

## A Study of Socio and Economic Condition and Problem of Indian Women in Changing Economic Perspectives



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### Introduction

Today women have been addressing the question of development from a feminist perspective. They have raised important questions on issues like child care, reproductive rights, violence against women, family planning, transfer of technology and rural development and have given the concept of development a new meaning. If development leads only to an increase in production, then it tends to reinforce and exaggerate the imbalances and inequalities within and in between societies. Development has to be an integral process with economic, social and cultural aspects leading to the control of one's life situation. Here, this is the concept of empowerment.

The National Education Plan for women emphasizes that women can be empowered through collective reflection and decision making. The parameters of empowerment are:

- Building a positive self-image and self-confidence.
- Developing the ability to think critically.
- Building group cohesion and fostering decision making.
- Providing the wherewith all for economic independence.
- Ensuring equal participation in the process of bringing social change.
- Encouraging group action (National Perspective Plan for Women, 1988).

There has been a progressive increase in the plan outlays over the last six decades of planned development to meet the needs of women and children. The outlay of Rs. 4 crores in the First Plan (1951-1956) has increased to Rs. 7,810.42 crores in the Ninth Five Year Plan, and Rs. 13,780 crores in the Tenth Five Year Plan. There has been a shift from "welfare" oriented approach in the First Five Year Plan to "development" and "empowerment" of women in the consecutive Five Year Plan. The Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB) undertook a number of welfare measures through the voluntary sector. The programmes of women were implemented through the National Extension Service Programmes through Community Development Blocks. Second Five Year Plan (1956-1961) - efforts were geared to organize "Mahila Mandals" (women's groups) at grass-root levels to ensure the better implementation of welfare schemes. Third, Fourth, Fifth and other interim Plans (1961-1974) gave

high priority to women's education. Measures to improve maternal and child health services, and supplementary feeding for children, nursing and expectant mothers were also introduced. It was the Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-1985), which adopted a multidisciplinary approach with a three pronged thrust on health, education and employment of women. In the Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-1990), the Developmental Programmes for women was continued, with the objective of raising their economic and social status to bring them in to the main stream of national development. A very Programmes" which extended direct benefits to women.

It was the Eighth five Year Plan (1992-1997), which brought a shift from 'development' to 'empowerment'. Special programmes were implemented to complement the general development programmes. The flow of benefits to women in the three core sectors of education, health and employment monitored vigorously. Women were enabled to function as equal partners and participants in the developmental process with reservation in the membership of local bodies. Some major initiatives undertaken during the Eight plan for women included, setting up of the National Commission for women to work towards safeguarding the rights and interest of women, setting up of Rashtriya Mahila Kosh to meet the micro credit needs of poor and asset less women. Other initiatives included the adoption of National Nutrition Policy in conformity with the Constitutional commitment to ensure adequate nutritional standard of the people, launching of the Mahila Samridhi Yojana to promote thrift activities amongst women and the launching of Indira Mahila Yojana basically for awareness generation and the economic empowerment through self-help groups.

The concept of empowerment of women is the product of the post 1975 women's movement. However, despite its frequent use in policy documents, and by women activists and women's studies, there is a considerable confusion over its meaning and interpretation. The dictionary defines the word, 'to give power to person/group to give them capacity to perform some-physical or mental activity, to delegate authority, to give legal rights. This definition does not seem to provide the subtle nuances, throbbing dynamism and the features inherent in the word 'empowerment' as it is used in the current women's movement. Similarly, the definition also fails to reveal the extreme nature of prevailing inequalities between sexes, the powerlessness of women, and the oppressive burden of inherited social system on grass-root women for the removal of which the women's movement prescribes and uses the term "empowerment". Empowerment is a multi-faceted, multidimensional and multi-layered concept which can be described as the feeling that activates the psychological energy to accomplish one's goals.

According to the Government of India Report, Empowerment, means moving from a position of enforced powerlessness to one of power. The possibility of empowerment depends. Decision-making in the field of financial, child related and social issues, access to or control over resources and freedom of movement are the three most vital indicators of women empowerment. There are various impediments to development. This paper focuses on three significant Gs. There are various attitudes towards. Girl child, Gender violence and Globalization.

Women's status in any society is an indicator of its development and progress. Indian culture idolizes boys and dreads the birth of girls. She is breast fed for a shorter time and taken out of school to take care of siblings. The cycle of deprivation and disadvantage is further compounded by early marriage, premature pregnancies and

attended risks. The girl child must be empowered to enter into the main stream of economic and social activity. Today we have realized that to improve the position of women one needs to look at the girl-child who is a woman of tomorrow. Only when we visualize a female child with a concern for human dignity then only we will have a strong and empowered women. The ultimate goal is to have an active, healthy and confident female child unfettered by socio-cultural patterns and traditional roles with equal access to knowledge information and opportunities.

The Indian culture, which idolizes sons and dreads the birth of a daughter, to be born female come perilously close to being born less than human. The Girl's discrimination begins even before birth. Our statistics clearly point out some facts that abortion of female fetuses is on rise. The ratio of female to male is declining. There is reluctance to seek medical aid for ailing daughters. Girls are breast fed for a shorter duration than boys and girls are easily withdrawn from school to look after their young siblings. Regardless of the economic background the status of the female child has never been the same as that of the male at any level.

Gender roles are conceived, taught and enacted in a complex set of relationships within family and society at large. Needless to say, the Media reinforces the same stereotyped gender roles. The girl child grows up with a low self-esteem. She grows up with a notion of temporary membership in her natal home to be disposed off with assets and dowry. A tradition saying sums it up thus, a daughter is like ghee (clarified butter)-both are good upto a point. If you do not dispose them off they start stinking her productive role is to continue the household drudgery added to which is her reproductive role.

Even as a preproductive machine, women's life is worth only if she produces a son. Tradition and scriptures reinforce social biases against the girl thus, "The birth of a girl grant it elsewhere, here grant us a son" Sophisticated medical technology now strengthens societal biases against girls in the form of prenatal sex determination tests which have resulted in female feticides. Education, global exposure and affluence, all of which translates into easier access to expensive technology have made it easier to select the sex of the child. If there is a choice it is always for the male child. Despite a stringent law, doctors and patients manage to evade it. Hence, there has been a decline in female ratio.

The implementation of laws is just one facet of the war against female feticide. However, in India there is a big gap between the law on paper and its implementation and of every law there are hundreds of ways in which it is bypassed. Meanwhile, in a society that ideologues the boy being born a female is to be born less than human. All across India the birth of a son is announced triumphantly with the beat of a brass thali (plate) and the distribution of sweets and money while that of a girl is met with silence and dejection, if not condolence. In North India dowries are much bigger and dowry deaths more common. In many states marrying daughter can reduce parents to penury.

The Girl child cannot be looked in isolation. Her status is a product of general societal attitudes towards women at large. Women face higher risks of malnutrition, disease, disability, retardation of growth and development. They have no access of control over resources. Their work is invisible and hence undervalued. Their disabilities are powerfully reinforced through our culture. media, education and socialization process. A look at some of the proverbs and saying in local languages throughout India sums up these attitudes. A popular Telugu saying

from Andhra is, "Bringing up a daughter is like watering a plant in another's courtyard". Another states, "If you tell lies you will get a female child" Another states, "It is better to be born as a tree in a jungle than to be born a girl". "It is easier to perform an Asvamedha Yagya than to perform a daughter's wedding." As a result of the cultural milieu women's self-image as well as societies image of her is negative. She has no value as an individual, who contributes to the nation's development. In this social context it is not surprising that the girl child like any other women has no value and her work is invisible and unrecognized.

The cycle of deprivation and disadvantage is further compounded by early marriage, premature pregnancies and its attendant risks. The dedication of girls as Devadasis, Jogins and Basavis in some regions of Andhra is singularly reprehensible violation of human rights as it makes young and innocent girls available for sexual abuse in the name of religion. The young Jogin does not marry and becomes the common property of the village and an object of sexual exploitation. According to a recent district wise survey there are 16,287 Devadasis, Jogins, Basavis in Andhra Pradesh, 80% belong to the Schedule Castes.

Girl Children are entitled to have equal access of all resources of society.. This entitlement is frequently denied. Discrimination that begins at the girl's birth has a cumulative effect on inequality, producing despair and powerlessness. The beginnings must be made with the girl child herself. Unless the girl internalizes the concept and experience of equity, as an adult she may tolerate and even perpetuate gender disparity. At present the girl child is denied the very acquisition of an identity. The right to personhood is a primary right and must be extended to the girl child. Also her rights to dignity, health, education are not visibly supported by the family or society. There must be concrete action on this count.

### **Conclusion**

Hence we see that there is no lack of initiative or policy decisions as far as women are concerned. Yet the reality is something very different and we have still not seen the empowerment of women in the real sense and women continue to bear the brunt of patriarchy. There are several constraints that check the process of women empowerment in India. Social norms and family structure in the developing countries like India manifest and perpetuate the subordinate status of women. One of the norms is to give preference to son over the birth of a girl child which is present in almost all societies and communities. The society is more biased in favor of male child in respect of education, nutrition and other opportunities. The root cause of this type of attitude lies in the belief that male child inherits the clan in India with an exception of Meghalaya. Women often internalize the traditional concept of their role as natural thus inflicting an injustice upon them. Poverty is the reality of life for the vast majority women in India. It is another factor that poses challenge in realizing women's empowerment.

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