider range of job options available to them. The study by Leela Kasturi (1990) shows that when unemployed weavers from Tamil Nadu migrant to Delhi, the women folk found jobs found jobs only as domestic servants. While men became mechanics, cooks or drivers. The shift in residence meant a severance with an established ways of life and the support of the extended family. Men who had few options at home became more whimsical and choosy about jobs in the metropolitan city. Women could hardly take anytime off from work to look around for
alternatives. Yet, men as well as women regard the unpaid and paid work of men as supportive and women’s earning as supplementary.¹¹

The sweeper community in Delhi a study by Malavika Karlekar (1987) shows that husbands were moving out of the traditional occupation and women actively supported male attempts at getting better jobs in the urban environment.¹² Women appeared convinced that men had a right to better lives while they rarely had such thoughts for themselves. Restricted physical mobility fuse responsibility for housework as well as fairly rigid views on where women from certain castes should work led women automatically to a situation where it was assumed that occupational mobility was meant for men only. Not unexpectedly, most daughters after the age of eight years or so joined their mother’s at work or looked and cleaned at home. Boys rarely helped, and it was not unusual to see sons playing in the alleys
while their younger sisters were at work, either at home or with their mothers.

For the majority of working class women, a job is essential. In relation to the limited chances for occupational mobility, when men and women work in the same occupation, female tasks are often the more arduous and time-consuming. For instance, in paddy cultivation they spend long hours in sowing, weeding and transplanting. In Kerala the extraction of the cashew nut from a corrosive liquid is women’s work. Again when both sexes do identical jobs, women often get paid less than men. Protests are rare, apart from ignorance of legal and other rights; there is a fear of exploitation and sexual harassment by the landlord or contractors.

Irrespective of social class there is at the level of belief, widespread commitment to the nation that a women’s job must not interfere or compete
with her primary role of wife and mother. There is also concern with her physical safety and the respectability of the occupation. Clearly working class families are far less able to ensure these conditions and often their women work under very difficult circumstances. Highly rated occupations for middle class women are teaching jobs at various levels, liberanship, medicine, particularly with specialization in gynecology and pediatrics, health visiterships and so on.

NGOs, SHGs has been working to promote women more viable towards social, political, economic and cultural development. Micro finance is a significant factor and accessible to small and micro enterprises, socio economic progress of poor women. Education and training also plays a major role in changing the life of poor women. The several institutions have been extending all types of
vocational training, income generating activities
and self-employment activities for poor women.

Empowerment of women is mainly related to their
participation in decision making with reared to
raising and distribution of resources i.e., income,
in vestments and expenditures at all levels. Even
though the Government of Karnataka has formulated
and implemented various schemes for the social
economic and overall development of the rural women,
when the present position of women is taken into
account these schemes do not appear effective in
enhancing the confidence and capability of the
women.

Empowering the poor women in rural areas to
sustain their surrounding ecology is a necessity not
only to stop the ecological degradation but also for
the physical survival of poor people. Almost every
village in India has what is called "Common Property
Resources (CPRs). Common Property Resources can be defined as "those resources which are exploited by all people in the village free of cost by expending their labour".

The CPRs in rural India consists of busy forests, fallow lands, grazing lands, water sources, streams and their banks, crop residues, plantation on common lands etc. the CPRs are prime sources of fuel wood, wild fruits, roots, nuts, leafy vegetables, roofing material for the huts etc. these resources are mostly exploited by the poor of the village and women in poor families are mainly responsible for exploring the resources from CPRs.

Dependence of poor women on Common Property Resources in support of their families and the need for empowering these women to have control over CPRs is only one aspect of women empowerment towards environmental and ecological action for sustainable
development. The need for empowering women throughout the world towards greater environmental action has been well recognized mainly on the basis of attitudinal difference between men and women.

**AMARTYA SEN'S CONCEPT OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT**

Amartya K. Sen has propagated the concept of WOMEN AGENCY as a strategy of Women Empowerment, which he has devised as part of his most significant contribution into Economics Viz., Human Capability Approach to Development. This new paradigm of development is more widely discussed since 1990s whereas Sen's concept of Women Agency is, however, not discussed. Therefore, we intend to (a) explain the Sen's concept of Women Agency with a view to bring out why the agenda of development or welfare of women could be and has to be different from men; (b) analyze Sen's views on how Women Agency approach could be used to empower women; and (c)
identify wide range of applicability of women agency concept of promoting the goals of women empowerment both in developed and developing world.

The concept of women agency as defined by Amartya Sen implies adoption of a strategy of collective bargaining with a set of goals to be achieved which women consider as very essential and important for empowerment.\textsuperscript{14} In fact, Sen’s concept of Women agency is a applied tool derived from the individuals overall evaluative space devised by him. The Evaluative space includes individual or personal well-being and personal overall agency goals. According to A.K.Sen, the agency goals are essential to achieve ones own conception of well-being. To do this, Sen says the goals will have to be achieved, and to achieve them freedom is essential. Thus Amartya Sen believes that the above distinction can be applied to Perspective of well-being and the agency. Therefore, the universal analytical
framework evolved by A.K.Sen to evaluate a person's welfare include four concepts Viz., (a) Well being achievement; b) agency achievement; c) Well-being freedom and d) agency freedom. These four concepts are, according to Amartya Sen, are related to one another and are also different from each other. An assessment of all these four types of benefits entails, according to A.K.Sen, different types of evaluative exercises.

This study has two parts. In part I we explain and elaborate the seven types of Gender inequalities as explained by A.K.Sen And part II we examine the Women Agency Approach advocated by A.K.Sen to solve the different types of gender bias or discriminations which have resulted in gender gap in development processes or in the gender wise unequal distribution of the benefits of the development process.
Gender Inequality-Amartya Sen's Analysis: A Perspective

The gender inequality is a result of the widespread practice of gender bias in different parts of the world. Perhaps the gender bias or inequality is as old as the human civilization process. Still the scientific analysis of different types of gender inequality and gender bias or discrimination is relatively of recent trend. Economists were the late entrants into the Gender Studies, since the mainstream economics do not recognize the existence of family and thus women in fact, the greater of mainstream economics theoretically is gender neutral however, the real world economic practices discriminate against women. This is one area of paradox which modern economics is yet to resolve. But there are attempts to resolve it by distinguished economists like Gary S. Beeker (1970), Boserup, E (1970), A.K. Sen (1984, 1985-2000)
and others. In Indian context the gender related disparities in development process are analyzed by Nirmala Banerjee, Maithreyi Krishnaraj, Odreyar D.Heggade and other since the early 1980s. It is essential and important to remember that both western and Indian studies on gender inequalities, including those by Amartya Sen, do maintain that the main source of some of the gender inequality is the social institution of Family and the remaining originate from the Patriarchical Capitalism. The phrase patriarchal capitalism implies the extension of patriarchic family values into the political economy (outside family) to determine women’s share in factor rewards like wages and property rights to the disadvantage of women. Against this background let us now explain the Seven types of gender inequality expounded and analyzed by A.K.Sen

Amartya K.Sen (2001) has identified the following seven types of gender inequalities in his
Public Lecture delivered at Radcliff Institute at Harvard University in 2001.

**Mortality Inequality:**

In some regions or countries of the world there are marked variations in expected longevity of life and mortality between men and women. Thus in these countries the women mortality is higher than the male mortality. Thus, the surviving male population is higher than the female population. The female mortality is relatively high in China, South Asian and Latin America. The female mortality rate is relatively low in countries where women have more access to maternity health care and nutrition (for instance high income countries).

**Natality Inequality:**

This problem arises on account of sex selective abortion practices followed by parents of the
partiarchical societies where male child is preferred to a female child. The male child preference, in fact work as female child bias resulting in termination of a female child at pregnancy. For this purpose the sex selective/identification medical technology is abused; such a practice is widely prevalent in India and other South Asian countries. Many South Asian countries, including, India have enacted legislations profiting sex identification medical tests. But still the practice of female child termination at pregnancy is widely prevalent because of strong and dominating patriarchal biases against female child. This has led to a sharp decline in female male ratio in Asian countries which A.K.Sen has termed as missing women.

Basic Facility Inequality:

The discriminations against women may strongly prevail in different forms than manifesting
themselves in discriminatory demographic preferences and features in a country, whether developed or developing. The former Taliban government in Afghanistan had excluded the female children from schooling and also from all kinds of human rights. A.K. Sen also draws our attention to the low girl child school enrolment ratio in many Asian, African, and Latin American Countries, which lead to educational disparities between men and women ultimately. Such a thing is called as Basic Facility Inequality between sexes by A.K. Sen. The gender based disparity in various social infrastructure exist considerably resulting in widening the human capabilities gap between the two sexes which also ultimate cause inequality gender wise in the social functions performed by people and distribution of the development benefits among men and women.

**Special Opportunity Inequality:**

In addition to the existence of basic facility inequality between sexes there is also enormous
disparities in the higher education opportunities available between young men and women. The parents refer to make more investment in the educational and training skills of the sons rather than daughters. This is a educational discrimination practiced by parents themselves for which in all societies there is social sanction. Thus the women participation in higher education including the technical and professional education is relatively low than their male counterparts.

Professional Inequality:

Women are discriminated against in the recruitment for jobs and in promotions within industry and business organizations both in developed and developing countries. The result is professional inequality, which further causes gender based wage and income disparities and status deprivation. A.K. Sen draws our attention to very scanty or no representation of women higher senior
level posts/vacancies both in public and private sectors.

Ownership Inequality:

In many societies the ownership of property/assets is also biased against women. Thus, a large majority of women do not own any income creating assets. The basic assets like housing and agricultural land are also unevenly distributed between men and women, even in rural areas. This is a major obstacle for women access into institutional credit, entrepreneurship and other forms of socio-economic participation. This is a general trend obtained the world over with minor variations. In India, except Kerala State, and west coast of Karnataka, the property rights are distributed till now by social customs and law in favor of men. In Kerala and West Coast of Karnataka (Dakshina Kannada and Udupi District) since there was matriarchial
family system, women have traditionally enjoyed the property rights. But the matriarchial family system is not a widely prevalent social organization in the world.

**Household Inequality:**

The gender inequality within households are most common and assume various forms. Even in the absence of gender discrimination in child preference, education, entry of women into high level executive posts, both in advanced and developing economies, there is substantial inequality between men and women in the distribution household work and child rearing responsibility. In many societies the women employment outside the family is accepted only when the concerned women are ready to balance both the house work and wage work. This is traditionally called division of labor by sex, but the feminists would prefer to call it
accumulation of capital Amartya Sen points out. According to A.K. Sen, the household inequality includes both inequalities within the families and all other institutionalized inequalities against women in the wider society, economy, and polity.

**Empowerment of Women in India: An Assessment**

The phenomenon of women's inequality is universal. Its magnitude and severity differ from country to country, from society to society, and from community to community. According to the 2001 census, women make up 496 million (48%) of the India's population, comprise 127 million workers with 26% of work participation rate (31% in rural and 11.5% in urban), literacy rate of just 54.16% (male-75-25%) enrollment in schools of just 49% (male-62%). All over the world, women are discriminated and exploited. India is not an exception for this. The intensity of exploitation and subjugation varies.
from society to society. But there is no such a society which has eliminated the exploitation and subjugation. The patriarchal system has confined the women to specific areas such as kitchen and the bedroom and fixed gender roles like bearing and rearing children, cooling and cleaning. Even today a woman is viewed as property and not a human being who has her own likes and dislikes. Opportunities for self development are denied to them. She is possessed and viewed as an object of beauty and a commodity for the pleasure of men. Submissiveness, selflessness and passiveness are expected from the woman. In many parts of India the female infanticide is also practiced. The parent’s attitude of discriminated treatment between boys and girls and girl child is neglected also seen. Women, before marriage by parents, after marriage by husband, mother-in-law father-in-law, etc. and in old age by children and daughter-in-laws, is usually controlled. Hence she experiences no freedom at all.
Men retire from their work and responsibilities but woman, never retires from monotony of domestic chores.

The partially liberated middle class educated and employed women experience severe psychological pangs as neither they can give up the traditional cultural values and nor can become completely westernized. In exceptional cases they may be getting the full co-operation of men in their self-improvement. Even though the constitution of India has granted and guaranteed the equal status to men and women, a high degree of discrimination between both is still prevailing. Woman in India is enjoying a very poor socio economic status. In India gender bias is one more problem of women labour. She is constantly discriminated against men though out the life. She is paid less than man i.e., 37% of male Income.
Thus, a conceptual assessment of women empowerment indicates much to aspire, than what is achieved. Let us examine the relation between Decentralization and empowerment in the next Chapter with empirical evidences.

Reference:


12. Latika Menon. 1998, Women Empowerment and


17 For Erskine Calder’s view also see Mehra R. The Neglect of Women in India’s Rural Development programme: A study of Failures in Planning ICSSR Programme of Women’s Studies (1979) P.24.

18 Government of India, Department of Social


