Introduction

After independence in India one of the issues which has attracted the attention of the policy makers was gender issues and concerns. Gender issues have become central policy arena. The issues of gender equality and justice assumed added significance in the context of the interface between new economic policy perceptions and gender relations. The gender equity became part of country’s strategy for eradicating poverty and human misery. The policy makers are strongly believed that a positive commitment to gender equality and equity will strengthen every area of action to reduce poverty because women can bring new energy and new insights. A lot of debate is going on women and development since last few decades. Several interventions had taken place both at national and international level leading to passing of several loss including loss against physical violence IPC Section 498 (a) and Section 125 for maintenance. The importance of feminism has been steadily growing and gaining intellectual legitimacy.

The women discrimination can be visualized on various angles. In a male dominated society like ours one has to accept that women are at the receiving end. The sex ratio is unfavorable to women and it has declined overtime. The literacy rates are low among women. The expectation of life is low for women in India up to the recent times. The opportunities and access to decision-making institutions are not equal to both men and women. There is clear division of labour among men and women, designating certain tasks exclusively to each and another. Mostly activities, which have low market value, are attached to women. Women mostly spend their time in household maintenance. There were also gender differences access and control over resources, which were important elements to consider in development, programmes especially where interventions may change the value of resource and reduce women’s access.

The most deep-rooted forms of gender inequality had been built into the structure of traditional Indian society. Through gender inequality exists a large measure in the society under different dimensions for long time, its importance has grown in the recent times only. In the traditional society the inequality between males and females existed to a large extent. Women were looked down socially, economically and politically. Women became scape goats of many traditions and customs. She was brutally killed in the name of Sati. The practice of child marriage, Kanyasulkam, Prostitution was taken it granted by society and women has no voice what so ever for centuries together. Women’s role was restricted to domestic life especially
kitchen work and bearing and rearing of children. She has no place in economic and political activities. Girl children were discriminated in terms of basic necessities of life such as food, clothing and shelter. Woman is the last person in the family to eat. She is the person who does all types of menial jobs. There is no respect for her work. Most of the women’s work outside the domestic front is restricted to agricultural labour activity (in agriculture) and unorganized activities in urban sector. The census of India did not consider their work while counting the number of economically active persons in the country for quite a long time.

The Government of India has taken several measures and also making endeavourer to hoist the status of women in the society in order to promote equality of men and women. The different plans, programmes, and policies have laid emphasis on women empowerment and raising the economic, educational, health and political participation of women to match with that of men. The draft national policy on empowerment of women envisages 1) to setup councils at the national and State levels to review the implementation of the recommendations of the national and State Commissions for women. 2) The center and State to draw up time bound action plans to translate this –policy into concrete action in consultation with the Central and State Commissions for women. (3) Every ministry at the Center and the State is obliged ensure equal flow of benefits in physical and financial terms.

Article 15 of the constitution prohibits any discrimination on grounds of sex. The directive principles of State policy also urges that the State shall direct this policy towards securing an adequate means of livelihood for women and ensuring equal pay for equal work for both men and women. Since seventy’s the objectives of raising the status of women and also been included in different five years plans. In the sixth five year plan emphasis was laid on raising the employment status of women. The seventh plan emphasized the need for human resource development in women. The eighth plan aims at enabling women to function as equal partners and implement social legislation for women effectively. The ninth plan has identified empowerment of women as an objective. The tenth plan also emphasis on women development.

The formulation of the national commission for women (N.C.M.) and the idea of setting of a national council for empowerment of women are encouraging steps in this direction. Also different state governments are also implementing several development measures for women’s health in general and re-productive health in particular. The lack of sex education among adult
girls and re-productive health education among the married women are also cause of many preventable diseases. Empowering women regarding the own re-productive health care and effecting accountability of men towards women’s re-productive health are important for promoting women health status in the society.

Now with the efforts of national and international organizations several laws were passed and some laws were changed. But still women continue to suffer from many social and economic and political disadvantages, since the attitudes did not change as fast as the change in laws. Gender issues are ideologically motivated and need a change in mindset in terms of attitudes and behavior of both men and women of all dimensions.

Women empowerment a much raised and discussed topic round the globe? But why is it necessary? Why we are trying to fill this gender gap? What is gender gap? Why are women not given that equality level and trust in the society! It is 21st century and women still have to run for their rights? If we ourselves could try to get the balance then there would be no need of this whole campaign for women empowerment. A house maker can anytime be a corporate leader! And we have series of example in our country itself! Then why do we yet need this women empowerment concept? Well is this gender gap filled in all states? Are women in the country getting their deserved rights? And are they educated till the age boys are? Are they forced to get married at a young age? Well staying in urban areas we have forgotten this topic! But the reality check says that this topic needs much more attention than it is getting. Women empowerment is not only to be known topic but it is that one should bring in practice. If you aims to empower women you will be an indirect force to empower a family. Women form a chain of knowledge that she has. It is always passed on to someone. Yes, you read it right a house maker is a dynamic source of knowledge. She is the one who can bring society to betterment. Don’t you remember Indira Gandhi, Mother Teresa, Lakshmi bai (Jhansi) Savitri Bai Phule and Sarojini Naidu?

They were the ones that irrespective of their profession worked for the mankind and their work is yet appreciated by us. Why? Ever wondered? What will happen if we decide to educate all the women in the country? Well, I think the country will finally be tagged as Developed instead of developing.
Empowerment is not just a word or to provide facilities, it is beyond that. Many of us use this word casually or really do not know what the word empowerment stands for? Well

Empowerment is a multi dimensional process which should enable individuals or a group of individuals to realize their full identity and powers in all spheres of life.

According to Webster’s dictionary the word empowerment indicates the situation of authority or to be authorized or to be powerful. In other words empower means to authorize. So empowerment is a process which gives women power or authority to challenge some situation.

The term empowerment indicates a process of giving to developing conditions for generating power within. Therefore, conceptually the term empowerment has multi dimensional focus and can be described as a process wherein a group or individuals are ambled to enhance their status in the society on the hand and overall participation and growth in the other. Empowerment is an active multi dimensional process which enables a woman to realize their identity, position and power in all spheres of life. Empowerment provides greater making process at home and in the matters autonomy in the decision making process at home and in the matters concerning society and freedom from customs, beliefs and practices.

Empowerment demands drastic and basic changes in the system or marriage and family, husband and wife relationship and attitude towards the socialization of remarriage.

Definition of empowerment :- Keller and Mbewe – “empowerment is a process whereby women become able to organize themselves to increase their own, self reliance to assert their independent right to make choices and to control resources which will assists in challenges and criminating their own subordination.”

P.K.B Nayar – empowerment is an aid to help women to achieve equality with men or at least to reduce gender gap considerably.

Now what is women empowerment? What are its features? And what are the schemes that are provided to the women in India to grow? What should women do in order to feel empowered to reduce this gender gap? Is education enough? Or do they need to be balanced economically as well as socially? And if yes what do they do to get that economic balance? They should start their own ventures or go for a job?
Will the society accept them as an entrepreneur? Or they will again have to give up on their dreams! Well this one answer my article won’t be able to answer you! It is something you got to discover yourself. Of the fear of society is what haunting one person then nothing can help him to overcome him except the person’s will power. Women should not stand for their rights but also help the ones who are deprived of their rights and cannot speak for them. Working hand in hand can be more beneficial. “Unity is strength” a not to be explained phrase. And it works wonders. Women can get hold of their rights by being empowered together. But before that one should know what does this term “Women empowerment “actually means?

Women empowerment is a prerequisite for creating a good nation. If women empowered her competencies towards decision – making will need to promote women empowerment among the rural women. Empowerment includes higher literacy level and education for women, better health care for women and children equal ownership of productive resources, their rights and responsibilities, improved standards of living and acquiring empowerment include, economic empowerment social empowerment and gender justice that is to eliminate all types of discrimination against women and the girl child.

Women empowerment is not a new concept it is quite a well known concept round the globe. Women all over the world have been challenging and changing gender inequalities since the beginning of history. These struggles have also been supported by many men who have been outraged at injustice against women and thereupon the consequences for the society. The goal of women empowerment is simply providing strength to them. The strength may be giving political or economic authority or provision of health and nutrition of health and nutrition care or social element in the poverty eradication. Empowerment of women, particularly rural women has become an important issue in the strategies of balanced development with social justice. Economic empowerment results in women’s ability to influence or make right decision increase self confidence better status and role in household etc.

I bet if everyone in the country started thinking like The country’s First Prime Minister, Pandit Jawarharlal Nehru who said “when women move forward the family moves, the villages moves and the nation moves, employment gives economic status to women, economic status gives way to social status and thereby empowerment” then no one can stop women to grow in our country and take the country along with it to new heights.
It is believed that economic strength is the basis of social, political and psychological power in the society. Thus, the lower strata of women mostly stems from their low economic status. And subsequent dependence and lack of decision making power. Therefore if women gains economic strength they gain visibility and voice.

Women have a unique position in the economy. In our country with an unfavorable woman – man ratio and strong patriarchal roots. Entrepreneurship an access to funds has been difficult.

Facilitating that women’s direct participation in decision making capacity and income generation activities can make significant contributions towards women empowerment. This will enable women to take the initiative for their development into their own Hans. And entrepreneurship can help women to gain economic development and improve their social status. Once they attain development of women entrepreneurship enables society to understand and appreciate their abilities. It enhances their status and leads to integration of women in nation building and economic. It provides the needed psychological satisfaction and imbues them with a deep sense of achievements to create their enhanced identity in society.