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RESEARCH ARTICLE

WOMEN AND PLANNING IN INDIA

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Abstract

Women who comprise half of humanity play a major role in the development of a society yet basic gender based disadvantages prevail all over the world. Hence it is important to make special efforts to empower women, especially through the planning process. Gender Planning frameworks have been implemented in the rest of the world. The objective of gender planning is achievement of gender equity, equality and empowerment through practical and strategic gender needs. Given the importance of women as 'ends' and not just 'means' in the process of development, the paper seeks to find how women's needs have been incorporated in Indian Planning. India's planning commission was the institution which made five year Plans for India till the 12th Five year plan (2012-2017). It has since been dissolved with NITI Aayog replacing it. The approach towards women in India, in planning remain 'Gender Aware Planning' and not 'Gender Planning'.

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Introduction:-

Improvement of the quality of life of the entire population on the basis of their full participation in the development process is being increasingly recognized as an important development goal. Women who comprise half of humanity play a major role in the development of a society yet basic gender based disadvantages prevail all over the world. Hence it is important to make special efforts to empower women, especially through the planning process.

Objectives:-

Given the importance of human beings as 'ends' of development and not mere 'means' in the development process; given the theoretical insights into various evolving policy approaches to women, and given the specifics of gender planning methodology, the paper examines the approach to women in the planning process of India to see whether specific gender concerns have been incorporated in the planning process.

Methodology:-

The paper starts with the theoretical aspects of gender discourses in development but uses reports and plan documents to analyse India's approach to women in its various Plan documents.

Development Perspectives:

The notion of what we mean by development has been a constantly evolving debate. It now encompasses a multidimensional phenomenon as embodied in the various slogans of development viz., economic growth,

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employment creation, jobs and justice, redistribution with growth, basic needs, participatory development, human development, sustainable development, inclusive development, etc.

The concept has evolved from the earlier focus on achieving high rates of economic growth above all as the main objective, to that of bringing about a real change and improvement in the quality of life of the whole population. It is now concerned with the improvement of various aspects of people's lives, namely, social, political, economic, etc. An important focus of development is on human development where human beings who were earlier perceived as the means to bring about development has now become ends in themselves.

In this context Amartya Sen (1980) propounded the capability approach to development. It looks at people's ability not just in terms of functioning, but in terms of people's capability to achieve various functionings. There is the distinction between capability or opportunity to be healthy and actual healthy functioning. Nussbaum has expanded the notion of capabilities and develops a list of capabilities which she believes provide a basis for central constitutional principles which citizens have the right to demand from their governments. An example is 'life'- being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length; not dying prematurely or before one's life is so reduced as to be not worth living; 'bodily health'- being able to have good health, including reproductive health; to be adequately nourished; to have adequate shelter(Nussbaum 2000)

Thus planning for women has to take account of all such principles. Nussbaum's framework gives an understanding of what policies are to be pursued for each and every citizen. Citizens should live a life that is worthy of the dignity of human beings and this political goal should constrain all economic choices (Moser 1993).

Now, the concept of human development has gone beyond its basic premises to emphasize the sustainability of the development process. It not only puts people at the centre of development but also advocates protecting the life opportunities of future generations as well as present generations and respecting the natural systems on which all life depends (HDR 1995). In some of the more recent contributions to development theories, culture aspects, their complexity and diversity, and to the ways in which culture specific conditions affect development strategies are also being incorporated.

Inclusive development is another recent development in the lexicon of development economics. This is a rights-based approach and is the process of ensuring participation of all marginalized and excluded groups in the development process and bringing about economic development, political cohesion and social stability through mutual interdependence.

The Sustainable Development Goals 2030 are the latest Global Goals adopted by all United Nations member states in 2015, as a universal call to ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030.

Policy approaches to women in development:

Certain theoretical perspectives which have shaped scholarly and practical work in the field of women and development, particularly in the Third World are: Women in Development (WID), Women and Development (WAD), and Gender and Development (GAD).

WID paradigms prevalent in the early 1970s, found that woman had either been excluded from the benefits of development, or had been included in ways that had marginalized them. The policy orientation was to use development resources for improving women's conditions and making their contributions visible.

Caroline Moser (1993) discovered five separate policy approaches in the WID framework, where she evaluated each approach in terms of their ability to meet those practical gender needs of women that requires urgent attention and women's more strategic needs, which must be met to change their subordinate status in society and relate to gender divisions of labour, power and control.

Practical Gender needs are the needs women identify in their socially accepted roles in society and which do not challenge the gender divisions of labour or women's subordinate position in society (e.g., health care and employment)

Strategic gender needs are the needs women identify because of their subordinate position to men in society, for example, the abolition of the sexual division of labour; the alleviation of the burden of domestic labour and childcare; the removal of institutional norms of discrimination such as rights to own land or property, or access to credit; the establishment of political equality; freedom of choice over childbearing; and the adoption of adequate measures against male violence and control over women.

The five approaches in the WID framework are:

Welfare: Earliest approach, 1950-70. Its purpose is to bring women into development as better mothers. Women are seen as passive beneficiaries of development. It seeks to meet PGNs.

Equity: This approach was used in the 1976-85 UN Women's Decade. Its purpose is to gain equity for women. It recognises the triple role and seeks to meet SGNs through direct state intervention giving political and economic autonomy, and reducing inequality with men. This approach is seen as feminist and is not popular.

Anti-poverty: It is adopted from the 1970s onwards. Women's poverty is seen as a problem of underdevelopment, not of subordination. It recognises the productive role of women, and seeks to meet the PGN to earn an income, particularly in small-scale income-generating projects. It is most popular with NGOs.

Efficiency: This approach originated in the post 1980s and is associated with IMF structural adjustment programs of the 1980s. It sought to ensure that development is more efficient and more effective through women's economic contribution. It seeks to meet practical gender needs, but, at the cost of longer working hours and increased unpaid work. Yet this is the most popular approach.

Empowerment: The most recent approach, articulated by Third World women. Its purpose is to empower women through greater self-reliance. It recognises the triple role, and seeks to meet SGNs indirectly through bottom-up mobilisation of PGNs (Moser, 1993).

As a critique to WID, another concept which came up in the late 1980s is that of Women and Development (WAD) which is based on Marxist thought. This approach attributes gender inequalities to the structural and socio-economic factors of society and ignores the sphere of reproduction and household level relations between men and women.

The Gender and Development (GAD) approach emerged in the 1980s. Gender is the social meaning given to biological differences between the sexes; it refers to cultural constructs rather than to biological givens. GAD approach maintains that to focus on women in isolation is to ignore the real problem which is their subordinate status to men. Women were seen as agents of change rather than as passive recipients of development assistance. It focuses on strengthening women's legal rights, including the reform of inheritance and land laws. It talks in terms of upsetting the existing power relations in society between men and women (Moser 1993).

Another policy approach to women which is in tune with the GAD theories is ILO's rights –based approach, which is particularly relevant for women, according to which women will no longer be seen as passive “beneficiaries” of development policies, but as active participants “entitled” to the benefits of development .

One approach is ILO's ‘mainstreaming gender’ approach. The aim of mainstreaming, which is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, is to achieve gender equality. The ILO gender mainstreaming strategy uses a two-pronged approach. The first is through explicitly and systematically addressing the specific and often different needs and concerns of both women and men in all policies, analysis, strategies, and every step of every initiative including monitoring and evaluation. The second is through targeted interventions when analysis shows that one sex – usually women – has been historically disadvantaged socially, politically and/or economically (ILO 2012).

Another theory is the Women and Environment(WED) approach which focuses on the environment factor to incorporate women's voices and such relevant considerations as local knowledge systems, gender relations, cultural specificity and political ecology (Kabeer 2004).

Gender Planning frameworks:

These play a great role in mainstreaming gender into development policies and programs. Mainstreaming gender into an organization means to integrate gender concerns into every aspect of an organisation's priorities and procedures. In general, 'mainstreaming' is different from an 'integrationist' approach which is simply concerned with allowing women access to development activities. Gender planning frameworks provide the 'tools and technical capabilities' for gender mainstreaming (March et al. 1999).

Harvard Analytical Framework or Gender Roles Framework or Gender Analysis Framework was developed by the Harvard Institute for International development in collaboration with the WID office of USAID, and is based on the WID efficiency approach. The social relations framework originated with academics led by Naila Kabeer (1994) at the Institute of Development Studies at Sussex, UK. Women's empowerment framework was developed by Sara Hlupekile, a gender expert from Lusaka, Zambia (ILO 2000).

Moser's Framework:

Moser (1993) argues that gender planning is a planning tradition in its own right. Her framework uses concepts of gender roles and gender needs, and feminist theories and WID/GAD debates. Gender roles of women (triple role of women) are: Reproductive (household labour, care work and maintenance), Productive, which is both paid and unpaid work (subsistence, unpaid family worker, etc., with potential exchange value) and Community Managing (undertaken at the community level as an extension of their reproductive role). Planning framework is an iterative process utilizing principles, tools and procedures. The objective of gender planning is achievement of gender equity, equality and empowerment through practical and strategic gender needs

Table 1:- Gender Planning Principles, Tools and Procedures:

Principles	Tool	Procedures	Techniques	Purpose
Gender roles	Gender roles Identification (is a tool that makes visible previously invisible work)	Gender diagnosis, objectives and monitoring	Identification of p/r/cm/cp roles of men and women and equal allocation of resources for work done in these roles	To ensure equal value for women and men's work within the existing GDOL
Gender needs	Gender needs assessment		Assessment of different practical and strategic gender needs	To assess those needs relating to male- female subordination
Equal Intra-Household Resource Allocation	Disaggregated Data At the Household Level		Gender disaggregated data	To ensure identification of control over resources and power Of decision- making within the household
Balancing of roles	Intersectorally Linked Planning	Gender entry strategy	Mechanisms for intersectoral linkages between economic, social, spatial, development planning	To ensure better balancing of tasks within the existing gender division of labour
Relationship Between roles and needs	WID/GAD policy matrix		Range of policy approaches; welfare; equity; anti-poverty; efficiency; empowerment	Performance indicator to measure how far interventions reach PGNs and SGNs
Equal control over decision-making in the political/ planning domain	Gender participatory planning	Gender consultation and participation	Mechanisms to incorporate women and representative gender-aware organizations into the planning process	Ensure SGNs are incorporated into the planning process

cm= community managing; cp= community politics; p= productive; r=reproductive; GDOL= Gender Division of Labour; PGNs= Practical Gender Needs; SGNs= Strategic Gender Needs.

Source: Moser (1993).

The ultimate agenda is to achieve equality in the gender division of labour within the household, equal control over resources and power of decision-making within the family, equality in the gender division of labour in paid employment and equal participation in local- and national-level political processes.

Condition of Women in India:

Dreze and Sen (1999) point out that one of India's severe social failures is the persistence of extraordinarily high levels of gender inequality and female deprivations. Women in India suffered from various forms of oppression and exploitation like female infanticide, child marriage, bigamy, polygamy, dowry, purdah, sati, widow oppression, etc., and in modern times, rape, domestic violence and other crimes against women. In the colonial period, social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy sought to wipe out such evil practices of Indian society, and fought for equal rights for women. After India attained independence, constitutional provisions were made to ensure that women may not suffer oppression and deprivation. Yet, despite such constitutional provisions, and even though it has been more than five decades since India attained independence, women in India still continue to suffer deprivations on various fronts.

Some data below show the dismal condition of women, thereby necessitating gender planning.

Table 2:- Some Indicators of Women's Status in India.

Parameters	Reference year/Source	All India
Infant Mortality Rate	2020(World Bank)	29.8
	2016-18(SRS)	33.1
	2006-08(SRS)	55.4
Maternal Mortality Ratio	2014(World Bank)	166
	2017(World Bank)	145
All women age 15-49 years who are anaemic (%)	2005-06(NFHS-3)	55.3
	2015-16(NFHS- 4)	53.1
Institutional Delivery (%)	2005-06 (NFHS- 3)	38.7
	2015-16 (NFHS-4)	78.9
Children age 12-23 months fully immunized (BCG, measles, and 3 doses each of polio and DPT) (%)	2005-6 (NFHS 3)	43.5
	2015-16 (NFHS 4)	62.0
Life expectancy	(Census 2011)	66.8
Sex ratio	Census 2011	940
Gender Gap in literacy	(Census 2011)	16.68
Labour Force Participation Rate(NSS)	79.8(Male)	31.2(Female)
Work participation Rate in Usual Status(ps+ss)(NSS)	54.3(Male)	24.8(Female)

Source: (1) National Family health Survey 3 and 4
 (3) World Bank, India Infant Mortality Rate 1950-2020
 (4) SRS Statistical Report 2018
 (5) NSS 68th Round

Gender Perspectives in Indian Planning:

Women and India's Five Year Plans:

From the First Plan (1951-1956) till the Fifth Plan (1974-1978), the approach of the Government of India towards the issues of women and children in the society was marked by the welfare concept, and main concern was amelioration of their condition in society, keeping in view women's role as mothers and homemakers. The planners focused on social legislation as a means to empower women (Seth 2001).

In the First Plan (1951-1956), the focus was on women's role in the family and in the community. The emphasis was on provision of welfare services. During the period, the Central Social welfare Board was set up and various welfare works were carried out through voluntary organizations and charitable trusts.

The Second Plan (1956-1961) retained the welfare approach to women's issues. It attempts to pay special attention to women workers who suffer on account 'social prejudices and physical prejudices' and emphasized the need to provide and implement maternity benefits, protection from injurious work, crèches, and equal pay for equal work policies (Planning Commission, 2010).

The Third Plan envisaged female education as a major strategy of welfare. Under 'social welfare' the emphasis was on the provision of rural welfare services and 'condensed educational courses'. Health services were geared to maternal and child welfare and also health education, nutrition and family planning (Ibid).

The Fourth Plan emphasised women's education and the promotion of women's welfare within the family, bringing down the birth rate, and increasing expenditure on family planning (Ibid).

Thus during the third,- fourth and interim plans(1961-1974), women were seen as 'targets' of family planning and as 'social sector beneficiaries'.

During the Fifth Plan (1974-1978) there was a shift in the approach towards from 'welfare' towards 'development'. Various programmes and schemes for women's empowerment were carried out.

The Sixth Plan (1980-1985) included a chapter on women. The plan was much influenced by international trends in the United Nation's movement for women. Women were seen as active partners in development rather than passive subjects for welfare. A multi-disciplinary approach was followed with a special thrust on the three core sectors of health, education and employment. Special institutions for women were set up during this time e.g. the National Committee on Women.

In the Seventh Plan (1986-1991) with the approach of bringing women into the mainstream of national development, a working group on employment of women and quota for women in development schemes was mooted. For example, the National Perspective Plan for Women (1988-2000) was prepared, which contained 360 recommendations (including for credit and land schemes and reservations in local governance institutions).

The Eight Plan (1992-97), with human development as its major focus, promised to ensure that benefits of development from different sectors do not by-pass women. It sought to make women equal participants and not more beneficiaries of the development process. The Plan however did not have a separate chapter on women; they were incorporated in a chapter on social welfare.

During the Ninth Plan (1997-2002), empowerment of women as the agents of social change and development became a strategic objective. The concept of Women's Component Plan was brought into action as one of the important strategies by directing both the Centre and the State Governments to ensure that not less than 30 per cent of funds/benefits are earmarked in all the women-related sectors. The Plan document included a separate chapter on Empowerment of Women and Development of Children. In fact the importance of gender sensitization was recognised in the 9th plan.

During the Tenth Plan (2002-2007), self help groups were set up under the banner of providing microfinance to women groups. Various specific strategies, policies and programmes for the empowerment of women were drawn up and a separate chapter on 'women and child' was included.

The gender perspectives incorporated in the Eleventh Plan (2007-2012) are the outcome of extensive consultations with different stakeholders, including a Group of Feminist Economists. For the first time, women are recognized not just as equal citizens but as agents of economic and social growth. Aimed at inclusive development, the vision was that every woman in the country should be able to develop to her full potential and share the benefits of economic growth and prosperity. A scheme on Gender Budgeting was introduced in 2007 with a view to building capacity so that a gender perspective was retained at all levels of the planning, budget formulation and implementation processes. Inclusion and mainstreaming of women also received special attention under programmes such as the MNREGA, the Right to Free & Compulsory Education, National Rural Health Mission, National Rural Livelihood Mission and National Skill Development Mission. The Plan document includes a chapter on 'Women's agency and child rights' (MWCD 2011).

The Twelfth Plan (2012-2017) is aimed at faster, inclusive and more sustainable growth. It recognized that development is a process of expanding the real freedoms (capabilities) that people enjoy. Hence Nussbaum and Sen's concepts become relevant. Gender equality is now a core development goal in itself. Women's empowerment is a process, which enables women to have a notion of dignity and self worth, bodily integrity, freedom from coercion and control over resources. This will be achieved when along with the condition of women, their position improves and their freedoms and choices are enlarged economically, socially and politically (MWCD 2011).

Gender Budgeting will be used to mainstream gender into the existing accountability mechanisms of the Government. The Results Framework Document (RFD) is an accountability mechanism which must be gender mainstreamed by making gender outcomes a mandatory part of the RFD. For improving gender accountability a section on gender sensitivity and initiatives undertaken for gender equality could be added as part of the personnel appraisal systems of the Government (GOI, 2013:180).

NITI Aayog and Gender Planning:

The Planning Commission in India which was an institution in the Government of India which formulated India's five year plans has since been dissolved in 2014. It has been replaced by a new institution, NITI Aayog.

NITI Aayog's 15 year Vision Document, which replaced the five-year plans in India, has proposed key reforms to encourage women's workforce participation across sectors in India in line with the achievement of Sustainable development Goals, in which Goal 5 aims at Gender Equality('Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls')

Women Entrepreneurship Platform:

The Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) is a first-of-its-kind unified-access portal to enable women across India to realize their entrepreneurial aspirations. The idea of the platform was first mooted by NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant, who announced its establishment at the conclusion of the eighth Global Entrepreneurship Summit, held in Hyderabad in 2017, with an overarching theme of 'Women First, Prosperity for All'. As an enabling platform, WEP is built on three pillars:

Iccha Shakti, which represents motivating aspiring entrepreneurs to start their business

Gyaan Shakti, which represents providing knowledge and ecosystem support to women entrepreneurs to help them foster entrepreneurship

Karma Shakti, which represents providing hands-on support to entrepreneurs in setting-up and scaling-up businesses

The platform meets these objectives by serving as an aggregator of information resources and services, with a focus on enabling women entrepreneurship, and works closely with partner organizations to realize various forms of integration to offer a seamless experience to aspiring or established women entrepreneurs (NITI Aayog, 2020)

Women Transforming India:

Recognizing that achieving gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls, rests upon unlocking the full potential of women in the world of work, NITI Aayog in 2016, in partnership with the United Nations and MyGov launched 'Women Transforming India', a flagship event, to recognize powerful women of India's workforce, who are influencing positive change in their communities and furthering the Government of India's mission of inclusive economic growth.

The idea behind the awards is to showcase exceptional women entrepreneurs who have broken the glass ceiling and challenged stereotypes through businesses, enterprises and initiatives that: (1) Provide innovative solutions to address key development challenges and/or, (2) Impact communities. The top 15 nominees, selected through a transparent and highly objective process of screening and evaluation through expert organization and eminent jury members, were awarded in the formal ceremony held in the month of December 2019 (NITI Aayog, 2020).

Women and Child Development:

The women and child development (WCD) division provides policy guidance and oversees programme implementation of the Ministry of Women and Child Development through periodic monitoring and evaluation

exercises for ensuring overall survival, development, protection and participation of women and children. It is broadly guided by the twin objectives of empowering women to live with confidence and dignity and to help them nurture their children to develop to their full potential, and provide them with safe, healthy and protective environments. It also focuses on improving nutritional outcomes and the overall development of children and adolescent girls. During the year 2019–20, many activities were undertaken, example as per Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY), Maternity Benefit Programme is being implemented pan India in accordance with the provision of the National Food Security Act, 2013. All pregnant women and lactating mothers who had their first pregnancy on or after 1 January 2017, except those receiving maternity benefit, are eligible. The objectives are to firstly provide partial compensation for wage loss in terms of cash incentives so that women can take adequate rest before and after delivery of their first living child, and secondly, the cash incentives would improve health-seeking behaviour among pregnant women and lactating mothers. The efforts of the ministry along with constant monitoring and facilitation efforts have resulted in enrolling 1.12 crore beneficiaries (pregnant women and lactating mothers) nationally and benefitted a cumulative sum of Rs 4558.93 crore under the scheme, up to end of November 2019 (NITI Aayog, 2020)

Other Initiatives:

Various consultations were organized with UN agencies and relevant ministries to deliberate on the challenges around declining female labour-force participation in India. Based on these, a policy paper on ‘Enhancing Women’s Labour Force Participation in India’ was also prepared and submitted (NITI Aayog 2020).

When economies are geared towards achieving women’s rights and gender equality, the benefits, such as fairer societies and greater economic growth, accrue to everyone. Women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work implies not only empowering female entrepreneurs and business owners, but also recognizing women’s unpaid care, domestic work and the overwhelming majority of women in the informal economy (NITI Aayog 2017).

As on December 2019, NITI Aayog was all set to come up with a nationwide index that would objectively assess and rank states on the basis of how the fare in terms of gender inequality (and then COVID-19 happened). The gender index, the “Women in Socio-Economic” (WISE) Index, would be on the lines of the Good Governance Index recently released by the government (Dhingra 2019). This is also in line with the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals being steered by NITI Aayog.

Conclusion:-

From Indian Plans, we see that approaches to women have followed global changes in policy approaches to women. Planning has come a long way from the earlier focus on women as mere recipients of welfare, focusing merely on meeting practical gender needs towards acknowledging them as active agents of change and of recognizing their strategic needs. Goals have been framed; requirement of gender mainstreaming have been acknowledged in planning documents. The 12th plan document has taken account of both Nussbaum’s capability concepts as well as focusing on inclusive and sustainable growth and ministry-wise incorporation of gender concerns have been proposed. NITI Aayog has also recognized women’s multi-dimensional role, both at home and in the labour market. But the planning exercise concerning women is still gender-aware planning (that recognizes women’s special needs), not gender planning. It is still focussed on meeting women practical gender needs and not strategic gender needs. Moreover, problem lies in implementation. Since mere statement of policy is not enough, a concerted effort should be made to enable full implementation of all policies and programmes for women. In the light of the crucial issue of COVID-19 and implications like GDP contraction, health infrastructure collapse, and massive job and livelihood losses, the NITI Aayog needs concerted action to put the economy back on track. It also has to put Gender Planning as an agenda in future courses of action.

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