

Women Empowerment Programme, Policies and Initiatives in Post-Independent India

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Abstract: *Women empowerment denotes free from all form of hegemony. This paper aims at how urban policy makers and administrators conceive the term women empowerment and how women empowerment has been addressed in our Five Years Plan and in various programmes and initiatives of the government. The provision of empowerment in the Indian constitution will also be addressed in this paper. From Independence to till today, how the women empowerment concept has been changed over time will also be addressed.*

Essentially, empowerment has four dimensions. These are cognitive empowerment, psychological empowerment, political empowerment and economic empowerment. Since independence, various initiatives have been taken to improve the socio economic and political status of women in urban India. In the beginning, the concept of development of women was concentrated on various welfare projects for the women and then after 1974, it was concentrated on the involvement of women in every sphere of life and after 1992, women empowerment initiatives have been concentrated on the self reliance. Empowerment is given importance, but the concept as conceived by the planner and administrator concentrated on partial empowerment and everything revolves around economic empowerment and in most of the time, empowerment related polices and programme exist in pen and paper. Now, it is the right time to implement empowerment related policies in real term and translated them into action to remove the hegemony.

Key Words: *Women Empowerment, Urban, Five Year Plan, Independence, policy.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Women empowerment is now a popular ward in development studies. So it is the demand of the time to discuss the concept in details. To me, empowerment denotes free from all forms of hegemony. To realize the real essence of the term we have to know at how urban policy makers and administrators conceive the term, women empowerment and how women empowerment has been addressed in our Five Years Plan and in various programmes and initiatives of the government. The concept of Women Empowerment has been changing over time. Essentially, empowerment has four dimensions. These are cognitive empowerment, psychological empowerment, political empowerment and economic empowerment. The programmes, policies and initiatives of women empowerment at the initials phase was welfare oriented and 25 years after independence the concept changed from welfare to development and 50 years after independence, the concept of Women empowerment replaced the term and concept women development.

2. METHODOLOGY: The present study is a qualitative study. The researcher has collected data from different secondary data and source like books, articles, government documents and websites.

3. OBJECTIVES:

- a. To find out the issues of women empowerment in Five Year Plan
- b. To identify the place of women in Indian Constitution
- c. To know the government policies and programme related to women empowerment
- d. To identify the gap in respect of women empowerment in polices and programmes

4. DISCUSSION:

Women Empowerment and Five Year Plans

Now, we will discuss how the concept of women empowerment has been conceptualized in Five Year Plan. In the First Five Year Plan (1952-56), the planning commission initiated some welfare oriented activities for the women. In this connection, Central Social Welfare Board was introduced in the year 1953 to do various welfare projects for the women. The objective of Central Social Welfare Board was introduced to assist voluntary organisation in conducting welfare programme for women. In the very next year, Central Social Welfare Board with the help of state governments introduced State Social Welfare Boards throughout the country (Konwar,2019).

In respect of women empowerment, the Second Five Year Plan(1956-61) emphasises on the organised effort of the women. In this plan, development of women was given priority. Following the approach of Community Development Programme (CDP), this plan insists that the women should be organised at the grass root level for the development of the women. So in this plan, we find that women development should be done by the women herself and the means of development of women is organised by themselves in organization.

Third Five Year Plan (1961-66) was concentrated on housing scheme and assistance on education and health services. In the Fourth Five Year Plan (1969-74), the importance was given on the education of women, maternal health and child health services. Emphasis was given on nutrition of women and child.

Up to the Fourth Five Year Plan, the concentration of urban planners, administrators and managers in respect of women empowerment was on welfare activity. From Fifth Five Year Plan(1974-79), the approaches of welfare was replaced by the concept of women's development. In this Five Year Plan, Women's Welfare and Development Bureau was established under the Ministry of Social Welfare in 1976 (Pangannavar, 2012). The function of the bureau was to co-ordinate women's development, policies, programmes and initiatives under one umbrella. In this plan period, another major initiative was taken in 1976. The National Plan of Action for Women was adopted and it was acted as a guideline for development of women.

As per the relation between women development and planning commission is concerned, this Sixth Five Year Plan(1980-85) is a milestone in respect of women empowerment. First time in the history of planning commission, the issues of women's development was incorporated in the Five Year Plan. We can say this is recognition of women's development. The 27 chapter of the planning documents was exclusively for women's development. The chapter was entitled Women and Development. From this Sixth Five Year Plan, family was recognised as a unit of development. In this Five Year Plan, multi disciplinary approach is recognised as best way for women development. In this plan phase, three major sectors in respect of women empowerment were identified and the sectors are health, education and employment. Development of Women and Children in Rural Area (DWCRA) was set up in 1982(Konkar,2019). The goal of this scheme was to provide self employment opportunity to the women belonging to Bellow Poverty Line (BPL) families.

In the Seventh Five Year Plan (1986-90), it was recognised that a holistic development of women and children is required. In this plan period, a minimum changes in the programme was initiated in various development sectors. The importance was given to the beneficiary oriented program for women. In this plan period, 27 beneficiary oriented schemes for women were initiated(Konwar,2019). In 1985, under the Ministry of Human Resource Development, the Department of Women and Child Development was set up. National Perspective Plan for Women(NPPW) was issued in 1988 by Government of India. This is mentioned here that NPPW replaced the National Plan of Action for Women which was established in 1976. From this time, issues of social justice and equity for all women were given priority. This perspective plan gave voice for reservation for women in various sectors,

We find a Paradigm shift in the Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-97). From the First Five Year Plan to Fourth Five Year Plan, The policy makers were concentrated on welfare of the woman and from the Fifth Five Year Plan, the concentration was on women development and from this Eighth Five Year Plan, the approaches to women empowerment was shifted from development to women empowerment. During this planning period, National Commission for Women (NCW) was established in 1992. The prime goal of National Commission for Women is to safeguard the women's right and interest. This plan focuses on human development and development of women was also an important area. From this time women are treated as equal partner and participant in development projects.

The Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002) emphasized on Women Component Plan. From this time, SHG was first time initiated by the government of India. Planners also emphasized to provide an enabling environment for women empowerment through various projects and initiatives. Legislative, institutional and financial supports were extended to the women for women empowerment. This is to mention here that empowerment of women is one of the objectives of Ninth Five Year Plan. Women should be incorporated in social change and development is the major realization of this Five Year Plan. Equal opportunity in the educational is also the outcome of this plan period. National Policy for Empowerment of Women was also adopted in this plan period.

In the Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007), the planning for empowering women was taken in accordance with the National Policy for Empowerment of Women. The main focus areas were social empowerment, economic environment and gender justice. In this Five Year Plan, gender was related with budget allocation and it was given importance to provide access equally to the women to the public resources.

In the Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012), women were considered as a main force of economic and social change. In this plan, importance was given so that government schemes benefits should directly or indirectly reach all sections of women of the society (Pangannavar, 2012). This plan also wishes to create a society free from women violence and ensure the participation of women in policy making. This plan also proposed to take initiatives to provide all sorts of facilities to the women and provide self employment for the women.

During the Twelfth Five Year (2012-2017), some emphasis was given on economic empowerment of women and involve women in government and include women in national policies and programmes.

After the planning commission, it was Niti Aayog, who are responsible for inclusion of women in planning process. Here we can discuss about an index on women introduced by Niti Aayog in 2020. The index was named Women's Index for Socio Economic (WISE) opportunity. From this index, we can realise the vision of women empowerment in Niti Aayog. This is an index through which gender equality and women's empowerment will be measured. WISE index reveals that we can measure the women empowerment through economic domains, political and decision making domains, human capital domains and social domains. So for empowerment of women, we should give priority in the above mentioned sections. The indicators of WISE were economic empowerment and financial inclusion, education, health, political participation and decision making and gender based violence. So for women empowerment, we should focus on economic empowerment of women and financial inclusion of women. We should give priority for women education and the health of the women. The political participation of women and decision making power of women need to be enhanced. The representation of women in policy making as well as in vote should be increased and gender based violence should be decreased.

Constitutional provision related to Women Empowerment:

- a) **Article 14 - Equality before law.**—The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India.
- b) **Article 15 -(1) Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.**— The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them
- c) **Article 15 (3)** Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any special provision for women and children.
- d) **Article 16 (2) Equality of opportunity in matters of public employment.**— No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, residence or any of them, be ineligible for, or discriminated against in respect of, any employment or office under the State.
- e) **Article 23 (1) Prohibition of traffic in human beings and forced labour.**—Traffic in human beings and begar and other similar forms of forced labour are prohibited and any contravention of this provision shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law.
- f) **Article 39 A. Equal justice and free legal aid.**—The State shall secure that the operation of the legal system promotes justice, on a basis of equal opportunity, and shall, in particular, provide free legal aid, by suitable legislation or schemes or in any other way, to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities.
- g) **Article 42 - Provision for just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief.**—The State shall make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief
- h) **Article 44 - Uniform civil code for the citizens.**—The State shall endeavour to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India.
- i) **Article 51 A(e) Fundamental duties**—It shall be the duty of every citizen of India— to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India transcending religious, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities; to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women.
- j) **Article 243-D Reservation of seats.**— (3) Not less than one-third (including the number

of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat shall be reserved for women and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat.

- k) **Article 243-D (4)** The offices of the Chairpersons in the Panchayats at the village or any other level shall be reserved for the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and women in such manner as the Legislature of a State may, by law, provide:
- l) **Article 243 T - Reservation of seats-** (3) Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Municipality shall be reserved for women and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Municipality.
- m) **Article 243 T (4)** The offices of Chairpersons in the Municipalities shall be reserved for the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and women in such manner as the Legislature of a State may, by law, provide.

(THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA As on May, 2022) at : <https://legislative.gov.in/constitution-of-india/>

Acts Related to Women Empowerment

1. Indian Penal Code 1860
2. Indian Divorce Act 1869.
3. Indian Evidence Act 1872.
4. Code of Criminal Procedure 1873
5. Legal Practitioners (Women) Act 1923.
6. Indian succession Act 1925.
7. Factories Act 1948
8. Employees' State Insurance Act 1948.
9. Minimum wages Act 1948
10. Plantation Labour Act 1951
11. Special Marriage Act 1954.
12. Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act 1956.
13. Immoral Traffic (prevention) Act 1956.
14. Maternity Benefit Act 1961.
15. Dowry Prohibition Act 1961
16. Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act 1971.
17. Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act 1976
18. Equal Remuneration Act 1976.
19. Indecent Representation of Women (prohibition) Act 1986
20. Commission of Sati (prevention) Act 1987
21. National Commission for Women Act 1990.
22. Pre-Conception and Pre-Natural Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act 1994.
23. Protection of women from Domestic Violence Act 2005
Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, Redressal) Act the 2013 ((Mandal,2018)

Scheme Related to Women Empowerment:

1. Short Stay Home Programme- Starts form 1969
2. Family Counseling Centers (FCCs) - Starts form 1983
3. Support to Training & Employment Programme for Women (STEP) - Starts form 1987
4. Swarna Jayanti Shahari Rojgar Yajona - Stars from 1997
5. Swadhar Scheme for Women in Difficult Circumstances - Starts form 2002
6. Gender Budgeting Scheme (GBS) - Starts form 2004
7. Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY)- Starts form 2010
8. Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (RGSEAG)-Sabla - Starts form 2011
9. Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana- National Urban Livelihoods Mission Starts Fron 2014
10. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme - Starts form 2015

11. One stop centre scheme - Starts form 2015
 12. Women Helpline Scheme. Starts from 2015
 13. Working Women Hostel (WWH) - Starts form 2017
 14. Scheme for Combating Trafficking - Starts form 2007
- (Mandal,2018)

5. FINDINGS:

- A. This study reveals that from the very beginning of independence, the country realized that the issues of women empowerment should be addressed.
- B. The present study explore that the Indian constitution provides various provision of women empowerment.
- C. The study reveals that from the very starting of Five Year Plan, women empowerment took place in the Plan documents.
- D. The study shows that a paradigm shifted in Five Year Plan from welfare to development to empowerment in respect of women empowerment.
- E. The study also shows there are various scheme for women empowerment has been introduced by government of India after independence.
- F. The study also highlights the laws related to women and somehow very much significance in women empowerment.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Planner, Administrators and Mangers should concentrate on involvement of women in planning process for women empowerment.
- Women Empowerment should addresses all section of women.
- Women Empowerment related projects should be designed by the women only.
- Health, Education and Poverty Eradication programmes which address women empowerment should touch not only the women belong to below poverty line families but also all women from all walks of life.
- Women reservation in decision making and law making houses should be ensured.
- Women development should be related with women self-esteem.
- Women Empowerment should be an inclusive process not a segmented activity.
- The existence women empowerment related policies and programmes should not confined in pen and paper, it needs to be implemented in its real spirit.
- The Right Based Approach should follow in every project and initiatives of women empowerment.

7. CONCLUSION:

If we look at the above discussion, we can find genesis of the concept of Women Empowerment. The essence of women empowerment exists from the very beginning at India. The presence of the concept prevail in the Constitution of India, The Five Year Plans ,in policies and in programme, The In the beginning, the concept of development of women was concentrated on various welfare projects for the women and then after 1974, it was concentrated on the involvement of women in every sphere of life and after 1992, women empowerment initiatives have been concentrated on the self reliance. Empowerment is given importance, but the concept as conceived by the planner and administrator concentrated on partial empowerment and everything revolves around economic empowerment and in most of the time, empowerment related polices and programme exist in pen and paper. Now, it is the right time to implement empowerment related policies in real term and translated them into action to remove the hegemony.

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