Chapter 4

WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT PROMISES AND REALITIES
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Women's Development Promises and Realities

"When women are the advisor, the Lords of creation don't take the advice till they have persuaded themselves that it is just what they intended to do; then they act upon it and if it succeeds, they give the weaker vessel half the credit of it; if fails, they generously give herself the whole".

Louisa May Alcott

4.1 Women: Past, Present and Future

India today is at the cusp of a paradigm change in its growth and its position in the world. We (both men and women) must act decisively to capture this opportunity. We need to think big and scale up rapidly in each and every area, be it education, infrastructure, industry, financial services or equality of both genders. For around two centuries, social reformers and missionaries in India have endeavored to bring women out of confines in which centuries of traditions had kept them. According to the 2011 Census, the percentage of female literacy in the country is 65.46% up from 52.59% since 1951.

But we should not forget that history in a witness to the women who have in the past demonstrated unique leadership capabilities. Razia Sultana, Rani of Jhansi, Sarojini Naidu and Indira Gandhi are motivation examples of women empowerment. Earlier, most women were able to demonstrate the leadership qualities only on their home fronts, as in Indian society man has always acted as the master of the scene and the decision regarding the issue of empowering women has
always been taken by him. God has gifted women with compassion, tender-heartedness, caring nature, concern for others. These are very positive signs which imply that women can be leaders. Though some women have shown their mettle yet a large number of them have to sharpen their leadership qualities in various ways. In order to help women to be in limelight, they need to be empowered. Therefore, empowerment of women is the prerequisite to transform a developing country into a developed country.

I would like to peep into the past when the stature of women as destroyed. They were treated as chattel in the early Roman society. In France, they were termed as half-soul creatures responsible for the destruction of society. The Chinese considered them as devil's soul. Japanese men preferred to live unmarried lives. Before the advent of Islam, Arabs buried their daughters alive considering them as a sign of disgrace. In this way, they deprived women of their due place. Most men view themselves as being the superior life-form in society. They justify this belief by saying that they are stronger and more capable; thus, making those more qualified for the more important roles in society. They place themselves on pedestals and force women to believe in their own inferiority to men and their incapability to excel educationally, politically, economically and domestically. But the truth is that women have advanced in all those areas.

In Shakespeare's works, many female characters are portrayed as being manipulated, if not controlled outright by the men in their lives as fathers, uncles, suitors, husbands. Therefore, Shakespeare's works appear to send mixed singles regarding the notion of female empowerment. Empowerment has multiple, interrelated and interdependent dimensions economic, social, cultural and political. It
can be understood in relation to resources, perceptions, relationship and power. But what does women empowerment mean? Women empowerment generally has five components: firstly, women's sense of self worth; secondly, their right to have the power of control their own lives, both within and outside home; and lastly, their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a just social and economic order nationally, internationally and universally.

In India, the empowerment process has already begun. We are now witnessing a steady improvement in the enrollment of women in schools, colleges and even in profession institutes. Their health is better as compared to earlier decades. In this decade, women are entering into the job market in increasing numbers. They are showing their skills even in non-traditional sectors like police, defence, administration, media and research fields. Twenty-six laws have been enacted so far to protect women from various crimes. The recent law on the 'protection of women against domestic violence' satisfies the long pending demand of the women activities. In the political field, the reservation for women is a significant step forward towards their political empowerment. When thirty-three percent reservations for women in Parliament becomes a reality, women's voice will be heard in the highest forum of democracy. The day, women of India will reach zenith in their empowerment. But a lot of work has to be done as there is a category of women (who consider themselves highly educated) that proudly accepts that they don't have digital literacy even though they own a computer, they cannot even operate bank accounts or make travel arrangements for family or handle hospital admissions even during emergencies. Even for a simple task like
social visits or shopping generally they need the company of their husbands.

Women in India feel proud to display that they are well protected and pampered by their husbands without realizing that they are making themselves helpless. Such women's economic literacy is so low that they cannot play any role in family's decision regarding family's budget, savings and investments. To such women, the national budget discussion is for men only and soap operas are for them. Such women suffer a lot if something untoward happens to their husbands. This type of extreme dependency is not good for the development of women. Women should remember that they are also rational, intelligent and thinking human beings. Dependent women are not empowered women. If modern women think that they are empowered, it's a myth for them. Empowerment means to inspire women with his courage to break free from the chains of limiting beliefs, patterns and societal or religious conditions that have traditionally kept women suppressed and unable to realize their true beauty and power.

Some qualities to be acquired by women to become truly empowered are awareness about risk prevailing at home, in work place, in traveling and staying outside home. They should have political, legal, economic and health awareness. They should have knowledge about support groups and positive attitudes towards life. They should get goals for future and strive to achieve them with courage. The best gift parents today can give to their daughters is education. If women choose to be ignorant then all the efforts taken by the Government and women activists will go in vain. Even in twenty-fifth century, they will remain backward and will be paying a heavy price for their
dependence, so, it is a wake-up call for women to awake from their deep slumber and understand the true meaning of their empowerment. In the end I would like to conclude with the following words, "Women as the motherhood of the nation should be strong, aware and alert".

Women have the potential to change their own economic status, as well as that of the communities and countries in which they live. Yet more often than not, women's economic contributions go unrecognized, their work undervalued and their promise unnourished.

Unequal opportunities between women and men continue to hamper women's ability to lift them from poverty and gain more options to improve their lives. Research shows that inequalities persist in the way paid and unpaid work is divided between women and men; in the fact that women remain the sole caregivers at home, and in their limited access to resources. What's more, these imbalances slow economic growth.

Women's economic empowerment – that is, their capacity to bring about economic change for themselves – is increasingly viewed as the most important contributing factor to achieving equality between women and men. But economically strengthening women – who are half the world's workforce – is not only a means by which to spur economic growth, but also a matter of advancing women's human rights. When governments, businesses and communities invest in women, and when they work to eliminate inequalities, developing countries are less likely to be plagued by poverty. Entire nations can
also better their chance of becoming stronger players in the global marketplace.

**Consider some of the positive outcomes of women’s economic empowerment:**

Where women’s participation in the labor force grew fastest, the economy experienced the largest reduction in poverty rates.

When women farmers can access the resources they need, their production increases, making it less likely that their families are hungry and malnourished.

When women own property and earn money from it, they may have more bargaining power at home. This in turn can help reduce their vulnerability to domestic violence and HIV infection.

When women have access to time-saving technologies – such as a foot-pedaled water pump or a motorized scooter – economic benefits can follow. ICRW research has found that technology helps women increase their productivity as well as launch income-generating pursuits and entrepreneurial ventures. Those kinds of outcomes empower women to become stronger leaders and to more effectively contribute financially to their families, communities and countries.

The bottom line- Investing in women helps speed up the development of local economies and creates more equitable societies.

The empowerment of women has been widely acknowledged as an important goal in international development, but the meanings and terminologies associated with this concept vary, and methods for systematically measuring and tracking changes in levels of empowerment are not well established. A diverse body of literature
has emerged regarding the conceptualization and measurement of women's empowerment and its relationships with other variables of interest in international development. Drawing from a review of theoretical, methodological, and empirical literature on empowerment from the fields of demography, sociology, anthropology, and economics, this paper describes and attempts to clarify basic definitional and conceptual issues that emerge from the literature and identifies common threads in the various definitions that have been used. It then discusses some of the key issues that need to be addressed in measuring women's empowerment empirically, emphasizing points on which important progress has been made as well as identifying challenges that remain to be addressed.

4.2 Globalization and Women's situation in India
Globalization has been described as the gradual elimination of economic borders and concomitant increase in international exchange and transnational interaction. Globalization has been identified with economic reforms, structural adjustment programs, New World trade order, and the opening up of the commercial markets and the global communication village, and the world increasingly becoming smaller. In the context of women, this would mean a better social and economic status. But does a growing interdependence and interconnectedness necessarily lead to women's development? A look at agriculture sector from a gender perspective in India, shows that it is not necessarily so. Globalization gets manifested in many ways. These include increased collaboration between companies in production and research, greater use of international financial markets, spatial spread of production activities to utilize local factors, cost advantage and gain access to new markets, increased
intra-firm trade and trade in semi finished parts, increased merger and acquisitions and greater use of international labor market for specialized and senior management staff. It is necessary to look at globalization in terms of its impact on the entire economy and society but with a perspective that is sensitive to women's needs and conditions because women comprise about half the sub-continents population. Gender has been increasingly acknowledged as a critical variable in analysis and development planning. Gender is an expression of power in social relationship between men and women. Gender as a power relation derives from institutional arrangements which provide men of a given social group, with greater capacity than women from that social group to mobilize institutional rules and resources to promote and defend their own interests. The analytic concept of gender is meant to challenge the essentialist and universal dictum that, "biology is destiny". In every form of activity, be it agriculture or allied activities, domestication of animals, fishing, weaving, garment making , women contribute substantially to the value addition of the final product and yet their work is perceived by all as subsidiary, unskilled and often as skill only of domestic value. A large number of these women are burdened with the double burden of work and are vulnerable to exploitation. Though, not a homogeneous group by way of caste, class or economic activity, deprivation and discrimination connect workers from this sector. They suffer from lack of opportunity to work, low and discriminatory wages and exploitative conditions resulting in casualization. They lack social security, face occupational health hazards, and do not have access to new technologies, skills and knowledge.
The period between the early 1950's to the mid 1960's was one of high growth in agricultural production and productivity caused by the rapid increase in public irrigation facilities during the First and Second five Year Plan period. It was thought that a closed economy model based on self reliance and import substitution, along with a major role for the state in allocation of resources would enable the country to achieve rapid economic growth and economic and social transformation. While this strategy has been successful in establishing a vast pool of scientific and technical human resource, during the first three decades of planning the GDP was only 3.5%. The second phase of agricultural change and economic growth occurred during the early 70's marked by a different strategy of intensive and selective growth with programs to assist producers to produce more and the shift in emphasis from public to minor private irrigation works. This new strategy favored the bigger farmers who were given special benefits, with electricity and water, at highly subsidized rates—high yielding variety seeds, fertilizers, credit etc. Though a number of programs were initiated to help the small farmers the growth process was selective and by-passed many segments of society. Thus the benefits of agricultural development did not percolate to those most in need of them.

It has been pointed out that women as consumers stand to lose under protectionism if the price of domestic goods is higher than those in the world markets, while women as producers stand to gain through the liberalization of trade in agricultural production, and exports only if they belong to the category of surplus farmers, but not that of subsistence production. Since most of the women are in subsistence economy, globalization is detrimental to the poor women and
contributes to the feminization of poverty. Today the shifting market considerations have created unforeseen economic hardships for the weaker nations and more so for the poor women who suffer from a double disadvantage of belonging to the under privileged class and that of the under privileged gender. Modernization and mechanization has brought many paradoxical situations for the poor household women. In the increasing cash based economy the conversion of cash into grain and dry fodder has become an expensive proposition for these households. In the absence of alternative avenues of employment and other important sources of subsistence, the poor landless farm hands are being increasingly marginalized and pauperized. For example, a single harvester combine harvests about 100 acres of crop in three days. Because of its efficient and speed functioning, even farmers having small holdings now find it more viable to get the crop harvested by these machines against cash payments. From the farmers point of view the work is done speedily, saving his time and quick completion of harvest operations and it protects the farmer from grain because he now makes payments in cash. Unfortunately, as a result of this a large number of farm labor families that were earlier grain wise comfortable throughout the year, now in majority of cases, been made surplus and those few who manage to find work have to strive hard to convert their cash into grains which usually becomes very expensive as time passes. This means working hard but earning less.

In a study of Odd caste women agricultural laborers from Salem district in Tamilnadu, D. Padmavathi and Vijaylakshmi Rammohan have shown how agricultural mechanization and inflation has contributed towards the pauperization of female agricultural laborers.
Because of modernization and technological transfer this particular caste group was forced to migrate to the cities in search of employment. Before migration they sold their lands to the big farmers with whom they were unable to compete because of changes in the economy. The "pull" factor for these migrants to Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh has been quarry mining, which has created new demands for labor in the unorganized sector because of liberalization and privatization. Earlier quarrying was considered a 'men's activity' but since 1970's growing liberalization and privatization of the quarry economy has made all this possible because the stone cutting and dynamiting of rocks on the quarries are being subcontracted. The quarry contractors now employ migrants by paying them lower wages. These women work for more than fifteen hours a day and have no permanency of work, shelter or receive any perks. Working in the quarries also poses many health hazards. Globalization has only compounded the situation by pushing women further down the occupational hierarchy. Women as consumers stand to lose under protectionism if the prices of domestic goods exceed that of the world market, while women as producers gain through liberalization of trade if they belong to the category of surplus farmers. Most of the women farmers are in subsistence production. Due to these changes, lack of work all the year round and slack and drought seasons they have little choice but to migrate to other areas. The focus of the 'green revolution' has been increasing grain yields of rice and wheat by techniques such as dwarfing, monocultures and multi-cropping. For an Indian women farmer, rice is not only food but also a source of fodder for cattle, straw for thatch. High yielding varieties have increased women's work. The destruction of biological diversity undermines women's diverse contribution to agriculture by eroding

95
biological sources of good, fodder, fertilizer, fuel and fibre. The shift from local varieties and local indigenous crop improvement, strategies can also take away women’s control over seeds and genetic resources. Similarly, women’s access to credit is also severely restricted. They do not have the collateral (land title and cattle) required for agricultural loans.

With the process of commercialization women’s traditional land rights were eroded. Land reform programs as well as the tendency towards the breakup of communal land holding especially ideas of tribal and customary tenures have led to the transfer of exclusive land rights to males as head of households. The ‘head of the family’ concept which is used as the basis for land redistribution has historically ignored both the existence of the female headed households and the rights of the married women to a joint share in land.

The ecological decline in common report resources and the decline in access to what remains due to force of privatization has meant that women work harder and are less able to fulfill their multiple roles in the maintenance and care of the farming system and the farm household. Thus a growing imbalance exists between women’s access to land, labor capital, services and facilities on the one hand and demands of production on the other.

Irrigation is another area where this change can be seen. Traditionally irrigation was based on water harvesting and water was transferred from the small ponds to the fields through the bucket system operated manually, and women were very active here. The introduction of diesel pumps has made irrigation a male monopoly. This has not reduced women’s workload. Many women’s access to resources including energy is actually declining, while their need for
food and income is increasing. Women are the most important collectors and users of biomass. The increasing scarcity of biomass is multiplying women’s work.

4.3 Challenges in the wake of globalization

Globalization has also decreased the control of women over resources. It has led to displacement and when both men and women land up in urban slums it affects the women more due to lack of sanitation. There is also an increase in the violence against women in these areas. The rhetoric of globalization promises to remove backwardness through a world wide exchange of information and establish a cosmopolitan culture but in actual practice since the world is based on unequal power relations these concerns are put on hold and lead to displacement and marginalization. Hence we need a holistic approach to development and empowerment—an approach which is based on equality, love and respect and starts from the family rather than an approach which is based on power and privilege of men and boys and weakness and subservience prescribed for women and girls.

Today there is an irreversibility of the reform process. The logic of global economy as well as India’s interests dictate that India become pro active in its liberalization policies. India must liberalize not because it has no choice but because it is the best choice. India must liberalize because that way alone can it become a rich and prosperous nation and that way alone is there any hope of conquering poverty. The realities of the transitional period and the costs to vulnerable sections of society have to be recognized by the policy makers and some social safety nets to be created. The agricultural reforms must
be sensitive to gender needs. The existing policy package consisting of Minimum Support Price for selected agricultural products and procurement of few food products and the supply of food grains and a few essential items through the Public Distribution System (PDS) need to be reviewed. The ideas of a minimum support price and crop insurance to reduce production risks will go a long way in helping the farmers. The PDS should target the poor and the people living below poverty line. Direct market interventions in the form of purchase, storage and distribution by government agencies must be avoided and increase the farmers especially women’s access to the market via better roads and transport facilities, storage, packing and agro processing facilities. The goal must be sustainable agricultural development. It is imperative for the government to prioritize food security. It is very important to develop safety nets to minimize the adverse distributional consequences of globalization. Legal frameworks should be altered to ease women’s access to and control of resources. The granting of land rights to women, rectifying the discriminatory inheritance laws, labor market legislations and laws to protect common property will go a long way in altering the social conditioning of gender.

Sustainable human development must be at the top of the priority agenda. There is a need to look at development with a human face. The most important goals must include universal access to basic education, primary health care for all, elimination of serious malnutrition and provision of safe drinking water. Women’s concerns need to be explicitly incorporated as integral elements of the objectives, content, monitoring and international support for structural adjustment. There is a need to take into account women’s
special needs in the contribution to economic production, such as household management, child rearing, and community organization in addition to their contribution to agriculture. We need to view human beings as having intrinsic value and not just an instrumental value. The right to a life of dignity is a basic human right. Hence there is a need to change the total perspective. Development and Empowerment will have no real meaning until we focus on the issues of the situation of girl child, gender violence and globalization.

4.4 Women Upliftment and the Economy

Sustained and rapid growth rates are the most effective route to poverty reduction. However, the main challenge is to ensure that growth is pro-poor and pro-women. The Indian economy, on average, has grown at a rate of more than 8 per cent during the last three financial years, making it one of the fastest growing economies in the world. This has been accompanied by a benign rate of inflation. The BRICS report identifies India as the only economy that will be capable of maintaining growth rates above 5 per cent till the year 2050. India’s share of global GDP, in purchasing power parity (PPP) terms, at 5.9 per cent in 2005 is the fourth highest in the world. In terms of share in world exports, India accounts for 0.9 per cent, with the value of exports in US dollar terms placed at US $100 billion. The poverty level, which was 36 per cent in 1993-94, had come down to about 22 per cent in 2004-05. However, statistical indicators, however, do not fully capture India’s recent economic achievements. For example: there has been an increased focus on infrastructure investments such as development of the Golden Quadrilateral, Bharat Nirman, The National Urban Renewal Mission aimed to provide further impetus to growth. In addition, major development initiatives
have been launched -- the historic National Rural Employment Guarantee Act; the National Rural Health Mission (including the Janani Suraksha Yojana); the expanded Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and a National Cooked Mid Day Meal Programme.

4.5 Women's Work in India -- Invisible, Unrecognized and Unremunerated

Women workers account for about 1/3 of all workers. There are over 397 million workers in India, out of which 123 million are women workers. Only a small proportion 18 million, are in the urban areas while 106 million are in rural areas. Not only do a higher percentage of women than men work in the informal economy, women are concentrated in the lower-income segments, working in survival activities or as casual wage workers or home workers. The link between working in the informal economy and being poor is stronger for women than for men. About 30% of the total workers are poor in India (using the 1999-2000 poverty line at Rs.336 per capita per month in rural areas and Rs.451 in urban areas). In general a large proportion were poor.

- India has 397 million workers
- 123.9 million are women
- 106 million are in rural areas
- 18 million are in urban areas
- Only 7% of India’s labor force is in the organized sector; 93% is in unorganized, informal sector
- 96% of women workers are in unorganized sector
4.6 Women Workers in the Unorganized Sector

The unorganized sector is large in India, accounting for 370 million workers in 1999-2000, constituting 93% of the total workforce and 83% of the non agricultural work force.

Women account for 32% of the workforce in the informal economy, including agriculture and 20% of the non agricultural workforce. 118 million women workers are engaged in the unorganized sector in India, constituting 97% of the total women workers in India. The informal sector in the non agriculture segment alone engaged 27 million women workers in India.

Women informal workers are concentrated mainly in agriculture – so much so that three-quarters of all employed women are in informal employment in agriculture. 90% of those employed in manufacturing and construction are also unorganized sector workers. Within manufacturing, they predominate in certain industries such as garments, textiles, food and electronics. The seasonality of work in this sector and the lack of other avenues of work make them vulnerable to a range of exploitative practices. They remain the most vulnerable and the poorest. And yet they are economically active and contributing to the national economy.

4.7 Prevalence of gender based violence

Violence against women (VAW) includes any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life. Violence against women manifests itself in
many ways and is one of the most pervasive forms of human rights abuse in the world today. While all women may experience violence, it intersects with other social and identity-based constructs like caste, religion, ethnicity, disability, and sexual orientation to make specific groups vulnerable to different and particular forms of violence. Thus, the nature of the violence and how it manifests itself may differ because of social location.

To effectively deal with the problem of violence against women efforts are being made to strengthen the existing legislation through review and amendments and develop institutional mechanisms. The Support Services, in place, to victims of violence are Short Stay Homes, Swadhar, Help lines for women in distress, Legal Literacy and Legal Awareness Camps, earmarking of one Fast Track Court in a district, (where there are two) to deal exclusively with cases of violence against women, constitution of the National Commission for Women (NCW) and State Commissions, increased recruitment of women police officers, establishment of women police cells in police stations and exclusive women police stations and establishment of Rape Crisis Intervention Centers in police districts in some big cities. In addition to these, efforts are being made to sensitize judiciary, police and civil administration.

Despite these efforts, crimes against women in the country continue to be on the increase. As per the latest data published by the National Crime Records Bureau, the total number of crimes committed against women has been increasing from year to year from 1.31 lakhs in 1998, 1.36 lakhs in 1999, 1.44 lakhs in 2001 and 1.51 lakhs cases in 2005, consisting of offences such as torture, molestation, rape,
abduction, sexual harassment, dowry deaths, immoral traffic and others.

Some of the facts related to women are:

- Crime Committed Against Women every 3 Minutes
- Molestation case every 15 Minutes
- Rape case every 29 Minutes
- Sexual Harassment case every 53 Minutes
- Dowry Death case every 77 Minutes
- Cruelty by Husband and Relatives case every 9 Minutes