

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

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The family is a basic social institution which forms the foundation of any community, small or large. It is a unit of interdependent and interacting personalities striving to achieve personal and group goals. The well being of a family is closely knit with the economic development of the larger community, be it local or national, of which it is an integral part. The family performs certain functions comprised of expressive and instrumental tasks for its existence and survival (Parsons, 1951). Both the expressive and instrumental functions are inseparable. The managerial aspect of family living and the managerial roles family members assume appear to be explicitly associated with the internal and external instrumental functioning of the family (Boderick, 1970).

An essential function to be performed for sustenance and survival of family is that of generation of financial income. It forms a tangible resource that contributes to economic well-being of the individual and the family in specific and the nation in general. In the traditional Indian society, true to the saying "Women for the hearth and men for the soil", the responsibility of being bread winner rested solely on the male head of the family except in the cases of the economically poor families, wherein everyone who could earn a small amount contributed to the provision of possible minimum needs. With the changing times, more and more women joined paid labour force.

The work participation rate according to Census 1991 indicates that more than one-third of the Indian population is working (37.64%). Among males, while 51.52 per cent are workers, among females only 2.26 per cent are considered as being in active labour force. Among females, the main and marginal workers constitute 16.43 per cent and 6.26 per cent respectively. While the percentage of main workers among males is much higher than that of females, the percentage of marginal workers among female

(6.26 per cent) is higher than that of males (0.98 per cent).

The saying 'Women hold up half of the sky' expresses the crucial role of women in development. Women constitute half of the world's population and they ought to play an equally important role along with men, in creating better life for families. If the productive potentials of nearly half the nation's human resource remains untapped, it is a colossal waste and would nullify all efforts geared towards national development.

Mahatma Gandhi believed that women's productive abilities and attitudes were essential forces that needed to be allowed full and free play for human and social development with justice and dignity. Bishop Nzimba of Kenya (1985) stated as follows: "Train a man and you train an individual, train a woman and you build a nation"

Viewed from the above perspective, the position of women in any society is an index of its civilization. As citizens, workers and mothers their contribution to economic and social development is crucial. Hence emancipation of women is an essential prerequisite for national development and social progress. The role of women in different fields of production has been proved, accepted and appreciated. The topic "Women and Development" is also debated upon frequently.

The economic independence and empowerment of women, disadvantages experienced by women in the rural areas and the constraints they face in becoming equal partners in development have emerged as critical issues in planned development programmes. Today, development of women is a matter of national and international concern, not only from the perspective of equity and justice, but also from the point of efficient use of human resources of society. The process of development necessitates women's participation as conscious partners, able to control and direct the process of change to meet their aspirations and needs (Majumdar, 1988).

The world conference of UN held at Copenhagen in July 1980 (ILO, 1980) defined development as the total development, including development in the political, economic, social, cultural and other dimensions of human life, as also the physical and moral, intellectual and cultural growth of human resources. Women's development should be viewed as an essential component in every dimension of development and not as an issue in social development.

The growing international concern for women's development motivated many governments, the world over, to study problems of women and to provide them measures of social security and status. In India, a tangible shift of attitude in the Government could be discerned in its effort to uplift the social and economic standards of women. In addition to Government's efforts, voluntary agencies too are very active in organising programmes for the poor and under privileged including women.

The Seventh Five Year Plan stipulated that a long term objective of development programme for women could be to raise their economic and social status in order to bring them into the main stream. It further stated that, "The basic approach would be to inculcate confidence among women and bring about an awareness of their own potential for development as also their rights and privileges" (Seventh Five Year Plan, 1985-90).

Women's education and their participation in income generating activities through gainful employment and self employment are advocated as powerful means to bring them into mainstream of economic and national development whereby they could become active components of social accounting system. Since available job opportunities are highly competitive and inadequate; and since the less fortunate women lack technical training, formal and professional education, self employment avenues are viewed as an ideal option to bring them into economic stream. Financial assistance supplemented with skill training is adopted by government to raise their economic productivity and thereby

achieve their development.

1.1 WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT AND THE EMERGING CONCEPT OF EMPOWERMENT

Women constitute nearly 50 per cent of the population in a country like India. Status of Indian women reveals that they are in large majority poor, illiterate, economically dependent on male family members, deprived, oppressed and suppressed. A major hurdle in their development in economic and social terms is their lack of access to and control over resources due to their being a part of a predominantly patriarchal society. The concern of government for the development of women at national and global level is visible through the shift in emphasis, of the various measures (government sponsored economic upliftment programmes) envisaged to give access to monetary resources to women, from welfare to development to empowerment. Thus among the recognised concepts and terminologies related to women's development, a powerful term which has gained much momentum and acceptance in recent years is empowerment.

Empowerment is a concept which has been perceived differently by different authors, from time to time and situation to situation, according to their need and usage. The literal meaning of the word reflects the action of empowering or state of being empowered, to give power or authority, to give ability and to enable.

Devadas et al (1994) defined the concept of empowerment of women in relation to the concept of freedom. Freedom refers to the absence of constraints in choice and action. According to them empowerment of women,

“Builds up potential for improving one's own welfare and brings about constructive changes in the lives of other people ... Empowerment of women implies that they know their rights and privileges; empowered utilise all opportunities and takes up jobs in

all sectors”

The Cornell Empowerment Group (1989) recognized the necessity for a clear concept of empowerment in order to facilitate positive change in any environment of culture and defined empowerment as, “intentional ongoing process, centered in the local community, involving mutual respect, critical reflection, caring, and group participation, through which people lacking an equal share of valued resources gain greater access to and control over those resources”. Thus empowerment is an intentional ongoing process which involves change. Change may be in any sphere of development and in attitudes, customs, behaviour and lifestyles. According to Mariner(1992), empowerment means to enable, permit, give power, to authorise and to commission. As women become empowered they become change agents who influence decisions and actions which affect organizations, institutions and communities. They become innovative, dynamic leaders who see power as something to be shared.

Leidenfrost(1992) defined empowerment in the context of education. According to her, empowerment or “to empower women” is to build in women the ability to do, the capability to accomplish tasks, the command over events and the ability to exercise influence. In more general sense, it is power that stems from new knowledge and skills acquired, action taken, gaining inner strength from educational experiences. The empowerment can be begun with or can be initiated by individuals and can be played out in the near environment of the home or in the community at large.

The most recent approach to women in development has been to achieve women’s empowerment especially of those at the grass root with an emphasis on self reliance Empowerment in this sense does not identify power of women in terms of domination over others, but in terms of the capacity of women to increase their ability to gain control over crucial material and non material resources and thereby minimise their

risks. This is particularly so in the case of women with low income (FAO, 1990).

The Global Conference on Women's Empowerment held in 1989 at Washington D.C highlighted empowerment as the surest way of making women partners in development. Empowerment, thus, indicates equipping one to improve one's living condition.

When women are empowered, they reflect the attributes of positive self image and self esteem, self confidence, competence, economic security, decision making ability, ability to hold responsibilities and efficiency in all activities (Cornell Empowerment Group 1989).

Mariner (1992) stated that the empowerment process of women for leadership will require changing values and attitudes along with adaptability and flexibility on part of the individual, family members and governments. According to Leidenfrost(1992) in "Empowerment process", women's needs are recognized and acknowledged, a new knowledge base is acquired, self confidence is enhanced and human potential improved. The empowerment experiences create new connections which cause change of attitudes and behaviour for women and result in social economic and political change for the community.

Empowerment of women beneficiaries of selected Government Sponsored Economic Upliftment Programmes (GSEUPs) is a state of being which is characterised by certain attitude towards empowerment through selected means, certain behaviour acts leading to role fulfilment and perceived levels of self esteem.

The less fortunate women are expected to get empowered through various GSEUPs. However there is dearth of information based on empirical data regarding empowerment

of women beneficiaries of GSEUPs.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

An attempt is made through the present investigation to determine the empowerment of women through their participation in GSEUPs and in terms of selected qualitative indicators, namely, attitude towards empowerment of women through GSEUPs, perceived changes in practices related to multiple role fulfillment and perceived level of self esteem.

Empowerment is a state of being which is developed or acquired over a period of time. Access to and control over resources is viewed as imperative to lead to empowerment of women. Since 'trickle down' effect did not materialise as anticipated in the initial planned periods of development, women became specially targeted group under development schemes of Central Government of India. A number of government sponsored programmes are introduced from time to time to draw economically poor women into the mainstream of national economic development and these programmes are identified as Government Sponsored Economic Upliftment Programmes (GSEUPs) for the purpose of the present investigation. An important means by which empowerment of women is aimed at by development planners, therefore, include GSEUPs, whereby economic independence of women is expected. Participation of women in GSEUPs is the initial process that would pave the way to their empowerment. As beneficiaries of GSEUPs, they get access to financial assistance / credit, managerial and technical skill, training and information. These inputs are aimed at building employment and income generation capacity in the women beneficiaries. Their entry into mainstream of economic development along with men exposes them to outside world. They get ample opportunities for decision making and implementation of their decisions. The women beneficiaries of GSEUPs are expected to generate income by their economic employment. Enhanced income enables them to increase their consumption and level of

living as well as expand their income generation further. They gradually become change agents for a better social order. Women beneficiaries of GSEUPs, then, become empowered not only in economic terms but also in socio cultural and politico-legal terms. They emerge as individuals with higher self worth or self esteem. Moreover, the empowered women beneficiaries exhibit a favourable attitude towards women's empowerment through GSEUPs. In other words, these changes would be the reflection of their empowerment through their participation in GSEUPs. Three attributes, namely, attitude towards empowerment of women through selected GSEUPs, perceived changes in practices related to multiple role fulfilment and perceived level of self esteem are identified as indicators or components of extent of empowerment of beneficiaries under study.

Economic empowerment is defined as that quality (power / strength / capacity) which results from the development of women's potential for increased employment and income generation and their participation in household and rural economy. Enhanced employment leads to authority and control over resources and access to resources.

Socio-cultural empowerment is defined as that quality (power/ strength / capacity) which results from the development of women's potential to act as a change agent. In other words, a socio-culturally empowered woman brings forth changes not only in herself but also in others to result in a new socio-cultural order conducive for women's development as potential human resource. This results in their increased ability to move from passive acceptance of life situation to one of active determination, thereby raising their status in the society.

Politico-legal empowerment is defined as that quality (power / strength / capacity) which results from the development of leadership qualities, civic responsibility and awareness regarding their rights, duties and responsibilities as individuals in their own

right and as members of social groups like family, community and so on.

Women beneficiaries of selected GSEUPs handle variety of tasks in the process of managing their IGAs under GSEUP. Women assume varied roles as mothers, wives, daughters-in law, mothers-in-law, 'subsistence supporter and so on in the course of their day to day living. The participation in GSEUPs for self employment by the less fortunate women and those women with little access to resources for income generation provides them an opportunity to generate income, gain exposure to larger world and develop confidence in themselves. By being a beneficiary of a GSEUP, they add on to their roles and may extend their spheres of activity to the larger community as well. This process leads to their empowerment which could be discerned by studying their self assessment of their practices related to multiple role fulfilment.

Women beneficiaries of GSEUPs assume various responsibilities in the event of their income generation. As a result they reveal differential levels of appreciation of themselves, or their self worth depending on the extent of empowerment attained. They identify themselves differently from others in the family / society. This feeling would lead to a feeling of self esteem in them.

1.3 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Various programmes like Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) and Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) were started in rural areas with the objective of focusing attention on women below poverty line by specially targeting them under such GSEUPs to improve their economic status and thereby, achieve their empowerment. These programmes represent resource packages passed down from national level to village level

The focus of the present investigation was to study the extent of empowerment of

women through selected GSEUPs by assessing selected attributes identified as indicators of empowerment. The GSEUPs identified included Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) and Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA).

Certain questions like : Why do women participate in the selected GSEUPs? Have they acquired some new skills through these programmes? Are they engaged in their traditional income generating activities (IGAs) even under GSEUPs? Have women become empowered due to their participation in GSEUPs? Do they exhibit differential levels of empowerment? Is there any relationship between empowerment and their situational, personal and family variables? and so on intrigued the investigator.

An intensive survey of literature revealed little evidence on research studying empowerment of women through GSEUPs deploying such qualitative indicators. It was observed that often women's development and empowerment were treated synonymous to the incremental income due to their participation as beneficiaries in GSEUPs. Moreover, the development of an appropriate tool to assess empowerment of women beneficiaries of GSEUPs also has not received much research attention. The discussions with government officials and NGO's implementing the GSEUPs too threw light on the need for an investigation of the present kind.

The present study is expected to make valuable contribution to knowledge base in relation to a socio-economically significant area - women's empowerment - which is of national and global concern. Moreover, the intricacies in women's empowerment through GSEUPs would also be unravelled through this study. Suggestions and recommendations on strategies and policies to achieve empowerment of women through GSEUPs are expected to be the other important outcomes of this investigation.

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The specific objectives drawn to give direction to this investigation were :

- (i) Ascertain the baseline characteristics of women beneficiaries of selected GSEUPs under investigation.
- (ii) Develop scales pertaining to selected attributes that would appropriately measure extent of empowerment of women beneficiaries through GSEUPs.
- (iii) Construct a scale to ascertain commitment of families of women beneficiaries to IGA under selected GSEUPs.
- (iv) Measure the extent of empowerment of selected non beneficiaries of GSEUPs under study and compare with that of women beneficiaries.
- (v) Ascertain the interrelationships between empowerment of beneficiaries through GSEUPs and the selected situational, personal and family variables.

1.5 ASSUMPTIONS

The study is based on the assumptions that

- (i) GSEUPs are launched by government to achieve empowerment of its beneficiaries
- (ii) Women beneficiaries of GSEUPs get ample opportunities to manage resources, and situations by themselves.
- (iii) Women beneficiaries of GSEUPs attain differential levels of empowerment
- (iv) Women beneficiaries can reveal their extent of empowerment through selected indicators or attributes of empowerment identified in the present study.

1.6 HYPOTHESES

- (i) There exists a relationship between extent of empowerment of women beneficiaries through selected GSEUPs, namely, IRDP and DWCRA in specific

and both these GSEUPs in general and selected situational, personal and family variables.

- (ii) There exists a difference in the influence exerted by selected situational, personal and family variables on extent of empowerment of women beneficiaries through selected GSEUPs, namely, IRDP and DWCRA in specific and both these GSEUPs in general.
- (iii) There exists a difference in the extent of empowerment of women beneficiaries of selected GSEUPs, namely, IRDP and DWCRA..
- (iv) There exists a difference in the extent of empowerment of women beneficiaries through selected GSEUPs in specific and in general and their counterparts who are non beneficiaries of GSEUPs.

1.7 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:

The study was limited to :

- (i) A sample of 98 women beneficiaries each of IRDP and DWCRA schemes from Rudrapur and Bajpur blocks respectively who registered during the period 1990-1993 and 49 non-beneficiaries each of respective blocks, Nainital district.
- (ii) Extent of empowerment of beneficiaries through GSEUPs in terms of selected attributes, namely, attitude towards empowerment of women through GSEUPs, perceived changes in practices related to multiple role fulfilment and perceived level of self esteem.
- (iii) Extent of empowerment of non beneficiaries in terms of only two of the selected attributes, namely, attitude towards empowerment of women through selected GSEUPs and perceived level of self esteem.
- (iv) The independent variables of the study, such as,
 - (i) Situational variables, namely, family commitment, and investment inclusive and exclusive of subsidy on IGA under selected GSEUPs.

(ii) Personal variables, namely, age of beneficiaries and age of family heads, education level of beneficiaries and family heads, income of beneficiaries from all sources, income from IGA under selected GSEUPs and incremental income of beneficiaries and extent of involvement of the beneficiaries in IGA under selected GSEUPs, and

(iii) family variables, namely, land holding, socio-economic status and years of married life.