Chapter-II

Review of Literature

2. Introduction:

The Present Chapter provides an insight on the contemporary studies related to the basic issues dealt by the research study. Since the present study focus on MGNREGA and other rural development programmes as well as impact on women empowerment, the chapter was divided into two sections. The first section was devoted to women development and empowerment issues and the second section was devoted to explain the theories and development programmes for other rural women mainly MGNREGA and rural development programmes.

A large number of people in Asia still continue to live in poverty even after more than six decades of development despite the relatively high growth rate achieved in many parts of this region. It is estimated that more than 550 million people are still living in poverty in Asia. Many anti-poverty programmes have been implemented so far which alleviated poverty to a certain extent, but such programmes have also created new inequalities or reinforced the existing ones. There is increasing evidence that anti-poverty programmes do not automatically benefit the women, and that many growth strategies make the condition of significant number of women in poverty groups worse. It is important to understand the process of change concerning women’s work and its implications in a correct perspective for an appropriate policy intervention as well as for giving input to the on-going voluntary action and movement for the betterment of the work scenario of women.

The first intervention on understanding women’s role and their contribution to the nation’s income as well as household income has begun in the late 1950’s but picked up momentum by international agencies in the 70’s. The present chapter presents the role of women in the process of development and empowerment. A conceptual framework has been developed from
theoretical as well as empirical models regarding the role of development and empowerment.

Section-I

2.1 Development – Empowerment Theories:

Some of the earlier pioneers, theories, views and opinions are briefly presented and explained in this section to understand the theoretical aspects of women and development. There is no unique theoretical model which can capture the diversity in the women’s work and their contribution. Several theoretical models have been formulated such as

1. Neo – Classical Theories
2. Theory of Institution of Home
3. Early Theories of Women Employment
4. Theories of Occupational Choice
5. Women Labour Market Segmentation Theory
6. Dual Labour Market Theory
7. New Household Economics
8. Feminist or Radical Theories
9. Female Marginalization Theory

1. Neo – Classical Theories:

The typical Neo-classical approach emphasizes that, workers are paid according to the value of their marginal product based on the balancing of demand and supply in a competitive capitalist economy. This approach assumes that the factors like family responsibilities, physical strength, education and training, homework, absent and turnover affect the labour productivity and labour supply of women and they account for the male-female differentials in earnings in the labour market. The neo-classicals used the human capital theory developed in the 1960’s to
strengthen the theoretical foundations of the labour market analysis. According to Mincer and Polanchek (1974) women earn less than men because they have lower levels of human capital (mainly education, training and job experience) and therefore lower labour productivity. Further their employment is interrupted due to marriage, bearing and rearing of children, etc. Because of which employers are also not willing to invest in the training of women. Hence women workers acquire less experience and training and their skills are lower which account for their lower earnings (Alkh. N.S. and Sema Singh, 1992).

2. Theory of Institution of Home:

According to this theory, the time allocation of the household between home production and wage work also strengthened the basic neo-classical theoretical formulation. Home is regarded as the basic institution, in which all kinds of change such as political, economic, social and moral changes occur in all values of life through transformation of this institutional work. Further this theory emphasized that the participation of women in the labour market would be greatly influenced by the family composition – the families allocate their resources (time and money) among family members in a rational manner because of which females receive less human capital investments. Hence, women’s place is not now exclusively confined to the home and its activities. Further a general rise in income might permit women to go out to work since it enables the purchase of labour saving household technology. A rise in the market wage of women vis-a-vis men should have the same impact. They have been slowly and gradually drawn into the economic arena in larger numbers. Hence due to economic necessity as well as empowerment of women female labour participation was also increased. Therefore, home is an institution which decides the scope and
significance of women’s economic activities and thus influences the socio-economic development.

3. Early Theories of Women Employment:

According to Yashoda (1993) employment theories gave scant attention to the peculiarities of women who work outside their homes. According to Ankar and Hein (1986) the neo-classical approach assumes that women’s labour force participation is of necessity intermittently because of their natural child-rearing role. And the other assumption of the Neo-Classical is access to job opportunities and compete as an equal basis in the labour market. The neo-classical theory captures only one dimension – the opportunity cost of labour in the market and forgets the multifaceted and multi-dimensional concept of gender division of labour. Karl Marx, the first and foremost advocate of the working class, had only a blurred vision of women at work. However expanding this theory of surplus value he pointed to two methods of augmenting the surplus value, i.e. 1) by prolonging the working days as much as possible to increase the number of hours of surplus labour and 2) by diminishing the number of hours necessary to produce the workers subsistence. This was done by employing women and children who require less for their sustenance than adults. Engels was more explicit than Karl Marx. He argued for emancipation of women following their full entry into social production. Engels was over-optimistic as women workers are still at the tail-end of the labour market. Thorstein Weblen, the founder of institutionalism, established for the first time a theory of gender-based differences in the labour market. His endeavor to establish a theory of economic behavior in which the identification of the different roles of women as opposed to that of men is noteworthy behavior in the labour market. Thus women’s household activities are ignored as unproductive work and classical and neo-classical economists have not contributed in the study of women’s place in the economy.
Theory of Exploitation of Women by Roemer explained the women’s exploitation in feudal, capitalist and socialist modes of production. However, the exploitation mechanism is more intense since the property right and endowment of human skill and non-human assets are biased against women than men. Similarly, the occupational differences and income differences between male and female women’s are better explained by Roemer’s —General Theory of Exploitation— rather than Marxian Surplus Value Theory of Exploitation.

4. Theories of Occupational Choice:

The recent development process has increased the number of women seeking work, and staying in jobs for longer periods and made an impact on labour theories. Axelrad Herma, Ginzberg and Ginsberg (1951) and Super (1957) have given the usual patterns of work observed in the career development of women. Women employment differs from that of men and is characterized by discontinuities due to marriage, child bearing, and post-natal demands on her time at home. A number of research studies by Matthews and Tiedman (1964) Paul Streeton, (1968), Michael Lipton (1968), Hla Myint (1971, Angrist (1971) and Tangri (1972) analyzed the issues of women while some of the theories analyzed that the patterns of work is parallel to those of men in the case of career oriented women. However, the potential for labour force participation depends on the women’s educational attainment.

5. Women Labour Market Segmentation Theory:

Paul Market theory emerged in the background of segmentation of women labour market due to differentials in work preferences, time allocation, skills and job orientation, literacy levels when compared to men. The theory explains that men are paid more and employed more
than that of women and pursued them to occupations which are mainly a peripheral nature.

6. Dual Labour Market Theory:

A popular and early version of the segmentation model in the dual labour market theory (Doeringer and Plore, 1971) which emerged in the background where men not women are paid more and men not women are employed more.

7. New Household Economics:

As a branch of institutional theory of Veblen, the New Household Economics deals with the interconnection between women’s fertility, market work and marital status and these are endogenous variables used for the first time in this theory. The pioneers who constructed theoretical and empirical models of demographic behavior with special emphasis on fertility, female labour participation and marriage, are G.S. Becker and J. Mincer. The central essence of these models is to assign critical roles to the values of men and women’s time in the decision making process. However, the new household’s economic theories are based on primarily behavioral assumption of western industrialized societies and hence they may not suit the developing societies.

8. Feminist or Radical Theories:

There are various versions of this approach, known as feminist or radical theories which has many divergences and incorporates both Marxist and non-Marxist approach. The main principle of the feminist theories is that the subordinate position of women in the labour market. Capitalism and patriarchy are held to be responsible for lower earning of women. The reason for women’s entry into the labour market has been given in three ways:
1) There is no man to earn in the family.
2) Men may not be able to earn an income which will fulfill family requirements.
3) The man may not be ready to share his whole income with other family member rationally and leaving women and children at a very low level. Hence, low income level compels women to join labour market as she has no required skill to join the high yielding, secure and lucrative job and keeps her at subordination of her husband.

The issue of sexual harassment has also been raised by the feminist writers. Anker and Hein (1986, p13) argue that sexual harassment may be greater problem in the developing countries due to the reasons such as:
1) The group of women desperately in need of income
2) In traditional societies, a woman leaving the protection of her home in order to take employment is more likely to be perceived as a loose woman, and
3) Men are not accustomed to interaction with women as workers in an organizational setting; they are likely to fall back on gender based expectations of behavior. Thus the feminist or radical theories pointed out towards the deeper social and cultural roots of the problems of women’s discrimination in economic participation.

9. Female Marginalization Theory:

The Female Marginalization Theory argues that women are progressively marginalized from production in the process of industrialization and economic development. The central idea of this theory is drawn from the Marxist and Socialist Feminist writings. A number of social feminists consider that capitalism and patriarchy result in women’s confinement to home and to inferior jobs (Einstein, 1979, Helmen, 1979). Therefore the
separation between production and reproduction under capitalism and
the hierarchal structuring of capitalist enterprise give rise to segregation
and Marginalization of women’s work.

2.1.1 Policy Approaches of Women Development and Empowerment:

The paradigm shifts of women empowerment and development policies
are discussed in this section. Human resources and specially the woman power
needs to be assigned a key role in any developmental strategy. The
participation of women will have a transformative effect on the goals of both
economic and social development. Women’s participation is a means to
achieve the goals of development. Women’s participation does not mean
quantitative but a qualitative process that involves more women into the
development models, rather it is a part of the process of empowerment and a
way to make the development policies.

2.1.2 Historical Perspectives of Policy Approaches:

Earlier development policies and programs were considered to be gender
neutral without any distinction between men and women and were assumed to
benefit automatically all the people; women as well as men. After the United
Nations Decade for Women (1975 – 1985) was declared, attention was given to
women primarily as mother child careers, or as a particularly vulnerable group.
Consequently, programs directed at women were related mainly to nutrition,
childcare, health and population which aimed at improving family life and
controlling women’s fertility. Welfare oriented programs were also designed to
help women who were suffering from the worst ravages of poverty and
malnutrition. Women’s roles were unperceived in agricultural and other forms
of production.
Ester Boserup's publication her ground breaking book – 'The Women’s Role in Economic Development’ in 1970, made women researchers and activists to think of women as active participants and visible in production in the household and other spheres of the society. Studies revealed that women have often been victims of development programs rather than beneficiaries. Women in development approach are discussed below.

### 2.1.3 Women in Development Approach (WID):

Women’s development is directly related to national development. Development of women’s resources i.e. their abilities, interests, skills and potentialities become an asset in accelerating economic growth and in ensuring social change in desired directions. The socio-economic factors such as health, education and employment are generally deemed to be very crucial for women’s overall development.

A new policy to integrate women in development gained momentum among the development agencies by the mid 70’s, which was also the International Year of Women (1975). Since 1950’s, many policy approaches have emerged, of which Moser (1989) distinguishes five different policy approaches, which reflect changes in macro level, economic and social policy approaches to Third World development. The shift in policy approach towards women has shifted the development policies in Third World from modernization policies of accelerated growth to basic needs strategies, associated with redistribution to the more recent measures associated with structural adjustment policies.

According to Moser, a strict chronological development or separation of these approaches has never been there. In examining how these approaches attempted to meet women’s needs, this framework distinguishes practical gender needs and strategic gender needs, a concept developed by Maxine Molyneaux. The term practical ‘gender needs’ refer to what women require in order to fulfill their roles and tasks. For eg, training and access to childcare
services; while the term strategic gender needs refers to what women require in order to overcome their subordination in the society.

Depending on the specific situation and needs to be addressed, practically, these approaches can be effectively combined. The approaches, their advantages are given below.

- **The Welfare Approach:** During the 1950’s and 60’s, in the early phases of development cooperation, women are perceived as passive beneficiaries in the development process. This approach is based on the western stereotype of the nuclear family in which women are financially dependent on the male breadwinners. However it is appropriate to Indian women’s status.

- **The Equality Approach:** Due to the failure of the modernization policies, the first women in Development (WID) approach emerged during the UN Decade of Women. The main aim of this equality approach is that, women are lagging behind in society and that the gap between men and women can be bridged by taking remedial measures within the existing structures.

- **The Anti-Poverty Approach:** The second WID approach links the economic inequality of women and men to poverty, and to increase the income generating opportunities for poor women. The main objective of this approach was to meet the basic needs such as food, clothes, housing, fuel and education. However, women’s reproductive roles are not addressed by this approach and social and cultural constraints are not identified.

- **The Efficiency or Instrumental Approach:** The main objective of this approach is to integrate women in the development process to fully utilize all human resources and to ensure that development will become more efficient and effective. However, this approach is based on the principle that women could perform extra work
without difficulty and that women’s labour has not so far been of benefit to national development.

- **The Empowerment or Autonomy Approach:** The above four approaches take little account of the historical inequalities of power between men and women in their societies or their participation in economic activity. In the mid 70’s empowerment or autonomy approach emerged among Third World Women and their organizations and it is based on their experiences. This approach aims at strengthening and broadening the power base of women in order to achieve greater self-reliance. It defines women’s inequality not only as a problem in relation to new but also in relation to their race, class, colonial history and current position in the international economic order.

A brief overview of the main characteristics of the different policy approaches are given below.

**2.1.4 Recommendations of World Conferences on Women Development and Empowerment:**

The recommendations of various conferences on women development and empowerment are presented in this section. Many worldwide conferences, summits, seminars, conventions and workshops are organized on women’s issues throughout the globe in order to empower women. From Mexico to Copenhagen, on to Nairobi and finally to Beijing and till date is just more than three decades of contemporary social history. The period of struggle for women’s rights and feminism, in India as well as the world, has been one of the most eventful and momentous in recent times. From the ultra Feminism in the sixties to the introspections on Women’s Status in the seventies, to Women in Development in the eighties to Gender in the nineties and to empowerment in the 21st century has been a bumpy but short ride. There has been a whole reshaping of paradigms of human development and women empowerment from women’s problems to women’s issues and finally to women’s perspectives.
The Fourth UN World Conference on Women organization at Beijing (1995) has suggested a platform for action, as an agenda for women’s empowerment and gender equality. Specific strategies suggested for women and economy is:

- Generate economic policies that have a positive impact on the employment and income of women workers in both the formal and informal sectors and adopt specific measures to address women’s unemployment.
- Take particular measures to promote and strengthen policies and programs for full participation of women with respect for their cultural diversity.
- Promote and support women’s self-employment and the development of small enterprises and strengthen women’s access to credit and capital on appropriate terms equal to those of men through scaling up of institutions dedicated to promoting women’s dairy cooperatives societies, including appropriate, non-traditional and mutual credit schemes, as well as innovative linkages with financial institutions; and
- Adopt policies that support business organizations, non-governmental organizations, and cooperatives, revolving loan funds, credit unions, grassroots organizations, women’s dairy cooperative societies and other groups in order to provide services to women dairy farmers in rural and urban areas. (Fourth World Conference on Women, 1996).

To sum up, the post Beijing Conference Report (1996) and recommendations prepared by Marla Riley suggests continuing the local/global empowerment of women through action towards change for a more just and sustainable society and world. 3rd September, 1981. With this many socio-economic development programs were initiated for the upliftment of women and these are discussed below.
2.1.5 Gender and Development:

Since the mid 1980's the shift from the integration of women to mainstreaming has been accompanied by the shift in focus from women to gender which is referred to as Gender and Development (GAD). Gender is understood as the socially defined and constructed roles of men and women.

On the contrary, sex is biologically determined while gender roles changed from one place to another and across time. From the women’s perspectives and experiences, gender and development is a progressive approach.

To make gender as central focus of development a number of strategies have been developed to bring women into the mainstream. In the past, the attention paid to the role of women in relation to development process has been limited. However, the Gender and Development approach has not yielded desired results in empowering women and men in a patriarchal society. Hence the shift of ‘basic needs’, ‘anti-poverty’ and ‘target-group’ approaches in planning has given a new focus to the role of women among the Indian rural women.

2.1.6 Empowerment Approaches:

In the 1990's the concept of empowerment of women as an instrument of development of women through participation of women in socio-economic development programmes has been gaining wider acceptance. Empowerment is a process of awareness and capacity building leading to greater participation in transformative action to greater decision-making power and control over one's life (OECD, 1984). Peoples participation in the policy making and planning processes also denotes empowerment approach to development. Empowerment mainly refers to entrepreneurial self-reliance according to Kate Young.

Two approaches commonly used by development agencies are identified by a study entitled —Empowerment of Women in South Asia, which include — Empowerment through economic interventions to increase women's economic status through employment, income generation and access to credit; and
empowerment through integrated rural development programmes, in which education, literacy, provision of basic needs and services, fertility control and strengthening of women’s economic status are included. Empowerment through awareness building, capacity building and organizing women that leads to transformation of unequal relationships, increased decision-making power in the home and community, and greater participation in politics (Sri Latha Batliwala, 1993).

Some of these ideas are also taking root in development programs which include the concept of empowerment. The Women’s Empowerment Framework is discussed below.

2.1.7 **The Women’s Empowerment Framework:**

For the first time the UNICEF (1993) has announced the Women’s Empowerment Framework and essential element at each level is explained below.

The main objective of the Women’s Empowerment Framework is that Women’s development can be viewed in terms of five levels of equality, of which empowerment is an essential element at each level. The levels are welfare, access, conscientization, participation and control.

- **Welfare:** The first level addresses / highlights only the basic needs of women where they are purely passive beneficiaries of welfare benefits, without resolving the underlying structural causes.
- **Access:** To make meaningful progress of the women the second level is essential, which involves equality of access to resources such as education, opportunities, land and credit.
- **Conscientization:** It is significant step in the Empowerment Framework. For women to take necessary steps to reduce the gender inequalities there must be recognition that their problems come from inherent structural and institutional discrimination.
• **Participation:** It is a process whereby women take decisions along with men equally and organize themselves and work collectively which will lead to increased empowerment and ultimately greater control.

• **Control:** It is the ultimate level of equality and empowerment. Hence women can be able to make decisions over their lives and the lives of their children and play an active role in the development process in this stage of empowerment framework. Thereby the contribution of women are fully recognized and rewarded.

In recent times, to bring womenfolk into the mainstream of development, all the governments in the Third World countries are using empowerment framework.

2.1.8 **Empowerment of Women:**

• **Definitional Imbroglio:** For integration of women in the development process the phenomenon of empowerment has been considered as an important variable in the Asian countries. The concept of Women Empowerment originates from the idea of the Brazilian educationist ‘Paulo Freire’. Empowerment has been described as nurturing, liberating, energizing the un-affluent and the un-powerful people (Barkat et.al, 1994). Empowerment is a process and, at the same time, the result of the process. It is the process of challenging existing power relation and of gaining greater control over the source of power (Barliwala, 1994). Empowerment is one type of perseverance to achieve strength through which a woman can establish her control on various assets; the concept, empowerment in this sense is to confer power on controlling the wealth and taking decision (Rahman, 1997).
2.1.9 Operational Definition of Women Empowerment:

“Empowerment” has been used to represent a wide range of concepts and to describe a proliferation of outcomes. The term has been used more often to advocate for certain types of policies and intervention strategies than to analyze them, as demonstrated by a number of documents from the United Nations (UNDAW 2001; UNICEF 1999), the Association for Women in Development (Everett 1991), the Declaration made at the Micro-credit Summit (RESULTS 1997), DFID (2000), and other organizations. Feminist activist writings often promote empowerment of individuals and organizations of women (Sen and Grown 1987; Jahan 1995; Kumar 1993) but vary in the extent to which they conceptualize or discuss how to identify it.

Another line of thought in development promotes social inclusion in institutions as the key pathway to empowerment of individuals and has at times tended to conflate empowerment and participation. Capitalism, top-down approaches to development, and/or poverty itself are seen as sources of disempowerment that must be challenged by bringing “lowers”—the poor and disenfranchised—(Chambers 1997) into the management of community and development processes. The growth of civil society and participatory development methods at both macro- and meso-levels of society are usually proposed as the mechanisms by which empowerment takes place (Friedmann 1992; Chambers 1997). For example, Narayan et al. (2000a) focus on state and civil society institutions at both national and local levels, including informal institutions such as kinship and neighborhood networks. Institutions at the micro level, such as those of marriage and the household, are not considered part of the state or of civil society, but interpersonal gender dynamics within the household are considered part of the equation of social exclusion and in need of directed efforts at change.
Bennett (2002) has developed a framework in which “empowerment” and “social inclusion” are closely related but separate concepts. Drawing on Narayan (2002), Bennett describes empowerment as “the enhancement of assets and capabilities of diverse individuals and groups to engage, influence and hold accountable the institutions which affect them.” Social inclusion is defined as “the removal of institutional barriers and the enhancement of incentives to increase the access of diverse individuals and groups to assets and development opportunities.” Bennett notes that both of these definitions are intended to be operational, and describe processes rather than end points. The empowerment process, as she characterizes it, operates “from below” and involves agency, as exercised by individuals and groups. Social inclusion, in contrast, requires systemic change which may be initiated “from above.” As Narayan (2002) and Ravallion and Chen (2001, in their discussion of “pro-poor growth”) also argue, systemic change is necessary to sustain empowerment over time. It is through the process of social inclusion that the “rules of the game” are modified and institutions transformed so that economic growth is widely shared. Bennett argues that the distinction between empowerment and social inclusion is important because the World Bank’s comparative advantage is at the system or policy level.

In general, women do not take a central place in much of the literature on social inclusion or empowerment. While clearly, the broad reference to empowerment as the expansion of freedom of choice and action, as articulated in the World Bank’s Sourcebook on Empowerment and Poverty Reduction (Narayan forthcoming 2002), applies to women as well as other disadvantaged or socially excluded groups, it is important to acknowledge that women’s empowerment encompasses some unique additional elements. First, women are not just one group amongst several disempowered subsets of society (the poor, ethnic minorities, etc.); they are a cross-cutting category of individuals that overlaps with all these other groups. Second, the household and interfamilial relations are a central locus of women’s disempowerment in a way that is not true for other disadvantaged groups. This means that efforts at empowering women must be especially cognizant of the implications of broader
policy action at the household level. Third, several of the authors whose work we review in this paper argue that women’s empowerment requires systemic transformation in not just any institutions, but fundamentally in those supporting patriarchal structures (Kabeer 2001; Bisnath and Elson 1999; Sen and Grown 1987; Batliwala 1994).

Development cooperation agencies have begun to focus on the development of indicators for assessing gender equality, and in some cases “empowerment”, and there is a growing body of literature in which efforts have been made to clearly define the concept of empowerment. This literature emerges from both activist and research writings. A diverse body of research has emerged on measuring empowerment and relating it to other variables of interest in international development. This research tends to take place at the interstices of the disciplines of demography, sociology economics, anthropology, and public health; it does not occupy a widely recognized niche in any academic field.

**2.1.10 Consensus on Conceptualization:**

Given the diversity in the emphases and agendas in discussions on women’s empowerment, we found greater consensus in the literature on its conceptualization than expected. There is a nexus of a few key, overlapping terms that are most often included in defining empowerment: options, choice, control, and power. Most often these are referring to women’s ability to make decisions and affect outcomes of importance to themselves and their families. Control over one’s own life and over resources is often stressed. Thus, there is frequent reference to some variant of the ability to “affect one’s own well being,” and “make strategic life choices.” For example, G. Sen (1993) defines empowerment as “altering relations of power...which constrain women’s options and autonomy and adversely affect health and well-being.”
Batliwala’s (1994) definition is in terms of “how much influence people have over external actions that matter to their welfare.” Keller and Mbwewe (1991, as cited in Rowlands 1995) describe it as “a process whereby women become able to organize themselves to increase their own self-reliance, to assert their independent right to make choices and to control resources which will assist in challenging and eliminating their own subordination”.

Also appearing frequently in definitions of empowerment is an element related to the concept of human agency self-efficacy. Drawing mainly from the human rights and feminist perspectives, many definitions contain the idea that a fundamental shift in perceptions, or “inner transformation,” is essential to the formulation of choices. That is, women should be able to define self interest and choice, and consider themselves as not only able, but entitled to make choices (A. Sen 1999; G. Sen 1993, Kabeer 2001; Rowlands 1995; Nussbaum 2000; Chen 1992). Kabeer (2001) goes a step further and describes this process in terms of “thinking outside the system” and challenging the status quo.

Kabeer (2001) offers a useful definition of empowerment that effectively captures what is common to these definitions and that can be applied across the range of contexts that development assistance is concerned with:

"The expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them."

We employ this definition as a reference point in the present study. Although brief, this definition is specific enough to distinguish it from the general concept of “power,” as exercised by dominant individuals or groups. Kabeer’s definition is especially attractive because it contains two elements which help distinguish empowerment from other closely related concepts (as discussed further below): 1) the idea of process, or change from a condition of disempowerment, and 2) that of human agency and choice, which she qualifies by saying that empowerment implies “choices made from the vantage point of real alternatives” and without “punishingly high costs".
2.1.11 Measures for Women’s Empowerment:

India attained freedom from British rule on 15th August 1947. India was declared a sovereign Democratic Republic on 26th January 1950. On that date the Constitution of India came into force.

All citizens of India are guaranteed social, economic and political justice, equality of status and opportunities before law by the Constitution. Fundamental freedom of expression, belief, faith, worship, vocation, association and action are guaranteed by the Indian Constitution of all citizens- subject to law and public morality.

2.1.12 The Constitution of India – Provisions Relating to Women:

The Constitution of India not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women for removing the cumulative socio-economic, educational and political disadvantages faced by them.

2.1.13 Advancement of women through Five Year Plans:

There has been a progressive increase in the plan outlays over the last six decades of planned development to meet the needs of women and children. The outlay of Rs. 4 crores in the First Plan (1951-56) has increased to Rs. 7,810.42 Crores in the Ninth Five Year Plan, and Rs. 13,780 crores in the Tenth Five Year Plan. There has been a shift from “welfare” oriented approach in the First Five Year Plan to “development” and “empowerment” of women in the consecutive Five Year Plans.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Plan Period</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>First Five Year Plan (1951-56)</td>
<td>It was mainly welfare oriented as far as women’s issues were concerned. The Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB) undertook a number of welfare measures through the voluntary sector. The programmes for women were implemented through the National extension Service Programmes through Community Development Blocks</td>
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<td>Second Five Year Plan (1956-61)</td>
<td>Efforts were geared to organize “Mahila Mandals” (women’s groups) at grass-roots levels to ensure better implementation of welfare schemes.</td>
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<td>Third, Fourth, Fifth and other Interim Plans (1961-74)</td>
<td>They accorded high priority to women’s education. Measures to improve maternal and child health services, and supplementary feeding for children, nursing and expectant mothers were also introduced.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-85)</td>
<td>This is regarded as a landmark in women’s development. The Plan adopted a multidisciplinary approach with a three-pronged thrust on health, education and employment of women.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-90)</td>
<td>Development programmes for women were continued, with the objective of raising their economic and social status and bring them into the mainstream of national development. A very significant step therein was to identify and promote “beneficiary-oriented programmes” which extended direct benefits to women.</td>
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<td>Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-97)</td>
<td>It attempted to ensure that the benefits of development from different sectors did not bypass women. Special Programmes were implemented to complement the general development programmes. The flow of benefits to women in the three core sectors of education, health and employment were monitored vigilantly. Women were enabled to function as equal partners and participants in the developmental process with reservation in the membership of local bodies. This approach of the Eighth Plan marks a definite shift from ‘development’ to empowerment’ of women.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002)</td>
<td>The Ninth Five Year Plan envisaged: 1. Empowerment of women and socially disadvantaged groups such as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes and Minorities as agents of socio-economic change and development. 2. Promoting and developing people’s participatory institutions like Panchayati Raj institutions, cooperatives and self-help groups. 3. Strengthening efforts to build self-reliance. i. The convergence of services from different sectors. ii. A women’s component plan at the Central and State levels.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007)</td>
<td>The Tenth Five Year Plan was formulated to ensure requisite access of women to information, resources and services, and advance gender equality goals.</td>
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*Source: India, Planning Commission, (2002). Five Year Plans, New Delhi*
2.1.14 International Policies and India’s Constitutional Provisions, Policies and Programmes for Women:

a. UN Human Rights Instruments:
   - Universal Declaration of Human Rights – adopted in 1948
   - International Conventional on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination - adopted in 1965/entered into force in 1969, monitored by the committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD)
   - Convention on the elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women- adopted in 1979/ entered into force in 1981, monitored by the Committee on CEDAW
   - Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment – adoption in 1984/ entered into force in 1987, monitored by Committee Against Torture (CAT)

b. Commitments at UN Conferences:
   - World Conference on Education for All (1990) Jomtien
   - Second UN World Conference on Human Rights (1993) Vienna
   - International Conference on Population and Development (1994) Cairo
   - World Summit on Social Development (1995) Copenhagen
- Fourth World Conference on Women (1995) Beijing
- World Food Summit (1997) Rome

c. Constitution of India Guarantees:

- Equality Before Law for Women (Article 14)
- The State not to discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste sex, place of birth or any of them (Article 15(I))
- The State to make any special provision in favour of women and children (Article 15(3))
- Equality of opportunity for all citizens in matter relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State (Article 16)
- The State to direct its policy towards securing for men and women equally the right to an adequate means of livelihood (Article 39(a)); and equal pay for equal work for both men and women (Article 39(d))
- To promote justice, on a basis of equal opportunity and to provide free legal aid by suitable legislation or scheme or in any other way to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities (Article 39 A)
- The state to make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief (Article 42)
- The state to promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and to protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation (Article 46)
• The state to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people and the improvement of Public Health (Article 47)

• To promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India and to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women (Article 51 (A) (e))

• Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every panchayat to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a panchayat (Article 243 D (3))

• Not less than one-third of the total number of offices of chairpersons in the panchayats at each level to be reserved for women (Article 243 D(4))

• Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every municipality to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a municipality (Article 243 T (3))

• Reservations of offices of chairpersons in municipalities for the scheduled castes, the scheduled tribes and women in such manner as the legislature of a state may by law provide (Article 243 T (4))


2.1.15 Schemes For Assitances:

a. Ministry of Women and Child Development:
   - Support to Training and Employment Programme (STEP)
   - Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (RGSEAG)
- Swawlamban, erstwhile Setting up of Employment and Income Generating Training-cum-Production Units for Women (NORAD)
- Construction/Expansion of Hostel Building for Working Women with a Day Care Centre (WWH)
- Balika Samriddhi Yojana (BSY)
- National Programme for Adolescent Girls (Kishori Shakti Yojana)
- Shishu Greh Scheme (Erstwhile- Homes for infants and young Children for promotion of In-Country Adoption)
- Integrated Scheme for Street Children
- Scheme for Welfare of Working Children in Need of Care and Protection
- Prevention and control of Juvenile Maladjustment
- Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS)
- Conditional Cash Transfer Scheme for the Girl Child with insurance Cover
- General Grant-in-Aid for Voluntary organizations in the Field of Women and Child Development
- National Mission of Empowerment of Women
- Scheme for Leadership Development of Minority Women
- Conditional Maternity Benefit Scheme
- Other Programmes (Relief to and Rehabilitation of Rape Victims)
- Education Scheme, Food and nutrition Board (FNB)
- Ujjawala, Scheme for Combating Trafficking
- Nutrition programme for Adolescent Girls (NPAG)
- Wheat Based nutrition Programme
- Anganwadi Karyakati Bima Yojana

b. **Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB):**
- General Grant-in-Aid for Voluntary Organisations in the field of Women and Child Development
➢ Care and Protection for Those on the Margins of society
➢ Awareness Generation Programme (AGP)
➢ Condensed Courses of Education and Vocational Training (CCE & VT)
➢ Rajiv Gandhi National Creche Scheme for the Children of Working Mothers 1994
➢ Integrated Scheme for Women Empowerment
➢ Family Counseling Centres (FCC)
➢ Mahila Mandal Programme (MMP)
➢ Short Stay Homes for Women and Girls (SSH)
➢ Socio-Economic programme (SEP)

c. Other Schemes:
➢ Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)
➢ The Swa-Shakti Project, a scheme for Rural Women’s Development and Empowerment
➢ Swadhar, Scheme for Women in Difficult circumstances
➢ Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (Credit for Women)
➢ Scheme for Rescue of Victims of Trafficking
➢ Priyadarshini, Women’s Empowerment and Livelihood Programme in the Mid Gangetic plains
➢ Innovative Work on Women and Children
➢ Scheme for Relief to and Rehabilitation of Victims of Rape

d. Ministry of Human Resource Development, Department of Education:
➢ Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)
➢ District Primary Education Programme (DPEP)
➢ National Programme of Mid day Meals in Schools
➢ The scheme for providing Quality Education in Madrassas
➢ The scheme for Infrastructure Development in Minority institutions
- Prarambhik Shiksha Kosh (PSK)
- Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA)
- Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC)
- Inclusive Education for Disabled at Secondary School (IEDSS)
- Scheme of Vocationalisation of Education +2 Level
- Scheme for Universal Access and Quality at the Secondary Stage (SUCCESS)
- National Scheme for Incentive to Girls for Secondary Education (SUCCESS)
- National Means – cum- Merit Scholarship Scheme (NMMS)
- Scheme for Construction and Running of Girls Hostel for Students of Secondary and Higher Secondary Schools
- Adult Education and Skill Development Scheme
- Development of Women’s Studies in Universities and colleges
- Schemes for Promotion of Higher Education for SC/ST/Minorities/OBC
- Post Graduate Scholarships for Students belonging to SC/ST/Minorities/OBC
- Post Doctoral Fellowship for women
- District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) for special Groups
- National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL)
- Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV)
- Kendriya Vidyalayas (KV)
- Navodaya Vidyalayas (NV)
- National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS)
- Focus on Minority Areas
- National Literacy Mission (NLM)
- Jan Shikhan Sansthan (JSS)
- Mahila Samakhya: Education for Women’s Equality
e. **Ministry of Rural Development:**

- Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY)
- Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY), including Food Grains Component
- Assistance for Rural Employment Guarantee Schemes
- National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP)
- National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA)
- National food for Work Programme(NFWP)
- National Common Minimum Programme (NCMP)
- Central Rural Sanitation programme(CRSP)
- Cash Component for Food for Work programme
- Indira Awaas Yojana(IAY)
- Accelerated Rural Water Supply programme (ARWSP)
- Rural Sanitation
- Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)
- Provision of Urban Amenities in Rural Areas (PURA)

f. **Ministry of Urban Development:**

- Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM)
- Water Supply and Sanitation
- Housing

### 2.1.16 Women and Economy:

With the advent of industrialization and modernization, women have assumed greater responsibility, both at home and in the world of work. This is reflected in the increasing work participation rate of women which was 19.7% in 1981 and rose to 25.7% in 2001. However, this is still low compared to male work participation rate, which was 52.6% in 1981 and 51.9% in 2001.
The number of women in the reorganized sector was 4.95 million on 31st March 2001, of whom 2.86 million were in public sector and 2.09 million were in the private sector. The number rose to 5.120 million on 31.03.2006, and of these women, 3.003 million were in the public sector and 2.118 million were in the private sector.

2.1.17 Support Measures for Working Women:

The Government of India has undertaken several initiatives to provide support to working women. Some of these initiatives are:

1. Rajiv Gandhi National Creche Scheme for the Children of Working Mothers
2. Working Women’s Hostels with Day Care Centres
3. Swawlamban, erstwhile setting up of Employment and Income Generating Training- Cum- Production Units for Women (NORAD) transferred to the States with effect from 01.04.2006
4. Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP)
5. Swayamsidha
6. Priyadarshini, Women’s Empowerment and Livelihood programmes in the mid Gangetic plains
7. Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK)

2.1.18 Legislation for working women:

Several legislations have been enacted since independence for the welfare of workers and women workers. These are:

1. The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976
2. The Minimum wages Act, 1948
3. The Mines Act, 1952
5. The Beedi and Cigar workers (conditions of employment) Act, 1966
7. The Employee’s State Insurance Act, 1948 (With rules uptill 1984)
9. Supreme Court order regarding sexual harassment of women at work place and other institutions, 1999
10. The Employment Guarantee Act, 2004
11. The Domestic Workers (Registrations, social security and welfare) Act, 2008
12. The Unorganised sector workers social security bill, 2007 (Under consideration of Parliament), on the whole the Government of India has initiated several socio-economic development and empowerment programmes for women to achieve gender equity. However, the present study in concentrating on the special programme which aims to provide employment generation for the poorest of the poor rural women.

2.1.19 Rural Women Empowerment:

The work of Lourene E. Shields (1995) provided an exploratory framework to understand and develop the concept of empowerment both from a theoretical and practical perspective with a particular focus on women’s perception of the meaning of empowerment in their lives. Human Development Report (1995) gave special emphasis on women empowerment. It mainly concerned on formulation and utilization of measure of gender equality and inequality and the identification of efforts and contribution made by women that go unrecognized in standard national income and employment statistics. The concepts of GDI and GEM evolved out in this report.

empowerment at aggregate level. In a paper prepared for the World Bank by Malhotra et.al. (2002), tried to highlight the methodological aspects of measurement and analysis on women empowerment. The edited volume of Aparna Mahanta (2002) sought to explain the question of women’s access to or deprivation of basic human rights as the right to health, education and work, legal rights, rights of working women’s, besides issues like domestic violence, all the while keeping the peculiar socio-cultural situation of the North East in mind.

Institute of Social Sciences and South Asia Partnership, Canada organized a workshop in 2003 which dealt with women’s empowerment through political participation wherein presentations were made on various theoretical works and case studies. The workshop addressed issues like “Proxy Women” which was the shorthand term used by some who perceived that women elected to Panchayat bodies were merely ‘proxies’ or puppets in the hands of their husbands, relatives and other male panchayat members. So deconstructing the idea of proxy women, the workshop emphasized on training programme for elected women for their capacity building. In the keynote address.

Mathew (2003) viewed that the equity and empowerment approaches merged together to form the ‘gender and development concept’.

Assam Human Development Report (2003) threw light on inequality in the achievement between men and women of Assam in different spheres of life. The report viewed that poverty, violence and lack of political participation were the main issues of concern for South Asian Women, and Assam was no exception.

Findings of Sunita Kishor and Kamla Gupta (2004) revealed that average women in India were disempowered absolutely relative to men, and there had been little change in her empowerment over time. The authors viewed that there were several cogent and pressing reasons for evaluating, promoting and monitoring the level of women’s empowerment in India, not the least of which was that household health and nutrition was generally in the hands of women and their empowerment was necessary for ensuring not just their own welfare,
but the wellbeing of households. They also asserted that empowerment was critical for the very development of India, as it enhanced the quality and quantity of human resources available for development.

Gustav Ranis and Francis Stewart (2005) in their article mentioned that a study in Cote de Ivoire reveals that increased female share in household income leads to increased spending on human development enhancing items. They also viewed female literacy as an important input of the production function (i.e. human development improvement function).

Rae Lesser Blumberg (2005) viewed that economic empowerment of women was the key to achieve gender equality as well as wealth and well-being of nation. The author opined that financial autonomy would enhance women’s capacity of decision making in various arenas of life. Moreover, it would lead to less corruption, less armed conflict and less violence against female in the long run.

In the January 2008 issue of ‘Kurukshetra: A Journal on Rural Development’, focused mainly on women’s empowerment and opined that although women were the active agents for sustainable development, and their empowerment was very important for the process of development, they had not actively participated in their own emancipation mainly due to low economic independence.

Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2001) in their paper used a policy of political reservation for women adopted in India to study the impact of women’s leadership on policy decision. They found that women were more likely to participate in policy making process if the leader of the village community was happened to be women.

Parashar (2004) examined how mother’s empowerment in India is linked with child nutrition and immunization and suggested women to be empowered simultaneously along several different dimensions if they and their children were to benefit across the whole spectrum of their health and survival needs.
Sridevi (2005) in her paper provided a scientific method to measure empowerment. Study of Cote de Ivoire revealed that increased female share in household income leads to increased spending on human development enhancing items (as quoted by Ranis and Stewart, 2005).

Karat (2005) in her works discussed the issues of violence against women, their survival, political participation and emancipation. Panda and Agarwal (2005) focused on the factor like women’s property status in the context of her risk of marital violence and opined that if development means expansion of human capabilities, then freedom from domestic violence should be an integral part of any exercise for evaluating developmental progress.

Desai and Thakkar (2007) in their work discussed women’s political participation, legal rights and education as tools for their empowerment. Deepa Narayan (2007) made an attempt to measure women empowerment for different countries and regions by using self-assessed points on a ten steps ladder of power and rights, where at the bottom of the ladder stood people who were completely powerless and without rights and on the top stood those who had a lot of power and rights.

Figueras (2008) in her work studied the effect of female political representation in State legislature on public goods, policy and expenditure in the context of India and opined that politician’s gender and social position matters for policy.

2.1.20 Women Empowerment through MGNREGS:

Shubhadeep (2010) conducted a study in two districts, Burdwan and Dakshin Dinajpur of west Bengal with 200 beneficiaries as respondents to assess the impact of MGNREGA on the empowerment of the beneficiaries. Significant positive changes were found in the level of aspiration, self-confidence and self-reliance of the respondents after commencement of the scheme. Hundred percent respondents were found to be in low empowerment category before MNREGA and 75.5 per cent of the respondents were found under low empowerment category and 24.5 per cent were found under medium empowerment category after working under MGNREGA. So a positive impact of
the programme was observed on the empowerment of its beneficiaries in the study area.

2.2 Section-II

2.2.1 MGNREGA and Rural Development Programmes:

Tenaja (1989), states that despite tall claims about the success of various anti-poverty measures such as IRDP (Integrated Rural Development Programme, NREP (National Rural Employment Programme), RLEGP (Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme) and TRYSEM (Training Rural Youth for Self Employment), most of the labour households are still not able to meet their minimum consumption requirements. These are people who do not have a bare sufficiency of anything – neither food, nor clothing nor shelter, what to speak of education or medical care. The fact we find such utter destitution here in Punjab (reputed to be the home of India’s most progressive farmers) raises doubts about the designing and implementation of the poverty eradication programmes which have generally taken the forms of loan facilities, subsidies, grants, etc.

Rao (1998) presented an overview of the rural employment situation and pointed out that through prosperity is positively related to agriculture, poverty is found to be higher even among States with a better resource endowment position. Structural differences and structural mismanagement are the main reasons for this phenomenon. He emphasized the need for dovetailing the programmes basically meant for achieving a higher agricultural growth with those aiming at improvement in the off-farm sector. He also stressed the need for having some programmes at the household level targeting rural artisans, small and marginal farmers, agricultural labourers etc. Similarly at the village level, some programmes should be thought of which will ensure
development at that level. He mentioned that the contribution of the private enterprises to GDP is much higher (72 per cent) when compared to that of the Government enterprises and in view of this, the strategy must be to give further fillip to the private enterprises in the form of extending necessary technical support and finances. The paper on TRYSEM depicts the successes and failures in the programme. The present phase of the implementation of TRYSEM provides mixed results. It was suggested that about two lakh village tanks may be developed using the TRYSEM funds which will go a long way in improving the resource base of the area. It was indicated that hardly 0.8 per cent of the funds earmarked are spent for the development of the artisan sector and this need to be increased significantly. Integration of various schemes and networking with various institutions will be necessary to achieve the desired results in this sector. Rao further mentioned that re-orientation of the present strategies would be necessary to improve the productive efficiency in the agriculture sector so that surplus is generated for the promotion of the non-farm sector in rural areas. The participatory approach may be attempted for achieving the desired goals.

Ramanujam et al (1998), explained according to the estimates of the National Sample Survey Organisation, the number of unemployment people in the country in 1992 was 23 million and this has become 58 million backlog in 1997 and the backlog is expected to touch the mark of 94 million by 2002. The unemployment includes both open and underemployment. The estimates for underemployment can be obtained by subtracting the unemployment rate as per the usual principal status definition form the based on the current status definition. In rural areas, open unemployment is declining faster when compared with the overall position. But underemployment has been increasing marginally. He also highlighted some trends in the unemployment levels according to the gender, occupation and educational levels. He observed that educated
unemployment is much higher in the rural areas that too among the females. Another important point made by Ramanujam et al. relates to the casualisation of employment. According to him, casual employment has gone up from 23.4 per cent in 1972-73 to 35.6 per cent in 1993-94. The casualisation of employment would lead to lower skills, resulting in poor quality of work and lower wages. Though 65 per cent of the labour force is engaged in agriculture the rate of agriculture growth is very low. Some of the future strategies at the macro level should include the improvement in the quality of employment provided. The employment created must be basically productivity-oriented and to achieve this, the skills of the people concerned must be integrated with technological factors. The other suggested course of action would be involving females in a larger measure in the employment generation programmes and these two issues would mean spelling out a Human Resource Development Policy for the future. The reasons identified by him for a higher rate of unemployment include excessive dependence on agriculture, low growth rate of agriculture and marginal farmers entering the labour.

Karunakaran (1998), felt that focusing on non-agricultural employment in the rural areas would be crucial to poverty reduction. There is a correlation in the employment in both agricultural, non-agricultural sectors and poverty levels. The shrinkage in the agricultural employment would normally lead to increase in the employment in non-agricultural sector which would result in the decline of the poverty level. Promotion of agricultural growth in the form of improving irrigational facilities through watershed development programmes would result in non-agricultural growth. Non-governmental organizations have a critical role to play in the area of market development. It was also felt that highly professionalized marketing system and reservation/sops for the tiny industry would go a long way in achieving the desired results.
Saxena (1998) has also emphasized the need for providing employment in the non-agricultural sector. According to him the following are the gaps in the existing policy. a) Lack of focus; b) Appropriate support not being extended; c) Inadequate industrial mechanism; and d) Lack of research and development; e) IRDP not being used for forging backward and forward linkages to support micro enterprises. He suggested a holistic approach in bridging the gaps in the policy for providing employment in the non-agricultural sector: a) There should be a clear policy for rural industrialization, b) Creation of separate structures with necessary manpower to implement and evaluate the programmes and c) Using the existing infrastructure effectively. He also provided a model for rural industrialization. As in the case of other important sectors he suggested that there should be a technology mission for rural industrialization. He also mentioned that nearly Rs. 600 crore is being spent on research by different organisations and if 20 to 30 per cent of this amount is earmarked for non-farm sectors in rural areas, higher employment and better production etc., can be achieved. Further, the manufacturing sector and service sectors need to be strengthened and the infrastructure sector given top priority.

Gangadharan et al (1998) has mentioned that the non-farm sector was given a priority status for financing since bank nationalization in 1969. However, NABARD and RBI studies showed that the performance of banks is not encouraging with respect to financing the non-farm sector. He mentioned that currently total credit requirements of the non-farm sector in rural areas is approximately in the range of Rs. 8000 crores whereas banks are financing only up to around Rs. 4000 crores. This credit gap of Rs. 4000 crores has to be met for development of the non-farm sector. He remarked the banks are not enthusiastic in meeting the credit gap principally due to lack of commercial approach to non-farm sector and inadequacy of rural infrastructure like power, roads and
communications etc. The appropriate strategy would be to improve the linkages including a cost-effective technology through meaningful inter-agency co-ordination. Another important strategy would be a group-based approach to the non-farm sector in the context of higher investment needs. He spelt out other strategies to develop rural industries for gainful employment.

Rath (1998) pleaded that the data collected by NSS merits a careful interpretation. He mentioned that, a) total number of days of employment is increasing at a lower rate compared to the total number of persons unemployed, b) due to tremendous growth of labour force, the phenomenon of work sharing has started leading to shorter working days. Length of real work per person has actually come down. At the same time the amount of time taken to complete a given work has been increasing. The NSS data cannot capture such things, c) for studying the rural unemployment the farm cost studies data has not been used. If the farm cost data is used, it if found that number of days of reported employment is not the actual number of days of employment. The actual number of days of employment is less, d) for schemes like IRDP there is no meaning in collecting information in terms of number of man-days generated. It would be better if, information is gathered about income generation e) there has been a rapid demolition of the rural industrial sector in post-independent period. For promoting employment in the non-farm sector, information and organization are more important and subsidy and the rule of state in spreading the information is vital and f) in our policy, education has been equated with literacy. Because of such an approach we are spending almost three times more money on literacy campaign than on primary education. Training and education must be integrated.
Haque (1998) felt that historically, development of the non-farm sector follows automatically as a consequence of the farm sector. This, however, has not happened in Punjab and Haryana where agriculture has grown and continues to grow at a very high rate. The infrastructure is also highly developed. But no such development of the non-farm sector has taken place. The reason for this as interpreted by Ramanujam is that the cropping pattern in Punjab and Haryana are labour intensive. Because of this, labour is withdrawn from the manufacturing sector resulting in a low growth of the non-farm sector. He also emphasized the need for developing composite skills in the rural labour. Another question raised was regarding the quality of employment.

Kumar (2006) has held that economic issues are the most important issues in the elections and for Himachali voters unemployment is the single most important issue determining the outcome of the elections.

Dre'ze and Lal (2007) writing about NREGS in Rajasthan have come to the conclusion that Rajasthan comes first in terms of employment generation per rural household under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA). In 2006-07, the average rural household in Rajasthan's six “NREGA Districts” worked for as many as 77 days under this programme, earning nearly Rs.4,000 in the process. This is an unprecedented achievement in the history of social security in India. Further, disadvantaged sections of the population are the main gainers. The share of women in NREGA employment is around two thirds in Rajasthan, and that of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe households is as high as 80 percent. In this and other ways, the Act contributes to social equity and economic redistribution. These figures are based on official data released by the Ministry of Rural Development, but they are fully consistent with independent reports, as well as with our own experience from Dungarpur district in April 2006.
Aulakh (2007), writing about the implementations of NREGS in Nawanshar says that people still prefer low paid government office job rather than manual work under the NREGS, the situation is everywhere in Punjab calling the manual labour aversion as a social stigma, the writer has narrated some of the good works done under the NREGS but educated people generally, even after getting registered avoid the physical labour. The migrant labour which is barred under the act wants to work on the scheme. Similarly women folks also want to work but social stigma stops them along with the reluctance of the educated youths to work with their hands.

Misra, Neelesh (2007) said that funds for the national employment guarantee scheme are being misused in U.P. and, all this is happening because of nexus among village heads, government officials and politicians and he further raises a question as to why can't the NREGA workers be integrated into, say the PM’s roads project, where they can be a force multiplier for machine-aided projects? Otherwise, there will be cases like the one at Arsaliya in Hardoi, where the headman decided to dig a pond though the villagers didn't need it. So none of them have job cards with them, and none of them got to work for 100 days. The job cards are with the village officials. I called up the pradhan. He said the truth was that the villagers were lazy and they did not want to work. Then he excused himself. He had an election meeting to organize, he said.

Dhuru, Arundhati (2007) has been skeptical about the implementation as the muster rolls fabricator cannot be ruled out and the minimum payments are also not guaranteed. According to her the success of the scheme depends more on politics and less on economics.
Swaminathan, P. (2007) on the other hand has depended the scheme that merely on the basis of corruption reports and poor performance the scheme cannot be outrightly rejected.

Dreze (2007) looks at the corruption in rural employment programs in Orissa and how this has continued in a NREGS as well. Nonetheless, he believes that there is tremendous potential of NREGA in the survey areas. Where work was available, it was generally found that workers earned close to (and sometimes more than) the statutory minimum wage of Rs 70 per day, and that wages were paid within 15 days or so. This is an unprecedented opportunity for the rural poor, and there was evident appreciation of it among casual labourers and other disadvantaged sections of the population. There is the hope among workers that NREGA would enable them to avoid long-distance seasonal migration, with all its hardships. Further, there is plenty of scope for productive NREGA works in this area, whether it is in the field of water conservation, rural connectivity, regeneration of forest land, or improvement of private agricultural land. The challenges involved in “making NREGA work” should always be seen in the light of these long-term possibilities and their significance for the rural poor.

Mathur (2007) thinks that a system of regular and continuous flow of authoritative information is essential, as opposed to the sporadic reports and studies dependent on the initiative of individuals and groups. There is room for the government to take up concurrent evaluations, more effective monitoring, time-series studies, and focused reports on critical aspects like minimum wages, muster rolls. The states should also shoulder responsibility through rural development department, labor, and agriculture, forests, planning, the CSSO and its network. To improve implementation, the government needs to troubleshoot, modify policy directives, and issue operational guidelines for the district, block and village levels. The government must take the lead, be proactive, mobilize institutions and groups, and use the media effectively.
NREGS involves several lakh government officials, panchayat functionaries, elected representatives, NGOs and community groups. They play a critical role but have had little preparation for the challenge. Government has the primary responsibility, and fortunately, also the capacity to do so, with its training in budget, infrastructure and network of support institutions. Most importantly, the isolation in which the NREGA now operates must end – as a mere scheme of one ministry, and no more. This in fact is a program of national importance which has been marginalized. While the ministry of rural development is the nodal ministry at the centre, every relevant department and agency requires being involved.

Manoj Kumar (2007) made a detailed analysis of impact of different poverty alleviation programmes, including the wage and self-employment programmes through his study titled “Political Economy of Poverty : A Micro-Level Study.” In his study he opines that most of the programmes for direct attack on poverty are good politics but bad economics. They are populist measures for various considerations. The book has evaluated the efficacy of the poverty alleviation programmes on the basis of micro level study with this conclusion that poverty alleviation programmes have filled the coffers of a group of people who are much above the poverty line. The book throws sufficient light on political economy of poverty and poverty alleviation programmes. The book has evaluated the self-employment programmes, wage employment programmes and National Social Assistance Programmes separately and in that process limiting factors in way of poverty alleviation programmes have been identified.

While emphasizing on the need for employment generation programmes in the realm of poverty alleviation, SB Verma (2006) brought out an edited publication titled “Rural Poverty Alleviation and Employment.” The authors point out that despite the steady growth of economy after independence, the problem of unemployment is still on the increase. The benefit of growth has failed to percolate down to the poor people especially in rural areas. The
strategy for poverty alleviation includes acceleration of rapid economic growth with a focus on employment intensive sectors (generation of income and wealth), access to basic minimum services for improving the quality of life of poorest of poor; and direct state intervention in the form of targeted anti-poverty programmes, including provision of subsidized food-grains.

Ambasta, Shankar and Shah (2008) gave a number of important recommendations. These included deployment of full-time professionals dedicated to NREGA at all levels, especially at the block level. Intensive effort at building up a massive cadre of fully trained grass-root workers required at the gram panchayat level through a nationwide movement for capacity building, engaging government and non-government training institutions. There is also a need for provision of adequate resources and setting up systems for continuous monitoring and evaluation at every stage of the program to ensure quality. Information technology has to be utilized optimally to infuse more transparency, accountability and speed at all stages, from sanction of works, release of funds, wage payments to social audit. The author also recommends revision of the Schedule of Rates so that they are in line with a program that bans machines and contractors, are gender-sensitive, more accurately reflect variations in climate and geology, valuate separately the different activities that comprise works and move in tandem with changes in statutory minimum wages.

Mehrotra (2008), a civil servant who has worked in implementation of the scheme, believes that 4 per cent of program costs now allocated to administrative costs and professional support is still quite low and does not recognize the fact that a program of the scale of the NREG requires serious professional support. If the 2 per cent per annum agricultural growth rate is to be reversed, the rain-fed areas that constitute 60 per cent of the agricultural cropped area in the country have to raise their land productivity; they have to move from one crop per year to preferably two if not three crops per year. The evidence from watershed development programs in the past has demonstrated that such programs can repay the investment on them many times quickly. Therefore, if the NREG continues existing manner, the program runs the risk of
going the way of most previous wage-employment programs. On the other hand, if its
design weaknesses, as well as the flaws in the design of its implementation are
addressed, it can raise the stagnating rural wages, push up productivity, stem
the tide of rural-urban migration and have second- and third-round effects that
go well beyond the policymakers’ original design.

Khera (2008) thinks that the successful implementation of the NREGA in
the Pati block in Orissa state goes beyond the ability of its residents to claim
their rights. This is brought out by the high levels of engagement with the
program in terms of planning, implementation and monitoring. Apart from its
immediate aim of being a form of social security for the rural poor, by providing
them local employment, it was expected that the NREGA would contribute to
activating gram Sabhas, empowering women and developing rural areas. In this
sense, the organization studied by the author in Madhya Pradesh has fully
imbibed the spirit of NREGA, where it is looked upon as an opportunity to
promote the overall development of the village as well as to alter the balance of
power in the village society. Aside from showing that it is possible to make the
NREGA work, the Sangathan’s experience also provides important insights into
the transformation that is possible if the act is effectively implemented.

Roshan Lal Raina, et al (2008), conducted on a study on MGNREGA in
Uttar Pradesh titled “Implementation of National Rural Employment Guarantee
Scheme: A Case Study of Uttar Pradesh.” The study presents the findings of a
pilot study on implementation of the National Rural Employment Guarantee
Scheme (NREGS), conducted in four districts --Sitapur, Raebareli, Unnao, and
Barabanki -eight blocks, sixteen villages, interviewing 400 beneficiaries (25 per
village) on the worksite. Major findings reveal that the beneficiaries, while
expressing satisfaction on the new initiatives taken by the Government,
demanded increase in wage rates, work site facilities as enshrined in the Act
and increase in the number of working days in a financial year. The study also
reveals that there is wide appreciation of the NREGA in the rural areas with
significant representation of beneficiaries from scheduled castes and Other
Backward Classes. There is need for vigorous identification of job opportunity
well in advance and strict monitoring of the implementation process. Creating greater awareness about the scheme through various local media facilities available in the rural areas vigorous efforts to involve women workers in warranted. Though the sample size of the study is small, it reveals interesting findings. It would be necessary to explore all the aspects of implementation process and plug various loopholes.

Mathur (2009) states that in social audit undertaken in Andhra Pradesh it was found that in certain villages, some people stated that they had not been paid for the work done. When comparisons were made of the payments as per the passbook with the payment as per the job card, it was discovered that the job card did not contain the inner pages that record the work done by each person; the job card itself was incomplete. This came as a surprise as it had not happened in any region so far but then this area had resisted the initiative. The MPDO was asked to ensure that complete job cards were issued, investigate the lapse, fix responsibilities and send a report. Earlier, several officials, Field and Technical Assistants and Mates admitted to irregularities and about Rs. 50,000 were returned. From separate discussions with the sarpanches, it was evident that they were keen to ensure that there was no irregularity in their villages. In one of the regions, Thimmapur mandal had been selected as a pilot project for the payment of wages through Smart Cards, which work like ATM cards and are given to each person registered under the NREGP. The bank concerned at the mandal headquarters appoints an agent to make payment for each village under the scheme. The Kollampalli village agent was a young lady who was also the President of a successful SHG. She operated a simple instrument connected on line with the bank, and after biometric identification each worker was paid the wage earned that had been deposited in the savings account. The families preferred this procedure to that of payments through the Post Office. Hence, in our literature review and some other articles discussed in this report, we find that a number of problems and issues have been discussed by authors assessing the scheme. There have also been success stories and interesting new practices that can be used as benchmarks and adopted across the country. On the whole, the authors are very positive about the potential of the scheme and see it as a means to revolutionize the way rural India lives and works.
Shankar Chatterjee (2009) in his exclusive work based on self and wage employment programmes being implemented in the country brought out publication titled “Employment Programmes and Rural Development in India.” It comprises of different rural development programmes particularly self and wage employment programmes including housing programme introduced in the country in the recent years. As is known to a present self employment programme mainly includes Swarnajayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana (SGSY) and wage employment includes National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS), which has been implemented through an act passed in the Parliament under the banner of National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA). Both have been discussed with field studies. For the benefit of readers, poverty concept and Indira Awaas Yojana (housing scheme of the poor) have been discussed. Mahatma Gandhi who took lot of initiative for the development of villages has also been highlighted in this volume.

In another related research work, Tinku Paul (2009), through their study on “Women Empowerment Through Work Participation, argues that with the growing globalization and liberalization of the Indian economy as well as increased privatization of services, women as a whole have been left behind and not been able to partake the fruits of development. Mainstreaming of women into the new and emerging areas of growth is imperative. This will require training and skill upgradation in emerging trades, encouraging more women to take up vocational training and employment in the booming sectors.

Sankar Datta et al (2010) brought out a publication titled “State of India’s Livelihoods Report 2010” and in which they dealt mainly on effects of development programmes on livelihoods based on agriculture. The State of India’s Livelihoods (SOIL) Report is an annual publication that aims to document recent trends and issues in the sphere of livelihoods promotion of the poor. A one-of-its-kind report, it is the only document that aggregates the experiences and challenges of the livelihoods sector, analyzes case studies and reports the progress of both government and privately run programmes with respect to the 4Ps People, Policy, Promoters and Potential. This volume of the SOIL report focuses on livelihoods in agriculture. In particular, some of the
themes covered in this report include effects of government policies on livelihoods in agriculture, government schemes for agri-based livelihoods (with a focus on MGNREGA), new-generation initiatives in agri-based livelihoods by NGOs (Non Governmental Organisations) and the private sector, the current scenario with respect to agri-finance and agri-marketing and the impact of climate change on agriculture.

Tapas Kumar Mohanty (2010) in his study on MGNREGA points out that the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) promises a revolutionary demand-driven, people-centered development programme. Planning, implementation and social audit by gram sabhas and gram panchayats can engender millions of sustainable livelihoods following initial rounds of wage employment. But NREGA has had to battle against the legacy of an ignominious past. Rural development programmes over the last 60 years have been dependent on the munificence of the state. They have been implemented top-down, using labour-displacing machines and contractors who have customarily run roughshod over basic human rights. This book provides all informations regarding NREGA and different social development programmes of Govt. of India.

Work participation of women especially in the rural context is being perceived as a policy prescription for removal of rural poverty and the much talked about feminization of poverty. Studies prove that female work participation is highly correlated with reduction in fertility rates, poverty ratios, enhancement of living standards etc. These positive outcomes have often catapulted the policy makers to promote female employment. The concept of empowerment highly depends on the incorporation of agency criterion in its assessment. This book is an attempt to unravel the association between female work participation and empowerment of women.

Indira Hirway (2011), in her study titled “Employment Guarantee Programme And Pro-Poor Growth : The Study of A Village In Gujarat” argues
that a well-designed wage-employment programme, with a guarantee component, can not only address the immediate problem of ensuring employment and wages to the poor at the bottom, but can also contribute towards promoting pro-poor economic growth. This study builds a village-level Social Accounting Matrix (SAM) to estimate the employment, income and output multiplier impacts of NREGA (National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) works in a village in Gujarat. These multipliers tend to increase with time. NREGA works can also relieve women from the drudgery of unpaid work like collection of water, fuel, wood, fodder, material for shelter, craft etc., by strengthening local infrastructure. The reduction in unpaid work can promote gender equality as well as increase multiplier impacts through women’s participation in NREGA. The study has identified an approach to maximise the values of the multipliers in the short and long runs. One needs to focus on the basic entitlements of NREGA that form the core of the act.

P. Arunachalam (2011) published his work on MGNREGA titled “National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme and Poverty in India.” In his work, he points out that:

“Poverty eradication is one of the major objectives of planned development. The magnitude of the problem is still quite staggering. Economic growth is important. Economic growth creates more resources and has the potential of creating more space for the involvement of the poor. But the involvement of the poor depends on the sources of growth and the nature of growth. If the growth is sourced upon those sectors of the economy or those activities that have a natural tendency to involve the poor in their expansion, such growth helps poverty eradication. One of the basic reasons for poverty is lack of income and purchasing power attributable to lack of productive employment and considerable underemployment and not to lack of employment per se. There would be schemes for income generation through supplementary employment guarantee programmes to ensure that the poor have purchasing power to access to food grains at prices they can afford. In reality the job guarantee is the equivalent of using a band-aid to staunch a hemorrhage. Under conditions of acute distress in India’s countryside, the government has pledged to provide
one member of every rural household 100 days work per year. The NREGP is patterned after the Maharashtran state government’s Employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS). This book deals with the empirical studies related to the impact of MGNREGP on poverty in rural India.”

SR Singh (2011) also came out with a similar work titled “National Rural Employment Guarantee Act NREGA: Issues and Challenges.” While providing the chronology of wage employment programmes implemented in the country, SR Singh opines that:

“India has been taking ample of measures to alleviate poverty and achieve the goal of rural development since its independence. All such programmes measures and schemes can be divided into two categories asset endowment schemes and employment generation schemes. Needless to name them all, however, employment related programmes which gained popularity were Food for Work in 1970s RLEG in 1980s Jawahar Rojgar Yogana in 1990s and many others. National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, Commonly known as NREGA has been the recent and most effective attempt for employment generation with almost giving right to work to the rural poor. The Act passed in 2005 has brought almost a revolution among rural poor. It has been renamed as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act MNREGA in 2006. It has been devised as a public work programme to address the issue of a rights-based approach to development; provide income security to the rural households through guaranteed wage employment; reduce/check distress migration from the rural to urban areas; and create durable community assets in the rural areas to trigger an overall development of about six lakh Indian villages. The jobless growth of the 1990s stagnation or even decline in the growth of agricultural productivity distressed farmers committing suicide in various parts of the country and increased migration from the rural to urban areas was the larger socio-economic contexts of this Act. The economists have been of
opinion that lack of rural infrastructure has been the main reason of arrested pace of development. This Act caters to the need and created an sample of rural infrastructure friendly to agriculture.”

In his work, SR Singh further points out that the critics have been equally large pointing out various loopholes in the provisions and poor implementation of the Act. It has been said like other employment generative schemes it has also fallen prey to wrong identification of the beneficiaries wastage of public money by way of corruption and ignorant masses particularly the poor masses. Thus it is high time to assess the economic social and political outcome of most cherished employment generative scheme like NREGA. It was in this sense a national seminar was organized on the issue recently. We are delighted to have a good number of quality papers discussions in the seminar. The papers were discussed threadbare in the seminar and various issues and views cropped up. This inspired us to bring out a volume on the variegated aspects of NREGA including economics implementation administration social justice and rural development.

Shankar Chatterjee (2011) who brought out a publication titled “Implementation of Rural Development Programmes” based on his empirical research work throughout the country. The author opines that many aspects of rural economy have been covered here. Starting from poverty, self-help groups, health, accounting procedures, infrastructure planning to women participation have been included here. Since the book is on the development issues so socio-economic indicators of all the states are included as annexure. The present self-employment programme mainly includes Swarnajayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana (SGSY) and wage employment includes Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) both have been discussed with field studies. Infrastructure programme like Gokul Gram Yojana which was sponsored by the Gujarat Government has been discussed here so that people from other parts of the country can get an idea about this programme. Similarly
RUDSETI approach, health programme, accounting programmes etc. have been covered as case based on field study. The volume will be useful for the students, academicians, policy makers to get idea about planning and implementation of rural development programmes in India.

Bagchi, KK (2011) brought out a edited volume titled “Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) As Right to Employment: Assessment of Impact and Effectiveness.” The volume embodies research work of selected researchers on the evaluation of implementation of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) now being implemented in all the rural districts of India. The act seeks to promote inclusive growth. The primary objective of the act is augmenting wage employment. Experiences of implementation of the programme demonstrate that the results have been mixed. The contributing scholars have identified the causes of limited success of the programme in different parts of India. The researchers have made practical suggestions for better implementation of the programme. Though most of the contributors have dealt with empirical issues, some researchers have dealt with theoretical issues on the subject. It is expected that the book will be useful to the concerned researchers, academicians and the policy makers.

Asha Kiran (2011) in his work on “NREGA: A Revolution” studied related issues extensively. In his opinion, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 better known as NREGA is perhaps the first of its kind in the world when the Congress led UPA Govt. has adopted revolutionary step by providing an economic safety net to 2/3 of the country’s population or 71.9 per cent India’s rural poor. The NREGA can be well taken as an innovative policy to boost. 1. The rural economy, 2. Stabilize agricultural production and 3. Reduce the population pressure on urban areas for employment and thereby transform the geography of poverty. The NREGA by providing legal guarantee to work marks a paradigm shift from all earlier and existing wage employment programs because it is an act and not just a scheme.
The NREGA program guarantees at least 100 days of wage employment in every financial year to every households is known by almost every member but beyond that what and how it is actually implemented or ought to be implemented in strict compliance with the guidelines of the act is almost not known to a larger section of the people.

Sivamurugan (2012) while focusing his work on poverty and unemployment dealt at length on employment generation programmes undertaken in the past and also on MGNREGA. Through his publication titled ‘National Rural Employment Programme’ (NREP) he opined that poverty and unemployment the two major problems facing countries. Not only developing countries but also some of the developed countries of the world are struggling with the above said problems as a result of recent economic crisis. But compared to developed countries the situations of most of the developing countries are too worse. Since 1950s the Indian government and Non-Governmental Organizations have initiated several programs to alleviate poverty including subsidizing food and other necessities, increased access to loans, improving agricultural techniques and price supports and promoting education and family planning. An in-depth analysis of such problems in those countries exhibits the need of a National Rural Employment Programme. India one of the country among them recognizes earlier the need of such a programme and speed up the steps to its implementation in the early period of 2005. The act was enacted with tan aim of improving the purchasing power of rural people by providing a legal guarantee of 100 days of employment in every financial year to adult members of any rural households willing to do public work related unskilled manual work at the statutory minimum wages of Rs. 100 per day. The success of the programme tends the UPA government to change its name as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme. This book deals with the empirical studies related to the impact of National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme in India.

2.3 Conclusion:
The review of literature thus assumes that the participation in development programmes enables the women to access facilitation process which may in turn enable them to participate in several activities and also exercise their rights and responsibilities.

To conclude, the research studies conducted and literature available indicate that though there were several procedural, implementation problems etc. in regard to MGNREGS yet the programme made a good dent in rural development sector. The programme has also made substantial impact on rural development issues as well as rural livelihoods. However, the above studies have not covered the geographical area of the present study and not discussed about women wage seekers and their empowerment exclusively.

Before to know the impact of MGNREGS on empowerment of women wage seekers, the next chapter deals with the socio-demographic profile of women wage seekers under MGNREGA.