

CHAPTER-I

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Over the past decades, gender equality and women's empowerment have been explicitly recognized as a key not only to the health of nations, but also to social and economic development. The promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women is one of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to which India is a signatory. The pairing of the two concepts of women empowerment and gender equality into one MDG implicitly recognizes that gender equality and women empowerment are two sides of the same coin: progress toward gender equality requires women's empowerment and women's empowerment requires increases in gender equality. (NFHS 2003)

Kishor (2006) identifies three important aspects of gender namely: (a) Gender tends not to be value neutral. The roles, rights, and obligations assigned to each sex are not just different, but also unequal with male roles and rights generally being valued more highly than female roles and rights. (b) Gender involves differences in power, both "*power to* and *power over*". The concept of '*power to*' encompasses legal and informal rights, access to resources, and pursuit of knowledge and personal goals, and it cuts across most domains of human functioning, including familial, cultural, and institutional domains. '*Power over*' refers to control over societal and household resources and decisions, cultural and religious ideology, and one's own and other's bodies. Importantly, men tend to have greater power than women and in some domains even have *power over* women. (c) Gender is not static or immutable. Being socially constructed, gender roles, rights, and expectations can change over time and across geographical space as societal needs, opportunities, and customs change. As a result of (a) and (b), inequalities based on

gender and the disempowerments of females are pervasive in most societies, particularly in patriarchal societies such as that in India.

Empowerment literally means “to invest with power”. However, in the context of women empowerment the term has come to denote women’s increased control over their own lives, bodies, and environments. Further, the concept of empowerment encompasses “a growing intrinsic capability—greater self-confidence and an inner transformation of one’s consciousness that enables one to overcome external barrier” (Sen and Batliwala, 2000). Greater control and increased capabilities to overcome barriers - all translate into increased agency or the ability to make and implement choices. An important indicator of agency is decision-making power particularly in regard to financial and familial matters, both inside and outside family and decision making power and participation in political, cultural and social matters.

1.1 Empowerment: The Concept

The term ‘empowerment’ has become one of the most widely used development terms. It involves power to, power with and power within. Empowerment is a process of awareness and awakening of capacity building leading to greater participation, greater effective decision-making power and control leading to transformative action. It is also a concept that does not merely concern personal identity but brings out a broader analysis of human rights and social justice.

Empowerment can be described as a process of enhancing the choice-making capacity of individuals or groups, total freedom to choose from among available options and thereafter, transforming the chosen options into desired actions and outcomes. Hence it involves social transformation of common persons through a rearrangement of power. By

power is meant a chance for humans to realize their own will in social actions, even against resistance of others within a society (Pain, 2007). The Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation, United States puts forward a definition of empowerment-the prime elements of which are:

a. Having Decision-making power: No one achieves independence unless one is given the opportunity to make important decisions about one's life.

b. Having access to information and resources: The process of decision-making needs to be conducted in situations, where individuals have sufficient information to weigh consequence of each choice. To create it, adequacy of information is an essential prerequisite.

c. Choices from a range of options: All choices need to be made from among various options, the absence of which curtails freedom of individuals' drastically.

d. Assertiveness: The quality to clearly express one's wishes and to stand up for oneself, so as to help an individual to enable, what he or she wants.

e. The feeling that individuals can make a difference: The importance of hope in shaping an individual's future holds the key to empowerment of an individual.

f. Learning to think critically - unlearning the conditioning - seeing things differently: Empowerment implies reclaiming of one's sense of competence and recognition of the often hidden power relationship.

g. Learning about management of anger: Empowerment enables the individual to learn about anger, its expression recognizing the limits.

h. The group feeling: Empowerment does not occur to the individual alone but involves connectedness with others people. Hence group feeling spreads empowerment.

i. The understanding that people have rights: The main reason of differentiated treatment meted out to different categories of people lies in the incorrect assessment by self of their true rights. Only when rights are understood, the sense of strength and self confidence can be increased.

j. Change in one's life and one's community: Empowerment not only inculcates a "feeling" or a "sense" but also a change, both to the individual and the community.

k. The necessity to learn skills: The process of empowerment is a human transcendence from one echelon to another. Acquiring appropriate skills is one of the many tools to achieve it.

l. Freeing oneself from the closet: Usually empowerment implies breaking free from the shackles of human restrictions so as to reveal their identity and displaying self confidence.

m. Never-ending self changes: Empowerment is not a destination but a journey, hence, its path is never-ending.

n. Raising one's self-image and overcoming stigma: Empowerment leads to confidence and enhanced capability, which in turn, leads to increased ability to manage one's life, resulting in a still more improved self-image.

1.2 Different Forms of Women Empowerment

In almost every society and in every sphere of life women assume unequal position and status; thus it is necessary to empower them by providing equal opportunities. The term empowerment is a multidimensional social process and it helps people gain control over their own lives. Further, it can be called as a process that fosters power in people for use in their own lives, their communities and in their society, by acting on issues they think

as important. “Empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social, or economic strength of individuals and communities.” (Retrieved from <http://www.empowermentillustrated.com>).

Different authors and organizations have tried to define the term ‘empowerment’ from their own perspectives. It ranges from self-strength to efficiency building of women. However, empowerment of women can be categorized into five main parts- social, educational, economic, political and psychological.

Social Empowerment

Social Empowerment refers to the enabling force that strengthens women’s social relations and their position in social structures. Social empowerment addresses the social discriminations existing in the society based on disability, race, ethnicity, religion or gender. From the sociological point of view, Gangrade (2001) has extended a definition of empowerment. He considers women’s empowerment as “equal status to women opportunity and freedom to develop herself.” Women are exploited in almost every society. Srivastava (2001) observes women’s empowerment from the perspective of their vulnerability to various kinds of exploitations. He envisages that it is necessary to “empowering women socially, economically and politically so that they can break away from male domination and claim equality with them.”

Educational Empowerment

Educational empowerment is the fundamental prerequisite for empowering women in all spheres of society. It is considered as the single most important instrument of socio-political and economic transformation. The United Nations Development Report 2014 ranked India 135 out of 187 countries (UNDP, 2014). Without proper education to all

children including girls, gender empowerment is not possible. The maxim – if one male child is literate personally he alone becomes educated but if one girl child is educated the whole family becomes benefited – has been realized by the national political leaders, policy makers, administrators and bureaucrats. In this regard Rao (2001) considers that, “The most important thing is that they (the women) need to be given free and compulsory education so as to make them aware of the rights and duties and possible free legal aid so that they can fight their cases without spending money.” An educated mother is a one thousand fold superior to a mere lecturer. Education creates self-confidence, self-esteem, self-sufficiency to a person. It brings light of hope; increases social, political, intellectual, cultural and religious consciousness; broadens the length of mind; removes all kinds of bigotry, narrowness, superstition and enhances fellow-feeling, tolerance etc (Mandal 2013). Devendra (2001) stresses the importance of health, education and self-esteem of women. Devendra feels, “Empowerment of women would mean equipping women to be economically independent, self-reliant, have a positive self-esteem to enable them to face any difficult situation and they should be able to participate in developmental activities.” Devendra believes that empowered women will be able to participate in decision-making, policy formulation and implementation of different policies and programs. Education plays a great role in this sphere. Shaikh and Rao hold that, “Women’s empowerment is a state of being that reflects a certain level of critical consciousness about external realities and an awareness about their internal thought construction and belief systems that affect their well being in terms of gender justice and social justice; as well as determination to use their physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual resources to protect their lives and sustain values that guarantee gender equality and personal, social, economic, political and

institutional level.” Professor Mukhopadhyaya (2003) discusses the term ‘empowerment’ in a broader perspective. According to her opinion, “Empowerment means freedom from deprivation; equal access to knowledge and information; knowledge of being within groups of their own; empowerment also means organization; it means creation of information system and knowledge base.”

Economic Empowerment

Economic empowerment is the capacity of women to participate in, contribute to and from growth processes in ways which recognize the value of their contributions, respect their dignity and make it possible to negotiate a fairer distribution of the benefits of growth. Economic empowerment increases women’s access to economic resources and opportunities including jobs, financial services, property and other productive assets, skills development and market information.

The economic empowerment of women is a prerequisite for sustainable development, pro-poor growth and the achievement of all the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Gender equality and empowered women are catalysts for multiplying development efforts. Investments in gender equality yield the highest returns of all development investments. Women usually invest a higher proportion of their earnings in their families and communities than men. India has been ranked at a poor 115 by a global survey which looked into the level of economical empowerment of women in 128 countries. The list was topped by Australia and followed by three Scandinavian countries- Norway, Sweden and Finland. At the bottom of the list were Yemen, Pakistan, Sudan and Chad (Pratiyogita Darpan April 2015)

A study in Brazil showed that the likelihood of a child's survival increased by 20 percent when the mother controlled household income. Increasing the role of women in the economy is part of the solution to the financial and economic crises and crucial for economic resilience and growth. However, at the same time, we need to be mindful that women are in some contexts bearing the costs of recovering from the crisis, with the loss of jobs, poor working conditions and increasing precariousness. "Wage employment means economic power" (Elliott, 2008). Through employment women earn money and it enables women and girls to become 'bread earner', contributing members of households with a strong sense of their own economic independence. "Economic empowerment is a powerful tool against poverty" (Biswas, 2010). The Djakarta declaration (1994) critically examines that, "empowerment of women is not only equal consideration; it was a necessary precondition for sustainable economic and social development." Without economic self-sufficiency other rights and scopes remain meaningless to the people. Self employed Women's association (SWEA) argues for women's empowerment through the attainment of full employment and self-reliance of poor and rural exploited women. It holds that, "When there is a woman's income, there is security of work; she has assets in her name, she feels economically strong, independent and autonomous" (The Kurukshetra, January 2005). The OECD-DAC Network on Gender Equality defined women's economic empowerment as their 'capacity to participate in, contribute to and benefit from growth processes in ways that recognize the value of their contributions, respect their dignity and make it possible to negotiate a fairer distribution of the benefits of growth' (OECD, 2011)

Political Empowerment

Participation of women in the political field and in various decision-making bodies is an important tool for empowerment. The participation of women at all levels of governance structures is the highest need of this hour for women actual empowerment. Political participation, simply means is an activity by citizens which intended to know who governs (or) how they do so. Political participation refers to a variety of actions by which the citizens take part in the functioning of state machinery. The constitution of India (1950) guaranteed to all women the right to equality and political participation through adult franchise. The efforts of women during national freedom struggle and Gandhiji's role in mobilizing them played a crucial role. Article 15 of the Constitution prohibits discrimination inter alia on grounds of sex, and article 15(3) enacts that nothing in article 15 shall prevent the state from making any special provision for women and children. Brill (2000) holds that "Without our own voices being heard inside the government areas and halls of public policy and debate, we are without the right to accountability— a basic establishment of those who are governed." In other words, "Empowerment is not giving people power; people already have plenty of power, in the wealth of their knowledge and motivation, to do their jobs magnificently.

Women throughout the world have been struggling to break away the shackle of bondage, subjugation, oppression and all kinds of ill treatment both within and outside of their families. Without bringing them in the corridor of power where they can formulate policies and programs and implement them, the survival of women is very difficult. Rajput (2001) also supports the view. According to him, "Empowerment of women in all spheres, in particular the political sphere is crucial for their advancement and the

foundation of a gender equal society. It is central to the achievement of the goals of equality, development and peace.” Without political participation it would be very difficult for women to increase effectiveness, capacity, challenging the existing power structure and patriarchal ideology.

Psychological empowerment

Psychological empowerment represents one facet of subjective well being (SWB) which means people belief that they have the resources, energy, and competence to accomplish important goals. Subjective well- being is one important variable by which the quality of life in societies can be measured. The facts that people in the society find their lives to be fulfilling and happy. Psychological empowerment often accompanies and follows from certain other facts of SWB such as positive affect (pleasant moods and emotions). Such positive emotions, when induced in laboratory experimental studies, have been found to have certain predictable consequences, including sociability, self-confidence, leadership and dominance, flexible thinking, altruism, active engagement with the environment, and self-regulatory ability. In other words, positive moods produce a state that appears to be similar to psychological empowerment. Success can lead to psychological empowerment when it heightens positive emotions, and psychological empowerment in turn can lead to further success if external conditions allow it. Although external conditions are necessary for empowerment, they are not sufficient for it without psychological feelings of competence, energy, and the desire to act (Diener and Diener 2002).

Concepts related to psychological empowerment have a rich history in the discipline of psychology. Bandura (1997) has extensively studied the effects of self-efficacy, the belief that one can accomplish specific goals. Rotter (1992) and Seligman (1991) have both

written about an internal locus of control, that is, attributing outcomes to one's own actions. Optimistic outcome expectancies have been studied by Carver and Scheier (1990), and Seligman, among others. Finally, feelings of autonomy and competence have been explored by Deci and Ryan (1980) and their colleagues.

Psychological empowerment is likely to result from high SWB, especially from positive emotions. People who are chronically happy are likely to feel more empowered than unhappy individuals. Research shows that self-confidence, sociability, activity and energy follow from positive emotions (Lyubomirsky, King, and Diener 2004) and studies also reveal that external power leads positive emotions (Keltner, Gruenfeld, and Anderson 2003). Because positive emotions are likely to arise from goal success, people are more likely to feel empowered and to pursue new goals when they have been successful in the past and when they perceive that they have the resources to meet their goals. That is, empowered feelings and successful action can form a self-reinforcing loop, but repeated failures and the resulting negative emotions can stop the cycle of psychological empowerment and result in depression, resignation, or learned helplessness. Thus, empowered feelings are likely to arise from good events occurring in a person's life because such events create positive emotions, which in turn lead to self-confidence and other feelings that create psychological empowerment.

1.3 Empowerment and the Third Millennium Development Goal: A New Way to Interpretation

In the year 2000, a commitment was made at the Millennium Summit of the Governments of 189 countries to achieve eight goals that are popularly called the Millennium Development Goals – MDGs. These MDGs provide an opportunity to fulfill

the basic impediments of development like reduction of poverty, hunger, improve health, and eliminate illiteracy.

Among the eight goals, the third one seeks to achieve gender equality through empowerment of women. Through this goal, the role of the governments to recognize the contributions of women in economic development and the costs incurred by societies due to the multiple disadvantages that women face, in nearly every country, are focused.

To achieve this goal the following resources, taken as indicators, are essential:

- ✚ Ratio of Girls to boys in Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Education;
- ✚ Ratio of Literate Women to Men – 15-24 years old;
- ✚ Share of women in Wage Employment in the Non- agricultural Sector and
- ✚ Proportion of Seats held by Women in National Parliament.

It is said that if the indicators are moving towards the positive direction, the targets as mentioned above could be achieved. Alternatively, women lives could be improved if women could get access to those resources.

Kabeer (2003), a famous social economist and an expert on poverty and gender issues, explored the concept of empowerment through three closely interrelated dimensions: agency, resources and achievements. According to her, “**Agency** represents the processes by which choices are made and put into effect. **Resources** are medium through which agency is exercised. **Achievements** refer to the outcomes of agency.” The meaning of Agency, Resources and Achievements are as under.

Agency

Agency can be used both positively and negatively. In a positive sense (i.e., the power to) people could use agency to choose among the options available in their life for making

life better, even if at the cost of opposition by others. Conversely, in a negative sense (i.e., the power over), some authority could dominate (in a negative sense) over others. ‘There are constrains which prevent people’s ability to make strategic choices in their lives. So agency in relation to empowerment, implies not only actively exercising choice (like decision-making), but also the meaning, motivation and purpose that individuals bring to their actions; that is their sense of agency.’

Resources

Resources are the medium, which if applied through various institutions; a particular authority enjoys greater power than others in the institution, by virtue of their position. Few examples are: head of an organization, head of a household, owner of a company etc. such authority is eligible to take the decision. Therefore, if a woman is a dependent member of an institution, she is unable to take part in any of the strategic decision-making process.

Achievements

Resources and agency are the means through which achievements could be made. In other words, potentials made through resource and agency could be realized through achievements.

1.4 MDGs in Terms of its Indicators

a. Access to Education

There are various proofs which tell that access to education resulted in increased women’s capacity in questioning and to take care of actions to improve their living conditions. It is expected that the educated women can not only take care of themselves but also take care of their whole family and also less likely to become victim of domestic

violence. For example a study by Sen in West Bengal, India noted that educated women were better able to deal with violent husbands: 'access to secondary stages of education may have an important contributory role in enhancing women's capacity to exercise control in their lives...through a combination of literacy and numeracy skills, and enhanced self-esteem' (Sen, 1999). In the present socio-economic structure, women are generally portrayed as a mere reproductive agent and with this background education is being seen as a medium through which women could be made better wives or mothers, helping them in getting a suitable husband. However, little effort has been made to equip them in such a fashion so that they could question the society. Sometimes boys are getting more attention than the girl students due to the concept that career is important for a boy, and education is required for a girl only for getting an appropriate husband. Such traditional role of female in the society has an ill-effect on the career of girls. But at present, around the world, the contribution of women in the total household income is increasing very rapidly. This fact should be taken into account while designing the educational curriculum. So, it can be noted that the policy-makers want to improve the education level among girls to improve health and welfare of the society as a whole with an intention of giving boys and girls equal position in the society. However, the advocates of women empowerment should be cautious while using the tool- education – for improving the level of women empowerment (Dey, 2007).

b. Access to Paid work

Microcredit practices are good example of gaining access to paid work. In developing countries, more and more women are getting involved in microcredit groups, and are

thereby able to redefine their role in household decision-making. This has also a positive impact on the reduction of domestic violence.

‘A recent survey of the impact of various Microfinance Organizations (MFOs) in India and Bangladesh noted that longer-term membership of such groups also led to various categories of wider impact, including higher levels of political participation, improved access to government programmes, and practical skills, as well as knowledge of the wider society, self-confidence on dealing with public officials, and the likelihood of participating in protests and campaigns.’

However, the most remarkable future in this era of globalization is the entrance of women in labour market on a large number in various medium and large scale production units. The increase in non-traditional agricultural export units is the reason behind this. This has a considerable effect on the women, particularly, in their decision-making power. Women in Ecuador Flower industry, Kenyan vegetable industry, vegetable industries of Guatemala and Dominican Republic are few examples of the fact mentioned above (Dey, 2007).

Similar trends have been observed in case of non-agricultural wage labourers. Women prefer employment in non-agriculture sector, mainly because of enjoying greater independence as it is generally associated with migration from rural areas, i.e., away from patriarchal control. Greater and secure wage in non-agricultural sector is also giving them power to renegotiate their relationship within marriage and also empower them to leave abusive marriage.

c. Political Representation

The last indicator points out the issue of equal participation in the decision-making process at the national level. This implies that the economic independence is not the ultimate word. If the proportion of women in population rightly matches the number of seats occupied by women in parliament that could be the perfect state of women empowerment and ideal situation for transformation. ‘A review of the relevant statistics suggests that, regardless of political systems, the proportion of women in national parliaments around the world is extremely low, averaging 13.8 percent in 2000.’ But many a country is exercising quota/reservation system to ensure women participation in politics. But while doing so, the advocates should be attentive about the reality and examine whether the representation is a token one or it is a legitimate form of representation. ‘A woman MP in South Africa was active in initiating the process of examining national budgets from a gender perspective; and the Women’s Budget Initiative, established in 1995, brought together parliamentarians and NGOs to scrutinize the allocation of public resources.’

Due to multi-dimensional nature, the perspectives of gender inequality cannot be reduced to some single and universally agreed set of priorities. Any such attempt could lead to a too narrow target or a quite long wish list, difficult to act on or monitor. From the discussion, it is quite clear that all the indicators under MDG Goal 3 have the potential to improve the quality of women’s life.

Women’s access to education will surely give them the power to sign on a document, but unless they acquire the ability to generate the analytical capacity, the expected change could not be realized. Women’s access to paid work definitely gives them greater

monetary independence, but they cannot enjoy the benefit until and unless their health etc is secured. And women's presence in the government surely is a big step towards eradication of unjustified practices, but if they are only invited but not chosen, that means they do not have any grass root constituency, their representation will be merely a token one. So, Policy changes should be such that the women could participate, monitor the progress and at the same time they could become responsible policy-makers, leaders of corporations etc for their respective actions (Dey, 2007).

1.5 Education and Empowerment

The word "empowerment" is one, which is widely used but seldom defined. It is an active, multi dimensional process which encompasses several multi reinforcing components that begin with and supported by economic independence. Education plays a major role to empower women.

1.5.1 Benefits and Returns of Education

Education is a basic human right and a significant factor in the development of children, communities and countries. Opening classroom doors to all children, especially girls, will help break the intergenerational chains of poverty because education is intrinsically linked to all development goals, such as supporting gender empowerment, improving child health, maternal health, reducing hunger, spurring economic growth and building peace. Education provides a variety of benefits to students including enhanced social skills, greater awareness of human achievement and an appreciation of cultural diversity. But education is increasingly viewed as an economic investment. Education provides a student with skills that are valued by employers and increases lifetime earnings capacity.

The origin of the idea of human capital goes back to at least Adam Smith who, in the *Wealth of Nations*, suggested that investment in physical capital through expenditure on machines might have parallels in investment in human capital through expenditures on education and training. Schultz and Becker, among others, were to revive this idea and develop it considerably from the early 1960s. Schultz was under no illusion about the unpalatability of the idea of regarding human beings as a potential form of capital, and of learning and education as the means of investment in that capital. In his address to the American Economists Association in 1960 he urged fellow economists to reconsider the idea of education as a form of investment in human capital, rather than simply a good for consumption (Little 2002).

The idea of education as a form of investment became the missing piece in the jigsaw of the puzzle of the sources of economic growth that were not accounted for by increases in land, labour (man-hours) and physical capital. The propositions of human capital theory were that the skills that people acquire are a form of capital, human capital, that these are acquired through deliberate investments in education; that skills are the capacities that contribute to economic production; and that earnings in the labour market are the means by which a person's productivity is rewarded. This form of capital had grown in Western societies at a rate faster than "conventional" (nonhuman) capital and that its growth has been the most distinctive feature of the economic system of the mid 20th century (Schultz, 1961).

Woodhall also points out that while the idea of human capital may be traced to writers in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, the first serious attempts to measure the economic costs and benefits of education and compute rates of return were made, for the United

States by Schultz (1961) and Becker (1964). Throughout the 1970s and 1980s studies of cost-benefit and rates of return were undertaken in a range of industrialized and developing countries by Psacharopoulos (1973, 1994) and others. Woodhall (2001) summarizes four general patterns revealed by these studies; (i) social returns are consistently lower than the private rate of return (ii) social and private rates of return to primary education tend to be higher than rates of return to secondary or higher education; (iii) the rate of return to education is higher in developing countries than in developed countries; and (iv) the rate of return to investment in education is higher than the average rate of return to physical capital in developing countries, though not necessarily in developed countries.

There are good theoretical reasons why education could lead to economic and non-economic benefits and sound empirical studies, in particular in the area of economic returns to education. For example, education increases the individual's earnings capacity, the education of one partner can also increase the earning capacity of the other partner, children's cognitive and emotional development is associated with their parents schooling. Better-educated people tend to be better informed about health and nutrition, are less likely to run health risks, and have better information on where to secure good medical care. Those with more schooling are less likely to smoke, less likely to be heavy drinkers, and are more likely to exercise (Sabates 2007).

1.5.2 The Private-Social Distinction

One can approach the value of investment in education from one of two perspectives. One is that of the individual student or private investor. The costs a person incurs while studying can be compared with the benefits one enjoys as a graduate. The costs are the

foregone earnings, tuition and other out-of-pocket expenses for the student and his or her family, and the benefits are the difference in post tax earnings between more and less educated workers of the same age. Such private calculus is straightforward and incontestable, resulting in the private rate of return to investment in education or one can take the perspective of the state or the country as a whole. States spend on education, and the benefits are realized in terms of the presumably higher productivity of the more educated workers. The cost in this case is much higher than what individuals pay for their education because of the public subsidization of education. As a first approximation, the benefits could be measured as pretax earnings differentials to reflect the full productivity potential of workers by level of education. The comparison of the costs and benefits measured this way results in the social rate of return to investment in education (Psacharopoulos 2006).

1.5.3 Micro versus Macro Approach

In the empirical literature, two routes have been followed to measure the value of education. One is to look at micro data, that is, at the level of the individual or the household, to compare the earnings or productivity of the more educated with that of the less educated. The other route is to look at aggregate national data and compare the level of a country's national or per-capita income growth with the resources committed to education (Psacharopoulos 2006).

Over the years, the notion of what constitutes economic development has changed. Initially, the notion of development was tantamount to monetary per-capita income. Today, development encompasses items such as smaller income disparities, poverty reduction, democratization, increases in life expectancy, reduction of infant mortality,

and a greener environment. When one is assessing the value of education, its effect on such difficult-to-quantify variables should be taken into account.

1.5.4 Private and Social Benefit of Education

The benefits of education typically are classified into private benefits and social benefits. Private benefits manifest in the labour market and can be measured in monetary terms. The private rate of return is used to explain the demand for education. It can also be used to assess the equity or poverty alleviation effects of public education expenditure, or the incidence of the benefits of such expenditure. On the other hand, social benefits are not directly observed or measured in monetary terms. The social rate of return summarizes the costs and benefits of the educational investment from the state's point of view, i.e., it includes the full resource cost of education, rather than only the portion that is paid by the recipient of education (Psacharopoulos, 1995).

Private Rate of Return

The costs incurred by the individual are his/her foregone earnings while studying, plus any education fees or incidental expenses the individual incurs during schooling. Since education is mostly provided free by the state, in practice the only cost in a private rate of return calculation is the foregone earnings. The private benefits amount to what a more educated individual earns (after taxes), above a control group of individuals with less education. "More" or "less" in this case usually refers to adjacent levels of education, e.g., university graduates versus secondary school graduates. For example, Individual earnings are strongly related to educational attainment. People who have completed high school earn more than those who have not; people with a bachelor's degree earn more

than those with only a high school diploma; and those with a graduate education earn more than those with only an undergraduate education.

Social rate of Return

Social benefits of a workforce with greater educational attainment and skills can be traced to the enhanced worker productivity associated with greater educational attainment. These productivity gains translate into higher output and incomes for the economy. Non-monetary societal benefits in regions with high proportions of college graduates include lower crime rates, greater and more informed civic participation, and improved performance across a host of socioeconomic measures. Empirical work in econometrics suggests that after controlling for differences in amenities and individual wages, an increase in the share of college graduates in the labour force leads to significant increases in productivity and wages for all workers. There is a large literature on rates of return to education. In the UK, Blundell, Dearden, Sianesi (2003) investigated the causal effect of education on income and the rate of return to education. Blundell, Dearden, Goodman and Reed (2000) investigated the impact of higher education on wages for men and women and for mature students. Dearden, McIntosh, Myck and Vignoles (2002) and McIntosh (2004) investigated returns to academic and vocational qualifications separately, whereas Blundell, Dearden and Meghir (1996) and Feinstein, Galindo-Rueda and Vignoles (2004) researched economic returns to work-based training.

1.5.5 Mother's Education and Mother's Empowerment

Education is a mile stone for women empowerment as it will be used as an agent of basic change in the status of women. It enables them to respond to opportunities, to challenge their traditional roles and to change their lives and enhance self-esteem. It was said that

education is one of the most important means of empowering women with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence necessary and to ensure equal participation in the development process for economic independence. Educating women benefits the whole society. It has a more significant impact on poverty and development than men's education. It is also one of the most influential factors in improving child health and reducing mortality. It also enhances access to legal literacy. Educated mother can give better education to her children and as well as can take better decision regarding their children education.

Research shows that mother's supportive behaviour towards the child helps the child in learning inhibit maladaptive behaviour and fostering positive behaviour in tune with the demands of the society. Mother's supportive behaviour towards the child also leads to helpfulness and thoughtfulness towards others, self-reliance, acceptance and responsibility and acquisition of skills that will support in later adult functioning. A mother is an architect of a child's personality and lays foundation for his/her acculturation. So well educated mothers give more feedback to their children and provide more task specific information than do less educated mothers.

Education is central to the process of sustainable development. The role of education in empowerment is not only learning of three 'R's (reading, writing arithmetic) but includes- raising awareness, critical analysis of various structures, and acquiring knowledge for empowerment at all levels. Education should include not only formal education but also skill training and functional literacy. First and foremost of all is to demystify the myth that girls are not sent to school because they are girls and in view of their primary role as mothers and housewives. Girls and women are not only housewives

and mothers but they are also ‘workers’ in the economic sense. They should be educated to perform an indispensable role in the home and in the household economy, as well as for bringing enlightenment and emancipation. Empowerment of women through education will develop:

- Self-esteem and self-confidence of women;
- A positive image of women by recognizing their contribution to the society, polity and economy;
- Ability-making abilities and action through collective process;
- Choices in areas like education, employment and health;
- Equal participation in development process;
- Knowledge and skill for economic independence; and
- Access to legal literacy and information relating to their rights.

Education is central to the capability approach Sen (1992), for example, identifies education as one of “a relatively small number of centrally important beings and doings that are crucial to well-being.” Nussbaum (1997, 2002, 2004, 2006), in her work on higher education in the United States and India and on schooling in India, has discussed the importance of education for women’s empowerment and the importance of public education as crucial to democratic societies. She identifies three key capabilities associated with education: first critical thinking or “the examined life”; second, the ideal of the world citizen; and third, the development of the narrative imagination. Sen (1999), fulfills an instrumental social role in that crucial literacy, for example, fosters public debate and dialogue about social and political arrangements. It has an instrumental process role by expanding the people one comes into contact with, broadening our

horizons. Finally, it has an empowering and distributive role in facilitating the ability of the disadvantaged, marginalized, and excluded to organize politically. It has redistributive effects between social groups, households, and within families. Overall, education contributes to interpersonal effects where people are able to use the benefits of education to help others and hence contribute to the social good and democratic freedoms. In short, for Sen, “education” is an unqualified good for human capability expansion and human freedom.

1.5.6 Role of Parents in Enhancing Educational Attainments of Children

Parents’ education is likely to be an important factor for the educational outcome of their children. Parents’ education affects the wellbeing of their children through a multitude of channels. Perhaps the most obvious is family income. Researchers have established a strong causal relationship between education and earnings. On average each additional year of schooling raises a person’s earnings by 10 percent. Better educated parents thus have higher incomes, an important determinant of wellbeing across all stages of life. Parents with higher incomes simply have more resources to invest in their children. Children who grow up in families with fewer financial constraints are better nourished. They live in more prosperous neighborhoods that have better schools and other amenities, as well as physical environments that are conducive to positive psychosocial development. They are healthier, and, more importantly, their families have the resources to deal with chronic health conditions that can have a cumulative impact on health in adulthood. Indeed, many of the investments in children that a higher family income makes possible bring dividends in the form of a healthy and prosperous adulthood (Kaushal 2014).

Family income, however, is just one of the many ways that better-educated parents contribute to the lives of their children. Better educated parents invest more efficiently in the education and wellbeing of their children. Arguably, they are better able to understand and use health information for themselves and their children. Further, expectations of higher income and better health make better educated parents more future oriented, which may influence their life choices and the choices they make for their children. Further, children learn from the attitudes and behaviours of their parents, which are often informed by knowledge acquired through education. Thus education influences not only economic and noneconomic opportunities, but also lifestyle choices, for example, decisions about marriage, sex and fertility (Kaushal 2014).

Literatures suggests that many factors affect the educational attainment of children. Parents' education especially mother's education is likely to be an important factor for the educational outcome of their children. Zangenberg and Zeuthen (1997) find through cross-tabulations that the share of children who obtain a high school diploma increases strongly with the educational level of the parents.

1.5.7 Intergenerational Transmission of Education

To study intergenerational mobility, economists have generally followed what is commonly referred to as the Human Capital Model, which is based on the works of Becker and Tomes. This model allows for biological or genetic transmission across generations, but it also assumes that economic factors- such as parents' investments in their own education and skills, family income, and wealth- play an important role. It predicts that intergenerational transmission happens in two ways: first, better-educated parents invest more or more efficiently in their children's human capital (that is, their

skills, knowledge, and health); second, health and ability are transmitted from parents to children biologically or genetically.

Hundreds of studies document correlations that support these channels of intergenerational transmission. Social scientists, however, have been cautious about drawing inferences from the simple correlations between parents' education and the education, health, income, and overall development of their children. Education has high intergenerational payoffs in multiple areas of life. But they also document that the U.S. education system reinforces socioeconomic inequality across generations (Kaushal 2014).

1.6 Statement of the Problem

In the world we live in, 1.3 billion persons are subjected to abject poverty, i.e., they carry on their existence at less than US\$1, a day. A closer analysis of these people found 70 percent of them to be women. For these women, poverty not only implied scarcity and want but also denial of rights, opportunities and getting subject of oppression. In conservative countries, most women had long been denied their basic freedom. However with economic liberalization and along with it western influence sweeping these nations, empowerment of the women-folk had off-late been a much discussed policy. In most of these countries, conservatism rules the roost. Still then, in these countries, the winds of change among the women-folk are palpable. This change literally termed as the process of empowerment have been vigorously approached by women and philanthropic organization with tacit support of the various government. However, with regard to publicity, only such bigger nations as India, China etc. get into limelight with the medium and small nations falling outside the domain. Among these types of countries where empowerment of women have reached some noticeable level, the case of Pakistan,

Maldives and Bhutan, despite having conservative societies are notice-worthy. (Pain 2007)

Women empowerment is an issue of great concern in almost all settings of life and in all countries of the world. Without empowering women problems like gender discrimination, violence against women, mother's health etc cannot be tackled properly. It is evident that both men and women are agents of economic development and deprivation of one agent will hinder the process of economic development as a whole. Existing literature suggests that women and men do not have equal access to and control over resources such as money, transport and time. Since the decision making power within the family is unequal with men enjoying privileges and women are denied, women's access to different types of services are restricted. The consequences are many for the women such as poor health, poor education, poor access to jobs and businesses. Women are, because of this unequal power sharing, often subjected to physical torture, humiliation and violence. Much of the women's work also remains unrecognized and undervalued. A review of 31 countries pointed out that women work longer hours than men in nearly every country but most of the women's work remains unpaid, unrecognized and undervalued (HDR, 1995).

Women empowerment can be measured by different indicators. Literature suggests that the most important indicators which measure empowerment of women are decision making power of women, freedom of mobility of women, workforce participation of women, education of women etc. In developing countries the status of women or the empowerment level of women is very low regarding these indicators.

Research studies have demonstrated a universal fact that there exist a wide gap between men and women in their role, performance and achievements in almost all sectors of the

economy. In Barak valley also the socioeconomic position of women is still very low. Keeping this in view, the present study seeks to investigate the overall status of women in the Karimganj District of the valley by measuring the empowerment level of them. The role of women in children's educational attainments is also a well researched area of study. Large number of studies pointed out that mother's workforce participation and education are two important factors that determine children's educational attainments. Women empowerment in developing countries is very low compared to developed countries. Poor countries by no means have a monopoly on gender inequality. In all societies men earn more than women. However, disparities in health, education, and bargaining power within marriage tend to be larger in countries with low GDP per capita. In many countries, households have a strong preference for male children. A serious problem in many countries is violence against women. In surveys conducted between 1995 and 2006 it is revealed that the proportion of women who had reported having experienced physical violence at least once in their lifetime was more than 10 percent in Hong Kong, China and the Philippines, more than 20 percent in India and Cambodia and nearly 50 percent in Australia. The higher rate in Australia may reflect that more women are willing to report physical violence, whereas the lower rates in other countries may be due to under reporting as women fear persecution or stigma. In general, a number of indicators are used to measure progress in women's empowerment, such as asset ownership, participation in nonagricultural wage employment and membership in parliament. Women in Asia and the Pacific are less likely than men to own assets. Farm holdings headed by women represent only 7 percent of all farm holdings, compared with 20 percent in most other regions of the world. Around two thirds of women's

employment in South Asia is in agriculture, while in East Asia the proportions around 40 percent. Between 1990 and 2009, across the region, women's participation in non-agricultural wage employment increased only marginally from 28 percent to 31 percent. Women are more likely than men to be informal workers in most Asia-Pacific countries. In addition to society's gender norm, this reflects their limited skills and restricted mobility. Women also have the burden of unpaid domestic work, to which they devote large amounts of time and energy. The Asia-Pacific region has the world's second lowest proportion of women parliamentarians. Even high income Asian countries have low proportions of women in their national legislatures, for example, Japan (11 percent in the lower house) and the Republic of Korea (16 percent). The Pacific sub region, despite achieving gender parity in education, contains four of the six countries in the world where there are no women legislators. (Yearbook of Asia and the Pacific 2014)

The developing regions as a whole have achieved the target to eliminate gender disparity at all levels of education, with a gender parity index of 0.98 in primary and secondary education and 1.01 in tertiary education in 2015 (the accepted measure of gender parity is between 0.97 and 1.03). Today, five of the nine developing regions have achieved parity: the Caucasus and Central Asia, Eastern Asia. The most substantial progress has been made in Southern Asia, where the gender parity index has increased from 0.74- the lowest starting point of all regions in 1990- to 1.03 in 2015. The gap between girls and boys has also narrowed considerably in North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa and Western Asia. Overall 64 percent of countries in the developing regions reporting data by sex had achieved gender parity in primary education in 2012. More than half of the countries with gender disparity in primary education in 2012 (56 percent) were in Sub-Saharan Africa.

In Secondary education, gender parity has been achieved in 2015 in the Caucasus and Central Asia, Eastern Asia, Northern Africa, South- Eastern Asia and Southern Asia.

Gender parity in secondary education had been achieved in 36 percent of countries with available data in the developing regions in 2012. The largest gender disparities in enrolment ratios are found in tertiary education, with only one developing region, Western Asia, achieving the target. The most extreme disparities are those at the expense of women in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia and at the expense of men in Eastern Asia, Northern Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean. Only 4 per cent of countries with available data in the developing region had achieved the target for tertiary education in 2012. (The Millenium Gevelopment Report 2015).

Kpein (2011) by using DHS data for developing countries found that there is lower level of education of mother in developing countries. In only two countries, Zimbabwe and Namibia, they noted more than seven years of education on average, in six countries there is more than six years of education. (Kenya 2003-6.176, Kenya 2009- 6.417, Lesotho 2004-6.713, Madagascar 2003-2004-6.376, Namibia 2006-2007-7.055 and Zimbabwe 2006-7.032 years of education) and in thirteen countries there is less than three years of education on average (Cameroon 2004-5.16, Congo rep 2007-4.69, Ghana 2008-4.605, Ghana 2003-4.258, Liberia 2007-3.054, Madagascar 2009- 4.407, Malawi 2000-3.02, Malawi 2004- 3.168, Nigeria 2003- 4.303, Nigeria 2008- 4.986, Tanzania 2005- 4.647, Uganda 2006- 3.357, Zambia 2007- 5.616 years of education) The statistics for mother's labour activity outside the household suggest an important part of mother's self employed a fewer part of them engaged as employed. Very few mothers working outside the household for a non member in some countries. it means most of them are either

housewife, or employed for relative or their husbands. As an example in Ethiopia 10.1 percent of the mothers in the sample are self employed and 3.6 percent are employed. The statistics for mother's participation for decision making process and mother's attitude toward gender equality suggest that in 18 over 28 countries the mother's take part in most than three (over six) elements of decision making process concerning herself on average. In twenty two cases, the mothers have on average 5 points at least for the attitude toward gender inequality.

India ranked 130 among 188 countries in Human Development Report 2015(UNDP 2015) India's rank has moved from 135 to 130. India's HDI rank between 2009 and 2014 has risen six positions. According to the report, between 1980 and 2014, India's HDI value increased from 0.362 to 0.609. According to the latest ranking, India stands higher than neighbours Bangladesh and Pakistan but lower than countries like Namibia, Guatemala and Tajikistan, even Iraq.

The human capital of mother is usually more closely related to the educational attainments of the child than is that of the father. Parental completion of high school and one or two years of post secondary schooling are typically found to have a larger effect on children's schooling than years of parental schooling beyond that level (Haveman, Robert and Barbara Wolfe, 1995). Glick and Sahn (2000), for West Africa, found that rise in household income leads to greater rise in investment in girls' education but has no significant impact on schooling for boys. Rise in father's education raises the schooling of both sons and daughters but mother's education has significant impact only on daughters' schooling. Male dominance implying lower empowerment of women in the household has also negative impact on children's education. Hamid (1993) showed that

low household income, low occupational status and lower education of head of household, and male dominance in household decision making play important role in constraining the demand for children's education. Since there appears to be a close link between women empowerment and children's education, the present study also seeks to explore this relationship with special reference to gender of the child. Finally, since women empowerment at household level generally refers to mother's empowerment, the present study deals with the level and problem of mother's empowerment at household level.

Studies by Dreze and Sen (2002) and Deolalikar (2005) show a clear correlation between women's educational status and infant and child mortality. This probably works in two ways. On the one hand, women are able to use the knowledge they acquire from education. On the other hand, women's education is likely to increase their role in household decision-making. Both of these routes together lead to an improvement in infant and child nutrition status. "Many empirical studies from around...suggest that the gender disparities in health, schooling and nutritional outcomes of children tend to invest more in their female children" (Deolalikar 2005:112)

1.7 Status of Women in Barak Valley

The status and empowerment of women is a domain that still has not been explored intensely in interior and isolated places like Barak valley. A general idea about the position of women in the society of Barak valley can be drawn on the basis of information pertaining to the share of women in the population, education and workforce of the three districts of the valley. These are submitted below in nutshell.

Population share

There are three districts in Barak Valley: Karimganj, Hailakandi and Cachar districts. As per 2011 census report, the total population of Barak valley is 3624599 out of which the size of female population is 1774561 which is 48.96 percent of the total. The percentage of females in the total population of the districts of Hailakandi, Karimganj and Cachar are 48.75, 49.06 and 48.75 percent respectively. As is evident from the above figures, the sex ratio is adverse against females and stands at 951 at Hailakandi, 963 at Karimganj and 959 at Cachar in 2011. It remained so in the previous decade of 2001 and 1991. In 2001 the sex ratio stood at 935 at Hailakandi, 947 at Karimganj and 945 at Cachar. In 1991, the sex ratio stood at 929 at Hailakandi, 946 at Karimganj and 932 at Cachar indicating slight improvement of sex ratio over a decade. (Statistical Handbook of Assam, 2006, 2014).

Education

In all the three districts of Barak valley, the females are lagging behind their counterpart in literacy rate. In 1991, The female literacy rate in Karimganj district was 44.76 percent while the male literacy rate was 64.05 percent, a difference of 19.29 percent against the females. The female literacy rate in Hailakandi district in 1991 was only 41.08 percent but the male literacy rate stood at 64.08 percent, again a hopping difference of 23 percentage. In Cachar district, the female literacy rate in 1991 was 48.76 percent and male literacy rate was 68.79 percent, the difference between these two was of 20.03 percent. The situation in terms of male-female difference in literacy rate did not improve much in 2001 although literacy rate of both male and female increased appreciably over the period. In Karimganj district, the female literacy in 2001 increased to 57.28 percent

and the male literacy rate increased to 74.69 percent, a difference of 17.41 percent against the females. In the same year, the female literacy rate in Hailakandi district was 50.46 percent and male literacy rate was 68.48 percent, male- female difference was 18.02 percent. In Cachar district, male female literacy rate was 75.73 and 59.41 percent respectively, the difference being of 16.32 percent. The male-female difference in literacy rate little improve in 2011 although literacy rate of both male and female increased appreciably over the period. In Karimganj district, the female literacy in 2011 increased to 72.09 percent and the male literacy rate increased to 84.12 percent, a difference of 12.03 percent against the females. In the same year, the female literacy rate in Hailakandi district was 67.60 percent and male literacy rate was 80.74 percent, male-female difference was 13.14 percent. In Cachar district, male female literacy rate was 84.78 and 73.68 percent respectively, the difference being of 11.1 percent.

As per data of 2004-05, the female enrollment at different stages of education was much less than the male enrollment. Out of the total students enrolled at pre-primary, Primary, Middle, High School, Higher Secondary level of education, the percentage of female enrollment in Karimganj district was 48.24, 48.48, 47.99, 45.13 and 32.15 respectively. The corresponding figures for Hailakandi district were 48.96, 48.27, 47.96, 45.55 and 29.61 percent respectively. For Cachar district the corresponding figures are 49.02, 47.85, 47.53, 43.03 and 43.51 percent respectively. One thing is clear from the above figures that female enrollment at higher level of education has remained very low in all three districts of Barak valley. The percentage of female teachers to total teachers at high and higher secondary level of schools is also disproportionately low in all three districts, as in 2004-05 (Statistical Handbook, Assam, 2006).

Workforce participation

The figures representing workforce participation rate for the census year 2001 do not also speak promisingly for females of the three districts of Barak Valley. In Karimganj district, out of the total workers, the share of female workers was only 18.89 percent. The corresponding figures for Hailakandi and Cachar district were 24.11 and 21.74 percent respectively. Out of the total female workers in the districts, the percentage of main female workers in the three districts Karimganj, Hailakandi and Cachar are 47.47, 49.79 and 54.57 percent only.

In socioeconomic and demographic sense, the females of all the three districts of Barak valley are backward in comparison to males. This leaves enough scope for studies on empowerment of women in Barak valley.

1.8 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the present study are as follows

- (i) To measure Mother's Empowerment level.
- (ii) To identify factors affecting Mother's Empowerment level.
- (iii) To examine the Impact of Mother's Empowerment level on children's education.
- (iv) To examine the relationship between Mother's Empowerment and gender differential, if any, in Children's Educational attainments.
- (v) To make a comparative analysis of rural-urban scenario so far as Mother's Empowerment and its link with Children's Education is concerned.

1.9 Research Questions

The study addresses the following two research questions which are framed to give direction to the research to meet its objectives.

- (i) Is there any impact of place of residence on mother's empowerment level?
- (ii) Does mother's empowerment contribute most towards educational attainments of female children?

1.10 Importance and significance of the Study

In India, since long back, women were considered as an oppressed section of the society and they were neglected for centuries. Gender disparities occur in different spheres of society. They occur in Education, work force participation, economic and in political spheres. To remove gender disparity from society women empowerment is an important tool. It is evident that both men and women are agents of economic development and deprivation of one agent will hinder the process of economic development as a whole. Empowerment of women is one of the most important factors of economic development. The important line said by Larry Summers "When you educate a boy, you educate one individual, when you educate a girl you educate a nation"

Empowerment has become the key solution to many social problems like high population growth rates, environment degradation, and low status of women. "Power" is the key word of the term "Empowerment" which means 'control over material assets, intellectual resources, and ideology. The material assets over which control can be established may be of any type- physical, human, financial, labour, etc. Knowledge, information, ideas can be included in intellectual resources.

Empowerment is a process by which individuals; groups and communities become able to take control of their circumstances and achieve their goals, thereby being able to work towards maximizing the quality of their lives. Empowerment commonly means

‘becoming powerful’, self-help may thus be viewed as one of the forms of empowerment (Rao 2006). He summarized the key features of empowerment as follows:

Empowerment is a dynamic, multi-dimensional and democratic process of awareness and capacity building. Empowerment helps to improve and maximize the quality of life of the poor and marginalized sections of the society. Thus it is a long term process that requires changes in knowledge, attitude and behaviour of not only women, but also of men and the society at large. Empowerment of women in general, and poor women in particular, is the thrust area of development initiatives in India today. Empowerment may be used to mean simply ‘enablement’ (Adams, 1990). According to Sharma, empowerment is a process aimed at changing the nature and direction of systematic forces, which marginalize women and other disadvantaged sections in a given context (Sharma, 1992).

According to Suguna, B. (2001), there is continued inequality and vulnerability of women in all sectors “economic, social, political, education, health care, nutrition and legal. As women are oppressed in all spheres of life, they need to be empowered in all walks of life. Active participation in social, economic and political spheres would help in enhancing process of decision-making, empowerment and it will also give women the desired self-respect and social dignity and these of course, are the pre-requisites of empowerment.” The 73rd Amendment to our constitution in 1993, besides Panchayat area, ensured reservation of not less than one third of these reserved seats for the women. The impact on making provision for reservation of seats for scheduled castes and tribes proportionate to their population in the reserving one third of seats for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) has been fruitful, and has empowered women both politically and socially. At present, there are approximately 260,000 panchayat

representatives in India, out of which 75,000 are women making it the largest number of elected women in the world (Razi, Yojana June 2012).

Many researchers suggest that mothers are more child-oriented than fathers, perhaps because of their different biological roles in child bearing and initial feeding, or because of differential social biological incentives that lead mothers to focus more on the quality of children and fathers to focus more on the quantity of children or because of different roles in traditional societies related to the greater demands for physical strength in some tasks such as plowing (Boserup 1970; Pitt, Rosenzweig and Hassan 1990; Alesina Giuliano and Nunn 2013). If mothers are more child-oriented than fathers on average for any one or more of these reasons, greater empowerment of mothers is likely to lead to more investments in the human capital of children.

1.11 Limitations of the Study

The important limitations of the study are mentioned below:

(1) The study is based on primary data which does not necessarily reveal the problems associated along with the progression of children's education. Time period data would have been more appropriate in researches like the present one. This may be construed as a limitation of the present study.

(2) Another limitation is that women empowerment is a multidimensional phenomenon and it is impossible to cover all its characteristics in one study. For example, this research deals with women empowerment in household level only and does not cover women empowerment at community level which is an important determinant of children's education.

(3) The study has been conducted with a small sample size of 250 households. Hence a better picture can be expected with a larger sample size of heterogeneous nature covering a much wider area.

1.12 Thesis Chapters

The thesis is organized by the following chapters:

Chapter-I: General Introduction

The subsections of this chapter are as under.

- Empowerment the Concept
- Different Forms of Women Empowerment
- Empowerment and the Third Millennium Development Goal: A New Way to Interpretation
- MDGs in Terms of its Indicators
- Education and Empowerment
- Statement of the problem
- Status of Women in Barak Valley
- Objectives of the Study
- Research Questions
- Importance and Significance of the Study
- Limitations of the Study

Chapter-II: Review of Literature

In this chapter, an extensive review of research articles, books, reports etc are made to understand the problems within the domain of the present study.

Chapter-III: Socio-economic profile of Women and Children's Education in Assam

The chapter delves into the socio-economic picture of Assam as well as the study area.

Chapter-IV: Conceptual Framework and Methodology

This chapter highlights the concepts of empowerment and its measurement problems.

Finally it develops the methodology of the present study. The subsections are as under.

-Conceptual Framework

-Methodology

Chapter-V: Data Analysis, Results and Discussion

This chapter comprises of two sections. The sections are as under. Both the section together presents the results of the study and the analysis of the results.

- Section –A (Data Analysis with Statistical Tables and Diagrams)

- Section-B (Data analysis with statistical and econometric tools)

Chapter-VI: Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

This is the final chapter and as such presents the summary of the study, the conclusions derived from the study and also recommendations which have great importance for policy formulation and implementation.

Bibliography