

# Women Empowerment through Government's Programmes: Challenges in the Era of Globalization

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## ABSTRACT

*“Disparities in the proportion of men and women at different levels of responsibility are important indicators of the unequal employment status and opportunity for men and women which are the direct result of a factors, i.e. the educational system, training, job-orientation and culture conditioning.” (India, 1974) There is a significance growth in the number of women entering the field of science. Technology and business. women have proven themselves as capable leaders in every field. Concern over Women's Empowerment is the most important key role of any developing countries. Planning commission of India has always focused on women's issues as per the perception of their members on the status of women in the economy.”*

**Key words:** Globalization, rights , constitution, equality and women.

Globalization has presented new challenges for the realization of the goal of women's equality, the gender impact of which has not been systematically evaluated fully. Strategies will be designed to enhance the capacity of women and empower them to meet the negative social and economic impacts, which may flow from the globalization process. Empowerment of women involves many things – economic opportunity. Social equality and personal rights. Women are deprived of these human rights, often as a matter of tradition. In rural areas, women are generally not perceived to have any meaningful income generation capacity, and hence, they are relegated mainly to household duties and cheap labor. Without the power to work and earn a good income, their voices are silenced. Even in matters of sex and child bearing, women often do not have the ability to oppose the wishes of their men. Within the framework of a democratic Polity, our laws, development policies, plans and programmes have aimed at women's advancement in different spheres. From the Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-78) onwards has been a marked shift in the approach to women's issues from welfare to development. In recent years, the empowerment of women has been recognized as the central issue determining the status of women. The National Commission for Women was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1990 to safeguard the rights and legal entitlements of women. The 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Amendments (1993) to the Constitution of India have provided for reservation of sets in the local bodies of Panchayats and Municipalities for women, laying a strong foundation for their participation in decision making at the local levels.

Sonia Gandhi, Chairperson of India's governing party, addressed nearly 5,000 women at a Women's Empowerment Conference in Kashmir. In her speech, Gandhi stated that education and opportunity were the keys to women's empowerment and praised the women of Kashmir as a symbol of residence against terror. Gandhi said, “The women have always bore the brunt of any disaster, whether natural, social or political”.

The principal of gender equality is enshrined in the India Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles. The Constitution not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women. Women's rights and issues have always been a subject of serious concern of academicians, intelligentsia and policy makers. Form pastoral society to contemporary information and global society, the role of women has changed drastically. The role of a

typical “Grihani” (house wife) who catered to all the requirements of the households including the rearing and upbringing of children in various sub roles of daughter, daughter-in-law, wife, mother, aunt etc. has been played quite efficiently. The continuity if changes in socio-economic and psycho-cultural aspects of human living has influenced the role of women. With the process of industrialization. Modernization and Globalization showing its deep impact on the human society all over the world, the role and responsibilities of women has attained new definition and perspective. Further this has also led to addition of responsibilities and widened the role of women who also shares the financial responsibilities.

What is most important is the way women view themselves and their capabilities. **Nehru reminded women “.....that no people, no group, no community, no country, has ever got rid of its disabilities by the generosity of the oppressor ..... the women of India will not attain their full rights by the mere generosity of the men of India. They will have to fight for them .”**Indian women have paid terribly for our insensitivity, they have also extracted a heavy toll form a society which has not yet learnt to live with all aspect of womanhood. In that respect theirs is not, what Rollo May would call, a case of “authentic innocence” but that of “pseudo innocence”. This innocence leads one to participate in a structurally violent system because of the unawareness of one’s power to intervene in the real world and because of the indirect psycho-social benefits of being a victim. (Nandy, 1976)

India has pledged itself to gender equality through several Articles of the Constitution:

Article 14 - Men and women to have equal rights and opportunities in the political, economic and social spheres.

Article 15(1) - Prohibits discrimination against any citizen on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex etc.

Article 15(3) – Special provision enabling the state to make affirmative discriminations in favour of women.

Article 16 - Equality of opportunities in matter of public appointments for all citizens.

Article 39(a) – The state shall direct its policy towards securing all citizens men and women, equally, the right to means of livelihood.

Article 39 (b) - Equal pay for equal work for both men and women

Article 42 – The state to make provision for ensuring just and humans

Women are often considered as better economic standards of capital than men. Research has shown that women are more likely to reinvest back into capital than are men. Equality and control over their own lives which contributing directly to their children’s development and there by indirectly to their nation’s income growth. Women entrepreneur may be defined as the women or a group of women, who initiate, organize and operate a business enterprise. Government of India has defined women entrepreneur to those who owned at least 51% share in the capital of the enterprises and at least 51% employment generated by the enterprises should be for women only. With regard to ownership, an SSI or a SME managed by one or more women entrepreneurs in proprietary concern or in which she/they individually or jointly have a share capital of not less than 51% as partners/share holders/Directors of private limited company /members of co-operative society is called a ‘Women enterprise’. In the recent years the entrepreneurship has gained wide popularity around the globe. Women are becoming entrepreneurs at a more than proportionate rate compared to men. SMEs sector in India is a very large in nature consisting of approximately 3.57 million units, which produced more than 8000 products. The share of the sector in overall export of the country is 34% and in direct export it is 45%. The sector generates 19.96 million employment of the country. The participation of women in SMEs sector can be identified in three different roles. Some women are the owners of enterprise. Some are the managers of enterprises and some are the employees. Women entrepreneur in the earlier years after independence were confined to entrepreneurship in traditional areas like food, fruits, vegetables, pickles, papad tailoring etc. however, latter in 1980s and subsequently women entrepreneurs have branched out to several non-traditional areas like engineering, beauty- parlors, jewellery, handicraft, electrical, electronics, chemical and other manufacturing. Women have expanded from the traditional three Ps- Pickle, Powder and Papad to modern three Es- Engineering, Electrical and Electronics.

There is a significance growth in the number of women entering the field of science. Technology and Business. Women have proven themselves as capable leaders in every field. Concern over Women’s Empowerment

is the most important key role of any developing country. Planning commission of India has always focused on women's issues as per the perception of their members on the status of women in the economy. The Government has also committed the following provisions to ensure women's rights and women empowerment. Some of the commitments are:

- To increase the Investment in Education to 6% of the GDP with major focus on Women and the girl child.
- Universalization of Mother and Child Care Programme to reach out to every corner of the country.
- Appointment of Commissioner for Women's Right.
- National Level Mechanism for Platform for Action.

Women right and women empowerment are most of the time looked from an urban perspective whereby the situation relatively appears to be in favor of women when compared to their rural counterparts. In 1992 the government of India passed the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendments that initiated a process of decentralization and enhanced democratic governance at the local level. The amendments gave constitutional recognition to executive and administrative councils of villages, towns and cities. One striking feature of the amendments is that at least 33% of seats at the local government level are reserved for women. This grant will support a workshop entitled, "Women's Empowerment in the Context of Local Government in India – An Assessment," to be held in New Delhi, 20-21 October 2003. The objective of the workshop is to better understand the concept of women's empowerment (particularly marginalized rural women who are poor and of low caste) in terms of their political participation in relation to the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> amendments.

Today women are playing an important role in rural development after getting elected from village panchayat to district level organizations. Although this is new field for women and they are facing still resistance from men in the male dominated society. But women have proved themselves to be a better and more sensitive administrator in a short span of time. Now political parties are compelled to offer more and more respectable posts to women. There are three aspects of rural development-economic, social and political which are dependent on each other. Women contribute the most towards economic development. In rural area women perform almost double work as compared to men. Whereas a man puts in ten hours of work every day and in same time a women labours for sixteen hours every day. But since her contribution to direct income is less, it does not receive the desired importance which she deserves. Today thousand of question are being raised regarding the condition of women in panchayat, but this opinion is absolutely wrong that women are not ready to take up any responsibility or they are incapable of taking decision the fact is that till now women have been deprived of their and there have been attempts to create in their path of progress if they wish to excel in social-political field. The MahilaSamakhya Scheme was started in 1989 to translate the goals enhanced in the NPE into a concrete programme for the education and empowerment of women in rural areas particularly those from socially and economically marginalized groups. In addition to women-specific and women-related policies enunciated in various plan documents, the government has also been creating an enabling policy environment in which women's concerns can be reflected, articulated and redressed by the government, the voluntary agencies and the corporate sector. As part of this effort, many policy instruments have been brought forth, over the years, leading to **Action Plans and Programmes in several spheres.**

National Policy for the empowerment of women (2001): The goal of the National Policy for the empowerment of women is to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women. Some of the specific objectives of this policy are: a) Creating an environment through positive economic and social policies for full development of women to enable them to realize their full potential, b) Equal access to health care, quality education at all levels, career and vocational guidance etc, c) Elimination of discrimination and all forms of violence against women and girl child.

**Manmohan Singh** Affirmed his commitment to women's empowerment, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said the government is moving towards providing one-third reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and state

legislatures. Inaugurating the women's leadership summit here, he said that the government is committed to social, economic and political empowerment of women, whatever effort and resources the task might take. The Women's Reservation Bill providing for 33 per cent reservation of seats for women in Lok Sabha and state assemblies. Observing that reservation for women in local bodies has revolutionized governance at the grass-roots level, the PM said, "We hope to give this movement of political participation of women further fillip by increasing the number of seats reserved in Panchayats and city and town governments to 50 per cent". "More significantly we are moving towards providing one-third reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and state legislatures", he added. He decried the low female literacy rate as well as the maternal mortality rate besides the exceptionally low sex-ratio. (Manmohan Singh ET 2010)

Against the backdrop of rising crimes against women, Congress President Sonia Gandhi said making laws for their empowerment is not enough as they will have to be implemented properly on ground. "We realize that by just making laws and announcing policies would not be enough to empower women. Along with it, policies and laws will have to be implemented properly on ground," she said while addressing a gathering at the launch of the Ahimsa Messenger scheme, under which volunteers will be created to spread awareness on women's issues. "We should end all acts of violence against women and initiate all steps so that women feel safe and become fearless, empowered and they are given the respect," Gandhi said. Gandhi said it is the collective responsibility of all women to initiate this process of giving equal status to women right from their homes. (Sonia Gandhi Aug 31, 2013 in ET)

### **11<sup>th</sup> five year plan for Empowerment of Women:**

Empowerment of women involves many things-economic opportunity, social equality and personal rights. Women are deprived of these human rights, often as a matter of tradition. In rural areas, women are generally not perceived to have any meaningful income generation capacity, and hence, they are relegated mainly to household duties and cheap labor. Without the power to work and earn a good income, their voices are silenced. Even in matters of sex and child bearing, women often do not have the ability to oppose the wishes of their men. Within the framework of a democratic polity, our laws, development policies, Plans and programmes have aimed at women's advancement in different spheres.

Empowerment of Women as agents of socio-economic change and development became one of the nine specific objectives of the **Ninth Plan** (1997-2002). Empowerment of Women as Agents of Social change and Development was continued in the **Tenth Plan**. Towards this a Sector specific 3 old Strategy was adopted based on the National Policy for Empowerment of Women (2001). In the context of the preparations of the **11<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (2007-2012)**, the planning commission constituted a Steering Committee on the Empowerment of Women and Development of Children under the Chairmanship of Dr. Syeda Hameed, Member, Planning Commission with the following Terms of reference. **11<sup>th</sup> Plan Approach for Empowerment of Women:** The National Policy on Women 2010, which informed the 10<sup>th</sup> five-year plan, articulated a series of goals towards women's empowerment. The objectives of this Policy include (i) Creating an environment through positive economic and social policies for development of women to enable them to realize their full potential (ii) The de-jure and de-facto enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by women on equal basis with men in all spheres- political, for development of women to enable them to realize their full potential (ii) The de-jure and de-facto enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by women on equal basis with men in all spheres political, economic, social, cultural and civil (iii) Equal access to participation and decision making of women in social, political and economic life of the nation (iv) 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. (v) Strengthening legal systems aimed at elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (vi) Changing societal attitudes and community practices by active participation and involvement of both men and women. (vii) Mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development process. (viii) Elimination of discrimination and all forms of violence against women and the girl child; and (ix) Building and strengthening partnerships with civil society, particularly women's organizations.



Women's equality in power sharing and active participation in decision making, including decision making in political process at all levels will be ensured for the achievement of the goals of empowerment. All measures will be taken to guarantee women equal access to and full participation in decision making bodies at every level, including the legislative, executive, judicial, corporate, statutory, bodies, as also the advisory Commissions, Committees, Boards, Trusts etc. Affirmative action such as reservations/quotas, including in higher legislative bodies, will be considered whenever necessary on a time bound basis. Women-friendly personnel policies will also be drawn up to encourage women to participate effectively in the development process. Policies, programmes and systems will be established to ensure mainstreaming of women's perspectives in all development processes, as catalysts, participants and recipients. Wherever there are gaps in policies and programmes, women specific interventions would be undertaken to bridge these. Coordinating and monitoring mechanisms will also be devised to assess from time to time the progress of such mainstreaming mechanisms. Women's issues and concerns as a result will specially be addressed and reflected in all concerned laws, sectoral policies, plans and programmes of action.

The emergence of new trend has drastically changed the domain of women politics and relationship in the during, last five decades. The increasing involvement of women in the mainstream politics and the impact of feminist movement all over the world led to an entirely different approach towards the role of women in politics. The government has taken several legal and administrative measures to provide more educational and job opportunities for women. During this period, women became socially and politically aware due to the spread of education and modernization and started asserting their rights including the political right. In this changed scenario, emerged a number of feminist organizations which resorted to imitational measures to claim for their rightful place in the socio-economic and political spheres.

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