

**CHAPTER - V**  
**DEMOCRATIC**  
**DECENTRALIZATION,**  
**DEVELOPMENT AND**  
**EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA:**  
**HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

## DEMOCRATIC DECENTRALIZATION DEVELOPMENT AND EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA : HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Over the last two decades, the issue of empowerment has been placed firmly on the agenda of development studies. The idea of empowerment is not the outcomes of new brains but has taken a hold over the minds of increasing number of persons for many years. The term is focused on television, in the press, in political field and in academic and legal circles. Empowerment can be thought of as the power of the powerless. This can be focused on poor, backward-class people, of women and of many other disadvantaged section. Empowerment has been context-driven rather than theory-driven. Context is the contradiction between a hierarchical social order and a democratic political system.

### *Concept of Empowerment:-*

Empowerment is all about social transformation and it is all about the ordinary people rather than advantaged people. Empowerment is also invoked in the context of economic weakness and insecurity of marginalized and other disadvantaged groups. The focus on empowerment has given a new emphasis to the building of economic and social capabilities among individuals, class and community. The idea of empowerment is a theory of social change. Empowerment differs on predominantly aggregative and predominantly integrative theory of democracy.

Empowerment, in predominantly aggregative theory of democracy, means equal influence and individual autonomy. In a predominantly integrative theory of democracy, empowerment means transforming individuals into citizens. Democratic strategy of empowerment must propose the institutionalization of democratic procedures which ensures both the aggregative and the integrative aspect of democracy. According to Hirschman (1970),

empowerment may be viewed from exit and voice options. The exit option is a weak means of empowerment, logically linked to economic life. The voice option is introduced as a supplementary means of empowerment, linked to family life and political life, choosing between the two, Hirst Paul (1994), gives priority to the exit option. Like Hirst, Burns, Hambleton and Hoggett regard the empowerment of ordinary citizens as the greatest challenges for reformers of the public sector in the 1990s.

The old idea of "growth with social justice" is now converted to "development with empowerment." Empowerment is an objective of economic development to the democratic discourse. Declaration (1995), on "empowerment" signed by the heads of the states says ----- we affirm that in both economic and social terms, the most productive policies and investments are these which empower people to maximize their capacities, resources and opportunities. Empowerment requires the full participation of people in the formulation implementation and evaluation of decision determining the functioning and the well being of our society.

India country papers at UN summit (1995), talks about the poor being empowered to be able to help themselves and breaking social, economic, cultural and psychological barriers to convert them from being "passive recipients" of government programme to "active participants". "Empowerment" and "Democratization" respond to the long standing demands of struggling groups. Hegel and Marx characterized the civil society in terms of the property structure by which democratization can be understood as limited democracy operating at the upper and middle class level which the masses are theoretically empowered.

Empowerment is often used to mean a variety of different things, from individual self-realization and self-assertion to participation to the control over decisions. The term 'empowerment' is used more of attempting to change the social and economic institutions that embody the basic and unequal power structure in society.

The concept of empowerment implies formal rather than substantive power and it involves an external upper level agency to grant power rather than people below seizing it in the course of struggle. Empowerment can be

understood in simply as 'strengthening the capacities' which can be 'achieved through 'full participation of people'. The process of empowerment involves not just an improvement in physical and social conditions, but also equal participation in decision-making process and control over resources. Thus, empowerment requires full participation of people that means the maximization of people's capacities, resources and opportunities.

The objectives and socio-economic goals as enunciated in the Preamble of Indian Constitution have a direct focus on women. The concept of empowerment has difference in understanding between government and women movement, which emphasizes more on participatory dynamism but the government seems to have adopted its static meaning. The word 'empowerment' is now being pervasively used not only by government but NGOs, social activists and researchers also. Empowerment is a product of early eighties with importance on participation and transfer of power to powerless and since then 'empowerment' has become an accepted term in development vocabulary. Researchers, social activists, planners, policy-makers and various agencies had tried to find a range of meaning to women's empowerment.

- (i) Empowerment is autonomy both collective and individual levels. It encompasses several mutually reinforcing components but begins with and is supported by economic independence. According to this definition, access to and control over productive resources, knowledge and awareness of self and society, and of personal needs, of socio-economic resources, realization of one's capabilities and the potential and confidence to take decision are the components of empowerment. To woman, empowerment is the restructuring of gender relation within family and society, (Hape,1994).
- (ii) Empowerment is the process in which people assume an increased involvement in defining and promoting their own agenda for political and social projects designed to enact change, (Wilkinson,1990).

- (iii) Empowerment means going autonomy and control over one's life. The empowered person become agents of their own development, and able in decision making and are able to challenge and change their subordinated position in society in respect of social-economic and political matters, (Sorensen 1997).
- (iv) Empowerment is a process aimed at changing the nature and direction of systemic forces which marginalize women and other disadvantaged sections, (Sharma,1992).
- (v) Empowerment is a process to participate effectively in decisions that affect women's lives at the family, community and higher level of political process, (Institute of Socio-Economic Development ,1991).
- (vi) Empowerment is a process of building capacity and confidence for taking decisions about one's own life at an individual and collective level, gaining control over productive resources. The empowerment process is facilitated by creating awareness about one's life and responsibilities in socio-economic and political fields, (Pandey,1993).
- (vii) Empowerment is the process of challenging existing power-relations and of gaining greater control over the sources of power, (Baltiwala,1994).
- (viii) Empowerment is the development of skills and abilities to enable rural people to manage better, have a say in development process, (Oakley,1991).
- (ix) A true emancipatory movement not only in economic resources but in political and social process has been variously labeled as empowerment, (Leiten,1992).
- (x) Empowerment implies a fundamental redistribution of power between different groups. It is a process of equality enhancement and can be achieved through disempowering some structure, system, process and institutions. Empowerment as an enabling process for equality demonstrates selectivity, unevenness, self-

generated momentum and compulsions. Empowerment is the vehicle which enables women to renegotiate their existence, (Banerjee,1995).

### ***Women Empowerment :-***

The first 25 years of development planning in India, was assumed that the general progress made by the population, would be shared by all sections and whatever the benefits accrued to the women. A new chapter on women and development was included in 6<sup>th</sup> plan document. A separate ministry for women and children was also created in 1984. Bringing women into the mainstream of development was a major concern of the government. It was realized that the goal of poverty alleviation and development cannot be achieved without full and active participation of women. In order to empower women an enabling environment with requisite policies and programmes has been taken by the government. Social and economic empowerment seeks to improve the access of rural women to health, education, sanitation, nutrition etc and bring about an enhancement in the equality of life of women, (Annual Report, 1998-99).

Inspite of the Constitution prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of sex, the Indian women are continued to be discriminated even after 53 years of independence. Woman, especially rural poor and illiterate never get portrayed as agents of change. Women became a 'target' in developmental activities rather than a group to be cooped as active participants. Hence, women empowerment is not merely important but "crucial" if development is to be sustainable, (Narasimhan S, 1999).

One of the fundamentals for the working towards social equality, empowerment of women is now being put in place. Empowerment of women, being one of the major objectives of the ninth plan, is thought to ensure to create an enabling environment and financial resources to achieve the object. In ninth plan an integrated approach has been adopted towards empowering women on social, economic and political fronts, (Draft, 1997).

Empowerment of women is a political issue located in a broad social context, is possible only by undoing the traditional arrangement of our society. Indian Constitution has recognized gender equality but an enormous gap between constitutional mandate and social realities on women issue were evident, for that reasons amendment to the constitution took place for gender equality and women empowerment, (Singh Raj, 1995).

Since decentralization has been recognised as a means to ensure democratic functioning and decision making, empowerment of women through panchayati raj assumes importance. It was commonly agreed that reservation is the best way of ensuring women participation in local body of decision making and women empowerment can be held through panchayati raj institutions, (Meenakshi Sundram, 1995). Empowerment of women would enable them to overcome the obstacles placed by socio-economic and political structure and also redeem their own weakness and deficiencies, (Kiriti Kumar, 1994). Programmes like National Literacy Mission(NLM), Jawahar Rozgar Yojana(JRY), DWCRA, IRDP, TRYSEM, Mahila Samakhya Programme(MSP), Legal Literacy Camp, Adolescent Girls Scheme(AGS), Indira Mahila Yojana(IMY), Integrated Child Development Service(ICDS), Prime Minister's Rojgar Yojana(PMRY), Ganga Kalyan Yojana(GKY), Watershed Development Programme(WDP), Supply of Improved Toolkits to Rural Artisans(SITRA), Indira Awaas Yojana(IAY), Million Wells Scheme(MWS), Employment Assurance Scheme(EAS) and many other programmes implemented through Panchayati Raj Institutions, certainly help in empowering women.

Ministry of rural areas and employment strives to improve the socio-economic condition, of the people below the poverty line in rural areas, various steps is being taken in this regard. The programmes and their main features can be focused as:

### **Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY);**

- Generates additional gainful employment for rural unemployed and under-employed.

- Creates sustained employment for strengthening the rural economic infrastructure.
- 6619.44 million mandays of employment generated since inception to 1997.

### **Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY);**

- Provision of dwelling units free of cost to mainly SC, ST and freed bonded labour below poverty line.
- Scheme extended to non SC/ST beneficiaries below poverty line since 1993-94.
- 37 lakh houses constructed and distributed up to 1997.

### **Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS);**

- Provides assured employment of 100 days to two members of a poor family who need and seek work.
- Emphasis on sustained employment through watershed development and creation of durable productive assets.
- Till 1997 more than 27.67 million persons registered under the EAS and more than 1131.1 million mandays of employment generated.

### **Million Wells Scheme (MWS);**

- Provision of open irrigation wells, minor irrigation schemes and land development works free of cost to small and marginal farmers amongst SC/ST.
- Since 1993-94, 2/3 of allocation are for SC/STs and 1/3 for non-SC/ST.
- 1.11 million wells constructed at a cost of Rs.4037.50 Crore.

### **Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP);**

- A major self-employment programme for poverty alleviation.
- Provides productive assets to small and marginal farmers, agricultural laborers, rural artisans and other rural poor.
- Fifty percent beneficiaries SC/ST, forty percent women.



- Till 1997 51 million families assisted at an expenditure of Rs. 11,435 Crore.

### **Ganga Kalyan Yojana (GKY);**

Ganga Kalyan Yojana, a centrally sponsored new scheme, has been launched in February, 1997 to help poor farmers by providing irrigation through exploitation of ground water.

- Individual groups consisting of small and marginal farmers below poverty line would be assisted through subsidy by government and credit by financial institutions.
- 50 percent of the funds have been earmarked for SC/ST.

### **Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA);**

- DWCRA in operation in all the districts in the country.
- Raises income-levels of poor women to make them economically self-reliant.
- Over 1,93,170 groups formed benefiting over 31,58,900 women.

### **Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment (TRYSEM);**

- Aims at providing basic technical and managerial skills to the rural youth from families below the poverty line to enable them to take up self/wage employment in the broad fields of agriculture and allied sectors, industries, services and business activities.
- 4.1 million youth have been trained under this programme till 1997.

### **Supply of Improved Toolkits to Rural Artisans (SITRA);**

- The programme aims at enabling the rural artisans to enhance the quality of their products, increase their production and income through improved tools.
- The programme launched in July 1992 has so far distributed 6.10 lakh toolkits benefiting 8.32 lakh persons up to 1997.

### **National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP);**

- Provides assistance to old persons having little or no regular means of substance.

- Each person will get Rs. 75 per month.
- Voluntary sector.
- Funds to voluntary agencies, under various schemes routed through Council for Advancement of Peoples Action and Rural Technology (CAPART).
- 16553 projects approved and Rs. 31071 Crore released to 5600 voluntary agencies till 1997.

### *Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) :*

DWCRA is a sub-scheme of the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP). It was started in 1982-83 on a pilot basis in 50 districts but has now been extended to all districts of the country. The basic objective of the programme is to provide income, generating skills and activities to poor women in rural areas, thereby improving their social and economic status. Through such social and economic empowerment, the programme seeks to improve the access of rural women to health, education, sanitation, nutrition etc., and to bring about an enhancement in the quality of life and general well being of the women and children. The members of DWCRA form groups of 10-15 women each, for taking up economic activities suited to their skill, aptitude and local conditions. A revolving fund amounting to Rs. 25,000 per group is given to each group to meet its working capital requirements.

NGO have been involved in the implementation of the DWCRA programme since its inception in 1982-83. CAPART has been supporting voluntary agencies for taking up DWCRA schemes in rural areas.

### ***Recent Initiatives :-***

#### **Child Care Activities (CCA)**

CCA was incorporated in DWCRA during 1995-96 with the objective of providing crèche service for children of DWCRA women. Setting up of literacy centres for DWCRA women with specific emphasis on girl child.

#### **Information, Education and Communication (IEC) :-**

IEC was incorporated in DWCRA in 1995-96 with the objective of generating awareness among rural women about DWCRA and other programmes for their benefit and to encourage thrift and credit among them. Each district is given Rs. 1.50 lakh per year. DWCRA is being implemented by the DRDA. To facilitate the implementation of the scheme, one post of Assistant Project Officer (women) has been sanctioned to be part of the DRDA team. The post of Gram Sevika has been sanctioned at the block level.

The team is responsible for necessary monitoring and follow up. The APO is to help in establishing contacts with different agencies in mobilisation of resources and training facilities, marketing of the products of DWCRA and also to look after day-to-day administration.

#### **Marketing of Products :-**

Since one of the focal points of DWCRA is income-generating activities for women, it is necessary that their activities are economically viable. Marketing of products of the women's group is therefore very important. The interest of women in the programme can be sustained only when a proper market is arranged for their products.

#### ***Linkages with other Programmes :-***

The state governments have set up co-ordination committees at state, district and block levels for proper integration of the programmes focusing on women and children. These committees also enable interaction with officers of

other programmes like National Literacy Mission and Mother and Child Health Care, so that there is mutual exchange of benefits flowing out of DWCRA. DWCRA has already been dovetailed with Integrated Community Development Scheme (ICDS) in many states.

**Table 5.1**  
**Physical and Financial Achievements Under DWCRA**  
**since its Inception**

(Rs.in Lakhs)

Plan	Target	Achievements Groups	Women Benefited	Central Assistance Released
Sixth Plan	6035	3308	52170	298.53
Seventh Plan	35000	28031	469707	3663.53
Annual Plan 1990-91	7500	7139	109557	898.00
1991-92	7500	9378	208012	962.72
Eight Plan	91900	141514	2268327	19074.17
Ninth Plan Upto 1998-99	91850	56093	695803	8354.68
<b>Total</b>	<b>239785</b>	<b>245463</b>	<b>3803576</b>	<b>33251.632</b>

**Source :** *Annual Report- 1998-99, Government of India, Ministry of Rural*

*Areas and Employment.*

Table 5.1 reflects a total no of 3803576 women in 245463 groups has been benefited under this programme where the target group was 239785. Initially no specific coverage of vulnerable groups such as SC/STs was fixed. However, during the year 1997-98, it has been made compulsory that 50 % of the groups have to be women belonging to SC/ST. Priority has to be given to physically handicapped person and also girls and women rehabilitated from prostitution.

### ***Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment :-***

TRYSEM as a centrally sponsored scheme started on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1979, aiming at providing basic technical and entrepreneurial skill to the rural youth from families below the poverty line to enable them to take up self-employment in the broad fields of agriculture and allied sectors, industries, services and business activities. This objective was enlarged in the year 1983 to include taking

up of wage employment also to the trained youth. TRYSEM plays an important role in facilitating diversification of activities taken up under IRDP. This programme seeks to impart new skills and upgrade existing skill of beneficiaries who are by and large attuned only to stagnant levels of agricultural or artisan skills. It was identified as the weakest link in the over all strategy for self - employment in rural areas.

Members of the steering group felt that TRYSEM should be revamped in its design, curriculum and method of training in order to improve the employment opportunities, short cuts in this area of training could backfire and undermine the objectives of providing sustainable employment for the rural youth. It was felt that training curriculum under TRYSEM should upgrade their syllabus in tune with the rapid changes in the job market. At a macro level, TRYSEM could be expanded to include the entrepreneurship development programme for IRDP beneficiaries. It was also felt that the training institutes should possess staff having requisite knowledge and expertise and that the trainers besides having a sound theoretical foundation should be suitably in touch with the ground realities. There was scope for upgrading the training skills of trainers in various government institutions engaged in imparting training under TRYSEM. There should also be a technical appraisal of private institutions / master craftsmen to ensure the imparting of quality training under TRYSEM.

Under TRYSEM it was observed that training is imparted in certain skills to women but they are rehabilitated in different trades. The group recommends that provision of limited, stereo typed training should be stopped and ruralisation of women ITIs should be done to give training in development activities including electronics, computers, drafting, chemical analysis etc. be undertaken. A Management Information System (MIS) should be developed through which important training institutes of relevance for TRYSEM through out the country be identified and networked. This would give some idea of the areas deficient in training infrastructure and where investment should flow during the ninth plan for meeting the training requirements. In those blocks where there is a concentration of unemployed youth and where there are no

reputed training institutions in the vicinity, ITIs could be set up. Priority should be attached to financing of IRDP projects for the TRYSEM trainees so that the investments made in TRYSEM training did not go waste. To ensure sustained self-employment it should be made incumbent on the training institutions under TRYSEM to continuously monitor the progress of their trainees in the respective trades they were pursuing.

In the Ninth Five-Year Plan a major thrust should be given to revamping of existing craft training centres, skill development institutions etc. for their modernization and infrastructural improvement to cater to the needs of the changing situations. It was felt that there should be an effort to assess the training requirements of the industry sector and TRYSEM training should be geared to meet these requirements. No institutional arrangements had been worked out for linking sectors with economic potential for self-employment in partnership with the private sector. The private sector needs should be taken in to account not only for marketing of products but also for identifying necessary skills. There should be an effective liaison and interface between the state government and the DRDAs. At present, TRYSEM training is not oriented towards the service sector. It was therefore recommended by the members of the steering group that training could be profitably imparted in the service sector activities such as marketing, catering, gardening etc.. Since that sector offered ample employment opportunities.

To take an account of this programme it is found that the rural youth in the age group of 18-35 years from families below poverty line are enlisted for training under the scheme. The minimum age for providing training under TRYSEM is relaxed to 16 years for inmates of orphanages in rural areas. The upper age limit is 45 years in case of widows, freed convicts and cured leprosy patients. 50 percent of selected youths should belong to the SC/ST, 40 percent should be women and 03 percent trainees should be physically handicapped persons. The duration of training is normally six months. The trainees are paid a stipend varying from Rs. 200 to Rs. 500 per month.

**Table 5.2**  
**Performance of TRYSEM During (1992-93) - (1998-99)**

(Rs. In Crores) (No in Lakhs)

Year	Allocation	Release	Expenditure	Target	No of Youth Trained
1992-93	39.87	47.04	47.50	3.00	2.76
1993-94	111.24	89.45	55.02	3.50	3.04
1994-95	89.16	74.03	68.46	3.18	2.82
1995-96	90.25	73.31	94.55	3.54	2.91
1996-97	90.25	70.11	100.27	2.90	3.64
1997-98	90.00	68.08	80.74	3.04	2.54
1998-99 *	89.76	40.61	30.86	2.92	0.66
<b>Total</b>	<b>600.53</b>	<b>562.63</b>	<b>477.40</b>	<b>22.08</b>	<b>18.37</b>

**Source:** *Annual Report – 1998-99, Government of India, Ministry of Rural Area and Employment.*

\* Up to November 1998.

During the period (1992-93-1998-99) total releases were Rs.562.63 Crore out of which Rs.477.40 Crores have been utilized. During the same period against the largest of 22.08 lakhs only 18.37 lakh youth have been trained.

**Table 5.3**  
**Physical Performance Under TRYSEM**

Year	No of Youth to be Trained	No of Youth Trained	Self Employment	Wage Employment	Total	No of Women Trained
1992-93	300000	275993	99334	42058	141392	134929
1993-94	350000	303821	107919	43004	150923	153981
1994-95	318436	281874	86466	44965	131431	137822
1995-96	353980	291450	92665	48450	141115	124462
1996-97	290079	364377	130812	51725	182537	195522
1997-98	304129	251387	73358	39384	112742	132841
1998-99 *	292485	66016	12988	11175	31535	46390

**Source:** *Annual Report – 1998-99, Government of India, Ministry of Rural Area and Employment.*

\* Up to November 1998.

Table 5.4

## Physical Progress under TRYSEM (Recurring Expenditure)

During 1998-99 (Up to November, 98-Provisional)

(In Numbers)

States/UTs	Target	Trained Youth Self Employed	Trained Youth Wage Employed	Total Trained Youth Employed	Trained Women	% to Women Trained
Andhra Pradesh	38534	1416	1102	2518	3943	54.82
Arunachal Pradesh	750	41	0	41	24	0.00
Assam	10965	354	209	563	118	61.46
Bihar	56370	1980	995	2975	10250	55.51
Goa	2000	207	26	233	912	55.44
Gujarat	4265	970	172	1142	1504	49.85
Haryana	NF	43	102	145	220	48.67
Himachal Pradesh	707	73	81	154	65	0.00
Jammu & Kashmir	NR	0	0	0	1211	0.00
Karnataka	13666	298	194	492	135	43.97
Kerala	1939	442	974	1416	1185	63.47
Madhya Pradesh	13770	2367	2269	4636	965	18.63
Maharashtra	20100	1003	1040	2043	892	24.06
Meghalaya	0	0	0	0	27	87.10
Mizoram	Nil	0	0	0	80	42.78
Orissa	18840	1156	1238	2394	2141	40.15
Punjab	1800	157	324	481	482	52.28
Rajasthan	10000	128	0	128	811	63.21
Sikkim	732	0	0	0	0	0.00
Tamil Nadu	13602	657	444	1101	2905	56.48
Tripura	1200	40	26	66	706	68.81
Uttar Pradesh	62974	7122	1357	8479	14873	68.12
West Bengal	19630	1897	597	2494	2941	49.92
A & N Islands	411	0	25	0	NR	0.00
Daman & Diu	NR	0	0	0	0	0.00
D & N Haveli	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Lakshadweep	30	29	0	29	0	0.00
Pondicherry	200	5	0	5	0	0.00
<b>All India</b>	<b>292485</b>	<b>12988</b>	<b>11175</b>	<b>31535</b>	<b>46390</b>	<b>70.27</b>

Targets are fixed by states/UTs

NR: Not Reported

NF: Not Fixed

Source: Annual Report 1992-99, Government of India Ministry of Rural Area and Employment.



Table 5.5

**Financial Progress Report Under TRYSEM (RE) during 1998-99  
(Up to November, 98) (Provisional)**

(Rs. In Lakhs)

State/Uts	Central Share	State Share	Central Release	State Release	Total Release	Utilisation	% Utilisation
Andhra Pradesh	237.98	237.98	124.38	124.37	248.75	221.50	46.54
Arunachal Pradesh	12.46	12.46	4.98	2.09	7.07	14.35	57.59
Assam	323.71	323.71	71.22	0.00	71.22	49.89	7.71
Bihar	779.64	779.64	232.36	150.00	382.36	456.70	29.29
Goa	0.55	0.55	0.29	3.84	4.13	13.06	1189.44
Gujarat	89.58	89.58	46.93	46.93	93.86	109.44	61.08
Haryana	52.70	52.70	23.95	9.33	33.28	27.15	25.76
Himachal Pradesh	22.20	22.20	9.44	12.08	21.52	10.93	24.62
Jammu & Kashmir	27.47	27.47	10.96	0.00	10.96	46.93	85.43
Karnataka	179.71	179.71	87.63	3.86	91.49	10.72	2.98
Kerala	80.64	80.64	34.74	34.74	69.48	57.77	35.82
Madhya Pradesh	395.20	395.20	207.04	207.04	414.08	278.65	35.25
Maharashtra	355.28	355.28	159.20	172.02	331.22	289.61	40.76
Manipur	21.70	21.70	0.00		0.00		0.00
Meghalaya	24.31	24.31	5.49	0.00	5.49	2.49	5.12
Mizoram	5.63	5.63	4.12	4.12	8.24	8.29	73.68
Nagaland	16.68	16.68	6.86		6.86		0.00
Orissa	272.24	272.24	120.78	122.78	243.56	189.20	34.75
Punjab	25.61	25.61	12.94	13.33	26.27	28.31	55.26
Rajasthan	136.46	136.46	40.17	25.03	65.20	38.33	14.04
Sikkim	6.33	6.33	1.39	6.00	7.39	3.64	28.75
Tamil Nadu	210.42	210.42	110.24	154.21	264.45	107.15	25.46
Tripura	39.18	39.18	13.10	25.00	38.10	36.28	46.30
Uttar Pradesh	858.04	858.04	738.58	906.98	1645.56	830.06	48.37
<b>West Bengal</b>	<b>302.54</b>	<b>302.54</b>	<b>136.17</b>	<b>115.88</b>	<b>252.05</b>	<b>251.22</b>	<b>41.52</b>
A & N Islands	11.15		0.00	0.00	0.00	1.53	13.72
Daman & Diu	2.36		2.30	0.00	2.30	0.38	16.12
D & N Haveli	4.38		1.24	0.00	1.24	0.00	0.00
Lakshadweep	1.10		0.00	0.00	0.00	0.32	29.14
Pondicherry	4.74		2.49	0.00	2.49	1.52	32.04
<b>All India</b>	<b>4500.00</b>	<b>4476.27</b>	<b>1921.71</b>	<b>2139.63</b>	<b>4061.34</b>	<b>3085.42</b>	<b>34.04</b>

Source: Annual Report – 1998-99, Government of India, Ministry of Rural Area and Employment.

It is observed from the table 5.3 that the year 1996-97 has a little more success having 364377 youth trained out of which 195522 were women, in the case of self employment a total no of 112742 youth were employed. From table 5.4 that among state West Bengal had a target of 19630 out of 292485 (India) during 1998-99. In West Bengal 2494 trained youth employed out of 31535

(India) a number of 2941 women as 49.92 percent were trained among 46390 women (India wide). In table 5.5 we found during 1998-99 West Bengal total release were 252.05 lakhs as all India picture shows 4061.34 lakhs. Percent of utilisation in West Bengal is 41.52 as 34.37 India wide.

### ***Supply of Improved Toolkits to Rural Artisan (SITRA) :***

The artisan in rural areas, despite their rich heritage and skills belong to the poverty groups. The existing programme aims at upgrading their skills and improving their production capabilities, by supplying them with modern toolkits enhancing there by their productivity and income levels. The scheme was launched in July 1992 with the objective of enabling the rural artisans to enhance the quality of their products, increase their production and income. Under the scheme, artisans from a variety of crafts except weavers, tailors, needle workers and beedi-workers are supplied with kit of improved hand tools within the financial ceiling of Rs.2000, of which the artisans have to pay only 10 percent and the rest 90 percent is subsidy from government of India. The supply of power-driven tools subject to a ceiling of Rs.4500 has also been permitted under the scheme. The District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) is the nodal agency for implementation of the scheme. Prototypes of improved tools in pottery, carpentry, blacksmith, leather work, wood craft, metal craft and laquerware have been developed by the National Small Industries corporation, Regional Design and Technical Development Centres under the Development Commission. The state government have been authorised to choose models/tools which suit the need of their artisans.

There is 50% reservation for SC and ST communities, wherever SC/ST persons are not available, the DRDA governing body can decide to allocate the percentage meant for SC/ST to other categories of artisans. There is no provision of reservation for women and physically handicapped persons. However, if eligible, preference will be given to such persons of other persons. Regular monthly monitoring is done by the Ministry of Rural Areas and Employment. State and district level committees have been set up by the state

government for implementation and monitoring of the scheme. Areas Officers nominated for various states by this ministry also regularly inspect the implementation of the scheme in the field during their visits to the states.

**Table 5.6**  
**Yearwise Allocation and Release under the Scheme SITRA**

(Rs. In Crores)

Year	Allocation	Release	Expenditure	Target	No of Toolkit Distributed (In Lakhs)
1992-93	16.85	16.85	13.86	0.98	0.83
1993-94	23.22	23.22	18.60	1.29	1.09
1994-95	29.00	29.00	22.91	1.61	1.25
1995-96	40.00	40.00	28.69	2.22	1.54
1996-97	40.00	40.00	36.02	2.22	1.81
1997-98	35.00	30.82	34.37	1.94	1.62
1998-99	59.00	26.87	25.14	3.27	1.32
<b>Total</b>	<b>243.05</b>	<b>216.76</b>	<b>179.59</b>	<b>13.53</b>	<b>9.46</b>

**Source :** *Annual plan 1998-99, Govt. of India, New Delhi.*

- Up to November 98.

Table 5.6 shows us that the year 1995-96 and 1996-97 has a maximum allocation of funds and target as 40.00 Crores and 2.22 lakhs where as the year 1996-97 has achieved as maximum, over all achievement is always less than the target. In Table 5.7 we find West Bengal has a less percent (32.09) of fund utilisation comparing to Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Nagaland and Andhra Pradesh during the year 1998-99. Andhra Pradesh has got a high percentage of fund utilisation where as Utter Pradesh has got the maximum allotment of funds.

**Table 5.7**  
**Financial Progress Report Under SITRA During 1998-99**  
**(Upto November, 98-provisional)**

State/Uts	Opening Balance As on 1.4.98	Allocation	Release	Total Funds Available	Total Utili- sation	% of Utilisation
Andhra Pradesh	NR	313.140	164.488	164.488	272.554	165.70
Arunachal Pradesh	21.26	16.334	12.285	33.545	2.270	6.77
Assam	NR	424.421	424.421	0.000	NR	0.00
Bihar	838.97	1025.866	0.000	838.970	44.699	5.33
Goa	NR	0.722	0.000	0.000	NR	0.00
Gujarat	NR	117.872	62.769	62.769	6.000	9.56
Haryana	60.82	69.346	21.567	82.385	4.980	6.04
Himachal Pradesh	9.82	29.204	11.728	21.548	5.830	27.06
Jammu & Kashmir	NR	36.144	9.770	9.770	NR	0.00
Karnataka	113.43	236.465	124.212	237.642	129.088	54.32
Kerala	29.09	106.101	55.733	84.823	36.470	43.00
Madhya Pradesh	172.23	520.012	277.825	450.055	87.080	19.35
Maharashtra	361.39	467.489	229.085	590.475	113.880	19.29
Manipur	NR	28.453	0.000	0.000	NR	0.00
Meghalaya	NR	31.878	0.000	0.000	NR	0.00
Mizoram	0.92	7.377	9.475	10.393	4.680	45.03
Nagaland	0.00	21.866	11.025	11.025	21.270	192.93
Orissa	171.86	358.223	75.644	247.504	77.530	31.32
Punjab	36.66	33.701	0.000	36.655	112.520	306.97
Rajasthan	117.22	179.556	27.177	144.394	821.460	568.90
Sikkim	4.05	8.299	1.837	5.887	3.640	0.00
Tamil Nadu	NR	276.884	109.828	109.828	166.409	151.52
Tripura	1.55	51.373	11.374	12.925	4.230	0.00
Uttar Pradesh	251.45	1129.024	966.494	1217.944	483.140	39.67
<b>West Bengal</b>	276.23	398.087	78.300	354.530	113.770	32.09
A & N Islands	2.45	3.998	2.100	4.550	1.950	42.86
Daman & Diu	0.54	2.170	0.000	0.540		0.00
D & N Haveli	14.30		0.000	14.300	NR	0.00
Lakshadweep	14.64	2.998	0.000	14.640	NR	0.00
Pondicherry	2.87	2.998	0.000	2.870	1.040	36.24
<b>Total</b>	<b>2500.237</b>	<b>5900.00</b>	<b>2687.13</b>	<b>4764.455</b>	<b>2514.490</b>	<b>52.78</b>

**Source:** Annual Report, 1998-99, Government of India, Ministry of Rural Area and Employment.

\*Daman & Diu does not require funds.

State government should take up the task of promoting development of appropriate toolkits for these artisan groups. They must interact with the Department of Science and Technology, NSIC, IIT for the 'development' of appropriate technology and designs for these improved toolkits. There are pockets where rural technologies have survived the onslaught of modern technological innovations by virtue of their sturdiness and locate specific utility. These should be identified and replicated elsewhere. A majority of rural artisans are illiterate and therefore they do not have access to documented literature. Efforts should therefore be made to prepare such literature with plenty of graphics and illustrations for easy comprehension by the rural artisans. It was proposed to strengthen and expand the programme for supply of improved toolkits to rural artisans in the ninth five year plan.

### ***National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP):***

The National social Assistance Programme (NSAP) has come in to effect from August 15, 1995. It is now in operation throughout India. This programme represents a significant step towards the fulfilment of the directive principles in article 41 to 42 of the constitution, recognising the concurrent responsibility of the central and state governments in the matter. It provides social assistance to benefit the poor households in the case of old age, death of the primary breadwinner and maternity. It is a centrally sponsored programme to extend 100% central assistance to the states/UTs to provide the benefits under it, in accordance with the norms, guidelines and conditions laid down by the central government. It has mainly three components as (1) National Old Age Pension Scheme (NOAPS). (2) National Family Benefit Scheme (NFBS). (3) National Maternity Benefit Scheme (NMBS). The intention in providing 100% assistance is to ensure that social protection to the beneficiaries everywhere in the country is uniformly available without interruption and a minimum national standard is maintained thereby. States and UTS are however, to ensure that the central assistance does not displace their own expenditure in similar schemes.

They may also expand their own coverage of social assistance independently, where ever they wish to do so.

**Table 5.8**

**National Social Assistance Programme NOAPS (Provisional) 1998-99**

State/Uts	O.B As on 1.4.98	New Allocation	Release	Exp. Reported	Total No of Benf.	Total Release
Andhra Pradesh	283.27	4361.76	4136.66	2617.29	514467	4170.67
Arunachal Pradesh	2.98	45.86	1.94	3.06	336	1.94
Assam	124.13	656.14	258.49	370.95	53087	264.80
Bihar	2784.16	6552.00	4047.87	4656.65	717519	5729.34
Goa	0.23	20.59	20.60	17.30	1758	23.17
Gujarat	546.48	514.80	242.86	104.72	2035	322.40
Haryana	35.33	352.87	208.50	105.63	15338	248.16
Himachal Pradesh	22.32	108.58	62.49	75.20	0	84.49
Jammu & Kashmir	39.73	248.98	150.24	78.57	26337	152.63
Karnataka	760.26	2959.63	1841.35	1866.20	183045	2588.48
Kerala	633.06	1252.37	774.33	584.11	75923	1125.34
Madhya Pradesh	2038.81	4585.46	3685.11	4119.88	790651	4332.90
Maharashtra	1140.97	3996.72	2631.80	2137.84	251303	2682.75
Manipur	11.75	97.34	0.00	10.02	2227	0.00
Meghalaya	17.53	94.54	6.96	53.60	6577	13.9113.91
Mizoram	0.08	37.44	18.73	18.45	0	34.45
Nagaland	9.85	66.46	4.98	13.20	885	4.98
Orissa	1258.86	3120.62	1816.66	1788.36	309590	1918.92
Punjab	17.99	280.80	149.17	164.26	36500	149.17
Rajasthan	673.65	1404.00	592.33	517.61	130823	592.33
Sikkim	0.00	22.47	1123	10.80	0	26.97
Tamil Nadu	1331.70	3276.00	1834.15	2256.19	0	1924.75
Tripura	32.73	146.02	114.58	81.78	15480	137.68
Uttar Pradesh	3947.28	7956.00	5830.17	7104.31	922537	6276.69
West Bengal	1253.93	3312.50	1516.97	1507.98	340059	2192.79
A & N Islands	0.00	5.62	0.00	0.00	0	0.00
Chandigarh	3.86	12.17	0.00	0.00	0	0.00
Daman & Diu	0.30	2.81	0.00	0.00	0	0.00
D & N Haveli	0.22	1.87	1.87	0.90	203	1.87
Lakshadweep	0.00	0.94	0.00	1.51	0	0.00
Pondicherry	1.03	14.04	7.02	6.79	0	14.04
<b>Total :</b>	<b>16980.20</b>	<b>45685.24</b>	<b>30055.99</b>	<b>30374.81</b>	<b>4396680</b>	<b>35104.54</b>

**Source:** Annual Report, 1998-99, Government of India, Ministry of Rural Area and Employment.

Table 5.8 shows us that during 1998-99 West Bengal has a little high performance in NSAP, which figures as 340059 beneficiaries expenditure is about 1507.98 lakhs. The NSAP is being implemented by the panchayats and municipalities in the delivery of social assistance so as to make it responsive and

cost effective. It provides opportunities for linking the social assistance package to schemes for poverty alleviation and provision of basic needs.

### ***Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) :***

The Integrated Rural Development Programme aims at providing self-employment opportunities to the rural poor through assistance in the form of subsidy and bank credit to enable them to acquire productive assets and appropriate skills to cross the poverty line. Though the allocation for this scheme have not been increased appreciably in the last three to four years, certain innovative changes have been made in the guidelines for this programme in order to make a greater impact on income levels. But the success has been limited. The major constraint in the implementation of IRDP had been sub-critical investments which had adversely affected Incremental Capital Output Ratios (ICOR) and thereby undermined the viability of projects.

Investment levels under IRDP therefore should be stepped up considerably to make this programme viable. Recognising that the level of investment is the most crucial variable in determining the incremental income generated through IRDP activities.

The government intervention should be focussed mainly on providing inputs, infrastructure and linkages and marketing support. To make IRDP more effective in its impact it should be specifically targeted to the income bracket just below the poverty line which comprises prospective beneficiaries who have the requisite skills and knowledge, an easier access to credit and a better absorptive capacity to derive greater benefits from IRDP. In the selection of beneficiaries, the procedure of identification should be made more objective and transparent through a greater involvement of the gram sabhas in this process. To ensuring that benefits under the programme reach the more vulnerable sections of the society an ensured coverage of at least 50% for SC/ST, 40% for women and 3% for physically handicapped. A revolving fund is provided to various groups for purchase of raw materials and marketing, payment of honorarium to the group leader, and infrastructure development.

The programme focussed on women or in which women played a dominant role, under the IRDP, the earmarking for women is 40% therefore, felt that there should be a more durable integration of DWCRA with IRDP as DWCRA was an excellent vehicle for extending IRDP credit support for women beneficiaries. When land is purchased under IRDP it should be made in the name of the women beneficiaries with adequate financial assistance provided to them under the programme. In India land continues to be main productive asset in the rural areas. IRDP activities had been relatively more successful in land based activities. In recognition of the fact that IRDP had been relatively more successful in land based activities, purchase of land was made a permissible activity under IRDP in 1995-96. Under land based activities it is felt that besides providing a package of inputs for enhancing productivity of land there also exists a potential for diversifying in to other productive activities such as sericulture, aqua-culture, horticulture and floriculture which have a high value addition. Since a large segment of the rural poor are landless, assistance to them under IRDP had also been provided in the small business and service sector. 50% of the IRDP investments are concentrated in the secondary and tertiary sectors, based on local resources and local requirements. These include processing industries, handloom and handicraft. The success of IRDP activities in this sector has been dependent on the development of skill base for the poor, upgradation of technology, establishment of forward and backward linkages, availability of infrastructure and market.

To achieve better returns from economic empowerment of the poor, the IRDP should be linked with area development and sectoral development programmes. Under the revised strategy for IRDP it was also proposed to redesign the programme as a credit based self-employment programme with an element of subsidy rather than a programme based cardinally on the provision of subsidy and supplemented by bank credit. To enable IRDP beneficiaries to sustain credible levels to income generation, there should be a continuous line of credit available to the beneficiary from the banks. Consequently, the importance of recovering bank loans could hardly be over emphasised. In the context of economic empowerment related issue discussed in ninth plan.



Table 5.9

## Physical Progress Under Integrated Rural Development Programme

During 1998-99 (Upto November, 98) As On 14-1-99

(No of Families)

State/Uts	Coverage of Disadvantaged Groups					
	Total Families	SC	ST	Women Beneficiaries	Handicapped Persons	% of Women Beneficiaries
Andhra Pradesh	59799	21046	6020	23267	727	38.91
Arunachal Pradesh	2810	0	2810	1428	0	50.82
Assam	7964	278	1809	1702	48	21.37
Bihar	84753	23231	13089	13187	155	15.56
Goa	602	3	0	323	0	53.65
Gujarat	22688	3651	6184	8351	260	36.81
Haryana	5881	2743	0	2746	102	46.69
Himachal Pradesh	3224	1314	155	1220	0	37.84
Jammu & Kashmir	7457	N.A	N.A	N.A	N.A	0.00
Karnataka	42775	11672	2825	14821	365	34.65
Kerala	17770	6164	364	7601	155	42.77
Madhya Pradesh	45904	9644	12459	8740	77	19.04
Maharashtra	60068	11394	8797	21629	67	36.01
Manipur						0.00
Meghalaya	1409	0	1409	572	0	40.60
Mizoram	1400	0	1400	525	33	37.50
Nagaland						0.00
Orissa	35383	7475	10585	10792	35	30.50
Punjab	5335	2537	0	1848	74	34.64
Rajasthan	25205	6675	4431	8922	78	35.40
Sikkim	643	29	314	211	0	32.81
Tamil Nadu	92094	42868	1480	37989	1325	41.25
Tripura	600	80	262	188	1	31.33
Uttar Pradesh	211249	107092	1292	78943	352	37.37
West Bengal	46341	14473	2448	15413	239	33.26
A & N Islands	119	0	6	41	0	34.45
D & N Haveli	113	0	113	4	0	3.54
Daman & Diu	29	6	12	16	0	55.17
Lakshadweep	2	0	2	1	0	50.00
Pondicherry	208	68	0	138	0	-66.35
<b>Total</b>	<b>781825</b>	<b>272443</b>	<b>78266</b>	<b>260618</b>	<b>4093</b>	<b>34.85</b>

Source: Annual Report 1998-99, Govt. of India, Ministry of Rural Area and Employment, New Delhi.

**Table 5.10**  
**Financial Progress Under Integrated Rural Development**  
**Programme**  
**During 1998-99 (Upto November, 98)- As On 14-1-99**  
(Rs. In lakhs)

State/Uts	Total Allocation	Central Releases (Upto date)	State Releases	Utilisation	Total Credit Target	Total Credit Acheived
Andhra Pradesh	7734.30	2264.52	2036.98	4985.35	21600.00	30.17
Arunachal Pradesh	403.82	161.02	148.81	169.85	880.00	5.89
Assam	10492.72	1163.68	472.38	758.24	7000.00	9.679.67
Bihar	25336.66	3924.78	2661.67	6237.60	51000.00	19.99
Goa	17.82	24.43	36.51	44.68	44.00	119.45
Gujarat	2911.34	766.76	766.76	1906.07	7500.00	36.56
Haryana	1712.78	462.30	503.95	545.80	4200.00	23.22
Himachal Pradesh	721.32	185.48	167.76	227.47	2000.00	40.10
Jammu & Kashmir	892.74	247.41	0.00	539.24	1800.00	40.26
Karnataka	5840.48	1439.74	1431.87	2394.22	14000.00	30.67
Kerala	2620.60	733.91	690.19	1142.84	7000.00	36.89
Madhya Pradesh	12842.50	3607.42	3582.32	4728.52	31500.00	22.70
Maharashtra	11545.22	3497.66	2456.24	4358.81	28500.00	28.94
Manipur	703.42	40.00	0.00	0.00	500.00	0.00
Meghalaya	788.10	74.07	0.00	92.12	600.00	11.83
Mizoram	182.36	52.13	66.64	100.35	200.00	5.83
Nagaland	540.60	86.70	0.00	0.00	400.00	0.00
Orissa	8846.44	2386.83	2208.89	2853.36	20700.00	21.45
Punjab	832.40	317.99	219.96	454.31	2000.00	40.55
Rajasthan	4434.88	1131.11	1090.23	1943.05	14000.00	43.84
Sikkim	201.90	22.39	18.00	58.66	230.00	35.92
Tamil Nadu	6838.82	3258.66	2501.09	5067.63	18000.00	48.92
Tripura	1270.06	270.48	184.42	255.45	1100.00	33.19
Uttar Pradesh	27883.22	12068.49	11359.71	12757.71	65000.00	43.46
West Bengal	9831.06	1194.70	1254.59	2505.36	20000.00	20.25
A & N Islands	69.58	36.26	-----	17.31	72.00	12.08
D & N Haveli	41.53	21.88	-----	5.60	60.00	18.13
Daman & Diu	27.43	0.00	-----	3.35	10.00	23.50
Lakshadweep	6.85	0.00	-----	2.17	4.00	2.00
Pondicherry	56.83	29.93	-----	31.63	100.00	14.04
<b>Total</b>	<b>145627.78</b>	<b>39470.73</b>	<b>33858.97</b>	<b>54186.75</b>	<b>320000.00</b>	<b>30.65</b>

Source: Annual Report, 1998-99, Government of India, Ministry of Rural Area and Employment.

In Table 5.9 we find the physical progress during 1998-99 where West Bengal has not performed well. Table 5.10 also presents us that West Bengal has a less percentage (25.48) of utilisation and only 20.25 percent total credit achieved.

## ***Panchayati Raj Institutions and Women Empowerment :***

Panchayati Raj, one of the most important political innovations of independent India is a channel for popular participation in development process. The Panchayati Raj System was instituted in 1959 which initiated a process of democratic decentralization in tune with Article 40 of the constitution. The most significant reason behind women participation in Panchayati Raj bodies was the implementation of 73<sup>rd</sup> constitution amendment. A positive aspect was that several women's group, government and NGOs started preparation in their own ways of mobilizing people and women towards political empowerment. Challenge has been much greater for women to get unleashed by the patriarchal forces. Character assassination was also the reason for women's lack of interest in politics (Chauhan A, 1998). Political empowerment is essential not only for ensuring political participation in the democratic process but also for realising the development goals for women. Decentralization process under 73<sup>rd</sup> constitutional amendments with reservation of seats for women is a big leap towards bringing the women in to the mainstream of panchayat raj. It is also felt that even if women are elected in large numbers, they may not be sufficiently effective to propound their cause unless they are adequately gender sensitive and politically educated (Sen A, 1994).

The Eighth Five-Year plan rightly emphasised on greater involvement of women in political process. The reservation of seats for women in panchayati raj is one of the significant achievements in women empowerment at the grassroot level. Instead of reservation the social blockade on women actually empowerment in political process is very negligible (Bhargava BS, 1992). Reservation of seat for women in panchayati raj is the main instrument of political empowerment for women. Reviewing women's political participation, women had a negligible impact on the political process that though they constituted a numerical majority, they were slowly acquiring the features of a minority group because of inequalities of status and power. To make women involved in politics, government took initiatives to set a quota for women in decentralised political institutions. It is noticed that if the hostile religious

fundamentalism, continues to grow the women's political aspect will probably be in jeopardy, because these forces divert attention from basic development issues important to women empowerment (Barbara,1997).

### **Achievements of these Programmes in Women Empowerment :**

Achievements is the mixture of success and failure, every aspect has these two factors in the case of its achievements. Various government plans and programme in ensuring women empowerment has also both the success and failure. If not all but many of these programmes have a better sign towards its failure. This failure or less success whatever we say is mainly because of administrative problem and some technical lack in implementation, these problems varies state to state and even district to district. Mostly it is the political will of the Indian leaders working behind every success or failure. Many of the programme is doing well though the target of the programme is not achieved by any of the programmes but the rate of achievement is quite high in many cases. Lack of funds, lack of people, cooperation is also the main hinders behind not having full success, but these programmes have done well in respect of empowering women economically and politically. However, the status of women had declined gradually with the consolidation of private property in the course of historical development. The alienation of women from the social production was the downfall of the female sex and consequently rise of male supremacy over women. This so called women's inferior position is not natural, but the circumstances pushed the women in to dependency becoming mere domestic channel to keep the house in order and was exploited in all the socio-economic and political life. It is obvious that, with the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, situation had started changing. The primary role of women in our society is still considered as wives, mothers, child-bearers and rearers, whatever may be their level of education and professional career. Factors which are to be taken account of women's involvement in panchayati raj institutions relates to the social structure, religion and culture of the family. In political structure, nature of political party, process of political succession which support or oppose

the recruitment of women to political officers. So the socio-political environment determines the women's activities in democratic decentralization. Thus, reservation of women in panchayati raj institutions has to be meaningful to bring about development and empowerment of women.

### **Overall Assessment of Women Empowerment :**

The Indian Constitution guaranteed to all women the right to equality and political participation but women's participation and their role in political life has not become a reality and that is why political empowerment of women by way of reservation is the need of the hour. Though the Constitution (article 14, 15 and 16) has granted equal rights to women but their voice is hardly given any weightage. How can they be empowered unless they have been allowed to put on an equal pedestal with men? How can they enjoy this equality until they have freedom? How can they enjoy freedom unless they have right in decision-making process and how they can take the decisions until and unless they are fully empowered? Reservation is the first step to empower women to enable them to enjoy rights and privileges (Narasimhan S, 1999). Major questions lingering in the minds of the politicians, administrators and social workers about women are whether it be possible to generate enough women power as per the reservation. Entire effort of empowering is to help them to exercise their rights in decision making at all levels and in every sphere of life, within and outside the household. Mere panchayati raj is not enough to empower women, they should be given a fair knowledge about the functioning of the political system as a whole and the interactions between the subsystem (Subha K, 1995).

Empowerment of women implies avoidance of crimes and atrocities against women and improvement in education and health. The empowerment of women and their status improvement in respect of education, health and economic opportunity is a highly important in itself. The world community cannot and should not miss the enhanced contribution that women can make to human development through their empowerment. Empowerment of women pre-supposes a drastic, dynamic and democratic change in the perception of and

expectation from women in our society. When women attains economic independence she naturally becomes the mistress of her body and decisions (Devasia L).

Empowerment of women is necessary for development, which implies a state of balance and equilibrium in factors related to human life which can be social, economical, political and even spiritual. If a human being is forced to live in an inhuman and degrading situation, development becomes unattainable. In the case of women equality, social justice and freedom have dynamic roles to achieve such empowerment. The eighth plan (1992-97) marks a further shift in approach to women's development from "development " to "empowerment ", seeking women to function as equal partners and participants in the developmental process. The strategy is in consonance with the provisions of the constitution which not only guarantees equality to women but also empowers them. Today, the women's concerns in all sectors have been flagged. The challenge lies in converting these concerns in to reality, so the empowering strategies would need to be further sharpened to make them effective and result oriented. Therefore, a need for comprehensive and holistic policy on women is felt by everyone. This would enable the country to fulfil the constitutional mandate of women's equality and objective of involvement in national development (Chaudhary M, 1996).

It is observed from the various government plans and programmes that a good response is coming out from women to get themselves empowered all the way. Even it is the new generation women who are able to come out of the social barrier and to involve in various public life. A move made by the women is a sign of positive attitude towards women empowerment. Lakhs of women are being self-employed and so they are able to be eco-independent by the advancement of governmental programmes. Education has a great role in this change among women. It is upwards trend which indicates successful positive attitudes of women to be empowered. Not only in employment but in political process also women are involving themselves so easily and emotionally which is an evidence of empowerment. Time is approaching very fast when Indian women will be fully empowered as compared to other advanced countries of the

world. Certain changes and suggestions is still required in government plans and programmes and in the machinery for its implementation. Empowerment is an accepted notion since the eighties, women empowerment can be known as gaining autonomy and control over one's life including social, economic and political empowerment. It is evident that the question of effective empowerment can not be ensured simply by amending the constitution. It is a challenge to women.

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