CHAPTER – 6

CONCLUSION AND FINDINGS

Inequalities between man and women and discrimination against women have been age-old issues all over world. Empowerment focuses on mobilizing the self-help on the poor and needy. Women empowerment has five components: women's sense of self-worth, their rights to have and to determine choices; their rights to have access to opportunities and resources; their rights to have the power to control their own lives; both within the home and outside the home. Empowerment is the process of obtaining basic opportunities for marginalized people, either by those people, or through the help of non-marginalized others who share their own access to those opportunities. It also includes actively thwarting attempts to deny those opportunities. Empowerment also includes encouraging and developing the skills for self-sufficiency with a focus on eliminating the future need for charity or welfare in the individuals of the group this process can be difficult to start and to implement effectively.

Empowerment can be viewed as means of creating a social development or environment in which one can make decisions and make choice either individually or collectively for social transformation.
Empowerment is the process of enabling or authorizing individual to think, take action and central work in an autonomous way. It is the process by which one can gain control over one's destiny and the circumstances of one lives. Empowerment includes control over resources (physical human, intellectual and financial) and over ideology.

The candidate has taken up the topic of study of women empowerment in Surat because of the following factors:

1. Surat has become a city of migrant labour in the last couple of decades and as a result the demography is skewed in favour of males, since males have predominantly migrated from other states to Surat in search of job opportunities.

2. A large number of women, belonging to all economic categories, are engaged in some kind of economic activity in non-formal sectors, thereby contributing to the economic betterment of their families.

3. This (migration) coupled with rapid urbanization and economic betterment has brought about a "modern and western" outlook and values among the citizens of Surat.

4. To what extent such a change gets reflected in empowerment of women is an issue that needs to be examined and hence this topic.
Objectives

1. To relate how the concept of empowerment is directly related to social, political and economic factors.

2. To find out how the women of Surat, both literate and illiterate, are aware of their powers, rights and duties.

3. To find out whether privileged women are more empowered than the non-privileged women in society.

4. To examine whether women empowerment has helped to develop and advance in social, political and economic spheres and activities.

Hypothesis

1. The literate women are empowered than the illiterate women.

2. Women from privileged class are empowered than the women of non-privileged groups.

3. Women from non-privilege groups know their rights but they are not aware of how to execute their rights in the society.

4. Empowered women are independent with participation in social and political activities.

5. Economic prosperity is related to women empowerment.
Issues in Women Empowerment

Some of the main issues in women empowerment are rooted in social and economic factors like education, social and religious customs that are considered as hindrance, the inherent limitations of a patriarchal society, and absence of economic independence. Despite several efforts and initiatives by governments at the international, national and local levels the outcome falls short of the objectives. Voluntary efforts through NGOs to complement governmental initiatives too have met with limited success. Creating awareness and women education seems to be the only enabling way for empowering women.

It is in this context, the study was undertaken to find out the nature and status of women empowerment in a city like Surat. The city had a long history of European occupation, Mughul rule and industrial and trading activities. In present times, the urban agglomeration of Surat comprises of majority of migrant male population who have settled for economic prosperity. The social and economic fabric has brought with it developments in infrastructure, education, services and has also witnessed political awareness amongst its citizens. To what extent these factors influence empowerment of women is a moot question. The analysis done in the earlier chapters reflect the status on women empowerment.
Findings

1. Majority of the respondents are in the age group of below 40, which is largely in conformity with the demographic profile of women in Surat.

2. Many respondents did not state their social background and hence the researcher had to place them as belonging to general category. As urbanization and economic benefits accrue, individuals prefer not to disclose their social background (caste, sub-caste etc).

3. The percentage of illiteracy is high in case of SC/ST categories and low in case of OBC and General categories. This reflects lack of awareness and opportunities among the SC/ST categories. The education level among OBC and general categories of respondents shows a relative higher percentage. This helps to infer that awareness and opportunities regarding education have not percolated to the SC and ST categories of respondents.

4. The fact that economic opportunities are available for varied type of unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled labour, both in the formal as well as the informal sectors is reflected in negligible variations in correlation between social status and economic background among different categories of respondents.
5. Respondents consider empowerment as the right to take decisions, both in family and at workplace indicating assertiveness as an attribute of empowerment among the respondents.

6. Education, work experience and formal training are identified as some of the ways to be empowered. This indicates that empowerment of women need to focus on these three core areas.

7. The myth that educated and economically independent women are empowered is negated by the fact that majority feel that empowerment has not taken place despite various efforts.

8. The perception that women belonging to non-privileged group lack education and awareness and are inferior to the privileged group of women as well as men, though they all are entitled to social rights and other privileges, may not be valid because they are aware about issues in empowerment.

9. Women who are educationally and economically better off are not necessarily empowered vis-à-vis social rights and independence.

10. Respondents feel that women belonging to the non-privileged group are more free and independent than the privileged group because they do not have to (i) show their social status, (ii) live up to other’s expectations and (iii) can exhibit unconstrained behavior.
11. Respondents opine that women of the privileged group who are educated and economically better placed have a responsibility to give back something to the society.

12. Though women view that taking up ‘voluntary’ activities give them a sense of independence and empowerment, major hindrance to undertaking such activities is their preoccupation with domestic chores.

13. Education and economic prosperity *per se* does not make women empowered. Respondents feel that though these two factors are important for empowerment, awareness, access to opportunities and support systems are equally necessary to gain empowerment.

14. Conservative nature of the patriarchal society is seen as one of the factors that hinders women empowerment.

   If social and economic empowerment serves as a base for women empowerment, the responses to political empowerment reveals that respondents have serious limitations on the issue of political activity and empowerment. It is observed that majority of the respondents are employed and hence the firm belief that economic stability is a necessity for other forms of empowerment including political empowerment.
1. Though majority of respondents do not participate in political activities, they feel that social work, performed though NGOs or similar such agencies, also constitute political activity.

2. Women belonging to backward classes and minorities do not actively take part in politics and there is a strong perception that literacy has very little to do with politics. This also reflects the perception of the respondents about the contemporary political actors and activities.

3. General awareness about political empowerment is substantially high among the respondents; that non-privileged women need to actively participate in the political process to get empowered, and the view that political empowerment is a process in social and political development of women reflects the attitude and ‘educated’ (not in the literate sense of the term) level of the respondents.

4. Though they perceive that empowered women can be successful in political activity, majority of them shy away from party politics and their active political participation is restricted to voting in elections.

5. Respondents think that political consciousness, the knowledge of electoral process as well as awareness about political ideology of the party is the main political functions. It is found that majority of
respondents have no opinion regarding this matter as they are not involved in any form of political activity.

6. It is noticeable that on the matter of distribution of the reserved seats, 72% respondents show their positive answer. 28% respondents did not think the reservation of seats for women is needed in elected bodies.

7. Only 14% of respondents are involved with some NGOs and similar agencies reflecting the restriction the society imposes on them.

8. The researcher also observed that major hindrances to active political participation come from the family itself and also due to preoccupation with domestic chores.

**Validation of the Hypotheses**

From the foregoing analysis and findings, hypotheses 1, 4 and 5 are found to be validated, whereas 2 and 3 are partly negated. The statement that women from the privileged group are more empowered than those from the non-privileged group is not validated because the latter do not face restrictions in their social behavior and do not have to show their social status. This gives the non-privileged women greater opportunity to assert their rights and other privileges. Hence the women of the non-privileged group are not only aware of their rights but also know how to secure the
same. Non-privileged women many not necessarily be literate but are aware of the issues in empowerment and therefore can be viewed as ‘educated’.

**Scope for Further Research**

The study opens up more areas in women empowerment for further research. Some of the areas can be in understanding and strengthening the methods and modes of women empowerment through education, awareness and training, focusing on enabling women to participate in social activities through NGOs, and examining how political participation (apart from voting during elections) can be increased at the grassroots level.