

The Government Policies Towards The Socio-Economic Development Of Women In Tamil Nadu 1967-1977

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Abstract

Independent India ensures equality for women in the preamble of the Constitution. Article 14 which provides for equality before law may be considered important for the establishment of the welfare state. Article 38 of Constitution specifically authorizes the State to work for establishing a welfare state. It states that the State shall strive to promote the welfare of the people by securing and protecting effectively as it may, a social order in which justice, social economic and political shall prevail in all the institutions of national life. Based on the principles enshrined in the Constitution several welfare programmes have been initiated by the Government from time to time. The Government policies towards socio-economic development leads the creation of new department accordingly, In September 1985, the Department of Women and Child Development under the Ministry of Human Resource Development was established in India and emphasize was laid on establishing a 'Women's Bureau', which function as a coordination or planning unit and an advocate of women's programmes and needs.

Keywords: Women, Government Policies, Social Welfare, Women Developments Programmes, Socio-Economic, Indian Constitution, Tamil Nadu.

Introduction

Tamil Nadu a southern state of India more than 30 million women, had significant developments in the position of women. In ancient times women, in general, enjoyed their Identity and dignity. They served as Homemakers, literary and spiritual personalities and rulers as well. They also performed as good advisers for their spouse-kings. Till the thirteenth century, there was no caste discrimination. Women in Tamil Nadu were socially weak, economically dependent and politically powerless till the end of the 19th century. The independent India ensures equality for women in the preamble of the Constitution.¹ Article 14 which provides for equality before law may be considered important for the establishment of the welfare state. Article 38 of Constitution specifically authorizes the State

to work for establishing a welfare state. It states that the State shall strive to promote the welfare of the people by securing and protecting effectively as it may, a social order in which justice, social economic and political shall prevail in all the institutions of national life.² Based on the principles enshrined in the Constitution several welfare programmes have been initiated by the Government from time to time. Traditionally the area of social welfare was concerned with the protective function of the State. With the emergence of planning several concrete steps have been taken for the welfare of the masses.³ Since the Constitutional guarantee of sexes has been ensured, various laws have been passed to improve the position of women. Most of the social evils prevailed in North India against womenfolk were absent in Tamil Nadu.⁴ Now women had improved their status.

Social welfare programmes for the weaker and vulnerable section of the society form an integral part of India's development plans. As early as the first Five-year plan, it was mentioned that the objective of social welfare is the attainment of social health. This implies the realization of such objectives as adequate living standard, the assurance of social justice, opportunities for cultural development through individual and group self-expression and readjustment harmony.⁵ The First Five Year Plan (1951-1956) envisaged welfare measures for women, to spearhead welfare measures of the Community Development Programme was launched in 1952. It was a socio-economic Programmes for rural reconstruction. Development Blocks were established for the effective implementation of these programmes.⁶

The Second Five Year Plan (1956-61) recognized the need for the organization of women as workers. It stated that women should be protected against injurious work, should receive maternity benefits and crèches for children. It recommended the provision of training to enable women to compete for higher jobs.⁷ The Third Five Year Plan (1961-66) emphasized female education as a major welfare strategy. It emphasized family education as a measure of welfare strategy through a condensed course of education coupled with maternal and child welfare service and socio-economic programmes for women.⁸ The basic policy of the Fourth Five Year Plan (1969-74) was to promote women's welfare with family as the base of operation. Large share of resources were devoted to family planning. High priority was accorded to the immunization programme of mothers and children.⁹

Welfare administration can be defined as the process of transforming social policy into social service, it is the process of translating policies into an action programme. Welfare

administration refers to the process of applying professional standards, competence and resources. It aimed at the successful implementation of the target programmes of social welfare through various official and voluntary social agencies. A properly trained and motivated bureaucracy appears as an essential pre-requisite for the successful implementation of the welfare programme.¹⁰ As women's welfare forms an integral part of the social service activities of a modern welfare state, the then Madras Government established a separate Women's Welfare Department in 1947. It promotes, the welfare of women in the country.¹¹

Socio-Economic Development Programmes in Tamil Nadu

In spite of the enactment of many social legislations women lagged behind men in different spheres. To improve their socio-economic status in the society both the Central and State Government introduced some progressive measures. Women social development programmes were contributed to the social empowerment in India. Tamil Nadu stands first in implementing various welfare programmes for the overall development of women and children. Since women and children are significant contributors for the growing economy, the State has been implementing a variety of welfare programmes namely granting of financial assistance to children and women in difficult circumstances to pursue education, marriage and widow remarriage and also providing healthy and protective environment of them.¹²

The Government of Tamil Nadu implemented various schemes and innovative programmes to empower women, socially, economically and politically. Most of these programmes were in the field of training, employment, income generation and supportive services. All these were aimed at making women independent and self-reliant.

The Government planned to help the woman primarily to build a perfect home by educating her about the needs of a happy home and her importance in society. It aims at the promotion of the welfare of families in all aspects through educational, preventive and protective services to raise the standard of living.¹³ One of the important activities of the Women's Welfare Department was the house to house visits. House visits helped in winning the confidence of women. Women social workers visited the houses in selected localities and surveyed the family conditions.¹⁴

In 1967, Government of Tamil Nadu changed the name of Madhar Sangams as Mahalir Mantrams.¹⁵ Facilities for learning crafts including cutting and dressmaking were

provided by the Madhar Sangams. 7,935 Mahalir Matrams were equipped with craft equipment under the minimum programme with 50 per cent local contribution. At the rate of one craft instructress for every 6 Mahalir Mantrams, 629 craft instructors were appointed.¹⁶ Under the scheme of Nutrition Education through Mahalir Mantrams 12 Mahalir Mantrams in each block were selected in a phased manner to organise this programme for 2 years. A total number of 832 Mahalir Mantrams at the rate of 8 in each of the 104 blocks were selected under the scheme for 1969-70 and a sum of Rs.1.56 lakhs was spent for this purpose.¹⁷ Under the programme of encouragement of economic activities, Mahalir Mantrams were graded into 3 categories namely A, B, C and an amount of Ra.1000, Rs.600 and Rs.400 respectively were given as awards for promotion of activities undertaken on a group basis. The selection of the best Mahalir Mantrams was done by a committee constituted at the block level and screened successively at the District and State level.¹⁸

During 1972-1973, Nearly 612 best Mahalir Mantrams were given a cash award of Rs.3.69 lakhs and for the year 1973-74, Rs.1.70 lakhs were sanctioned for this scheme of 340 awards.¹⁹ The Demonstration on Feeding Programme was one of the components of the composite programme of the government of India. Nutrition Demonstration was about the better uses of local feeds, balanced menus and recipes. The demonstration was conducted once a week for two years. Each selected Mahalir Mantrams were provided with demonstration kitchen equipment up to the value of Rs.500.²⁰ It was implemented in 28 selected blocks from 1970-71. Four preschools in each of the 28 blocks had been covered under the programme. An expenditure of Rs.4.29 lakhs had been incurred during 1971-72 towards this programme. The care of the welfare of children and women led to the formation of community service centres.²¹

This scheme was extended for the year 1975-76. Under this scheme, sewing machines were presented to poor, destitute widows, physically handicapped women in the age group of 20 to 40 who knew to operate the sewing machines. It facilitated their self-employment. The sewing machines were purchased by the Directorate of Social Welfare and supplied to the fifty women's welfare branches and twenty-seven tailoring units at the rate of two machines for each of the branches and the units. The service homes at Tambaram, Thanjavur and Cuddalore were also provided with sewing machines. They were also supplied free of cost to women who were in the lower-income group. One thousand women were benefitted by the scheme during 1975-76.²² The expenditure incurred on this scheme during 1975-76 was Rs.7 lakhs.²³

C.N. Annadurai became the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu in 1967 at that time he, introduced some welfare measures in Tamil Nadu. Followed by M.Karunanidhi became the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. Satyavanimuthu appointed as Minister for Department Harijan Welfare Women's and Children's Welfare and Tourism portfolios in the cabinet of twelve male ministers of Karunanidhi ministry.²⁴

Hindu Marriage (Tamil Nadu) Amendment Act of 1967

Even in the year 1926, a strong feeling arose in Tamil Nadu to eradicate the plight of women. The Self-Respect Movement under the leadership of E.V. Ramaswamy called Periyar, dedicated its service to women's welfare. He encouraged widow Remarriage, inter-caste and inter-religious marriages and also against the child marriages and devadasi system. He conducted Marriages without any religious ceremonies, Brahmin priest and thali tying process. This marriage is based on an individual's courage. This marriage is based on an individual's courage. This marriage abolishes caste disabilities. It did not incur unnecessary and wasteful expenses. Since the launching of the Self-Respect Movement, sufficient courage was given in its media for the spread of Self-Respect Marriages all over Tamil Nadu. Once the Madras High Court decreed that Self-Respect marriages were invalid, Periyar took too much effort and argued that the government would recognize this kind of marriage as a valid one. From 1929 to 1932, more than 8,000 Self Respect Marriages were conducted by this movement.²⁵

Later this Self-Respect Movement stood as the base for Annadurai, a great scholar and an eminent follower of Periyar, to evolve his ideas on women's right in the society. He highlighted the plight of the widows in the society as well as the supremacy enjoyed by the males in the society. When he became the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu (1967-1969), he brought the famous amendment to the Hindu Marriage Act. The amendment accepted the Self-Respect Marriage or Suyamariyathai of Seerthirutha marriage, as a valid one. This Act was called the Hindu Marriage (Tamil Nadu) Amendment Act, 1967.²⁶

Avvai Village Welfare Society

After observing that landless labourers who were unable to hold the lands they were given for free due to ignorance, Ms Ambujam, a Gandhian and disciple of Shri Vinoba Bhave realized that something should be done to ensure equal opportunities to all. Consequently, she founded Avvai Village Welfare Society in the year 1976, having in mind the upliftment

and empowerment of marginalized groups such as children, women, elders and disasters victims. Since then, Avvai Village Welfare Society has grown to become the biggest organization in Nagapattinam and Kilvelur districts and one of the most important in Tamil Nadu, due to its various accomplishments in favour of the needy. Avvai Village Welfare Society had formed over 3341 Women SHGs with over 60,000 members under the Mahalir Thittam which has made Avvai as one fo premier agencies in Tamil Nadu in Women Self Help Group SHG Movement as partner of Tamil Nadu Corporation for Development of Women Ltd., Avvai Village Welfare Society has become the biggest organization in the district of Nagapattinam.²⁷

The Equal Remuneration Act of 1976

Sections 4 and 5 of the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 provide for equal remuneration for equal work to male and female workers for performing works of similar nature and prohibits discrimination in matters of recruitment of men and women which discrimination if carried out, is punishable with imprisonment which shall not be less than three months but which can extend up to one year and fine. The other Acts that relate to women to safeguard equality and dignity of women are the Minimum wages Act, 1948, the Employees State Insurance Act, 1948, the Plantation Labour Act, 1951, the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976, the Legal Practitioners (Women) Act, 1923, the Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929 and the Indian Divorce Act, 1969 and so on.²⁸

It is important to mention the name of Mary C. Clubwala Jadav. She was nominated four times to the Legislative Council from 1946 to 1971. She fought for the introduction of women's wing in Tamil Nadu Police.²⁹ The Central Social Welfare Board releases through the State Social Welfare Advisory Board, grants to voluntary agencies for their various programmes.³⁰ The State Social Welfare Board will be charged with the responsibility for determining all the matters of policy relating to the programme for women and children in the State. The State Board will be responsible to the State Government in all matters relating to the women's and children's programmes of the State and will also be responsible to the Central Social Welfare Board regarding their grants-in-aid programme which was entirely financed by them.³¹

Conclusion

In February 1973, work relating to backward classes welfare was transferred back to the Ministry of Home Affairs. From March 1971 to August 1979, it continued to be part of a department within the Ministry of Education and Social Welfare.³² The Government policies towards socio-economic development leads the creation of new department accordingly, In September 1985, a Department of Women and Child Development under the Ministry of Human Resource Development was established in India and emphasize was laid on establishing a 'Women's Bureau', which function as a coordination or planning unit and an advocate of women's programmes and needs.³³ In 1988, the National Perspective Plan for Women suggested that a 30 per cent quota for women be introduced at all levels of elective bodies. Women's groups insisted that reservation be restricted to the panchayat (village council) level to encourage grass-root participation in politics. The consensus around this demand resulted in the adoption of the 73rd and 74th amendments of the Indian Constitution in 1993.³⁴

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