



Deprivation of Women's Human Rights: Policies for Resolution

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ABSTRACT

Our ideas about differences between the sexes have deep historical roots. For generations these ideas were accepted uncritically. Sexual identity is a central part of human personality. Women have come to recognize themselves as a minority group similar in many ways to other minority groups. Though things are beginning to change to some extent, but even minor changes have far-reaching implications. However, people are becoming aware that sexual inequality is as unjust as racial, ethnic, caste and class inequality.

Keywords: Deprivation, Human Rights, Policies, Sexual Identity, Resolution, Women

I. INTRODUCTION

Sex roles are duties and obligations assigned on the basis of gender. There are different social expectations for males and females in countless social situations. These expectations pertain to both to what people are supposed to do and to what they are not supposed to do. Sex roles are assigned early in the socialization process. Children quickly learn how to act accordingly as per their specified roles. Most keep their sexual identity for life. Nevertheless, adult sex roles are complex, involving both personality and behavioral characteristics. Stereotypes about the differences between sexual identity are relics from the past. But while times have changed, the old sex roles have not. As a result of sex role stereotypes, women perceive themselves as minority group (Coleman, 1980: 260-61).

In the contemporary times, the notion of development has been at the centre of many political and academic divides. Welfare and progress are the two ends of the spectrum of the discourse on development and women. Women should no longer perceive growth as a means of ameliorating their lives but rather as a way through which they can take charge of their lives and commence momentous transformations. Naila Kabeer argues that much of the development discourse was based on a particular vision of society, economy and individual. Dissatisfied with the existing methods, a new way of looking at women in the context of development slowly began to take shape. This new approach came to be referred to as the Women In Development (WID). Ester Boserup in her pioneering work "Women's Role in Economic Development" laid down the foundation of the Women In Development (WID) approach when she argued that variations across sex roles in cultures were the



key variables for explaining differences in the status of women across the world. She also made strong recommendations for better designed education for women that would improve their competitiveness and productivity. This approach insisted that work that is unpaid – subsistence work and children – and work in the formal sector should be accounted. Development policy has experienced many changes from the 1970s to the contemporary times (Priyam et al, 2009: 122-124). Therefore, two standpoints have come forward so far in the current discourse on the modalities of gender equity: women's development and women's empowerment, and that in order.

Women's empowerment is a socio-political principle envisaged in relation to the wider agenda of women's rights. It is a progression that guides women to understand their full potential, their rights to have access to opportunities, resources and choices with the liberty of decision making both within and outside home. Empowerment would be attained only when development in the situations of women is accompanied by their capability to influence the direction of social change gained through equal opportunities in economic, social and political spheres of life (GoI, 2016: 1). Policies on Women's empowerment exist at the national, state and local (Panchayat) levels in many sectors, including health, education, economic opportunities, gender based violence and political participation. However there are significant gap between policy advancements and actual practice at the community level (Shettar, 2015: 13).

II.REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Naila Kabeer's (1989) interpretation: Kabeer interprets empowerment as a radial transformation of power relations between women and men 'so that women have greater power over their own lives and men have less power over women's lives'. Kabeer (1994) has provided another dynamic account of empowerment; she regards empowerment as a concept with theoretical and practical potential that merits being more than an empty slogan. She found it necessary to deconstruct the notion of power in order to consider empowerment. She further emphasized on the importance of such elements as self-respect, and the sense of agency. In addition, she believes that 'self esteem and feeling of being as active agent' are the fundamental principles of empowerment and she expends her thought by saying that 'empowerment should be considered aspect of perceiving oneself as an active agent capable of making decisions'. In her opinion, the empowerment process should have its effect in policy changes at the state and market institutions level that ultimately mould and limit women's live (Naz, 2006). John Friedman's (1992) view: Friedman's (1992: 32-34) theory of 'alternative development' is derived from the concept of empowerment that arises from indigenous, political and social cultures of society. According to Friedman, there are three kinds of power, social, political and psychological. Social power consists in processing knowledge, information and skills. Political power is a mechanism that influences policy changes both at the micro and macro level. It's the result of the power of voice and collective action. Finally, psychological power is expressed as an individual sense of potency demonstrated in self-confidence behavior, self-reliance and increased self-esteem. Friedman explains empowerment as social power, which can be



translated into political power (Friedman, 1992). According to Kate Young (1993), empowerment enables women ‘to take control of their own lives, set their own agenda, organize to help each other and make demands on the state for support and on the society itself for change’. As Young, empowerment is a complete change of the processes and structures responsible for women’s inferior status in the society. It is based on a ‘transformatory potential’ related to the ‘need to transform women’s position in such a way that the advancement will be sustained (Young, 1993). Regarding empowerment, Hashemi et el (1993) have clarified it in a study ‘Targeted Credit Programs and the Empowerment of Women in Rural Bangladesh’ and emphasized on women control over on her lives. They have identified six general domains in which, traditionally subordination of women is played out and in which empowerment of women is believed to be taking place. The six domains are: 1.Sense of self and vision of a future. 2. Mobility and visibility. 3. Ability to earn a living. 4. Decision-making power within the household. 5. Ability to interact effectively in the public sphere. 5. Participation in non- family groups (Hashemi et. el, 1993). In Chen and Mahmud’s (1995) clarification when they have conceptualized also empowerment as women’s advancement, ‘Empowerment is a process of positive change that improves women’s fallback position and bargaining power within a patriarchal structure, and identify different causal pathways of change; material, cognitive, perceptual and relational’ (Chen and Mahmud, 1995). On conclusion, empowerment is a process of awareness and capacity building leading to greater participation, to greater decision-making power and control, and to transformative action in order to bring about change.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Following were the main objectives on which purpose the present study was undertaken:-

- i) To highlight the transformational change in the life of the women from traditional ethos to empowerment.
- ii) To draw attention to special provisions and welfare schemes for women’s development in India.

IV. METHODOLOGY

The present research study is descriptive in nature as such the data used in the present study relies purely based on the secondary sources of data related according to the need of the study. Some of the secondary data analysis sources include the information that is available in the Planning Commission Reports, Census reports, Evaluation Report (GoI), books, journals, magazines, published as well as unpublished research articles and papers, newspapers etc which were used for conducting literature review. In this paper an attempt has been taken to analyze the development and empowerment of women in India from time to time.



V. DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

Historically, women have been regarded as constituting a weaker section. They were given unequal treatment on the basis of sex. They have been pictured and presented as ‘home makers’ who are good for the household chores only. This image of women has been changing with the passing time. The quest for equality is being pursued consistently. Due to the efforts of the UNO, the issue of empowerment of women became an international issue. The UN declared the Year 1975 as the International Women’s Year. Further, the UN Declaration of 1975 compelled the national governments to shift their emphasis on women’s programmes from welfare to development. The Declaration prescribed for the all-round development of women (Rao, 2015: 208).

The Constitution of India conveys a powerful mandate for equality and rights of women in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, and Duties and also provides for specific provisions for affirmative actions. Our country is also a signatory to a number of UN Conventions, primarily Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Beijing Platform for Action and Convention on Rights of the Child where the commitment of the nation to protect and empower its women and girls is quite pronounced. India has been working towards empowering her women ever since independence, and especially since the 1990s. The government and non-government sectors have both been pushing ahead with programmes aimed at imparting education to women, giving them better health care, providing them with means of livelihood opportunities to participate in the decision making process at home and in society. Special attention is being paid to improve the lot of the girl child giving her better chances of survival and opportunities, for living a life of fulfillment (Razi, 2012: 24).

In the context of above scenario, the process of poverty eradication and reducing gender discrimination started, the governments have been implementing various schemes and programmes providing ways and means towards women development and empowerment. The constitution of India has given special attention to the needs of women to enable them to exercise their rights on equal footing with men and participate in the national development (Kitchlu, 1991: 16). Thus, framing of the five year plans was the first major step taken in the direction of welfare state. Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India was the pioneer of five year plans who stressed on welfare of women, children and tribal's in our country (*ibid*: 329). The planning committee on status of women, in its report “towards equality” mentioned that “women are considered to be handicapped by social customs and social values and, therefore, social welfare services have specially endeavored to rehabilitate them (GoI, 1975: 356). The report defined three major areas in which they had paid special attention to women’s development. (a) Education, (b) Social welfare and (c) Health. A planned approach was provided on special thrust to the welfare of women which was adopted with the launching of the first five year plan in 1951.

The First Five Year Plan (1951–56) contemplated welfare measures for women. To implement welfare measures for the benefit of poor women, the Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB) was established to deal with



the problems of women (Department of Women and Child Development, 1986: 12). The Second Five Year Plan (1956 – 61) intimately concentrated on overall intensive agricultural development. However, the welfare approach to women's issues was determined recognizing women as workers. Further, protection against injuries at work, maternity benefits and crèches for their children was approved. It also suggested immediate implementation of the principle of equal pay for equal work and provision for training to enable women to compete for higher jobs. The Third Five Year Plan (1961 – 66) sincerely recognized the greater importance of education for women which has been a major welfare strategy for women. The emphasis on women education was continued during the Fourth Five Year Plan also (1969 – 1974). The basic policy was to promote women's welfare as the base of operation. The outlay on family planning was stepped up to reduce the birth rate through education. Immunization of pre-school children and supplemental feeding, expectant and nursing mothers was provisioned (*ibid*: 13). Need for training women in respect of income generating activities and their protection was stressed in the Fifth Five Year Plan. Further, the fifth plan also recommended a strategic programme of functional literacy to equip women with skills and knowledge so as to perform the functions as a good housewife. Under the health programmes, the primary objective was to provide minimum public health facilities integrated with family planning and nutrition for vulnerable groups, children, pregnant and lactating mothers also (Widge, 1992: 12). Consequently National Plan of Action (1976) providing the guidelines based on 'United Nations' World Plan of Action for women' came into force. The National Plan of Action identified areas of health, family planning, nutrition, education, employment, legislation and social welfare for formulating and implementing of action programmes for women and called for planned interventions to improve the conditions of women in India. For the women's welfare, the development bureau was setup in 1976 to act as a nodal point within the Government of India in order to co-ordinate policies and programmes and initiate measures for women's development (National Perspective Plan for Women, 1988-2000 AD: 13). The Sixth Five Year Plan stressed the need of economic independence, educational advance and access to health care and family planning as essential for women's development. So the strategy was threefold: of education, employment and health (Desai and Gupta, 1987: 333). The Seventh Five Year Plan sought to generate awareness among women about their rights and privileges (Chetana, 1992: 124). The long term objectives of developmental programmes in the Seventh plan were to raise women's economic and social status in order to bring them into the mainstream of national development and recognized the importance of women in contributing to the various socioeconomic, political and cultural activities. The seventh plan emphasized the need to open new avenues of work for women and perceive them as crucial resource for the development of the country. Another salient and crucial recognition was the need for organization of women workers and unionization (*ibid*: 14). Under this plan, a new scheme, "Women's Development Corporation" has been taken up for promoting employment generating activities by supporting schemes from women's group and women from poorer sections of society (GoI, 1985-90: 123). A women's development planning and monitoring cell was also set up for collection of data and monitoring of planning programmes (*ibid*: 127). A very significant step therein was to identify and promote



beneficiary oriented programmes which extended direct benefits to women. During the 7th Plan period, the Indian Parliament adopted a National Policy on Education, 1986 which included a chapter on Education for women's equality (Mukund, 1990: 204). The strategy in the Eighth Plan was to ensure that the benefits of development from different sectors did not bypass women and special programmes were implemented to complement the general programmes. The main objective of Eighth Plan was to extend the reach of services to women both qualitatively and quantitatively. Panchayati Raj institutions were involved in the designing and implementation of women's programmes. The approach of the Eighth Plan made a definite shift from development to empowerment of women. In order to meet the needs of women and children, there had been a progressive increase in the plan outlays over the time of eight five year plans. The outlay of Rs. 4 crores in the First Five Year Plan (1951 – 56) had gone up to Rs. 2000 Crores in the Eighth Five Year Plan (GoI, 1992: 291-92).

Women are facing problems like feminization of poverty, inadequate investment in social sectors, increasing violence against women and stereotyped portrayal of women in private and state media especially television. The rise of gender sensibility is one of the distinguishing features of our times. It has taken hold of human imagination like never before. For all practical purposes, the concern of gender equity has graduated to the level of a policy objective (Sharma, 2000: 19). Thus the 9th Five Year Plan is an attempt to bring in women's issues within the policymaking spheres. It came into effect from April 1, 1997. An approach paper had been developed by the Planning Commission and accepted by the National Development Council, which had become basis for developing Ninth Five Year Plan. In this approach paper focus was laid on the empowerment of women and people's participation in planning and implementation of strategies. In the planning process, empowerment at the outset, means choices for women to avail the opportunities of their choices. The supportive environment provided to women at all stages by the home, school, religion, government and work place (Anand, 1997: 4). A supportive environment was the one that was ensuring gender sensitivity. In all regional meetings, participants were asked for gender sensitization and training at all levels in public and private sectors. The Government has set up national resource units for women which acts as an apex body for promoting and incorporating gender perspectives in politics and programmes. To achieve the goals laid down therein, a number of initiatives have been launched. They included the enactment of legislation to ban sex determination tests so as to prevent female foeticide. Equally important is the fact that the state governments are also drawing up plans of action to cater the local requirements to ensure the holistic development of the girl child. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts of 1993 ensures the reservation of 1/3 of seats for women in all elected offices of local bodies, in rural and urban areas. In the rural areas, women have thus been brought to the centre-stage in the nation's efforts to strengthen democratic institutions (GoI, 1995: 27). The Tenth Plan aims at empowering women through translating the recently adopted National Policy for Empowerment of Women, 2001 into action and ensuring 'survival', protection and development of children through rights based approach (Pirzade and Parnade, 2005: 9-10). The Eleventh Plan Approach paper aimed to raise the sex ratio for the age group 0-6.



Further, this plan intended to ensure 33 percent of the direct and indirect beneficiaries of all government schemes to be women and girl children only. It also proposed that all children enjoy a safe childhood without any compulsion to work (Planningcommission.nic.in). Thus, in the light of above discussed plans for the welfare of women, gender equality trends has begun to dominate public discourse overshadowing vital concerns for other kinds of inequalities such as with respect to caste and class. This is proof of the agility of gender concern today in the contemporary era.

Government of India has also implemented a number of Centrally Sponsored Schemes throughout the country, including the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The objective of implementing all these schemes is to firstly to reduce poverty and economic insecurity, secondly to generate livelihood support and empowerment in order to improve the overall quality of life and human development index. For the socio-economic and protection-care of women also certain legislations and welfare schemes have been initiated. They cover welfare and support services, training for employment and income generation. They play supplementary and complementary role to the other general developmental programmes in the sectors of health, education and rural development. All these efforts are directed to ensure that women are empowered both economically and socially and stand at par with men in the national development.

A) Women/Girl related Acts

- The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956/1986
- The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961/1986
- The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986
- National Commission for Women Act, 1990
- The Infant Milk Substitute, Feeding Bottles and Infant Food Act, 1992/2003
- The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000/2006/2011
- The Commission for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005
- Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005
- Child Marriage Prohibition Act, 2006
- The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013
- Criminal Law Amendment Act, 2013 (New provisions enacted by MHA, penalizing acid attack, sexual harassment, voyeurism and stalking; increased penalty for gang-rape and causing serious injury to victim; Provision for rape expanded and pre-medical treatment to victims)

B) Schemes under Ministry for Women

- Working Women Hostel Scheme was introduced in 1972-73 that envisages provision of safe and affordable hostel accommodation to working, single working women, women working at places away



from their hometown and for women being trained for employment. This scheme provides provision of day care centre for children of the inmates of the hostel which is an important aspect of the scheme.

- Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP) Scheme was launched in 1986-87 to make significant impact on women by upgrading skills for employment on sustainable basis and income generation for marginalized and asset-less rural and urban women especially those in SC/ST households and families below poverty line. The key strategies include training for skill development, mobilizing women in viable groups, arranging for marketing linkages and access to credit. The scheme covers ten sectors of employment i.e. agriculture, animal husbandry, dairying, fisheries, handlooms, handicrafts, khadi and village industries, sericulture, waste land development and socio-forestry.
- Swadhar Scheme was launched in the year 2001-02 for the benefit of women to provide primary need of shelter, food, clothing and care to the marginalized women/girls living in difficult circumstance who are without any social and economic support, also to provide emotional support and counseling to such women, to arrange for specific clinical, legal and other support for women/girls in need and to provide for help line or other facilities to such women in distress.
- Comprehensive Scheme for Combating Trafficking – Ujjawala Scheme, launched on 4th December 2007 to combat trafficking. The scheme has five components such as Prevention, Rescue, Rehabilitation and Re-Integration of Victims of Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation.
- National Mission for Empowerment for Women (NMEW) was launched by the Government of India on International Women's Day in 2010 with the aim to strengthen overall process that promotes all-round development of women. It has a mandate to strengthen the inter-sector convergence; facilitate the process of coordinating all the women's welfare and socio-economic development programmes across ministries and departments.
- Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY) was introduced in October 2010 for contributing a better enabling environment by providing cash incentives to pregnant and nursing mothers. Under this scheme, maternity benefit @ Rs. 6,000 per beneficiary is being provided to pregnant and lactating mothers 19 years above for two live births.. the objective of this scheme is to improve the health and nutrition status of pregnant and lactating women and infants by promoting appropriate practices, care and service utilization during pregnancy, safe delivery and lactation; and encouraging the women to follow optimal IYCF practices including early and exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months.
- Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (RGSEAB) – SABLA Scheme was introduced in 2010-11 for holistic development of adolescent girls (11-18 years) making them self-reliant by improving their health and nutrition status and facilitating access to learning and public services through various interventions such as health, education, vocational training and counseling and guidance at AWC. Under nutrition girl (14-18 years) are provided supplementary nutrition and under



non-nutrition component, out of school AGs (11-18 years) are provided IFA Supplementation, health check-up and referral services, counseling and guidance on family welfare etc.

- Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BPPP) launched on 22 January 2015 which aims to address the issue of child sex ratio (CSR) through a national level strategy focusing for improving CSR and promote education to 100 gender critical districts through multi-sectoral action. The objective of this scheme is to prevent gender biased sex selective elimination, ensure survival and protection of the girl child and also to ensure education of the girl child (GoI: Dec, 2015).
- Lastly, on the economic front a number of income generating schemes were introduced. In addition, provisions were also made to sufficient proportion of women as beneficiaries in those developmental schemes like IRDP (Integrated Rural Developmental Programme), JRY (Jawahar Rozgar Yojana), TRYSEM (Training of Rural Youth and Self-Employment Scheme etc (Doshi and Jain: 1999).

VI. CONCLUSION

On concluding, there is no doubt that we are in the midst of a great revolution in the history of women for her empowerment. The evidence is everywhere; the voice of women is increasingly heard in Parliament, courts and in the streets. The Constitution of India gave women equal rights and the Government of India from time to time is establishing new provisions and legal enactments, also new welfare policies and schemes are being introduced for the women. Women have now not only found their place in work places but are also part to governance. In recent years, there have been explicit moves to increase women's political participation. Women have been given representation in the Panchayati Raj system as a sign of political empowerment. There are many elected representatives at the village council level. At the central and state levels too women are progressively making a difference. Today we have women Chief Minister in five states of country including the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The Women's Reservation Bill is slated to further strengthen the political participation. India has many women in decision making and leadership position who can actually be the role models for others.

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