



CHAPTER – I

Introduction



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

*“To awaken the people,
it is women who must be awakend;
once she in on the move, the family moves,
the village moves and the nation moves”*

- Pandit Nehru

Empowerment is the most frequently used term in development dialogue today. It is also the most nebulous and widely interoperated of concepts, which has simultaneously become a tool for analysis and also an umbrella concept to justify development intervention.

Though women empowerment is not a sufficient condition it is still a necessary condition in order to stabilize and in turn to have sustainability of the development process. (Sridevi, 2005)

The concept of empowerment was for the first time introduced at the International Women Conference in 1985 at Nairobi. The conference defined empowerment as *“a redistribution of social power and control of resources in favor of women.”*

Control over resources in turn include control both over societal resources like education, employment, and political power and household resources like income, property, health, nutrition and decision making for getting this control one must primarily have the access to these resources. (Kuruvilla, 2008)

Beteille (1999) observes that ‘the main point behind empowerment is that it seeks to change society through a rearrangement of power’.

Beijing Conference 1995 had identified certain quantitative and qualitative indicators of women empowerment, as follows:

Qualitative:

1. Increase in the self-esteem, individual and collective confidence
2. Increase in articulation, knowledge and awareness on health nutrition, reproductive rights and literacy
3. Increase and decrease in personal leisure time and time for child care
4. Increase and decrease of work loads in new programmes
5. Change in roles and responsibility in family and community
6. Visible increase and decrease in violence on women and girls responses to changes in social customs like child marriage dowry, discrimination against widows
7. Visible changes in women's participation level attending meeting, participating and demanding participation
8. Increasing bargaining and negotiating power at home, in community and the collectives
9. Increase access to and mobility to gather information
10. Formation of women collectiveness
11. Positive changes in social attitudes
12. Awareness and recognition of women's economic contribution within and outside the household
13. Women's decision making over her work and income.

Quantitative indicators:

A) Demographic trends:

- maternal mortality rate
- fertility rate
- sex ratio
- life expectancy at birth

- average age of marriage
- B) Number of women participating in different development programmes.
- C) Greater access and control over community resources/ government.
- D) Visible change in physical health status and nutritional level.
- E) Change in literacy and enrollment levels.
- F) Participation levels of women in political process.

Hence 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 with reference to women, the power relation that has to be involved includes their lives at multiple levels, family, community, market and the state.

Therefore empowerment is seen as the only effective answer to oppression, exploitation, injustice and other maladies with which our society is best.

But empowerment is not something which could be available in the form of a capsule to those whom we think is in need of it. It is not just a concept that could be defined with the help of some universally accepted parameters.

Status of Women in India:

In India we can see that women are the most oppressed and the most neglected group in society. Women have through the centuries, remained cloistered and confined within four walls of the home and dismissed as the second sex, not only in education but also in the fields of nutrition, health and survival.

The traditional India has seen women as a member of family wives or mother and not as an individual with an identity or right of her own. The

main role of the women is just to cook, look after children and take care for other family members. There is no direct relationship between the status of women in society and women's power within the household.

After independence the Indian constitution guaranteed equal rights for men and women and constitution has emphasized on welfare state, its responsibility is to improve the quality of life the citizens. The Government of India evolved different types of economic strategies and programmes for the betterment of living conditions of the people. Despite all welfare and development programmes significant outcome in 1970's is that highly neglected section of the society is women.

Majority of women are still unable to enjoy the rights and opportunities guaranteed to them. The major cause behind this is subordinate position of women in general and education in particular.

According to the World Development Report 1992, there were 948 million adult non-literates in the world of whom 65 percent were females. Female literacy was particularly striking in Asia, which accounted for 77 percent of the world's female non-literates. The Census of India 2001 shows that the percentage of female literacy is 54.16 percent. This data shows that women's literacy is a challenge for the country. This did great damage to the position of women in Indian society and they began to be regarded as inferior and were excluded from various fields of activity.

Research available in the education of women in India point out a number of socio-cultural and socio-economic factors that influence the participation of women in the system of women's education.

The prevailing cultural norms of gender behavior and the perceived domestic and reproductive roles of women tend to adversely affect the learning and retention of girl's in schools. The effect of gender bias varies in different social and economic groups and is particularly harsh on

communities which suffer discrimination. The gender biases existing in society and domestication of girls have a direct bearing on many aspects of the educational system. (Kulshrestha, 2006)

All over the world, the movement for improving women's status has always emphasized education as the most significant instrument. The social reformers of the 19th century tried to use education more to ameliorate the position of women socially; they were able to awaken the consciousness of the notion to the evils of child marriage, sati, polygamy, enforced widowhood, dowry system, etc.

Since the new western education which developed during the 19th century invariably meant "a method of earning" and since women were not required to earn, it was not considered necessary for women to be educated. Learning to do household work was sufficient for her and so the parents were not keen to incur any expenditure in educating the girls till very recently (Pillai, 1998). Hence the root cause of women's oppression is education, which has snatched legitimate powers from women, making them totally defenseless and powerless. Therefore women need to be empowered for undoing the injustice method out of them.

Relation between Education and Empowerment:

Even after sixty years of Indian independence women are still one of the most powerless and marginalized sections of the Indian society.

Development is the process of societal transformation from a traditional society to a modern society. Educational attainment and economic participation are the key constituents in ensuring the empowerment of women. Education develops the personality and rationality of individuals, qualifies them to fulfill certain economic, political and cultural functions and thereby improve their socio-economic status.

The movement for improving women's status all over the world has always emphasized education as the most significant instrument for changing women's subjugated position in the society. The aim was to use education to make women more capable of fulfilling their traditional roles as wives and mothers and to make them more efficient and active units in the process of socio-economic or political development. (Mathu A. and R. Pandya, 2006)

The empowering role of women's education affects not only the lives of the women, but also the lives of their children and other dependents such as aged.

According to Gunnar Myrdal (1969), education has an independent as well as "instrumental" value, i.e. the purpose of education must be to rationalize attitude as well as to impart knowledge and skills. Education for national development should include education for self reliance, personal development, social development, productive capacity, social; integration and political understanding.

Education of women, therefore occupies top priority amongst various measures taken to improve the status of women in India. In recent years the focus of planning has shifted from equipping women for their traditional roles of housewives and mothers to recognizing their worth as producers, making a major contribution to family and national income. Efforts have been made over the past three decades of planned development to stay in schools, to continue their education as long as possible, and to provide non-formal educational opportunities for women. (Vashistha, 1999)

Education is a milestone for women's empowerment because it enables them to respond to opportunities, to challenge their traditional roles and

to change their lives. Similar ideas were supported in International Conference- 1994. It was said that:

Education is the most important means of empowering women with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence necessary to participate fully in the development process.

Educating women benefits the whole society. It has a more significant impact on poverty and development than men's education. It is also one of the most influential factors in improving child health and reducing infant mortality.

Education is central to the process of sustainable development. The role of education in empowerment is not only learning of three 'R's (reading, writing and arithmetic) but includes:

- raising awareness
- critical analysis of various structures and
- acquiring knowledge for empowerment at all levels.

National Policy on Education:

The National Policy on Education (NEP)-1986 is a landmark in the approach to women's education. It has attempted for the first time to address itself to the basic issues of women's equality. In the section entitled 'Education for Women's Equality' the policy states:

"Education will be used as an agent of basic change in the status of women. In order to neutralize the accumulated distortions of the past, there will be a well conceived edge in favor of women. The National Educational System will play a positive, interventionist role in the empowerment of women. It wills faster the development of new values

through redesigned curricula, textbooks, training and orientation of teachers, decision makers and administrators."

It gives over-riding priority to the removal of women's illiteracy and obstacles inhibiting their access to and retention in elementary education. Emphasis has been laid on women's participation in vocational, technical and professional education at different levels as also to promote women's participation in non-traditional occupation and existing and emergent technologies. The Programme of Action for implementation of NPE (POA) spells out the meaning of women's empowerment: "women became empowered through collective reflection and decision making". (NPE, 1986)

The Programmes of Action 1992 has comprehensively given the below mentioned parameters of empowerment of women:

1. Enhance self-esteem and self-confidence in women.
2. Build a positive image of women by recognizing their contribution to the society, polity and economy.
3. Develop in them an ability to think critically.
4. Foster decision making and action through collective process.
5. Enable women to make informed choices in areas like education, employment and health especially reproductive health.
6. Ensure equal participation in the development process.
7. Provide information, knowledge and skill for economic independence.
8. Enhance access to legal literacy and information related to their rights and entitlements in the society with a view to enhance their participation on an equal footing in all areas.

(Khandai H., 2001)

Education has always been considered as the most powerful instrument for social change. It was in this respect that the National Policy on

Education viewed education to play a positive interventionist role in the empowerment of women.

Progress of Women's Education:

In the present age of the advancement of science and technology economics growth, social prosperity and sustainable development of a nation is contingent upon the general awareness and educational status of masses. The Indian government has expressed a strong commitment education for all and implemented various schemas and programme for girl's. In addition, the mid-day meal scheme has also improved girl's enrollment and retention in school.

As a result of number of initiatives and measures taken up by the Government we notice a rise in the percentage of enrollment of women.

The data in table 1 present the growth of women enrollment in different stages of school education from 1950-51 to 2001-02.

**Table 1: Enrollment of Women by Stages from 1950-51 to 2001-02
(In Million)**

| YEAR | Primary (I-V) | Middle/Upper Primary (VI-VIII) | High/High Secondary Inter/Pre-Degree (IX-XII) |
|---------|------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| 1950-51 | 5.4 | 0.5 | 0.2 |
| 1960-61 | 11.4 | 1.6 | 0.7 |
| 1970-71 | 21.3 | 3.9 | 1.9 |
| 1880-81 | 28.5 | 6.8 | 3.4 |
| 1990-91 | 40.4 | 12.5 | 6.3 |
| 2000-01 | 49.8 | 17.5 | 10.7 |
| 2001-02 | 50.3 | 18.7 | 12.1 |

Source: Selected Educational Statistics 2002-03, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Department of Elementary Education.

The data shows that since 1950-51 the total enrollment at the primary, upper primary, secondary and senior secondary stages increased by 6, 14 and 20 times respectively.

Women in Higher Education:

Today, in the twenty-first century, we cannot afford to ignore, the importance of higher education for women any longer. The Education Commission observed, that “In modern world the role of women goes much beyond home and bringing up the children. They are now adopting a career of their own and sharing equally with men, the responsibility for the development of society in all its aspects”.

Higher education leads to promote excellent adventure of ideas and search for truth. It is to collective new knowledge and interprets old knowledge in the light of new needs and discoveries. It has to provide the right kind of leadership in all walks of life and identify gifted youth and help them to develop their potential to the full by cultivating physical fitness, developing the powers of the mind, right impacts, attitudes and values. (Mathu, A. and R. Pandya, 2006)

Higher education is growing at a brisk place; today there are 389 Universities and 18064 Colleges that cater to the rapidly growing demand for higher education in the country. At the beginning of the academic year 2006-07 the total student enrollment was 111.28 lakhs, out of this the number of women student was 44.66 lakhs, or 40.4 % of the total enrollment. (Wizart, K. and V., Arya, 2007)

The data in table no. 2 presents enrollment of women in Higher Education.

Table: 2 Enrollments of Women in Higher Education.

| Sr. No. | Year | Women Enrolled | Percentage |
|---------|---------|----------------|------------|
| 1 | 1950 | 43,126 | 10.9 |
| 2 | 1960 | 1,70,455 | 16.2 |
| 3 | 1970 | 6,55,822 | 21.9 |
| 4 | 1996 | 2,19,1138 | 34.1 |
| 5 | 1997 | 2,51,4511 | 36.7 |
| 6 | 2002-03 | 3,69,6000 | 40.05 |

The data shows that since 1950 the women enrollment in higher education was increased. But as compared to total enrollment it is very low.

Kale, P.K. (2006), observes that the rate of increase in enrollment of women in Higher Education is just 0.6 % per year. Only 6 % of women reach to the level of college education and beyond due to heavy drop out from schools. Because of socio-cultural mindset girls/women are not given education particularly higher education.

One of the major reasons for lack of education among women in India is high drop out rate among girls at the early stages of schooling as compared to boys. The figure related to drop out percentages at different stages of schooling among boys and girls are presented in table 3.

Table 3: Drop out Rate at Different stages of School Education (in percent)

| Year | Primary | | | Elementary | | | Secondary | | |
|-----------|---------|-------|-------|------------|-------|-------|-----------|-------|-------|
| | Boys | Girls | Total | Boys | Girls | Total | Boys | Girls | Total |
| 1960-61 | 61.7 | 70.9 | 64.9 | 75.0 | 85.0 | 78.3 | NA | NA | NA |
| 1970-71 | 64.5 | 70.9 | 67.0 | 74.6 | 83.4 | 77.9 | NA | NA | NA |
| 1980-81 | 56.2 | 62.5 | 58.7 | 68.0 | 79.4 | 72.7 | 79.8 | 86.6 | 82.5 |
| 1990-91 | 40.1 | 46.0 | 42.6 | 59.1 | 65.1 | 60.9 | 67.5 | 76.9 | 71.3 |
| 1992-93 | 43.8 | 46.7 | 45.0 | 58.2 | 65.2 | 61.1 | 70.0 | 77.3 | 72.9 |
| 1999-2000 | 38.7 | 42.3 | 40.3 | 52.0 | 58.0 | 54.5 | 66.6 | 70.6 | 68.3 |
| 2001-2002 | 38.4 | 39.9 | 39.0 | 52.9 | 56.9 | 54.6 | 64.2 | 68.6 | 66.0 |

Source: Education in India, Department of Secondary and Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development.

As per data 45 % of girls and 41 % of boys drop out of school between class 1 and 5. The data on school attendance by age show the proportion of girls attending school decreases with age while for boys it remains somehow stable. In 1992-93, only 55 % of girls aged 11 to 14 were attending school compared with 61 % of the younger age group. The difference between the percentage of boys and girls becomes much more pronounced as we move up the level of education; this is mainly due to the higher drop out rate among girls.

Major Problems in Girl's Higher Education:

The higher education of girls at present suffers from several weaknesses. The drop out of girls in higher education is more common problem in Indian Higher Education System.

There are many reasons for dropout of girls in higher education. The reason can be categorized as follows:

- a) ***Economic Reason:*** Poverty is the predominant factor that hinders girls to get higher education. Parents of middle and lower classes think to save money for their dowry rather than for their education and the higher education are also so expensive that parents of middle class can not afford it.
- b) ***Familial Reason:*** The narrow-minded parents have gender bias towards girl's education. As a result, parents give more importance to educating their sons rather than daughter. Usually their daughter will be married of as they attain puberty.
- c) ***Educational Reason:*** The educational reasons which stand in the way of girl's education, are inadequacy of facilities, particularly distance of College or University, irrelevance of

the content of education, curriculum not suited to their requirement, etc.

- d) ***Social Reason***: It was felt that higher education for girls resulted in increasing the number of spinsters. So most of the parents wanted their daughters to discontinue higher education. Thus the problem of losing girl's higher education to marriage is common.

Beside above reasons the married women face in attending regular class in the pressure of family and personal responsibilities such as taking care of children, performing household chores, or attending to the sick in the family.

According to Berge and Lenskyj (1990), women learners come to class with specific personal histories, learning styles and expectations that are shaped to varying degrees by their experiences as girls and women in a society characterized by male power and privilege.

Hence girl's enrollment and retention in education can be accelerated by taking different measures like providing suitable infrastructure, as lack of availability of higher education institution near to their residence or homes leads to dropout. Therefore many girls stop their higher education and they did not get any facilities provided by government through their various schemes and programme. Its affect on women empowerment process because without education in general and higher education in particular they did not get such benefits.

At the national level, uneducated or semi-educated women have resulted in unimproved productivity, unimproved income and economic dependence, as well as they did not get better quality of life.

Need to have Distance Education System:

Distance education system is one of the most effective modes of imparting education and training for those who cannot afford formal education.

Now a day there is massive rate of dropouts from the formal education system due to financial and other constraints. A large number of female who could not complete formal education in a formal way try to get them educated in certain areas of education.

In addition to the barriers posed by sex discrimination; many women are doubly or triply disadvantaged as member of ethnic minorities, as working class women, or as members of other marginal groups.

In order to ascertain the sort of education and support services that would be appropriate to women's needs, it would be necessary to understand and know more about their experiences, their learning needs, the difference and diversity among them so that a more learner centered approach is planned and implemented for them, through distance education system. ([http://lit server.literary.hpenn.edu](http://lit.server.literary.hpenn.edu))

Distance education is flexible in nature and able to cater to the needs of women's that could not be blessed with the education provided in conventional learning system.

Distance education is any type of education that occurs while location, time or both separate the participants. In distance learning, the teacher, though the use of technology, delivers instruction to a student at a separate location. (Siddiqui, H. M., 2004)

According to Talesra, the term open and distance learning represents approaches that focus on opening access to education and training provision, freeing learners from the constraints of the time and place and

offering flexible learning opportunities to individuals and groups of the learners.

Distance education system has some unique approaches, which gives central place to the learners in the teaching-learning process and provides a comprehensive learning programme for personality development by using various learning activities.

Distance learning meets the needs of women, who are unable to study the conventional mode of education or to take a career break out who wanted to acquire knowledge through education.

Indira Gandhi National Open University is a National Open University offers large number of professional and technical programs besides traditional programs which aim to improve the quality of learners and giving opportunity to them who otherwise would not have gone in to conventional education for various reasons.

Indira Gandhi National Open University's distance education becomes an inevitable tool for providing skills-based education and training for women through their flexible academic programme and learning system. IGNOU helps in women's empowerment through distance education facility. The present M.Phil. research work aims to empirically verify and evaluate the role of IGNOU in women's empowerment.

So far in this chapter we have introduces the subject of study, concept of Women Empowerment and its various indicators, status of women, relation between education and empowerment, progress of women's education, problems of women's education and need to have distance education system.

We will now move to the next chapter regarding review of related literature and research methodology.

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