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Research Article

A STUDY ON WOMEN SPECIFIC POLICIES FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The concept of empowerment has been the subject of much intellectual discourse and analysis for the purpose of this discussion, the conceptual frame work expounded by United Nations is a useful starting point (United Nations 2001). Empowerment is defined as the processes by which women take control and ownership of their lives through expansion of their choices. Thus, it is the process of acquiring the ability to make, strategic life choice in a context which this ability has previously been denied. The core elements of empowerment have been defined as agency, (the ability to define one's goals and act upon them) awareness of gendered power structures, self esteem and self-confident (Kabeer 2001). Empowerment can take place at a hierarchy of different levels – individual, household community and societal and is facilitated by providing encouraging factors (e.g. exposure to new activities, which can build capacities) and removing inhibition factors (e.g. Lack of resources and skills). Empowerment is a word with so much meaning handed into it. It means recognizing women's contributions and their knowledge. It means enhancing their self respect and self dignity. It means women controlling their resources; it means women becoming economically independent. It means being able to forget their tears, anxiety, their feelings of inadequacy, inferiority etc. Gender inequality is the main social issue in India in which women are getting back in the male dominated country. Women empowerment needs to take a high speed in this country to equalize the value of both genders. Uplifting of women in all means should be the utmost priority of the nation. Inequalities between men and women in the society generate lots of problems which become a big obstruction in the way to success of nation. It is the birth rights of the women to get equal value to the men in the society. To really bring empowerment, every woman needs to be aware about their rights from their own end. They need to take positive steps and involve in every activities instead of only involving in the household chores and family responsibilities. They should know about all the happenings in their surroundings and country women empowerment has the power to change many things in the society and country. They are much better than men to deal with certain problems in the society. They can better understand the disadvantages of the overpopulation for their family and country. They are fully able to handle the economic conditions of the family and country through proper family planning. Women are capable enough to handle any impulsive violence in comparison to the men whether in the family or society. Through women empowerment, it can be possible to change the male dominated country into the equally dominated country of rich economy. Empowering women may easily help to grow each and every member of the family without any extra effort. A woman is considered to be responsible for everything in the family so she can better solve all the problems from her own end. Empowerment of the women would automatically bring empowerment of everyone. Women empowerment is the better treatment of any big or small problems related to human being, economy or environment. In few last years, the advantages of the women empowerment are coming out in front of us. Women are being more conscious about their health, education, career, job and responsibilities towards family, society and country. They are taking part in the every area and showing their great interest in each field. Finally, after long years of hard struggle they are getting their rights to go ahead on the right track. Thus The Government of India initiated so many policies and programmes for empowerment of women,

In the recent years, various constitutional and legal rights have been implemented by the government of India in order to eliminate ill practices and gender discrimination against women. However, in order to solve such a big issue, the continuous effort of everyone including women is required. Modern society is being more aware about the women rights which results in the increasing number of several self-help groups, NGOs, etc working in this direction. Women are being more open minded and breaking the societal barriers in order to achieve their rights in all dimensions even after crimes are going side by side. Some of the acts passed by the Parliament are Equal Remuneration Act-1976, Dowry Prohibition Act-1961, Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act-1956, Medical termination of Pregnancy Act-1971, Maternity Benefit Act-1961, Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act-1987, Prohibition of Child Marriage Act-2006, Pre-Conception & Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act-1994, Sexual Harassment of Women at Work Place (Prevention, Protection and) Act-2013, etc in order to empower women with legal rights. In order to provide safety to women and reduce crime against women in India, government has passed another act Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Bill, 2015 (especially after Nirbhaya case when an accused juvenile was released). This act is the replacement earlier Indian juvenile delinquency law of 2000 (Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000) in order to reduce the juvenile age from 18 to 16 years in cases of heinous offenses. and The government of India initiated so many important policies. The National Policy for Women Empowerment (2001), National Nutrition Policy (1993), National Health Policy (2002) The National Environment Policy (2006), The National Policy on Education (1986), National Population Policy (2000). They are very important. Their contribution also appreciable. The Study is Purely Theoretical. The Study is based on secondary data sources. The necessary information about the Women Specific Policies in India and its various components are collected from Books, Journals, Internet Source or related topic. The Researcher study about the Women Specific Policies in India The Research Work includes I. Introduction II. Methodology III. Women Specific Policies in India. IV Conclusion. etc.

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INTRODUCTION

Empowerment is defined as the processes by which women take control and ownership of their lives through expansion of their choices. Thus, it is the process of acquiring the ability to make strategic life choices in the context where this ability has previously been defined. The core elements of empowerment have been defined as agency (the ability to define one's goals and act upon them), awareness of gendered power structures, self – esteem and self – confidence (Kabeer 2001). Empowerment can take place at a hierarchy of different levels

– individual, household, community and societal and is facilitated by providing encouraging factors (e.g., exposure to new activities, which can build capacities) and removing inhibiting factors (e.g., lack of resources and skills).

With the above brief conceptual understanding of empowerment, what strategies can be used effectively to empower women. In many developing countries (especially in South Asia). One strategy which has been found to be promising is participatory institution building in the self – help groups, often coupled with savings and micro credit loans. A

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closer look at the impact of these schemes on the empowerment of women reveals a mixed picture, with positive aspects and some limitation.

Mayoux's (2000) definition of empowerment relates more directly to power, as "a multidimensional and interlinked process of change in power relations" it consists of: one is "power within", enabling women to circulate their own aspirations and strategies for change; another one is "power to", enabling women to develop the necessary skills and access the necessary resources to achieve their aspirations; third one is "power with", enabling women to examine the collective interests, to organize, to achieve them and to link with other women and men's organization for change; and lastly "power over; changing the underlying inequalities in power and resources that constrain women's aspirations and their ability to achieve them. These power relations operate in different spheres of life (e.g., economic, social, political) at different levels (e.g., individual, household, community, market, institutional) etc. ISI researches identified six general areas or domains in which empowerment of women is believed to be taking place as a result of Grameen Bank, BRAC and other credit programmes; a sense of self and vision of future, mobility and visibility economic security, status and decision making power within the household, ability to interact effectively in the public sphere and participation in non-family groups. Thus, their concept of empowerment can be looked at in a behavioral sense as the ability to take effective action (Snow, 1990).

To "empower women" means to authorize power or increase the overall position, status and condition of women in every spheres of life. Empowerment of Women would result in better and more developed society. When women contribute equally along with men for the benefit of society, the world would surely become a better place to live. The government has started the Five year Plans in 1951. An in-depth analysis of the national level planning in India especially its five year plans gives us an idea about its approach in devising a plan. Over the years, approaches have shifted from one direction to another. From the early 50s till the mid-80s the approach of development planners has been "welfare oriented". Women and their upliftment have been treated as a separate issue. The Government in different plan documents enunciated the policies advocating women's issues. Also, the Government has tried to create an environment in which women's issues can be reflected and articulated not only by the Government but by Voluntary Agencies also and by the whole world so many policies have been brought forth. Some of the important policy-guiding documents include- The National Plan of Action for Women (NPA) adopted in 1976 became guiding document for the development of women till 1988 when a National Perspective Plan for Women was formulated (Government of India, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1991). The National Policy for Children (NPC) adopted in 1974 considers children as supreme assets of our country. It is the duty of the state to accept their nurture as its own responsibility and should take necessary action for their improvement. The National Expert Committee on Women Prisoners (1986) examined the condition of women prisoners in the criminal justice system and made necessary recommendations regarding legislative and prison reforms about the rehabilitation of

women prisoners. The National Perspective Plan for Women (NPP) (1988-2000) by a 14 member committee, headed by Mrs. Margaret *et al*, the then Minister of State for Women, Youth Affairs and Sports, is more or less a long term policy document advocating a holistic approach for the development of women. According to this plan, some of the objectives to be achieved by 2000 A.D. in regard to women's education are elimination of illiteracy, Universalisation of elementary education and minimization of the dropout rate in the age group 6- 14 years and stagnation to negligible proportions. The plan also emphasized of making education an effective means for women's equality by (a) addressing ourselves to the constraints that prevent women from participating in the educational process, (b) making necessary intervention in the content and processes of education to inculcate positive egalitarian attitude. Providing non-formal and part time courses to women and impetus to enroll them in various professional courses so as to increase their number in the medicine, engineering, and other fields substantially. And ultimately creating a new system of accountability, particularly in respect of the basic educational services, to the local community, inter alia. by active involvement of women.

Shramashakti- the Report of National Commission on Self Employed Women and Women in Informal Sector (1988) examines the entire of issues faced by the women in the unorganized sector and makes a number of recommendations for the betterment of women in the informal sector relating to employment, occupational hazards, legislative protection, training and skill development. Inter alia, the commission made recommendations on the education of women. The National Nutritional Policy (NNP), 1993 articulates nutritional considerations in all important policy instruments of Government and identifies short-term and long-term measures necessary to improve the nutritional status of women, children and country as a whole. The National Plan of Action for the Girl Child (NPA), 1991:2000 is an integrated multisectoral decadal Plan of Action, for ensuring survival, protection and development of children with a special gender sensitivity built for girl children and adolescent girls (Geeta Rama Swamy).

In addition to these women specific policies, there are many more women related policies like National Policy on Education (1986), which laid emphasis on women's participation in vocational, technical and professional education at different levels. The policy says that the national system of education will play a possible, interventionist role in the empowerment of women and that women's studies will be promoted as a part of various courses and educational institutions encouraged taking up active programmes to further improve on women's development. National Health Policy (NHP). 1983, advocates the welfare and development of women and children in the Country. The National Commission for Women's Act (NCW) 1990 advocates the safeguards of the rights and interests of women. The Parliament has also constituted a Committee on Empowerment of Women consisting of 30 members, of which, the Speaker from amongst members of Lok Sabha nominated 20 and the Chairman, Rajya Sabha, from amongst members of Rajya Sabha, nominates 10 members. The department has undertaken a collaborative project with Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) and Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) to orient functionaries working in the

field of women empowerment through SHGs using a distance education mode. A certificate course was launched on 16 August, 2000. At present, 2000 women, most of them from rural areas are receiving training at 150 Direct Receiving System (DRS) sites spread all over the country. At the instance of then Minister of State for Women and Child Development, during the budget speech of year 2000-2003 the Governor announced the constitution of a Task Force on Women and Children. The Task Force recommended observance of the year 2001 as the Year of Women's Empowerment. A National Policy for the Empowerment of Women has also been announced recently on March, 2001. The policy represents the first document brought by the Government stating its aims and objectives in relation to women's issues. It is the culmination of a process of consultation with NGOs, activists, academicians, representatives of State Governments and members of Parliament followed by consideration by a group of Ministers headed by Shri. K.C. Pant, Deputy Chairman, and Planning Commission.

A two-day National Conference of State Ministers and Secretaries in charge of Women and Child Development was held at Vigyan Bhavan on 26 and 27 April 2001. The State Governments and the Central Government agreed to make efforts to substantially step up investment in the social sector to remove severe malnutrition and reduce infant mortality. Further, the State Governments were advised to implement existing laws, rules and guidelines relating to the status of women and working conditions of women in the society. The Conference noted with concern the growing incidence of violence against women. The State governments were advised to set up District level committees for prevention of violence against women.

At the initiative of the Department, National Institute of Public Finance and Policy, conducted a study on Gender Budgeting, with the ultimate objective of preparing gender profiles and analysis of the national budgets every year. The development of satellite accounts to National Accounts system to quantify the care sector's contribution to the economy would also be covered under the study. The interim report of the study has been submitted in January 2001 for providing inputs for the Annual Economic Survey 2001. In order to take action on recommendations of the study a follow up workshop was conducted on 3-4 October, 2001 to discuss Gender Indicators and Gender Budgeting: Issues and Challenges, with a mix of stakeholders such as representatives from the Finance Ministry, Census, NSO, CSO, and gender study experts and activists.

Domestic Violence against Women (Prevention) Bill, 2000. The Bill drafted in consultation with NCW, has been circulated to the concerned Ministerial Departments and is awaiting approval of cabinet for introduction of the bill in the Parliament (A.K. Pandey, 2002). An integrated programme for women's empowerment, named Swayamsidha has been launched in September 2001. The programme will extend to 650 blocks by the end of the IX Plan. The long-term objective of the programme is all-round empowerment of women, especially social and economic, by ensuring their direct access and control over resources through a sustained process of mobilization and convergence of all ongoing sectoral programmes.

Policies

Gender Sub-Plan: Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India, in 1974 gave a new impetus towards gender perspectives on public expenditure. Under Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-97), for the first time in India, Planning Commission high-lighted for the need to ensure a definite flow of funds from the general developmental sectors to that of women. "The benefits of development from different sectors should not bypass women and special programmes on women should complement the general development programmes. The latter, in turn, should reflect greater gender sensitivity" as not much progress was made in terms of ensuring adequate flow of funds and benefits to women.

Women Component Plan: Ninth five Year Plan (1997-2002) adopted "Women Component Plan" as one of the major strategies of planning and budgeting and directed both the Central and State Governments to ensure that 'not less than 30 per cent of the funds/benefits are earmarked in all the women's related sectors'. It also directed that a special vigil be kept on the flow of the earmarked funds/benefits through an effective mechanism to ensure that the proposed strategy brings forth a holistic approach towards empowering women.

Scheduled Caste Plan/Scheduled Tribe Plan: Strategies of the Scheduled Caste Sub Plan for the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Tribal Sub- Plan for the Scheduled Tribes (STs) were introduced in the Sixth Plan and Fifth Plan for channelizing to these categories of people their due share of plan benefits and outlays. It was based on the conviction of the Planning Commission of India that neither 50 years of planning nor thousands of crores of rupees allocated for 'SC/ST Welfare' had any substantial impact on the lives of these groups. Greater attention was paid to ensure convergence of Ministries/Departments and pooling resource together for common target groups.

METHODOLOGY

The Study is Purely Theoretical. The Study is based on secondary data sources. The necessary information about the Women Specific Policies in India and its various components are collected from Books, Journals, Internet Source or related topic. The Researcher study about the Women Specific Policies in India.

The Women Specific Policies in India National Policy for Women Empowerment (2001)

The goal of the National Policy for Women Empowerment (2001) is to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women. Specifically, the objectives of this Policy include-

1. Creating an environment through positive economic and social policies for full development of women to enable them to realize their full potential
2. The de-jure and de-facto enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedom by women on equal basis with men in all spheres-political, economic, social, cultural and civil
3. Equal access to participation and decision making of women in social, political and economic life of the nation

4. Equal access to women to health care, quality education at all levels, career and vocational guidance, employment, equal remuneration, occupational health and safety, social security and public office etc.
5. Strengthening legal systems aimed at elimination of all forms of discrimination against women
6. Changing societal attitudes and community practices by active participation and involvement of both men and women.
7. Mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development process.
8. Elimination of discrimination and all forms of violence against women and the girl child; and
9. Building and strengthening partnerships with civil society, particularly women's organizations.

Therefore, National Policy for Empowerment of Women (2001) made concrete suggestions towards the introduction of a gender perspective in the budgeting process. Specifically, it promised.

- Developing "Gender Development Indices" (GDI), by networking with specialized agencies.
- Undertaking "Gender auditing and development of evaluation mechanisms"
- Undertaking the collection of "Gender-disaggregated data" by all primary data collecting agencies of the Central and State Governments as well as research and academic institutions in the Public and Private Sectors.

National Nutrition Policy (1993)

Till the end of the IV Plan, India's main emphasis was on the aggregate growth of the economy and reliance was placed on the percolation effects of growth. In the face of continuing poverty and malnutrition, an alternative strategy of development comprising a frontal attack on poverty, unemployment and malnutrition became a national priority from the beginning of the Fifth Plan. This shift in strategy has given rise to a number of interventions to increase the purchasing power of the poor, to improve the provision of basic services to the poor and to devise a security system through which the most vulnerable sections of the poor (viz. women and children) can be protected.

National Health Policy (2002)

A National Health Policy was last formulated in 1983, and since then there have been marked changes in the determinant factors relating to the health sector. Access to, and benefits from, the public health system have been very uneven between the better-endowed and the more vulnerable sections of society. It has been mentioned in the policy document that this is particularly true for women, children and the socially disadvantaged sections of society.

The National Environment Policy (2006)

The policy recognises that a diverse developing society such as ours provides numerous challenges in the economic, social, political, cultural, and environmental arenas. All of these coalesce in the dominant imperative of alleviation of mass poverty, reckoned in the multiple dimensions of livelihood security, health care, education, empowerment of the disadvantaged, and elimination of gender disparities. The

National Environment Policy seeks to extend the coverage, and fill in gaps that still exist, in light of present knowledge and accumulated experience. It does not displace, but builds on the earlier policies.

The National Policy on Education (1986)

The National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986, as modified in 1992, emphasises three aspects in relation to elementary education

- Universal access and enrolment,
- Universal retention of children up to 14 years of age, and
- A substantial improvement in the quality of education to enable all children to achieve essential levels of learning

National Population Policy (2000)

In the new millennium, nations are judged by the well-being of their peoples; by levels of health, nutrition and education; by the civil and political liberties enjoyed by their citizens; by the protection guaranteed to children and by provisions made for the vulnerable and the disadvantaged. Women in India constitute about 496 million (2001 census) representing 48 per cent of the total population. Such a high per cent of valuable human resource face disparities in access to and control over resources and constitute as one the most vulnerable and marginalized. The Population Policy 2000 recognised the plight of women and prescribed indicative suggestions to resolve these concerns.

Women's risk of premature death and disability is highest during their reproductive years. Maternal mortality is not merely a health disadvantage; it is a matter of social injustice

- Low social and economic status of girls and women limits their access to education, good nutrition, as well as money to pay for health care and family planning services
- Empowering women and enhancing their employment opportunities and participation of women in the paid work force
- Since 33 per cent of elected panchayat seats are reserved for women (73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments Act, 1992), representative committees of the panchayats (headed by an elected woman panchayat member) should be formed to promote a gender sensitive, multi-sectoral agenda for population stabilisation, that will "think, plan and act locally, and support nationally"
- Under-nutrition and micronutrient deficiency goes beyond mere food entitlements to woman's well-being. To the extent that women are over-represented among the poor, interventions for improving women's health and nutrition are critical for poverty reduction.

CONCLUSION

Women who were the most dormant segment of India population have now become active participants in all walks of life. Till now, they were only unit of the family organization. Now, women are becoming not only a significant unit of the society but also influencing the course of social change in society. Women are an important element of our Society. The modern society has started recognizing the individual identity of women. She is believed to have her aspiration, abilities and

qualities as a man does have and it is also agreed that she should have the opportunities to develop her faculties and to express them according to her own choice. Now a days she is facing so many Problems. The government has started so many programmes and policies for Empowerment of women. In this way woman empowerment policies role is in the society is highly appreciable.

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