CHAPTER – I
INTRODUCTION

One of the ironies of human civilization is that over the past millennia, woman, man’s partner in development and search for happiness has reached the very heights of achievements and recognition and has also plunged to depths of exploitation. The position of women in any civilization shows the stage of evolution which it has reached and furnishes the truest test of its civilization and culture.

The position of women in any society is a true index of its cultural and spiritual level, and the attitude of a community towards her has a great social significance. In India women has always been accorded due honour and dignity. Manu, the first law giver is very particular in granting dignified and honourable position to her. He categorically says, “Women must be honoured and adorned by their fathers, brothers, husbands and brother-in-law, who desire their own welfare. Where women are honoured, their gods are pleased, but where they are not honoured, no sacred rite yields reward.” Where the female relations live in grief the family soon wholly perishes, but that family where they are not being duly honoured, pronounce a curse, perish completely, as if destroyed by magic. Hence, men who seek their own welfare should always honour women on holy days and festivals with gifts of ornaments, clothes and dainty food.”

But in view of her emotional and physical condition he lays stress on her all around protection. He lays down, ‘Her father should protect her during childhood, husband during youth and sons in old age.’ Besides the codes of ancient law-giver bestow upon women supreme authority in the
domestic affairs and also make provisions for employing them in royal services, industry and agriculture.

Hindu tradition has generally respected womanhood, though occasionally we find derogatory references to women. The history of ancient India may be said to commence from the period during which the Rig Veda was composed. In Rig Veda we find a great literary monument of hoary antiquity, containing a code of ethical life reflecting the thoughts and aspirations of the people. Vedic literature which is the prime source of all cultural manifestations in India depicts a vivid picture of ancient Indian womanhood. The Vedic society was a patriarchal one, and hence father was the head of the family. During the period we find that prayers were uttered for the birth of a son, though we do not come across any reference deprecating the birth of a daughter as in Atharva Veda. We find in the Rig Veda a number of names to denote a girl at different stages of her life. A girl is variously called kanya, duhita, kaninaka, kmiyana, kanyala, putrik etc. Of all these epithets for girls, the word duhita seems to have been in frequent use in the Rig Veda, referring to a daughter.

But a sudden decline in their status ushered in with the advent of the Muslims in our country. The laws, customs and traditions of the new political masters lowered the status adversely affected the social and dignity of women. Deprived of the right to freedom movement, she was confined within the four walls of the house and was compelled to engage herself entirely in the domestic activities. Thus, the main purpose of the life of woman remained only to satisfy her husband and look after her children. Such was the condition of the Indian women in general at that time. The social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Ray, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and M. G. Ranade in the 19th Century, for the first time, raised their voice against unequal status of women in society. During the
Indian National Movement and particularly in the Gandhian era many women came out of the four walls and worked in various ways to free the country.

Indian society has been and even today is a semi-feudal society. In the Indian social structure women is practically regarded as a secondary citizen having no independent status. She is supposed to perform all duties but has a limited right. She has no economic freedom. She has to manage the house with whatever money the husband puts in her hand. In any financial crisis in the family, the woman is the greatest sufferer.

All most in all communities of the world, women function merely as a human incubator and inspite of her major contribution to society. She falls victim to the predicament of her unequal status. It is woman who is victimized and discriminated to the maximum at each and every stage. Exploitation of high magnitude based on the distinction of sex existed all along and is still continuing

As we know women are vital element of society. A society’s progress depends a lot on them. All societies must strive to do everything possible to integrate women in all walks of life in an equitable and just manner. The Preamble to the Constitution of India promises "to secure to all its citizens justice-social, economic and political; Liberty-of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; Equality-of status and of opportunity; and promote among them all: Fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity of the National".

According to Indian tradition since the inception of society women has been treated with great honour and dignity, though occasionally we do find derogatory references to women. While analyzing the Indian History and Purans, the facts reveal that the relationship between a man
and a woman has always been in a state of fluctuation and there has been a sea change in the position, rights and status of women since the dawn of civilization.

As way back as in 1980, the UN Report commented: "That women constitute half the world’s population, perform nearly two thirds of work hours, receives one tenth of the world’s income and own less than one hundredth percent of world’s property.’ Half of the Indian populations too are women. Women have always been discriminated and have suffered and are suffering and discrimination in silence. Self-sacrifice and self-denial add to their nobility and fortitude and yet they have been subjected to all inequalities, indignities inequality and discrimination.”¹

The International Labour Organization (ILO)² in the year 2000, had assessed that significant changes in world economy, such as rapid globalization, fast-paced technological progress and growing informalization of work have greatly altered women’s labour market status in recent years. Millions of women throughout the world live in conditions of abject deprivation of, and attacks against their fundamental human rights for no other reason than that they are women. From coffee to computers, women workers provide the labour that creates the goods that appear in the world’s supermarkets and departmental stores.

Low level of literacy, skill and income-earning capabilities led to the subjugation of women in society since the centuries. The biological function of child-bearing and rearing, and performance of the domestic chores, came to be considered as the less intelligent and repetitive tasks meant for women, and became a thankless job. Their contribution as

¹ UN Report, 1980.
“home-makers” was wholly overlooked. It results in various malpractices against women.

Female infanticide, foeticide, demand for dowry, subjecting women to physical violence both within the home and in society, are just to cite a few instances. This has resulted in a continuously declining female ratio in the population during the last few decades. Growth and balanced development of any society will be wholly illusory if equal opportunities are not made available to both women and men for their physical, moral, intellectual and cultural growth and well-being. Development will be a distant dream, without equal participation of both men and women. No process of development can be considered complete, where women continue to remain subjugated, and is deprived of equal opportunities for their growth.

With independence came a Republican Constitution loudly pronouncing equality for all citizens, men and women alike. It provided a new vision adumbrated in the Preamble, the Fundamental Rights and the Directives Principles of State Policy. The various declarations at the UN and international conventions echoed the same sentiment of equality of the sexes and India adopted these with great enthusiasm. The Indian legislatures, both at the Federal and State levels, followed suit by adopting or enacting a great number of laws to provide content to these pronouncements, in matters both social and economic. Many an existing law was amended to remove any gender bias in its orientation.

What is true of socio-economic development is equally true of legal advancement. New issues arise or old issues assume a new urgency in the emerging economic or social milieu. It may be the question of domestic violence or of sexual harassment at the workplace.
Empowerment, eaglet and dignity of women are the desiderata of contemporary womanhood, long subject to undeservedly humiliating inferiority of status, discrimination in civil and political rights and subordination in developmental opportunities. Women are human and, as of right, a radical transformation in women's position is just, fair and necessary to put an end to the current invidiously arbitrary situation.

Empowerment is now increasingly seen as a process by which the one's without power gain greater control over their lives. This means control over material assets, intellectual resources and ideology. It involves power to, power with and power within. Some define empowerment as a process of awareness and conscientization, of capacity building leading to greater participation, effective decision-making power and control leading to transformative action. This involves ability to get what one wants and to influence others on our concerns. With reference to women the power relation that has to be involved includes their lives at multiple levels, family, community, market and the state. Importantly it involves at the psychological level women's ability to assert them and this is constructed by the 'gender roles' assigned to her specially in a cultural which resists change like India.

In India, women and men are getting the same ontology status, but in traditional practice and thoughts the status is very different. Women’s role is in the household whereas men are expected to fulfill the role as provider. Many women today have very limited options for employment. Gender discrimination in wages is a regular feature for women workers. Since it is traditionally a women’s job to take care of the household, it is hard for girls to get the education that would lead to a better job. Those who get an education often work with healthcare, education or administration. For the women in the rural
areas that work, bear the double burden of a job and responsibility for children and home. The agriculture sector in Indian employs 65 % of the labour market.³

Today the caste system is weakened but still wields considerable power; especially in politics. In India it is illegal to discriminate because of caste but positive discrimination like affirmative action’s is legal. The government reserves significant numbers of public-sector jobs, parliamentary seats and university places for scheduled castes. Arranged marriages are still the norm rather than the exception. In the big cities love marriages are starting to become more common. Out of the Indian population 80 % are Hindus, Muslims 14 %, Christians 2.3%, Sikhs 2.3 %, and Buddhists 0.7%.⁴

“India, whose democratic political stability was the envy of the developing world, may have entered a condition of structural political fragmentation, and of regionalization of politics” after the election 1996.⁵ India is the world’s largest democracy. The constitution, which came into power 1950, details the powers of the central and state governments. Women’s political participation in the political system is not encouraging.

Indian women got the right to vote and ran for political office in 1950 and the first Indian women became elected in 1952.⁶ When the 73rd and 74th Acts were passed there was also discussion in the Parliament about ensuring a quota for women of 33% in future Indian parliaments (the 84th Amendment Bill). This system would ensure that 182 seats would be reserved for women out

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⁴ Lonely Planet, *India* (China: The Bookmaker International Ltd.), 2003, pp. 34-64
of 545 seats in Lok Sabha (the Indian government). It never came further than to be discussed but if the system on local level with quotas works fine, there will once again be a discussion and this time it will lead to a quota for women in Lok Sabha. No Indian party is against 1/3 woman in the parliament but they are against reservation with direct seats in the parliament so that is why the act has not been passed on governmental level. Today there are only 10, 3 % women in the Indian parliament (the upper house) and only 8, 8 % in the lower house. Already today 125 seats out of the 545 in Lok Sabha are reserved for the Scheduled Castes (the official term for Dalits or Untouchables) and Tribes. Women are less than 1/5 of the party members of political parties.

Situational analysis of Indian Women is necessary before we attempt an envisionment of the future of Women. We are aware that the trend of Women's empowerment is backed by the Constitution of India. Over the decades, various laws and the National Policy, the Plans, Programmes and allied strategies for implementation of national and international periodic reviews and assessments too have further strengthened this trend in that women's welfare and development is an ongoing active concern of this nation.

So there is an urgent need to develop the women who are treated as secondary citizens. For this empowerment of women is very essential which includes two components like attitudinal empowerment and material advancement. This helps to improve women’s status in the society and strengthens their economic status. For this we need strategies and it involves a complex interplay, a shifting power equation between tradition and change.

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Empowerment underpins the quality of the working life by creating in the greater confidence in one's ideas, skills and judgement. It is about knowing oneself and trusting one's ability and capacity to do the job positively. Empowerment of women is gaining added significance in the Indian context owing to their greater participation in developmental activities. Women empowerment cannot be rigidly defined, particularly, in a situation like ours, where there exists a lot of difference among women on different sectors such as rural v/s urban women; women in organized sector v/s women in unorganized sector or informal sectors; women in government/Public Sector v/s those in Private Sector; educated women v/s uneducated women, both in rural and urban sector; and women belonging to lower level income group v/s those belonging to higher income group. Above all, one finds glaring differences between women belonging to upper caste, class and religions those belonging to lower classes. All these differences cited above are crucial factors to reckon with before anyone attempts to define the concept empowerment of women and then analyzing the determinants of the same.

In other words, empowerment is influenced by a host of socio-economic, political and cultural factors be a ranking of an individual by the society he/she lives in, in terms of his/her material belongings and cultural possessions along with the degree of respect, power and influence he/she wields.

Capacity building is a continuing process that will enable individuals to increase their response to the challenge they face.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

An attempt in this section has been made to review the available literature on the topic under study.
Nandita Saika in her volume “Indian Women A Socio-Legal Perspective” tried to concentrate on discrimination, violence and protection seen in everyday life not directly perpetrated by the State and with women living in abnormal circumstances such as during riots, or in areas in which the Armed Forces Special Powers Acts is in force or in which terrorism is rife. The appendix of this book contains details of the relevant provisions of various Indian laws which have been mentioned in the text; the main text explores the societal status of women in contemporary Indian society.

S. B. Verma and Shiv Kumar Jiloka and Kumari Jyoti Kushwah “Rural Women Empowerment,” focused on the role rural women play in agriculture and related rural development activities. It is a recognized fact that unless the women’s potential is properly developed no transformation and economic development of rural society is possible. Hence it emphasised the importance of creating on the opportunities for socio-economic development of women in rural India for which their access to resources, participation in decision-making activities in agriculture and other allied activities is necessary. It is further pointed out that time has come when rural women should get their due share in various development programmes and extension services apropos their contribution to the rural sector. For the empowerment of rural women it is imperative that their access to the available extension services be improved. Giving due recognition to rural women in designing the development programmes is very necessary to achieve the stated goals of development. Women are now the major Stakeholders and can not be

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ignored any longer their socio-economic empowerment requires integrating their concerns, special needs and priorities into the policies and programmes meant for rural development. It is also viewed that the rural works programmes did not offer a solution to the alleviation of rural poverty without people’s participation where mis-utilization, corruption, middle-man involvement, negligence, non-commitment of stakeholders, power-brokers and so on are in way. Rural employment is a weapon to fight against poverty but when it is dubbed with people’s participation it becomes the powerful weapon to fight poverty.

A. Ranga Reddy and C.H. Hanumantha Rao in their edited work “Empowerment of Women and Ecological Development”\textsuperscript{10}, based on National Seminar on “Empowerment of Women”, apart from overall perspectives for Employment of Women in India, which covered specific aspects like education, health, agriculture, urbanisation, ecology and Panchayati Raj institutions for assessing their role, identifying the problems faced by them and for suggesting policy measures to enhance their seminar was a very high level of participation by women scholars both by presenting papers and contributing to discussions. Further this book contain valuable information on the status of women and the emerging problems based on the latest field level studies in Andhra Pradesh and other states.

Fatima Ehtesham Siddiqi and Sarala Ranganathan in their work “Handbook on Women and Human Rights a Guide for Social Activists,”\textsuperscript{11} divided it into two parts on the basis of two major themes. The first part


deal with the concept of ‘Empowerment and Employment: Attaining Integrated Development’ respectively, the next part deal with the ‘Crime and Punishment: Search for Justice’. This handbook tried to cover not only the maximum variety of issues related to human rights of women but also consolidates various factual details regarding the current situation. Such an integrated treatment of the issue is thought to be useful for all sections of society, especially for the social activists involved with the question of human rights of women. It has also reflected briefly on the global and national perspectives on status of women in contemporary societies. Factors and elements affecting the status of women in today’s world have been dealt in an extensive way, including the same in India with an elaborate historical perspective.

Jill M. Bystydzienski and Joti Sekhon “Democratization and Women’s Grassroots Movements,” based on the collection of case studies of women’s participation in grassroots movements we attempt to document women’s contributions to the struggle for, and creation of participatory democratic forms of social life in various parts of the world. Each case was placed in the larger political, economic, and cultural context to identify factors affecting the process of democratization, and the relationship of women’s grassroots movements to more general societal developments. This book is divided into five parts i.e. Asia, Africa and The Middle East, Central America, Eastern Europe, Western Europe, North America and Australia. She has analyzed variety of ways in which women in sixteen different countries, in different parts of the globe, struggle for more control over their daily lives while simultaneously creating and extending opportunities for greater participation and discuss the processes by which women’s grassroots movements

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organizations and actions contribute to increased participation at the organizations, local, state, and regional levels and the theoretical and practical implications of the connection between women’s community-based movements and democratization.

Steele et al. in their study “The Impact of an Integrated Micro-Credit Program on Women’s Empowerment and Fertility Behavior in Rural Bangladesh”\textsuperscript{13} divided the multidimensional construct of women’s empowerment into four dimensions. These were: women’s mobility, role in household decision making, husband’s attitude, her attitude regarding her children education and age at marriage.

Similarly, Kishor S. In a study “Empowerment of Women in Egypt and Link to the Survival and Health of their Infants”\textsuperscript{14} conducted in Egypt used financial autonomy, participation in the modern sector, life time exposure to employment, sharing of role in decision making, family structure, equality in marriage, devaluation of women, marital advantage, and traditional marriage for measuring empowerment.

Rahman, et al. “Women’s Empowerment and Reproductive Health: Experience from Chapai Nawabganj District in Bangladesh”\textsuperscript{15} conducted a parallel study in Bangladesh and data was collected from 200 farm women. Five measures of empowerment were selected for this study,

these were: women decision making within family, spending ability, cosmopolitanism, social participation and access to assets and resources. Quantitative approach was applied in this study. In socio-cultural setting of South Asia, women’s freedom of movement is also considered as important factor that can be used as one of the dimensions of women’s empowerment that was not explained by Rahman.

In another qualitative study conducted in rural India, Jejeebhoy, S., in his work “Women’s Autonomy in Rural India: its Dimensions, Determinants and the Influence of the Context”\(^{16}\) used three dimensions of empowerment (autonomy) \(i.e.\) women’s mobility (freedom to visit different places), access to economic resources and decision making authority.

A study based on National Fertility and Health Survey conducted by Roy and Niranjan in their work “Indicators of Women’s Empowerment in India”\(^ {17}\), indicated three dimensions of empowerment like; women’s involvement in decision making, their freedom of movement, and access to money. These dimensions were measured separately by developing indices. Furthermore, quantitative approach was used in this study.

Jejeebhoy, and Sathar\(^ {18}\) conducted quantitative study “Women’s Autonomy in India and Pakistan. The Influence of Religion and Region” in two neighboring countries Pakistan and India. In that study four dimensions \(i.e.\) economic decision making ability, spatial mobility, freedom from

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threat, and control over economic resources were used as dimensions of empowerment.

Sridevi in “Empowerment of Women: A Systematic Analysis”\textsuperscript{19} used five dimensions to measure construct of women empowerment. These were: control of over personal salary; maintenance of family income; supporting the natal family; expenditure on education of children; and financial decision on health care. Moreover, composite index was framed using all these dimensions. Further this study was based on both qualitative and quantitative approaches and respondents for this study were the female Postgraduate teachers in Chennai (India).

Parveen in her study “Empowerment of Rural, Women in Bangladesh: A Household Level Analysis”\textsuperscript{20} conducted in rural Bangladesh, developed the composite index of women empowerment by using six dimensions \textit{i.e.} economic contribution to household; access to resources; ownership of assets; participation in household decision making; perception of gender awareness and capacity to cope with household shocks. This study was conducted by using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Regression analysis was applied by constructing cumulative empowerment index of all the dimensions and considering it as dependent variable. Coefficient 0.46 in multivariate analysis revealed that one unit increase in score of index for media exposure causes 0.46 units increase in score of empowerment index. It was further explained that mass media and interpersonal communication is an important tool for women’s empowerment.


It was a good attempt to operationalize the multidimensional concept of women’s empowerment because it covered many aspects of women’s empowerment. However, women’s mobility that is considered as important factor in determining women’s empowerment was not regarded as primary dimension of women’s empowerment.

Aforementioned reviews indicate that dimensions of empowerment were decided on the basis of nature and context of the studies and different dimensions of empowerment were used in different study settings. However, it was noticed that most commonly used dimensions of empowerment were: women’s spatial mobility, women’s involvement in household decision making, and women’s control over resources.

Batliwala in his work “The Meaning of Women’s Empowerment: New Concepts from Action” mentioned three approaches to women’s empowerment i.e. integrated development, economic development and consciousness rising. She argued that one of the reasons for powerlessness of women is lack of education that impedes their access to paid job, health care and awareness.

In three country analysis (Bolivia, Peru and Nicaragua) based on the datasets of the 2000, Bolivia Family Interaction and Children’s Wellbeing (FICW) Survey; the 2000, Peru Demographic Health Survey and 1997-98 Nicaraguan Demographic and Health Survey, Heaton et al, “The Effects of Status on Women’s Autonomy in Bolivia, Peru, and

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Nicaragua indicates that educated and literate women have greater access to information and knowledge that increase their chances for paid jobs, other benefits and resources. In their study it is found that relationship between autonomy and education was strong in Bolivia, whereas such relationship was weak in Nicaragua and Peru. However, findings suggest promotion of girls’ education along with socio-economic development enhances job opportunities for educated women that lead them towards empowerment. These findings also indicate that there is a close link between education, job, and women’s empowerment in most of the regions.

This link is also explained by Lopez-Claros and Zahidi in Women’s Empowerment: Measuring the Global Gender Gap who stressed that education is essential for women’s empowerment. Uneducated or less educated women have not much access to paid work. Greater number of illiterate women in society has potential for less literacy for the next generations. Therefore, lack of knowledge and less education further marginalize the women from mainstream of their communities.

Mason in his volume “The Status of Women: Conceptual and Methodological Issues in Demographic Studies” indicated that life long experience makes woman able to speak for her rights. As her children grow older and get married, she becomes mother-in-law and this status also awards her authority over her daughter-in-law.

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These views indicate that with the passage of time even a powerless woman becomes empowered. Such ideas were also reflected by Solomon and Adekoya in their study in Nigeria entitled “Women and Power Transformation in Rural Households: A Case Study of Osun State, Nigeria”\textsuperscript{25} about the women and power transformation, authors stated that elder women generally have greater involvement in decision making within family than the younger women however younger women also begin to participate in decision making in their elder age.

Mostofa \textit{et al.} in their study in Bangladesh entitled “Mathematical Modeling of Women Empowerment in Bangladesh” \textsuperscript{26} revealed that women under 20 years of age had less empowerment than the women who were between the ages 40-44. Authors further argued that older women had better understanding and closer relation with their husband because they had more chances to communicate with their husband on various issues that increased with the age.

Roy and Niranjan in their work “Indicators of Women’s Empowerment in India”\textsuperscript{27} noticed greater autonomy among those who were involved in gainful economic activity.

Women do a lot of work within home as well as in the fields but their work remain unpaid and unrecognized. Roy and Tisdell in their study in India “Property Rights in Women’s Empowerment in Rural India: A


Review” also suggested that women’s status can be improved by socially recognizing economic activities. For making these activities socially visible, they must involve themselves in outdoor economic activities, because their household activities that contribute to family’s sustenance are not commonly recognized as economic activity.

In another study Jones et al. in their volume “The Double X Factor: Harnessing Female Human Capital for Economic Growth” argued that business women, apart from their business, were big source of well being of their family, organizing community groups, and developing just society. Such economic empowerment of women can lead any nation towards prosperity.

Tisdell in his paper, “Poverty and Economically Deprived Women and Children, Theories Emerging Policy Issues and Development” viewed social restriction to paid work of women reduces their economic capabilities and limits their human capital. Furthermore, in the same paper, author quoted that reduction in opportunities for Santhal tribal women to collect non-timber product from forest, caused a cut in their economic opportunities and bargaining power within house, and lowering down their status within their family.

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Blumberg in his work “Women’s Economic Empowerment as “Magic Potion” of Empowerment”31 persuaded that enhanced female economic productivity was proposed as the basic factor in reducing gender inequality. Women’s earning provides opportunity to enhance their own resources as well as improve their control over these resources that help them to be empowered.

However, economic empowerment may be hindered by cultural barriers. Women’s involvement in paid jobs can be effective only if they have full control over their earning; otherwise, it is just an addition to their responsibilities without any meaningful gain.

In this connection Samarasinghe in “Puppets on a String: Women’s Wage Work and Empowerment among Female Tea Plantation Workers of Sri Lanka”32 also related economic independence of women with their empowerment. However, for empowerment, both access to resource and control over their income were considered prerequisite. In some areas women’s wages are given to their husband’s or father. This act of handing over of wages of women to their male family members do not prove helpful in empowering women despite their involvement in paid job.

In this regard, Mayoux in “The Magic Ingredient, Micro Finance and Women Empowerment”33 pointed out that microfinance programs had negative impact on women’s empowerment. Income generating activities

of women cumulated their workload and responsibilities of repayment of loans. Their loans were commonly used by male family members and despite all efforts they gained little benefit.

However, Mayoux in her “Job, Gender and Small Enterprises, Series on Women’s Entrepreneurship, Development and Gender in Enterprises” further investigation indicated that helping women to utilize their loan properly is one way of developing self esteem and empowerment. Women entrepreneurship influenced positively to economic growth and job creation. Mayoux also considered women business as vehicle to social change as well as economic and political empowerment.

In a study based on community survey in a village of Detroit USA, Becker et al. “Predictors of Perceived Control Among African American Women in Detroit: Exploring Empowerment as a Multilevel Construct” explored that women who were the member of any organization had greater influence at their neighborhood as compared to the non members. These findings confirmed that enhancement of women’s participation in community-based and non-government organizations are essential elements for empowering women.

A similar point of view was given by Peterson and Hughey in their work “Social Cohesion and Interpersonal Empowerment: Gender as

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Moderator who, in another community health survey, concluded that participation in community health contexts provided chances to women for their empowerment and also encouraged individuals to develop collective consciousness and motivation for action. Furthermore, the findings of the study suggested the restructuring of organization that helps women to develop a supporting network of social connection within group.

Social networking provides women a window of opportunities to discuss their issues and to work out their solution. In this connection, Cochran in his work “The Parental Empowerment Process; Building on Family Strengths” argued that social networking and support groups were prerequisite for individuals to enhance their empowerment. In other words neighborhoods, churches, religious groups and voluntary associations provide platform for empowering individuals.

DAWN, “Rethinking Social Development: DAWN’S Vision” stressed the importance of women’s organizations in bringing change in the perception of women towards society and generating the political will for serious action. Social networking is also necessary for women’s mental and psychological health which is essential for empowerment.

In this regard Fone et al. in “Does Social Cohesion Modify The Association Between Area Income Deprivation And Mental Health?” A

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Multilevel Analysis” indicated in a study that deprivation of income was associated with poor mental health status. However, in the area where people had greater social networking, despite poverty, had better level of mental health than the area where social cohesion was less. Mental health is considered to be closely related with women’s agency or empowerment. Therefore, one can conclude that social cohesion or network of friends ensures good mental health, which is prerequisite for healthier change in women’s life.

Mosedale, S., in “Policy Arena, Assessing Women’s Empowerment: Towards a Conceptual Frame Work” mentioned that power can be achieved by collective action. Some of the strategies to empower women stressed to create opportunities for women to spend time with other women. In other words, there is a need of women’s mutual groups where they can think about themselves, share their problem and develop strategies to overcome these problems. Mosedale also see the potential for empowerment in a collective form through political, economic and social mobilization of the groups.

Batliwala in her book “Empowerment of Women in South Asia: Concepts and Practices” indicated that economic strength of women does not necessarily bring women empowerment rather empowerment process can be understood by considering the ideology that legitimize male domination and by exploring the facts that perpetuate their oppression.


The author blamed women for their own oppression. Therefore, she recommended external intervention for their empowerment and linked women’s empowerment with their access to new ideas and information. It is concluded that that positive change can be brought in women’s consciousness by new set of ideas and information. Therefore, awareness about such ideas and information is essential for consciousness rising which leads them towards empowerment.

Moreover, Hashemi and Schuler in their work “Defining and Studying Empowerment of Women: A Research Note from Bangladesh” explained that in rural Bangladesh women do not have any identity outside their family. Therefore, women’s job, social networking and outdoor activities will enhance their confidence and reduce their emotional dependence on their families. Moreover, their attachment to alternative supportive network increases their potential to assert within family as well as in the community.

Rao and Bloch in their work “Wife Beating, its Causes and its Implications for Nutrition Allocation to Children: An Economic Anthropological Case Study of a Rural South Indian Community” pointed out the importance of dowry given by the parents to their daughters at the time of marriage. They mentioned that dowry was an important element in securing a woman in her in-laws’ or husband’s home. Moreover in India, statistics about dowry harassment and death cases and other various studies indicated that women who were given less amount of dowry had

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lower status in their in-laws as compared to those who were given greater amount of dowry.

Bate et al. in their study “Socio-Economic Factors and Processes Associated with Domestic Violence in Rural Bangladesh” 44 based on 1200 married women in Bangladesh explored that lack of dowry and economic resources that women bring to their marriage, was one of the prime causes of their lower status, vulnerability and powerlessness in their in-laws’ or husbands’ house.

Conversely, in a study based on Nigerian Demographic and Health Survey Data 2003, Ahmad in his work “Intra-Household Bargaining and Investment in Child Health” reported that dowry payments were usually made as a compensation for poor marriage market qualities like beauty, education etc. In fact larger amount of dowry brought by the women may not be helpful in empowering women; however, this can be considered as exceptional case because most of the researchers explored positive association between dowry, property and women’s empowerment. It is common perception that women who own some property have relatively less economic dependency as compared to the women who have no owned property. In this connection Oxaal and Baden in their work “Gender and Empowerment: Definitions, Approaches and Implications for Policy” 46 argued that successful application of women’s reproductive and

sexual rights were associated with economic independence and bargaining power of women.

Similar point of view was also put forward by Bisnath in “Poverty in a Globalizing World at Different Stages of Women’s Life Cycle” who stressed on political mobilization, consciousness rising and education for attaining women’s empowerment. The author further suggested change in laws, civil codes and system of property rights, social and legal institutions in order to achieve gender equality. What changes should be made? How much such changes are important? The answer to such questions can only be obtained by developing awareness among women. In other words, awareness about rights is vital for developing a rational for desirable structural change in order to empower women. It is not easy for a single woman to bring considerable change in her life.

Rowland-Serdar and Schwartz-Shea in their work “Empowering Women: Self, Autonomy, and Responsibility” argued that empowerment of women depends upon the extent to which cultural messages are internalized by them. In other words greater the belief in cultural messages, lesser would be the level of empowerment among women. Women spend most of their energy in rearing and caring rather than thinking about themselves. Such lack of thinking and strong cultural believing brought them to the state of confusion where they could not comprehend that what are their rights, responsibilities and cultural obligations which were imposed on them. Therefore, in order to be

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empowered, women must be able to understand what their rights are and how these are being exploited. This end can only be achieved by increasing the level of awareness among women about their rights and practices of these rights.

In this regard, Farashuddin et al. in “Empowerment of Women”\textsuperscript{49} indicated that women’s involvement in micro-credit activities could give them greater awareness and knowledge regarding inheritance laws, laws against polygamy, dowry etc. Their study concluded that women groups, NGOs and micro-credit were the sources of awareness raising that ultimately enhance their empowerment.

Musokotwana and Siwata in their work “Gender Awareness and Sensitization in Basic Education”\textsuperscript{50} argued that empowerment of women can be ensured, by increasing awareness of the women about their rights. Furthermore, awareness rising can be helpful in controlling environment. Thus, knowledge of women about their rights is an important predictor of women empowerment.

Collins in his volume “Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment”\textsuperscript{51} mentioned that ‘power’ deals with ideology, culture, and consciousness. Therefore, without awareness women will continue to support their own subordination and also that of other groups.


\textsuperscript{50} Musokotwana, R. and R. M. Siwala, Gender Awareness and Sensitization in Basic Education (Paris UNESCO: Basic Education Division), 2001.

Freire and Macedo in their edited work “The Paulo Freire Reader”\textsuperscript{52} stressed upon consciousness raising and developing critical thinking rather than following cultural practices blindly. Therefore, critical thinking must be initiated among women through education and promotion of awareness to cross the cultural barriers that impede their empowerment.

Stromquist in his work “The Theoretical and Practical Base for Empowerment”\textsuperscript{53} considered political participation as important determinant of empowerment as political participation develop capacity among women to analyze, organize and mobilize resources for social change.

In a study on constraints to women’s involvement in agriculture leadership, Pini in “Constraints to Women’s Involvement in Agricultural Leadership”\textsuperscript{54} indicated five main factors that restrict women’s involvement in agro-politics. These were: lack of support; the conduct, time and location of meetings; gender biased culture of organization; women multiple commitments and lack of interest. These views indicate that women have to face number of problems in order to involve themselves in politics. Therefore in order to enhance political participation there is a need of supportive environment for them.


Democracy is an effective tool for developing political awareness in this connection.

Women’s Political Participation Program in Nepal, Andrews in his volume “Strengthening Democracy Through Women’s Participation, A Seminar On Emerging Issues In Asia (Panel II)”\textsuperscript{55} stated that the program proved helpful in increasing women’s awareness and skill to transform their personal issues into public concern. Political participation also enabled women to influence the policy that facilitated them to involve in political process more effectively.

Likewise in the context of Sri Lanka, McKenna in Strengthening Democracy Through Women’s Participation: A Seminar on Emerging Issues in Asia (panel II)\textsuperscript{56} argued that women’s political participation helps women to develop a political culture that favors women cause and included more women in decision making process. These views indicate that women’s political interest is prerequisite for their empowerment.

Bari in his volume “Women’s Political Participation: Issues and Challenges”\textsuperscript{57} stated that political participation is vital for developing individual and collective activity as well as creating opportunity that leads them towards empowerment.

\textsuperscript{56} McKenna, M. R., \textit{Strengthening Democracy Through Women’s Participation: A Seminar on Emerging Issues in Asia (panel II)}, Ibid.
\textsuperscript{57} Bari, F., “Women’s Political Participation: Issues and Challenges”, \textit{Division of Advancement of Women (DAW) Expert group meeting, enhancing participation of women in development through enabling environment for achieving gender equality and advancement of women Bangkok, 8-11 Nov. 2005}. 

Phillips in his book “The Politics of Presence” favored the quota of women in higher level political setup for addressing their issues. On the other hand, Chandra “Women and Empowerment” and Rowlands “A Word of the Times, But What Does It Mean? Empowerment in the Discourse and Practice of Development” supported the political participation at grass root level which can be helpful for empowering women. However, for the development of favorable political culture for women, efforts should be made to enhance political awareness among women at local level that can bring a pressure group of women for solving their common issues at local level and presenting their more serious issues at higher level. In this connection

Hust in his work “Political Representation and Empowerment: Women in the Institutions of Local Government in Orissa after the 73rd Amendment to the Indian Constitution” stated that greater number of women’s involvement in political process helps each other to challenge the existing power structure, negotiate gender relation as well as assists them to promote enabling environment. On the basis of above mentioned reviews one can conclude that women’s participation at individual and collective level is a route towards their empowerment and this discussion can be summed up with a single statement that political participation of women is an important determinant of the women’s empowerment.

How a radio and television can bring social change? In this regard, Ali and Sultan in their work “Socio-cultural Constraints and Women’s Decision-Making Power Regarding Reproductive Behaviour” suggested that radio and television can create awareness among women about their rights and bring gender equality through dramas and other interesting programs.

Objectives

The main objectives of the study were:

1. to study the impact of capacity building on empowerment of women
2. to analyse the main difference between Indian and western perspective on empowerment of women
3. to examine the empowerment through capacity building or the capacity building through empowerment
4. to analyse the main causes of deterioration in the position of women in Indian society
5. to examine the Gandhian approach for women empowerment and capacity building

Research Methodology

The study is empirical in nature. Random sampling is a technique will be used for the selection of data. All the main methods of data collection i.e. Observation (participant and non participants), Interview, Questionnaire and Schedule will be used to collect the data. The collected data will thoroughly processed, codified analysed and interpreted

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accordingly. The help of the computer will also be taken at the appropriate stage. The researcher plans to scan all the primary sources in the subject, Research Journals and writings on Women Empowerment and Capacity Building. The conclusion drawn from the collected data will be compared with the conclusion and observation drawn from the primary sources for the purpose of analysis and interpretations.