

**Government Arts College for Women, Salem-8.**

**Department of Economics**

**Women Empowerment in India**

**III Year B.A Economics**

**Unit – I**

**Women Empowerment in India**

**Women empowerment indicates addressing women powerful to create them proficient in taking decisions for themselves. Women have undergone a lot over the years in this men-dominating world. In more primitive centuries, they were criticized as almost non-existent human beings. As if whole rights belonged to men even the basic right such as voting. As time unfolded, women understood their power. Since then, the revolution for women empowerment started in this world. Women Empowerment Essay in Hindi will update here soon.**

Women's empowerment is the process of empowering women. Empowerment can be defined in many ways, however, when talking about women's empowerment, empowerment means accepting and allowing people (women) who are on the outside of the decision-making process into it. Women's empowerment is the most crucial point to be noted for the overall development of a country. Many celebrities are all for girl power such as Liza Koshy and Lilly Singh (who has her own late night show and has won many awards and also raised money for #girllove and other charities) "This puts a strong emphasis on participation in political structures and formal decision-making and, in the economic sphere, on the ability to obtain an income that enables participation in economic decision-making." [3] Empowerment is the process that creates power in individuals over their own lives, society, and in their communities. People are empowered when they are able to access the opportunities available to them without limitations and restrictions such as in education, profession and lifestyle. Feeling entitled to make your own decisions creates a sense of empowerment. Empowerment includes the action of raising the status of women through education, raising awareness, literacy, and training and also give training related to defence ourself . Women's empowerment is all about equipping and allowing women to make life-determining decisions through the different problems in society.

Former First Lady Michelle Obama greets students during a Room to Read event with First Lady Bun Rany of Cambodia in support of the Let Girls Learn initiative, at Hun Sunni Prasat Bakong High School in Siem Reap, Cambodia, March 21, 2015. Alternatively, it is the process for women to redefine gender roles that allows them to acquire the ability to choose between known alternatives whom have otherwise been restricted from such an ability.

[1] There are several principles defining women's empowerment such as, for one to be empowered, they must come from a position of disempowerment.

**For example:** A stripper no longer has to take off her clothes to get money and now is a receptionist for a respectable company. Empowerment stems from self respect. Furthermore, one must acquire empowerment themselves rather than have it given to them by an external party.

2. Other studies have found that empowerment definitions entail people having the capability to make important decisions in their lives while also being able to act on them. Lastly, empowerment and disempowerment is relative to other at a previous time; therefore, empowerment is a process, not a product.

3. Women empowerment has become a significant topic of discussion in development and economics. It can also point to the approaches regarding other trivialized genders in a particular political or social context.

4. Women's economic empowerment refers to the ability for women to enjoy their right to control and benefit from the resources, assets, income and their own time, as well as the ability to manage risk and improve their economic status and well being.

5. While often interchangeably used, the more comprehensive concept of gender empowerment refers to people of any gender, stressing the distinction between biological and gender as a role. Advisor to US President and businesswoman Ivanka Trump (right) and Japanese PM Shinzo Abe attending the World Assembly for Women in Tokyo to speak on women's rights and empowerment, 2017. Entire nations, businesses, communities and groups can benefit from the implementation of programs and policies that adopt the notion of women empowerment.

6. Empowerment of women is a necessity for the very development of a society, since it enhances both the quality and the quantity of human resources available for development. Empowerment is one of the main procedural concerns when addressing human rights and development.

7. Women's empowerment and achieving gender equality is essential for our society to ensure the sustainable development of the country. Many world leaders and scholars have argued that sustainable development is impossible without gender equality and women's empowerment.

8. Sustainable development accepts environmental protection, social and economic development, including women's empowerment. It is widely believed that, the full participation of both men and women is critical for development. Only acknowledging men's participation will not be beneficial to sustainable development. In the context of women and development, empowerment must include more choices for women to make on their own.

9. Without gender equality and empowerment, the country could not be just, and social change wouldn't occur. Therefore, scholars agree that women's empowerment plays a huge role in development and is one of the significant contributions of development.

### **Characteristics of Women Empowerment**

**Women empowerment possesses certain characteristics. They are the following:**

1. Women empowerment is giving power to women; it is making women better off.
2. Women empowerment enables a greater degree of self-confidence and a sense of independence among women.
3. Women empowerment is a process of acquiring power for women in order to understand her rights and to perform her responsibilities towards oneself and others in a most effective way.

4. Women empowerment gives the capacity or power to resist discrimination imposed by the male dominated society.
5. Women empowerment enables women to organise themselves to increase their self- reliance.
6. Women empowerment provides greater autonomy to women.
7. Women empowerment means women's control over material assets, intellectual resources and ideology.
8. Women empowerment challenges traditional power equations and relations.
9. Women empowerment abolishes all gender-based discriminations in all institutions and structures of society.
10. Women empowerment means participation of women in policy and decision making process at domestic and public levels.
11. Women empowerment means exposing the oppressive power of existing gender and social relations.
12. Empowerment of women makes them more powerful to face the challenges of life, to overcome the disabilities, handicaps and inequalities.

### **Need and Importance of Women Empowerment**

Gender equality and empowerment of women is recognized globally as a key element to achieve progress in all areas. It is one of the eight Millennium Development Goals to which world leaders agreed at the Millennium Summit held in New York in 2000. The Charter of United Nations signed in 1945 is the first international agreement that proclaimed gender equality as a fundamental right. Ever since there had been many conventions, programmes and goals to help women by conferring on them human rights which are universal, indivisible, interdependent and inter related.

In order to promote development of women and to protect their rights, the General Assembly of U.N. adopted "Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women" on 18th December 1979, which came into force on 3rd September 1981. The Convention also took notice of particular problems faced by rural women and their

significant role in survival of their families. So all States parties to the Convention agreed to take appropriate measures to enable rural women to participate and benefit from rural development. In spite of many conventions and time bound measurable goals, world statistics speak of deplorable state of women that is a cause of concern.

In terms of every indices of development and socio-economic status, women have fared worse than men, in all regions and in all strata of the population. Hence the need and importance of women empowerment can be looked up on in the following direction:

### **As Women**

Women constitute 70 per cent of the world's poor population or almost 900 million of the 1.3 billion people who live in absolute poverty. Two-thirds of the world's illiterate populations of 876 million people are women. They produce 50 per cent of the food worldwide but receive only 10 per cent of the incomes . Women's access to and ownership of resources is less than that enjoyed by men. And even among those who own property, the control of its use and dispensation vests more often with some male member of the family. In many communities women cannot, or do not, inherit land. This means not only that they cannot earn through cultivation, but also that they do not have collateral with which they could seek credit for income generating activities like the men can.

**Feminisation** of poverty (rise in the proportion of women among the poorer strata) has been noticed as a phenomenon in most developing countries. The men move up faster during such development grabbing greater opportunities that women are unable to access because of gender handicaps. Even the official Country Report for India presented at 4th World Conference on Women at Beijing in 1995 observed that 'the percentage of women among the extremely poor is disproportionately large' adding that intra household inequalities can be significant necessitating special attention for poor women.

### **Earnings**

Women's average earnings are consistently lower than those of men but in the unorganized sector, which account for 94 per cent of economically active women,

earnings are even lower.

### **Health**

Several studies have recorded a gender asymmetry in the utilisation of health services during illness fewer women than men seek and receive treatment. Attendance and

admission figures at hospitals are significantly lower for women than for men; for every three men who avail hospital facilities there is only one woman who does so.

In terms of food intake, women suffer greater deprivation intra familiarly (women eat last as part of the culture of self- effacement and services to other- and if there is insufficient food the men and children get fed first and the women do without.). A very systematic sex bias is also reflected in higher nutritional or caloric deficiency among girls vis-a-vis boys. And because of gender bias in the allocation of food, malnutrition is a significant factor in many of the female death under 24 years of age that take place due to complications of pregnancy and child birth. The U.N. Development Fund for Women estimates that 50 per cent of the women in Asia and Africa are malnourished.

### **Education**

Of the 960 million illiterate persons in the world, 640 million, or 2/3rds are women. In every age group, literacy figures are lower for female compared to male. In India out of 428 million illiterate, women account for 275 million (64.25%), with male and female literacy rates being 63.8 and 39.4 per cent respectively (1991 Census figures). In 2001 the literacy rate of women has increased to 54.16, still it is lower than the male literacy rate. School enrolment figures for girls have been – and continue to be - lower than for boys at all stages and ages, and the drop out rates also higher for girls at every stage from primary to high school.

### **Politics**

Political space has always been monopolised by men. Representation of women among members of parliament and state legislatures has never exceeded 7 per cent and has typically remained around 5 per cent over the years despite the increasing visibility of women. Women's representation at the higher rungs of the decision-making positions has also been consistently low.

As of March 2002, women held just 14.2 per cent of representative posts in national parliaments around the world. Except for countries like, Finland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark, the percentage of women parliamentarians to the total membership in parliament is quite low. Internationally only 24 women has been elected as heads of state or government in the last century. Of the 185 highest-ranking diplomats to the United Nations, only 7 are women.

### **Socio - cultural factors**

The cultural construct of son preference adds to the psychological diffidence of the female child. Dowry deaths are a related abomination unique to India - 17 women are killed every day for dowry, according to the figures of the National Crime Records Bureau of the Home Ministry.

Violence against women has its roots in the subordination of women at the social level and their vulnerability has not decreased but increased in developing economies as a consequence of social disruptions backlash (hostility to women's assertiveness and growing awareness) and a general degeneration of values. Every 7th minute, the National Crime Records Bureau finds that a woman is subject to some criminal offence or the other. State Crime Bureau's Report shows that the number of crimes committed against

### **The Dimensions of Women Empowerment**

All the conceptualizations of empowerment emphasize five main dimensions; individual or personal, economic, social/cultural, familial and political. Most see the empowerment process as addressing a combination of these dimensions and affecting different domains: household, community, national and international. These views of empowerment are grounded within different concepts of power, the root concept within which empowerment is located, leading to different mechanisms for social change and transformation.

### **Steps in Women Empowerment.**

#### **There are various steps in achieving women empowerment:**

1. The first step begins at a personal level. An individual woman develops feelings of personal power, command and self-sufficiency over material and inherent choices she has

to make.

2. In the second step, empowerment takes place on an interpersonal level. Here a woman influences the decision making power of another woman through their contact and working together.

3. In the third step, they emphasize the goals for social action and social change. A community development programme develops through a group effort. But there can be possibility of backward linkage also. A community development programme can lead to individual empowerment and interpersonal empowerment.

### **Stages of Women Empowerment**

**According to Sushama Sahay (1998)<sup>26</sup>, there are three stages in the realization of women empowerment:**

1. In the first stage, empowerment is visible when women can distance themselves from a given situation and recognize the structure of power and look into them without fear.

Women learn to analyse the situation and in the process the fear gradually turns in to an understanding.

2. In the second stage, women can experience the change of not only being able to name the injustice but also resisting it. What is not right need not be accepted. Hence the courage to protest is experienced. This is possible in a collective way too.

3. In the third stage, a more mature state of realisation emerges namely that we need to know more. Basic confidence in oneself is generated by predictable support from a group, which nurtures the learning spirit among women.

### **Strategies of Women's Empowerment**

The strategy adopted for empowerment of women can be classified into three categories:

#### **1. Integrated development approach**

Here, the assumption is that women's disempowerment is due to their lack of education, low economic status, lack of access to resources and low decision-making power.

#### **2. Economic approach**

The economic approach is based on the assumption that economic intervention is

considered necessary because of their low economic status and consequent dependence as also due to their lack of decision-making power.

### **3. Consciousness rising-cum-organising approach.**

This approach presumes that through awareness building, empowerment can be achieved. The premise is that disempowerment is a result of complex interplay of historical, cultural, social, economic and political factors.

#### **Education:**

Education plays the most crucial role in empowering women. It not only generates momentum but also sustains empowerment process in the long run. Empowerment consists of five dimensions, each equally important but none sufficient by itself to enable women to act on their own behalf. Educational settings have the potential to foster all the five dimensions but require the educational programme to be designed explicitly to achieve each of those ends. It is relevant to point out here that one of the important recommendations of the National Policy on Education is to promote empowerment of women through the agency of education.

To achieve empowerment through education, several concepts must be introduced at

#### **Employment:**

Employment means economic power. It means earning by dint of hard work and one's own ability. Employment - whether in trade or business or a job in the organised sector - frees women from the constraints of economic dependence on men. Lack of earning power forces the woman to tolerate and silently endure harassment and ill treatment at the hands of the husband. Employment, especially outside the family, gives a sense of economic independence and thereby forces men and other members to refrain from ill treating the women members.

#### **Women's Organisation:**

Women's Organisations have come to be recognized as the main source of power, position and strength for women in modern India. A woman cannot fight injustices, perpetrated by men single handed or alone. But, she can do the same collectively through organisations. Women SHGs in rural areas, under Stree Shakti Scheme, are doing



yeomen service in organising women power. Women from different sections are being brought together and organised into an association to wage a war on liquor shops and gambling dens, mataka centres etc., and fight for abolishing age old practices like wife beating, polygamy, dowry-connected harassment, devadasi system, child marriages, etc. Besides, the SHGs are providing employment opportunities to large masses of illiterate, ignorant and suppressed women folk. A proper leadership among rural women will go a long way in empowering them.

### **Information Technology**

The single most resource that liberates people from poverty and empowers them is knowledge. A society, by using knowledge through all its constituents, endeavours to empower and enrich its people, and thus will become a knowledge society. Such knowledge society will need massive empowerment at all levels and among all the key actors of the society. At this juncture, it is essential to see the possibilities of women's empowerment through information technology.

Access to information is the key for economic, social and political empowerment of

### **Unit -II**

Sex and gender are different concepts that are often used interchangeably. The UK government refers to sex as being biologically defined, and gender as a social construct that is an internal sense of self, whether an individual sees themselves as a man or a woman, or another gender identity.

Historically, the terms "sex" and "gender" have been used interchangeably, but their uses are becoming increasingly distinct, and it is important to understand the differences between the two.

The meaning of "sex" and the differences between the sexes. It will also look at the meaning of "gender," and the concepts of gender roles, gender identity, and gender expression.

In general terms, "sex" refers to the biological differences between males and females, such as the genitalia and genetic differences.

"Gender" is more difficult to define, but it can refer to the role of a male or female in society, known as a gender role, or an individual's concept of themselves, or gender identity.

Sometimes, a person's genetically assigned sex does not line up with their gender identity. These individuals might refer to themselves as transgender, non-binary, or gender-nonconforming.

Sex' and 'gender' are often used interchangeably, despite having different meanings:

Sex refers to a set of biological attributes in humans and animals. It is primarily associated with physical and physiological features including chromosomes, gene expression, hormone levels and function, and reproductive/sexual anatomy. Sex is usually categorized as female or male but there is variation in the biological attributes that comprise sex and how those attributes are expressed.

Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviour, expressions and identities of girls, women, boys, men, and gender diverse people. It influences how people perceive themselves and each other, how they act and interact, and the distribution of power and resources in society. Gender identity is not confined to a binary (girl/woman, boy/man) nor is it static; it exists along a continuum and can change over time. There is considerable diversity in how individuals and groups understand, experience and express gender through the roles they take on, the expectations placed on them, relations with others and the complex ways that gender is institutionalized in society.

Gender stratification refers to the social ranking, where men typically inhabit higher statuses than women. Often the terms gender inequality and gender stratification are used interchangeably. Most of the research in this area focuses on differences between men's and women's life circumstances.

Gender stratification refers to the social ranking, where men typically inhabit higher statuses than women. Often the terms gender inequality and gender stratification are used interchangeably. There are a variety of approaches to the study of gender stratification. Most of the research in this area focuses on differences between men's and women's life circumstances, broadly defined. Scholarly debates focus on which dimensions of inequalities are most relevant and the level at which inequalities are generated and maintained (i.e., individual, couple, family, group, or societal level). Researchers have been challenged to explore gender, race, and class inequalities from an intersectional perspective, rather than treating gender as independent of race and class. There is little acknowledgment of the heteronormativity that is present in gender stratification

Gender inequality remains a major barrier to human development. Girls and women have made major strides since 1990, but they have not yet gained gender equity. The disadvantages facing women and girls are a major source of inequality. All too often, women and girls are discriminated against in health, education, political representation, labour market, etc.—with negative consequences for development of their capabilities and their freedom of choice.

The Girls is an inequality index. It measures gender inequalities in three important aspects of human development—reproductive health, measured by maternal mortality ratio and adolescent birth rates; empowerment, measured by proportion of parliamentary seats occupied by females and proportion of adult females and males aged 25 years and older with at least some secondary education; and economic status, expressed as labour market participation and measured by labour force participation rate of female and male populations aged 15 years and older.

### **Gender Socialization:**

Gender socialization is the process by which individuals are informed about the norms and behaviors associated with their assigned sex, usually during childhood development.

### **OBJECTIVES:**

**Explain the influence of socialization on gender roles and their impact:**

Gender socialization is the process by which individuals are taught how to socially behave in accordance with their assigned gender, which is assigned at birth based on their sex phenotype.

Today it is largely believed that most gender expression differences are attributed to differences in socialization, rather than genetic and biological factors.

Gender stereotypes can be a result of gender socialization: girls and boys are expected to act in certain ways that are socialized from birth. Children and adults who do not conform to gender stereotypes are often ostracized by peers for being different.

While individuals are typically socialized into viewing gender as a masculine-feminine binary, there are individuals whose gender identity does not align with their assigned gender, which indicates that the gender binary is not universally applicable.

**Gender Socialization** – The process of educating and instructing males and females as to the norms, behaviors, values, and beliefs of group membership as men or women.

Gender inequality is the idea that men and women are not equal and that gender affects an individual's living experience. These differences arise from distinctions in biology, psychology, and cultural norms. Some of these types of distinctions are empirically grounded while others appear to be socially constructed

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Gender justice is a human right; every woman and girl is entitled to live in dignity and in freedom, without any fear. Gender Justice is indispensable for development, poverty reduction, and is crucial to achieving human progress. Realizing it includes sharing of power and responsibility between women and men at home, in the workplace, and in the wider national and international communities

Women Education in India Essay: Women's Education in India is a long-standing necessity. Women are often stereotypically viewed as the caretakers of the house. However, in the modern age, women's rights are being recognized; most importantly, their right to receive an education. Women need to be given equal opportunities as men, especially when it comes to education.

### **Unit -III**

#### **Women Empowerment in India Problems and Challenges**

##### **Women Education**

Women's education will help to eradicate the discrimination and stigma that women face today. Educated women in India can also contribute to India's developing economy as well as making India a more socially developed country as well. There are many schemes in India to help women receive education, which would empower women.

##### **Education**

Of the 960 million illiterate persons in the world, 640 million, or 2/3rds are women. In every age group, literacy figures are lower for female compared to male. In India out of 428 million illiterate, women account for 275 million (64.25%), with male and female literacy rates being 63.8 and 39.4 per cent respectively (1991 Census figures). In 2001 the literacy rate of women has increased to 54.16, still it is lower than the male literacy rate. School enrolment figures for girls have been – and continue to be - lower than for boys at all stages and ages, and the drop out rates also higher for girls at every stage from primary to high school (Sakuntala, 2001).

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Violence against women has its roots in the subordination of women at the social level and their vulnerability has not decreased but increased in developing economies as a consequence of social disruptions backlash (hostility to women's assertiveness and growing awareness) and a general degeneration of values. Every 7th minute, the National Crime Records Bureau finds that a woman is subject to some criminal offence or the other. State Crime Bureau's Report shows that the number of crimes committed against

### **Women Health**

Women also need health care more and access the health care system more than do men. While part of this is due to their reproductive and sexual health needs, they also have more chronic non-reproductive health issues such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, mental illness, diabetes and osteoporosis.

### **Women and Economy**

- Sustained and rapid growth rates are the most effective route to poverty reduction.

However, the main challenge is to ensure that growth is pro-poor and pro- women. The

Indian economy, on average, has grown at a rate of more than 8 per cent during the last three financial years, making it one of the fastest growing economies in the world. This has been accompanied by a benign rate of inflation. The BRICS report identifies India as the only economy that will be capable of maintaining growth rates above 5 per cent till the year 2050. India's share of global GDP, in purchasing power parity (PPP) terms, at 5.9 per cent in 2005 is the fourth highest in the world. In terms of share in world exports, India accounts for 0.9 per cent, with the value of exports in US dollar terms placed at US \$ 100 billion. The poverty level, which was 36 per cent in 1993-94, had come down to about 22 per cent in 2004-05. However, statistical indicators, however, do not fully capture India's recent economic.

**Economic Empowerment** – Ensure provision of training, employment and income generation activities with both forward and backward linkages with the ultimate objective of making all women economically independent and self reliant.

**Gender Justice** – Eliminate all forms of gender discrimination and thus enable women to enjoy not only de jure but also de facto rights and fundamental freedom on par with men in all spheres, viz, political, economic, social, civil, cultural etcy

### **Women in Agriculture**

While women have always played a key role in agricultural production, their importance both as workers and as farm managers has been growing, as more men move to non-farm job leading to an increased feminization of agriculture.. Today 53% of all male workers are in agriculture as against t 75% of all female workers. and 85% of all rural female workers, are in agriculture. Women constitute 40% of the agricultural work force and this percentage is rising. Further, an estimated 20 percent of rural households are de facto female headed, due to widowhood, desertion, or male out-migration. These women are often managing agriculture and providing family subsistence with little male assistance. Hence agricultural productivity is increasingly dependent on the ability of women to function effectively as farmers. In the above context, a two pronged approach access to and ownership of resources is less than that enjoyed by men. And even among those who own property, the control of its use and dispensation vests more often with

some male member of the family. In many communities women cannot, or do not, inherit land. This means not only that they cannot earn through cultivation, but also that they do not have collateral with which they could seek credit for income generating activities like the men can.

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#### **2.4b Earnings**

Women's average earnings are consistently lower than those of men but in the unorganized sector, which account for 94 per cent of economically active women, earnings are even lower (Sakunntala, 2001)<sup>18</sup>.

women has increased to 1,43,795 in 2001. In Kerala, number of crimes committed against women was 5,658 in 2004 (Economic Review, 2005)<sup>23</sup>. Women make up 31 percent of the official labour force in developing countries and 46.7 per cent worldwide.

The value of women's unpaid housework and community work is estimated at between 10 to 35 per cent of the GDP worldwide. Thus for empowerment of women the world has a long way to go. And this task of empowerment of women is necessarily a movement to end the hegemony of man on the one hand and on the other also by enlisting their support, wherever necessary, to bring about desired changes in the society and attitude of people so that discrimination suffered by women are remedied.

Empowerment in such a context calls for modalities other than mere economic betterment, because much of women's powerlessness stems from non-quantifiable rather than monetary impositions or handicaps. Conventional strategies for development address only poverty not powerlessness nor subordinate status, which are the crucial issues.

Although women are the main providers of basic services in poor settlements, their key role remains largely unrecognized. They are subject to special constraints in obtaining adequate housing and in participating in human settlement development efforts at all levels. Equitable distribution of development benefits is a fundamental principle, hence the need to remove these constraints.

### **The Dimensions of Women Empowerment :**

All the conceptualizations of empowerment emphasize five main dimensions; individual or personal, economic, social/cultural, familial and political. Most see the empowerment process as addressing a combination of these dimensions and affecting different domains:

household, community, national and international. These views of empowerment are grounded within different concepts of power, the root concept within which empowerment is located, leading to different mechanisms for social change and transformation.

### **Steps in Women Empowerment.**

There are various steps in achieving women empowerment:

#### **Health**

Several studies have recorded a gender asymmetry in the utilisation of health services during illness fewer women than men seek and receive treatment. Attendance and admission figures at hospitals are significantly lower for women than for men; for every three men who avail hospital facilities there is only one woman who does so.

In terms of food intake, women suffer greater deprivation intra familiarly (women eat last as part of the culture of self- effacement and services to other- and if there is insufficient food the men and children get fed first and the women do without.). A very systematic sex bias is also reflected in higher nutritional or caloric deficiency among girls vis-a-vis boys. And because of gender bias in the allocation of food, malnutrition is a significant factor in many of the female death under 24 years of age that take place due to complications of pregnancy and child birth.

The U.N.Development Fund for Women estimates that 50 per cent of the women in Asia and Africa are malnourished.

**A. Ensuring effective** (rights being rights not just in law but also in practice) and independent (rights being rights that women enjoy in their own capacity and of those enjoyed by men) land rights for women and

**B.Strengthening** women's agricultural capacities is desirable:

#### **Economic approach**

The economic approach is based on the assumption that economic intervention is considered necessary because of their low economic status and consequent dependence as also due to their lack of decision-making power.

3. Consciousness rising-cum-organising approach. This approach presumes that through awareness building, empowerment can be achieved. The premise is that disempowerment is a result of complex interplay of historical, cultural, social, economic and political factors (V. Mohini Giri, 1998).

### **Ways and Means of achieving Women Empowerment :**

Empowerment of women can be achieved through education, employment, women's organisation, Information Technology, Science and Technology, Entrepreneurship, Micro finance Institutions, Law and Agriculture.

#### **Education:**

Education plays the most crucial role in empowering women. It not only generates momentum but also sustains empowerment process in the long run. Empowerment consists of five dimensions, each equally important but none sufficient by itself to enable women to act on their own behalf. Educational settings have the potential to foster all the five dimensions but require the educational programme to be designed explicitly to achieve each of those ends. It is relevant to point out here that one of the important recommendations of the National Policy on Education is to promote empowerment of women through the agency of education.

To achieve empowerment through education, several concepts must be introduced at appropriate levels. When referring to primary and secondary schooling, empowerment should enable girls to develop the knowledge and skills to nullify and counter, sexual stereotypes and conceptions of masculinity and femininity that limits the social potential of women. Empowering girls should mean offering them courses with content that not only attacks current sexual stereotypes but also provides students with alternative visions of a gender free society.

Gender and women studies programmes have made it possible for students to gain a greater understanding of how gender forces operate in society.

influenced the development and dissemination of new theoretical and methodological approaches dealing with the nature of gender, national development and social change.

Distance education is another important way of empowering adult women. The question that how can women representatives who are pre-occupied with their political and administrative engagements or women employees who are busy with their jobs and activities can pursue education in view of paucity of time arises. Distance education is the immediate and most satisfactory answer (K. Sekhar and B.S. Vasudeva Rao, 2001).

It is with adult women outside of formal education that empowerment at present reaches its highest forms. Not only are adults more capable of reflexive thought - typically



derived from family work and other everyday experiences - but they can also acquire new knowledge in less restrictive and more creative settings such as those provided by nonformal education programmes. Education in terms of literacy equips women with the skills of elementary reading, writing and mathematics. A literate woman can very well read receipts, printed rates of consumer goods and items, write bank cheques and keep the family's accounts. Socially and psychologically, it develops and strengthens women's self-confidence, courage and awareness of the self and of the external world. Education in terms of certificates, diplomas and degrees qualifies women to take up modern white-collar jobs. Besides, formal education develops their personality by exposing them to the world of books, peers, teachers and the public at large. Thus the availability of equal or better educational opportunities for women leads to their assumption of a range of social roles, builds a broader and positive self-concept and enables them to tackle problems like domestic violence with courage and determination.

**Employment:**

Employment means economic power. It means earning by dint of hard work and one's own ability. Employment - whether in trade or business or a job in the organised sector - frees women from the constraints of economic dependence on men. Lack of earning power forces the woman to tolerate and silently endure harassment and ill treatment at the hands of the husband. Employment, especially outside the family, gives a sense of economic independence and thereby forces men and other members to refrain from ill treating the women members.