

# A STUDY ON ECONOMIC REFORMS OF RURAL WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN ALIGARH (UTTAR PRADESH), INDIA

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## ABSTRACT-

Women are important elements of the family as they keep the culture alive by transferring it from generation to generation and are fully aware of the fact that they can bring grace and dignity to the place where they live and they can build a new nation. But they have subordinate status in the society and facing many problems and difficulties at home and work place, mostly in rural society. In our country, nearly 78 per cent of the total women participate in regular work and they constitute about 80 per cent of the total women population in rural area but their work participation has not been considered at large. The hypothesis of this study is to know whether there is any positive impact of new economic reforms on the development of rural economy in general and of rural women in particular.

**KEY WORDS-** Economic Reforms, Rural Women, Empowerment.

## INTRODUCTION-

The great majority of women live in unacceptable conditions, while women are responsible for 68 per cent of the food production, nearly 35 per cent of the families dependent on them, yet they constitute 90 per cent of the world's poor in India; of the total 30 per cent people who are below poverty line, 70 per cent are women<sup>1</sup>. Women's poverty in India is directly related to the absence of economic opportunities and autonomy, lack of access to economic resources, including credit, land ownership, lack of access to education and support services and their minimal participation in decision-making process. Therefore, the eradication of poverty of women in India cannot be accomplished through anti-poverty programmes alone, but it will require their democratic participation and changes in the economic structure in order to ensure their access to resources and opportunities<sup>2</sup>. The study revealed that the largest sector of India's economy, agriculture contributes a little over 30 per cent of the GNP and accounts for 60 per cent of the employment of the women workers, in which 34.55 per cent are cultivators, 43.56 per cent labour and 4.63 per cent engaged in livestock, forestry, fisheries etc. nearly 63 per cent of all economically active men are engaged in agriculture as compared to 78 per cent of women, almost 50 per cent of rural female workers are classified as agricultural labourers and 37 per cent as cultivators. Thus, agriculture continues to be the major field for women's employment<sup>3,4,5</sup>.

**Shashi Kanta Verma** depicted that the day-to-day life of rural women has been full of hardship, deprivation and struggle for survival. The nature and extent of involvement of rural women and men in agriculture and home activities as well as extent of exposure of modern crop technology to farmwomen. Farm women generally have low social participation. Pesticide, dusting, spade work during field irrigation, ploughing, sowing, manure and fertilizer application, uprooting, seeding and marketing of grain were exclusively performed by men. Transplanting and storage of grains were found to be the exclusive domains of women. Other farm operations like weeding, harvesting, carrying head load, threshing and winnowing were performed jointly, but predominantly by women. The household activities are predominantly performed by women irrespective of their socio-economic status. A woman devotes about 6 hours in the peak season against 7 hours in the slack season in household activities<sup>6</sup>.

### Need of the Study-

Women play a significant role in the family, society and as a whole for the development of the nation. They contribute to agriculture and allied activities. They are important constituents of the family as they keep the cultural stream alive by transferring it from generation to generation. Women are fully aware of the fact that they can bring grace and dignity to the place where they live and they can build a new nation. But they have subordinate status in society. They face many problems and difficulties at home and working place, mostly in rural society. They are powerless. They do not get recognition for their work as principal occupation.

There is need to study the probable changes in the patriarchal structure and attitude of society towards rural women, the means and methods of increasing their participation and role and improving their status in society. Further, there is need of this study to give more empowerment to rural women. It may be stated that during the last few decades, the Government of India has made many economic reforms on empowerment of rural women by giving more power to women for changes in their roles and status in the study. There is need for the study that women should be educated and self-confident. They should be aware of their rights, both in their work and in the social sphere. Thus, in the present study, an attempt has been made to evaluate the impact of new economic reforms on empowerment of rural women in India, with special reference to Aligarh District of Uttar Pradesh.

### METHODOLOGY-

The National Perspective Plan for Women 1988-2000 gave the following profile of women in India with special reference to rural women, "There is continued inequality and vulnerability of women in all socio-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"<sup>7</sup>.

The State of Uttar Pradesh looms large on the map of India because of its large size and population. According to 1991 Census, the State has a geographical area of 29411 sq. km. a population of 139112287. Thus sixteen per cent of the country's population lives in Uttar Pradesh on 9.8 per cent area of the country. The density of population in the state is 472 per sq.km. which is 1.7 times higher than the average density of the country at the rate of 220per sq.km.. The proportion of the Scheduled castes population is also higher as compared to that in the country, showing 14.6 per cent. Only 41 per cent of Uttar Pradesh population is literate as against 52.21 per cent at all India level. The male's literacy rate accounts for 55.21 per cent in Uttar Pradesh as against average of 64.13 per cent at all India level and females literacy rate is as low as 25.31 against the national figure of 39.29 per cent. It may be stated that the per capita income in Uttar Pradesh is also deplorably lower as compared to the national average, indicating the general backward condition of Uttar Pradesh.

The economy of Uttar Pradesh is more rural and agricultural than that of any other state of India, 82 per cent of the population of Uttar Pradesh lives in rural area as compared to 76.3 per cent in India. Similarly, 74.5 per cent of main workers are engaged in agriculture against 50.5 per cent at the all India level. Thus, the State of Uttar Pradesh is generally more backward than other States of the country as a whole with respect to major indicators of development.

The total population of Aligarh District, according to 1991 Census, is 3296000, comprising 1789000 males and 1507000 females. The Rural population of the District is 2467000 (1335581 males and 1131419 females) and urban population is 829000 (445147 males and 384853 females).

The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes population of the District as per 1991 Census is 758000 and 270 respectively. The density of population in the District is 657 per sq. km. Sex ratio is 842 females per 1000 males against the State figures.

Thus, Aligarh District has been selected for indepth study of participation of women in rural economy as universe of the study. It does not constitute a homogenous group. Stratified Random Sampling technique has been adopted in order to obtain representative samples. Here, the population (women) was divided into several sub population (strata) as per their individually more homogenous character. Then an item was selected from each strata to constitute a sample.

The unit of the study has been treated on the basis of individual cases of each stratum. The sample was 300 to 400 cases pooled in the District. Both primary as well as secondary data have been collected. The Primary data was collected with the help of the questionnaire which was specially constructed for this purpose. The secondary data were collected from various sources such as Census Reports, Five-Year Plans, Annual Reports, journals & periodicals, published research reports, etc. The information in the respect of primary data related to the respondents include education, marital status, family composition, caste structure, economic organization, occupation, social relations, religious groups, basic communities, assets, farm size,

land, income & other employment opportunities, medical facility and banking facility, etc. It may be stated that secondary data were supplemented to the primary data.

The collected data have been processed with the help of computer. Simple statistical techniques such as mean and averages have been used. Various other factors have also been taken into account. These are: per capita income, per capita consumption and per capita saving. These variables have been tested with other variables like caste, education and occupation. An attempt has been made to find out the relationship between these variables. This relationship was used to identify the main factors responsible for the participation of women in rural economy at micro level.

#### **AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF RURAL ECONOMY-**

An attempt has been made to analyse the socio-economic characteristics of rural households in Aligarh District of Uttar Pradesh. In order to study inter relationship among the variables numbers of variables have been taken into account. These variables are as follows:

- (i) Age (up to 20, 21-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51 and above)
- (ii) Sex (Male and Female)
- (iii) Marital Status (Married, Unmarried, Divorcee, Separated)
- (iv) Caste (SC, ST, OBC, Higher castes)
- (v) Level of Education (Illiterate, Literate, Middle, High School, Intermediate, Graduate, Post-Graduate and above, Professional Degree/Diploma)
- (vi) Occupation (Agricultural Work, Animal Husbandry, Animal Care and Agriculture Wages, Tailoring, Embroidery)
- (vii) Level of monthly Income (upto Rs. 2000, Rs. 2001-4000, Rs. 4001-6000, Rs. 6001-8000, 8001-10000, Rs. 10001-12000, Rs. 12001-15000, Rs. 15001 and above).
- (viii) Size of Family (0-3, 4-6, 7-9, 10 and above).

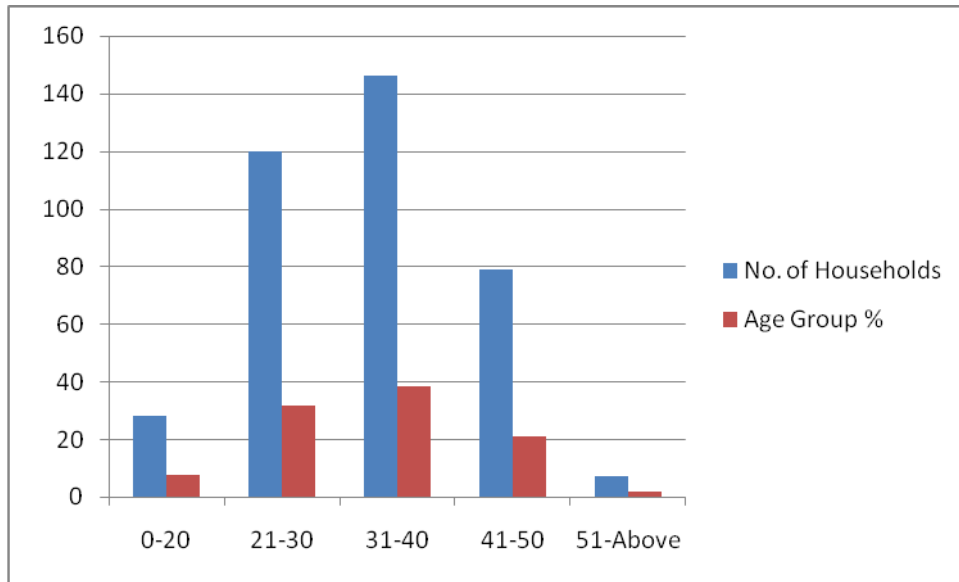
#### **RESULT AND DISCUSSION-**

There are 380 sampled households where rural women have been considered as unit of observation. Since this study is confined to study rural women and their economic activities, and therefore, women have been considered as main focus of the study. The main characteristics of the sampled households have been discussed in the following paras:

As described below, the age of the respondents has been classified into various categories. These are 0-20, 21-30, 31-40 and 41 to 50 and 51 and above age groups.

**Table – 1.1: Classification of the respondents according to Age Group in the sample**

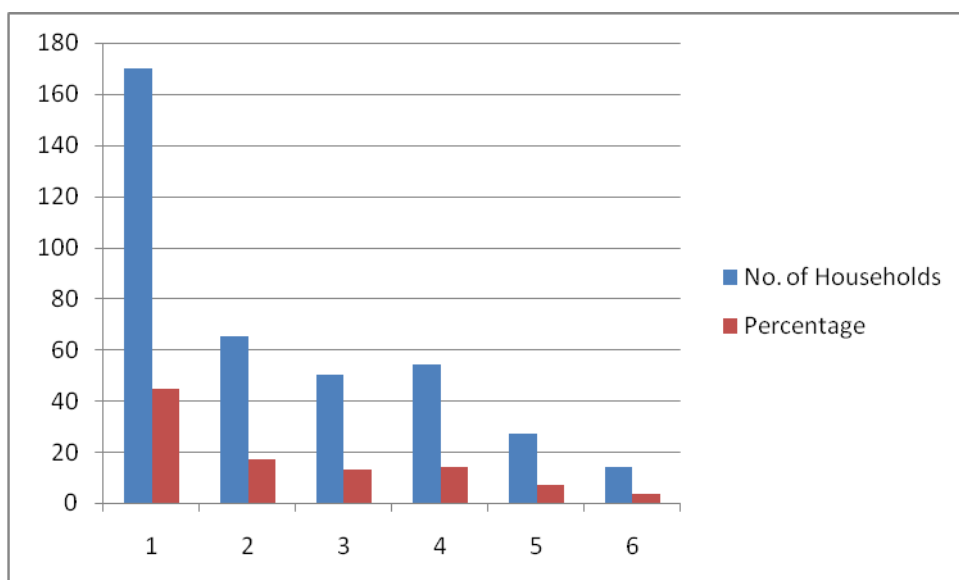
<b>Age Group</b>	<b>No. of Households</b>	<b>Age Group %</b>
0-20	28	7.37
21-30	120	31.58
31-40	146	38.42
41-50	79	20.79
51-Above	07	1.84
<b>Total</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>100.00</b>



The above projected table shows that women are found in all categories of age group. Between the age group 31-40, 38.42 per cent women are found and in the age group between 21-30, 31.58 per cent women are located. In the age group between 41-50, 20.79 per cent women and in the age group between 0 to 20, 7.37 per cent women were found. It may be stated that only 1.84 per cent women are found in the age group of 51 above of age group. Thus, the table revealed that sampled women are found in all categories of age groups.

**Table – 1.2: Classification of the respondents according to the Occupation in the sample**

Occupational	No. of Households	Percentage
Agriculture work and Animal work	170	44.74
Agriculture work	65	17.11
Animal Husbandry	50	13.16
Animal Care, Agriculture Wages	54	14.21
Agriculture Wages, Animal Care and Income Generating	27	7.10
Agriculture Wages	14	3.68
<b>Total</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>100.00</b>



The above table shows that 44.74 per cent women are doing agriculture and animal work; they are doing work on their own land, while 17.11 per cent women are doing only agriculture work, 13.16 per cent women are doing Animal Husbandry work on other fields on wages and they are also engaged in the care of cattle, 14.21 per cent women are doing only care of cattle and agriculture work on wage and 7.10 per cent women are doing income generating activities, agriculture work on wage and animal husbandry. In the remaining category 3.68 per cent women are doing only agriculture work on wages in the landlord fields. Mostly rural women are engaged in agriculture and animal husbandry. It is clear that very little percentages of women are doing income-generating activities in the study area. Lack of education facilities for women and lack of awareness for education are the main reasons for it.

**Table – 1.3: View of the respondents about Monthly Income in the sample**

Income (Monthly) in Rs.	No. of Households	Percentage
0 – 2000	18	4.74
2001 – 4000	56	14.74
4001 – 6000	101	26.58
6001 – 8000	87	22.89
8001 – 10000	48	12.63
10001 – 12000	26	6.84
12001 – 15000	21	5.53
15001 – Above	23	6.05
<b>Total</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>100.00</b>

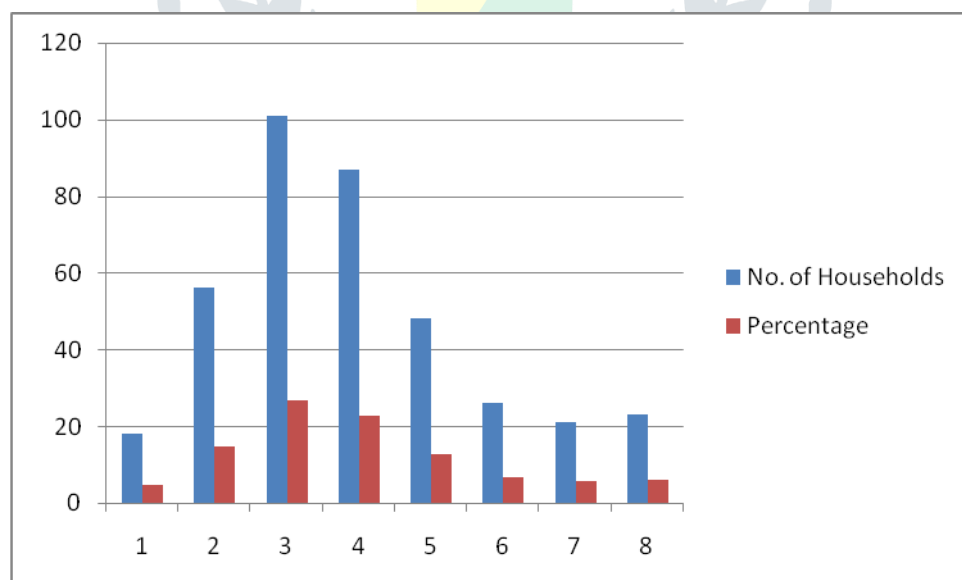


Table – 1.3 shows that 26.58 per cent female households earn the income between Rs. 4001-6000 per month, 22.89 per cent female households earn income between Rs. 6001 to 8000 per month, while 14.74 per cent earn income between Rs. 2001 to 4000 per month. Only 12.63 per cent female households earn the income between Rs. 8001 to 10000 per month, and still fewer i.e. 6.84 per cent households earn income between Rs. 10001 to 12000 per month. 6.05 percent female households earn between Rs. 15001 and above per month, while 5.53 percent female households earn income between Rs. 12001 to 15000 per month. It is also discovered that 4.74 per cent female households earn income between Rs. 0 to 2000 per month only.

**NEW ECONOMIC REFORMS-** Sustained and rapid growth rates are the most effective routes to poverty reduction. However, the main challenge is to ensure that economic growth is pro-poor and pro-women. Economic growth is the increase in value of the goods and services produced by an economy. It is conventionally measured as the percent rate of increase in real gross domestic product, or GDP. In economics, "economic growth" or "economic growth theory" typically refers to growth of potential output, i.e., production at "full employment," which is caused by growth in aggregate demand or observed output. The flaws of GDP may be important when studying economic reforms; however, for the purposes of economic growth in the long run it tends to be a very good indicator. There is no other indicator in economics which is as universal or as widely accepted as the GDP. The real GDP per capita of an economy is often used as an indicator of the average standard of living of individuals in that country, and economic growth is therefore often seen as indicating an increase in the average standard of living. (source: wikipedia). The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in India expanded 7.7% in the second quarter of 2011 over the previous quarter. Historically, from 2000 until 2011, India's average quarterly GDP Growth was 7.45% reaching an historical high of 11.80 % in December of 2003 and a record low of 1.60 % in December of 2002. The Indian economy, on an average, has grown at the rate of more than 8% during the last four financial years, thus making it one of the fastest growing economies in the world as picturise below.(source: Trading Economics.com; India Central Statistical Organisation).



India's diverse economy encompasses traditional village farming, modern agriculture, handicrafts, a wide range of modern industries, and a multitude of services. Services are the major source of economic growth, accounting for more than half of India's output with less than one third of its labour force. The economy has posted an average growth rate of more than 7% in the decade since 1997, reducing poverty by about 10 percentage points. The development strategies in the newly independent and developing countries, including India, in the mid twentieth century were framed against this background. The role of speeding up the process of industrialisation was assigned to the state with the need on the part of the governments to occupy the commanding heights and to lead from the top. India, at that time, played a pioneering role in giving expression to the aspirations of the newly independent third world countries in the economic field. In 1956, India's Five-Year Plan outlined the goals of development strategy in the following terms:

“The pattern of development and the structure of socio-economic relations should be so planned that they result not only in appreciable increases in national income and employment, but also in greater equality in incomes and wealth. Major decisions regarding production, distribution, consumption and investment and, in fact, all significant socio economic relationship – must be made by agencies informed by social purpose”.

Reforms are a means to achieve the ultimate goal of economic development of the country and the well-being of its people. The following are the words of the 1998 World Bank Report on India, as cited by Srinivasan (1999): “Reform is not needed for its own sake, but for the sake of India's poor and in the interest of having them both contribute to the growth process and benefit from it”.

**ROLE AND STATUS OF WOMEN IN RURAL ECONOMY-** In the study area, women play a significant role in family and community, shouldering all the responsibilities, providing for the needs and comforts of all members of the family and the children, running the households, managing within the limited budget, they provide services round the clock without any payment and yet they are considered economically dependent on their husband or father or any other male members of the family. They also work in the field side by side with their men folk, behind the scene; they quietly play a leading role in keeping the family

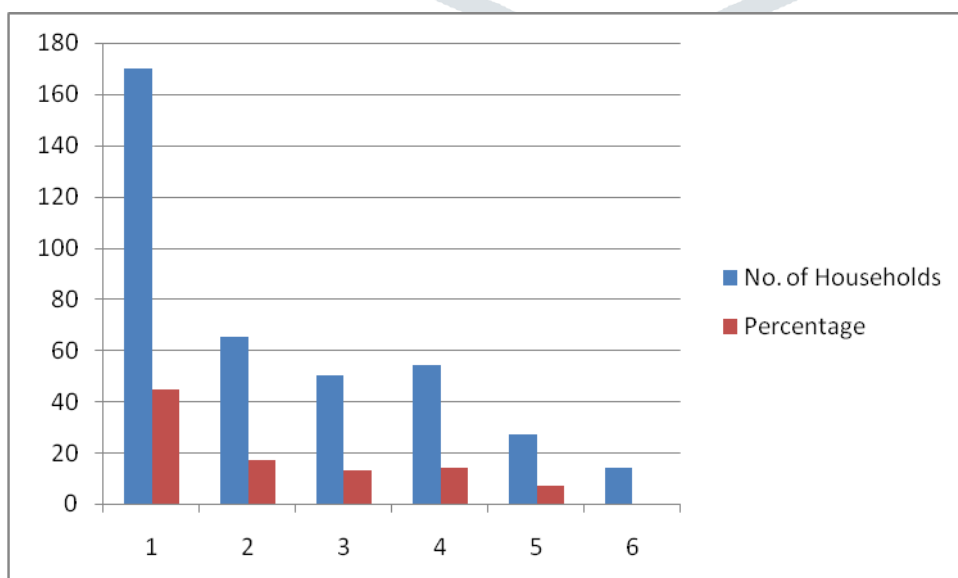
together and maintaining its well being. Thus their contribution towards the stability and well being of society as a whole is immense.

The Central Government of India and the State government have started many welfare programmes for empowerment of rural women in the study area. Technical and job oriented education are being provided to the women in the rural area to provide better opportunities for employment, the rehabilitation department of India has also started a training programme for women. These are related to knitting, sewing, spinning, embroidery, fruit conservation etc. These programmes have been started to improve the economic status of rural women. The Central Social Welfare Board is engaged to increase the income of the family by implementing various training programmes and gainful employment. State government and other departments have started so many welfare programmes for women. The State social welfare Board TRYSEM, Mahila Mandal etc. 65.79 per cent households have benefited by these programmes so increase their participation in various economic activities and increase their source of income and changes their role and status in rural economy, while 34.21 per cent female have not benefitted in the study area.

In the sample 380 female households have been selected for the study. The household plays vital role in three economic field activities in study area. These activities are: (a) Agriculture related activities, (b) Animal Husbandry and (c) Income generating activities.

**Table – 1.4: Female’s Participation in Economic Activities**

Occupational	No. of Households	Percentage
Agriculture work, Animal Husbandry	170	44.74
Agriculture work	65	17.11
Animal Husbandry	50	13.16
Animal Husbandry, Agricultural wage	54	14.21
Agriculture work/Animal husbandry Embroidery, Tailoring	27	7.10
Agriculture Labour	14	3.68%
<b>Total</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>100%</b>



Total female households have been divided into six categories. These categories are:

- (i) 44.74% households are engaged in agricultural activities and animal husbandry.
- (ii) 17.11% households are engaged in only agriculture work.
- (iii) 13.16% households are engaged in only animal husbandry.
- (iv) 14.21% households are engaged in agriculture wage work and animal husbandry.
- (v) 7.10% households are engaged in Agriculture Wage/animal husbandry, Embroidery and Tailoring etc.
- (vi) 3.68% households are engaged only in agricultural wages work.

The total sampled female households divided into the six categories that play important role in these activities. 44.74% females, who are main cultivators doing agriculture and animal husbandry related activities. Agricultural related activities are sowing the seed behind the country plough, rural women do the transplanting of paddy and vegetable crops in the fields, weeding operation in paddy field, irrigation and water management, harvesting of crops, threshing of field crops, transporting and feeding of straw of the thresher, grain to the storage and dehaasting of maize cobs.

**GOVERNMENTAL ROLE FOR EMPOWERMENT OF RURAL WOMEN**-Nearly one half of the available human resources in India, as in other countries, are women according to the census 2011, the total population of India is 1210.19 million, of which 623.72 million (51.54 per cent) are male and 586.46 million (48.46 per cent) are female. Uttar Pradesh is the most populous state in the country with roughly 199.58 million populations, of which 155.11 million are rural and 44.47 million are urban. Out of them 74.07 million female and 81.04 million male live in rural part of the state. The overall sex ratio at the national level has increased by seven points to reach 940 according to the census 2011 as against 933 by census 2001. This is the highest sex ratio recorded since census 1971 and a shade lower than 1961. The increasing sex ratio is a positive sign of women's welfare and the development process. The directive principles are vital part of Indian constitutional law. Some of the directive principles are 'women specific' but the experiences of the past 46 years of the national developmental efforts have not brought about these fruits among the women sections which were expected and required for the development of a country. Therefore, women still continue to suffer from disadvantages in society and remain excluded from programmes of development<sup>8</sup>.

**CONCLUSION**- In this study, an attempt has been made to examine the socio-economic factors, promoting the empowerment of rural women. The empowerment of women is an important necessity of the present day. The Central and State Governments of India have started various types of economic reforms, employment and development programmes to give more power to rural women. Empowerment is the phenomenon of nineties. Keeping this in view the Government of India celebrated the year 2001 as the women's empowerment year and this is defined as 'giving power to' 'creating power within' and 'enabling it in multi-dimensional process which enables individuals and groups to realize their full identity and powers in all spheres of life. This envisages greater access to knowledge and resources, greater autonomy in decision making for self, greater ability to plan one's life. To have greater control over circumstances and greater capacity to free one's self from traditions, customs, beliefs and practices. Most of the modern democracies and developing nations have a public agenda for the process of empowerment of women. It is a national commitment. It is the creating of series of world women's conferences held in the last two decades with the UN support.



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