

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Concept of Development of Women

Development is a process which leads to continuous rise in the capacity of people to control their environment, accompanied by a wider distribution of benefits resulting from such control. Development is also defined as a type of change in which new ideas are introduced into a social system, in order to produce higher per capita income and levels of living, through more modern production methods and improved social organisation.

For the first time, in the Seventh Plan Document of the Government of India, there is a special Chapter on Women and Development, which reflects the concern and importance the Government attaches to this sector. The aim is to provide necessary infrastructure for full development of the capabilities and potential of women to enable them to play a significant role in the development process as participants and beneficiaries.

No Government alone can bring out significant results unless people themselves participate and respond

to the demands of progress. It is more true in the case of women's development. There are many women organisations which are taking a lead in this field. However, some of them have expressed a desire of being informed of the schemes launched or the socio-economic development of women by different Government agencies and those agencies which are sponsored by the Government.

Womens' Development Activities are defined as any activities which help women for a better, happier, healthier and more satisfying life, by making their life more meaningful, and removing all the obstructions or hurdles due to which women have remained neglected or unattended to, in the national scene. The area of women's development is very vast and it covers practically every aspect of life, in which women are involved. It also covers areas where their involvement in the community at large is concerned.

Modern economic development depends on effective harnessing of human resources viz. man as well as woman power. International organisations like United Nations' Organisation (UNO), International Labour Organisation (ILO), thinkers and leaders and people in developing and developed nations are realising the need. Women too are now becoming aware of the fact that full and equal participation of women is crucial to the strength of

the country. The year 1975 was declared as International Women's Year (IWY). The association of women with the process of economic development, promotion of equality, and development of peace constitutes the central theme of IWY. There is no doubt that the basic objective of promoting active participation by women is, in the process of development, so that they could occupy their rightful place as equal partners.

Every known system, from times immemorial, has needed and utilised the work of women. In very primitive communities, women usually devoted a fairly large part of their time to the production of a variety of goods for household use, such as containers for food, cooking utensils, mats and carpets and to making clothing for the family. Some women might specialise in preparing for sale, ready-made dishes or in brewing of beer for sale. Others specialised in the production of clothing, mats and carpets for sale, and many women were professional potters or basket weavers at village level.

With further economic development and improvement in the transport system, markets for professionally made artisans' products, widened and some villages, where such things were made for sale, grew into small towns with economy based partly upon such home industries, and partly upon market trade for the surrounding region.

If such a centre of home industries appears to have specialised in products which are traditionally produced by women, we may find a very high female participation in them. Expansion of industries, later, opened the gate for more and more participation of women in economic activities.

It is worth observing, that after the Independence of India, the position and status of middle class women, as far as employment is concerned, has much improved. Before Independence, we could find few voluntary and governmental organisations employing women and girls. Since the Independence, the trend of women's employment has been gradually on the increase. Indian women are no less efficient than the women of other countries. The fact that some of the Indian women have entered various fields like industry, education, politics etc., and have made a mark in these fields, indicates that the Indian women can compete with women from developed countries of the world.

1.2 Studies on Development of Women's Economic Potential

A study on the economic aspects of the working women's life reveals that in 66.3 per cent of the cases, husband's income fails to meet family expenses. It is

noteworthy to observe that even in cases where husband's income is Rs.800/- and above per month, 46.16 per cent working women are of the opinion that their husband's income is not sufficient to meet their family expenses. Thus, women whose husband's income is Rs.800/- or more per month are also working. This indicates a rising standard of living and also the fact that working outside the home is increasingly becoming a way of life for women in our society. It also indicates a changing pattern of values. The average income of the married working women is Rs.447.35 per month while the average income of their husband's is Rs.550/- per month. However, the coefficient of correlation between the incomes of the working women and their husbands, is 0.62 which is positive and significant. This means that generally, working women having higher income, have husbands whose incomes are also high. In other words, there is in general, a correlation between the incomes of the working women and of their husbands'. The average of the total income of the family of the working women comes to Rs.1038/- per month, while the average of the monthly income of the working women is Rs.338.7 per month. Thus, on an average, the working women's income comprises 32.8 per cent of the total income of the family. This is significant and it suggests that it has become necessary

for the working women to carry on their career because if they leave their jobs, the family will be deprived of about one-third of its income. The increasing cost of living and the rising standard of living has made it imperative for increasing number of women to work outside the home and to supplement the family income.

In a study on the standard of living of the families of working women, it was found that the standard of living of the families of these working women is quite high. Probably, this is one of the chief motivations inducing these women to work outside their homes. Once having been accustomed to these modern living conveniences, they find it difficult to forego them. They have, therefore, to continue with their jobs.

The economic system of every country, from times immemorial, has needed and also benefitted by the help, cooperation and participation of women in the world of work. Since, primitive times, when men lived on hunting, down to the present century, women have often been found to cooperate with men on the economic front.

1.2.1 REASONS FOR WHICH WOMEN WORK

Reasons that prompt women to enter into employment are as complex as those influencing other choices that affect their way of life. It is generally believed that socio-cultural changes have played very important role

in increasing situations in which women would like to seek employment. While one would not deny the importance of socio-cultural changes, there are several factors which lead one to take individual decision to work or not to work.

In one of the ILO (International Labour Organisation) studies of 1958 identifying the motives behind the employment of women, it was presumed that motives differed with marital status, both objectively and subjectively. Not only the economic needs varied with marital status, but the psychological reasons also. International Labour Organisation, broadly mentioned two reasons : (a) women's economic need and (b) national necessity for increased production.

Some other studies have brought to light the fact that loneliness is a powerful motive for women to seek employment outside their homes. The Ministry of Labour, Government of India has pointed out that whatsoever the stage of economic or social development of a country, four factors prevail which lead women to join the working force. These are, firstly, the inadequate income of the principal earner which forces a woman to work and supplement the income; secondly, mishaps, such as incapacity of the bread winner; thirdly, death of the bread winner; and lastly, a woman's desire for economic

independence or for securing higher standard of living. There is also the desire on the part of the women to give expression to their own talents and skills.

1.2.2 THE PROBLEM OF ROLE CONFLICT

The current social situation arising out of the employment of women, was studied by Raj Gopalan (1982). He found that the women employed as nurses seemed to have the effect of disqualifying them for marriage, thereby, they bring conflict with their normal legitimate role in the home. Furthermore, it has been pointed out that there is a universal feeling that mothers with small children should not work. But even here, when a mother has someone to look after the baby at home, the family prefers that she should go out to work rather than stay at home. From the point of view of educated girls, who while going to school and colleges, have got into the habit of meeting other people on the social and cultural levels, staying at home becomes a boredom, and even at the cost of fatigue they wish to get out of the narrow walls of the home. This is welcome to all concerned as it adds to the family income.

It is not surprising to note that the actual conditions in which women are living, and the fostered desire to attain all types of independence including economic, inculcated by the women's movement, presents

the picture of Indian women in a messy state of affairs. Yet, it is a consolation to find, that working women are not in messy condition. They have adopted various means for tension release and have also made extraordinary efforts to reconcile with the conflicting situations. Role conflicts are resolved by fixing up priorities and allocating time to role demands made on her by systematising her time schedule. Working women make proper arrangements for the care of children when they (women) are absent from home and the solution to the problem of managing a home after working hours is by sharing domestic responsibilities, having substitutes, and by using time-saving devices.

1.2.3 WOMENS' DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

It is only recently that the question of employed women has come to be recognised as an important factor in the life of the people. The complexity of the problems arising out of employment of women is indeed great. The variegated problems in their world context are being discussed by the International Labour Organisations. The subject has also assumed great importance in developing countries like India.

In Times of India, February 10, 1986, a reporter brought to light, that in the Fifth National Convention of Women Entrepreneurs, in Gujarat, in 1986, the Centre

was urged to announce a special package of policy measures to encourage large number of women from both the urban and rural areas to join the economic mainstream of the country. In a Workshop on, Peace for 21st Century by Rural Women, the then Chief Minister, of Gujarat State, Mr Amarsingh Chaudhary, had announced that the State Government had decided to set a target of training at least 1000 women entrepreneurs during 1986 and promised that the tempo would be maintained in future as well. He pointed out that the State Government had already announced a special 5 per cent additional subsidy to the entrepreneurs for setting up of a full-fledged separate cell to encourage them. But if all the funds available under various schemes like the Integrated Rural Development Programme were "intelligently used" for training and industrial promotion, it should not be difficult to achieve the modest target of training 1000 women entrepreneurs in each State every year. The training being given to women in certain skills like embroidery, garment making, and other handicrafts, was not sufficient for the rural women to take to small or medium scale industries. It was very essential that first rate training facilities in relevant vocational skills were introduced. Though the Polytechnics and Industrial

Training Institutes admit a large number of women students, but much more remains to be done in this area, not only in the Gujarat State but all over the country. In a few cases where women had high level of literacy and vocational skills, they were not in a position to start an enterprise for which they needed the business skills of buying and selling, of handling money and taxes, and various other skills in dealing with external environment.

The development schemes and economic activities have been male-dominated. Little has been done to provide opportunity to women to emerge from their conservative attitudes and ignorance and to make them conscious about the important role which they can play in the changing society. These observations indicate the need to develop situations for women's development, in which Home Science can play an important role by educating them and motivating them so that they become conscious about the outcomes of having a progressive outlook in life.

Many women are employed in agriculture and allied industries. Those engaged in occupations other than cultivators and agricultural labourers, form a bulk of 46.49 per cent in occupational division. These women were production workers, transport equipment operators,

and labourers. They form only 0.13 per cent of the total workers in occupational division. Those engaged as professional, technical and related workers constituted 15.74 per cent of total female workers; and these mostly included teachers. In administrative, executive, and managerial division, women constituted only 2.49 per cent of the total. Women's proportion to total main workers is comparatively larger in occupations such as service workers and as farmers, fishermen, hunters, loggers and related workers. All these facts, go a long way to prove the plight of women in the country; and this plight may be attributed to institutional and traditional attitudes, as revealed by studies.

Low level of literacy among women is in itself a major contributory factor for perpetuating backwardness among women. This restricts their entry into employment market. Even among the employed workers, according to 1981 Census results, as many as 88.23 per cent of females were illiterate in rural and 55.57 per cent in urban areas. These facts bear testimony to the fact rightly stated by Myrdal (1962) that Indian Society cared little for the education of girls, and generally women had an inferior position.

Low female literacy rate, and low rate of participation in economic activities, are more than

enough manifestation of the low status, of women in Indian Society. Other factors, although no less significant, that are responsible for women's low status are psycho-social, cultural and biological in nature. There are institutional, behavioural factors, inhibitors, and traditional attitudes, which have prevented women to rise on the social and economic ladder. Repeated pregnancies are one of the most potent factors, which prevent women to gain their rights and privileges equal to men in certain jobs.

As Pandit Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, had said that in order to awaken the people, it is the women who have to be awakened. Once they are on the move, the household moves, the village moves and the whole country moves. Therefore, emphasis should be laid on the education of women as an important plank for accelerating social and economic development. The income generating programmes should be undertaken in cooperation with agencies like health clinics, family welfare centres, and other womens' organisations. The object of the programme should be to impart knowledge and skill so that women may perform their multifarious duties in and outside home more efficiently.

The Government has set up a number of independent and autonomous organisations for the education and

training of women. Help from them should be obtained so that the battle against ignorance, illiteracy and poverty could be fought unitedly and in coordinated fashion. Dedicated and devoted individuals and agencies should be mobilised and enthused to assist in this work.

1.3 Need and Significance of the Study

The importance given to women by planners can very well be judged by the fact that there was one separate chapter devoted to women and development in the "Sixth Plan" document. However, the fact remains, that special schemes for improving women's status did not prove much useful. There is a strong case for women's self-action, greater initiative, and drive for their own development. They will have to strive hard to get their rights and privileges, and should try to rid themselves from economic dependency upon male members. Provision of education and gainful employment would go a long way in bringing about the stipulated results in the best interest of women. In fact, provision of greater educational facilities, including functional literacy and professional education, and creation of job opportunities for women on a fair basis as the Sixth Plan Document puts it, would greatly help women to gain their due status in society.

The income-generating programmes in a society where 50% of the people live below poverty line, can become the pivot to serve as places of attraction and incentives. They can provide facilities for improving the economic conditions and technical skills.

The researcher is concerned and at times even touched by the miserable condition of most of the women in India. It was observed that most of the women are suffering from social and economic deprivations because they are not economically independent. Women do have the potential to get trained for income-generation. Womens' potential to generate income cannot be neglected.

It is further felt that women should get gainfully employed so that they add to the Gross National Product and thus to the income of the nation. The women who cannot afford formal education cannot join middle and upper class working force. On the other hand, they are neither labourers nor trained for highly professional jobs like doctors and teachers. They have to be fitted somewhere in-between the two extreme categories of workers, highly professional and unskilled labourers on the other. We could, for our convenience, categorize this band of workers as semi-skilled workers or semi-professionals. For achieving this motive, we have to

have training agencies which would develop various skills for income generation by women. Thus, after going through Directories of Social Welfare for Baroda City and Gujarat State, the investigator felt the real need to study such agencies in Baroda City. Moreover, the voluntary agencies scenerio, in Baroda City and Gujarat State are so much highlighted in the media that the investigator felt the urge to study these voluntary training agencies in Baroda City which claim to train women for income generation. The training agencies which develop entrepreneurship skills in women also need to be recognised, as these training agencies have assumed a new role in national scene. So, giving a fresh look at womens' training agencies by way of studying their functioning was considered important. The researcher hopes to learn about the functioning of these training agencies, in order to analyse their role in the development of womens' economic potential.

It was further realised that these training agencies become pivotal in development by way of developing womens' earning power. So studying them in depth was considered important. It was observed that these agencies have been evaluated by themselves, but neither a university, nor the outside agencies, have studied them. The researcher felt that there was a need

to undertake a detailed and descriptive study of such agencies in a systematic manner to recognise their importance and publicise their contribution to womens' development. The training agencies cater to women from low socio-economic status, who have a low literacy level. As they are semi-literate or low-literate women and because of repeated pregnancies, these women are not able to get trained for higher level jobs. So, training for lower level jobs becomes important. For this particular reason, such training agencies have an important role to play. The researcher hopes that by studying these agencies in depth, some improvements for working of these agencies could be suggested. Further, for higher level training for jobs there are a number of different agencies, which makes it all the more essential to have training agencies for semi-skilled and low level women workers. It is hoped that this research study will do good work for many women who will be trained by these agencies.

The researcher is particular about encouraging and motivating womens' economic independence and realises that women could be a strong asset after their economic development. The researcher wants that women should turn from economic liabilities to economic assets. This is only possible when they have the earning

power, which is further made possible by womens' training agencies for income generation.

For the past three or four decades, employment of women is becoming an important issue at national level in India. This trend makes it all the more essential that women who have the potential to develop certain skills, get the right kind of training to join the world of employment with all confidence and faith.