Chapter VI

Research Findings and Policy Recommendations

Women constitute half the population of India, but they face gender discrimination in all walks of life and to facilitate the empowerment of women, there is a wide list of policies and programmes adopted in various five years plans, there is a plethora of constitutional and legislative provisions in the name of women but can one say that Indian women have get them selves free from shackels of poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, neglect, oppression, harassment, exploitation and violence at domestic as well as at societal level?

In chapter II an attempt has been made to highlight the programmes and policies run/governed by government of India for empowerment of women and chapter III is flooded with the constitutional and legal provisions, various social and economic legislations for women's emancipation. Chapter IV presents the true picture of what place an average Indian women has in Indian economy and society. The indicators used in this chapter reveal the dismal conditions of Indian women. The present socio - economic status of women emphasize that inspite of programmes, policies, Acts enacted by government for women, they are still living a miserable, unhealthy, unhappy life.

There is considerable change in the approach towards women's development, from welfare during the First Five Plans, to development from fifth plan to empowerment from the Eighth Plan. But still women constitute a microscopic minority in the allocation under various Five Year Plans programmes
as discussed in chapter II.

The low female literacy in India and particularly in rural areas has hindered the development of women and that of the country as well. Though we experience an increase in the female literacy over the last four decades, still there exists a large gap between female and male literacy rates. This is because of the existence of the age old socio-cultural taboos in Indian society. Though the government has launched many programmes and introduced incentives to increase the school enrollment rates, but this have not yielded desired results. The girls face gender discrimination at both levels, domestic as well as societal.

The educational status of Indian women reflects the limited opportunities they have in employment field. So most of the women are concentrated in low skilled, less paid jobs. Moreover, working women have to perform professional as well as familial roles without necessary complementary changes in their roles and relations with other members of the family. The consequence is that employed women and especially married women are victims of conflicting role expectations from profession and domestic sides.

There has been no specific focus on employment throughout planning exercise in India since 1950. Employment programmes have been adhoc and lacked logic, consistency and rationality. Women were mostly considered as target groups for welfare schemes rather than as active participants in the productive process. The general tendency has been in most cases "to design development mainly for men". The net result is the reduction in the size of female labour force,
feminisation of poverty, low economic status of women and widening male-female difference.

Violence against women imposes a major obstacle to the process of development of women and their empowerment. India is a country in which goddesses are revered and yet paradoxically foeticide, female infanticide, dowry deaths, molestation, eve-teasing, child abuses, rapes, wife beating and other shameful crimes against women are on the increase. A woman is confined to the inside world of house and hearth, remains isolated from outside world. In the house, she has to perform back breaking work from dawn to late night, yet her contribution goes unrecognised. She is an inferior being from the time she is born, and even before, till the time she dies. Her destiny is always linked with a man, whether he is her father, brother, husband or son. This will be the legacy she will hand over to her daughter unless her self-image undergoes a change and she is able to develop her potential in a conducive environment.

It has been found in the study that even after several decades of the introduction of social legislations, it appears that bulk of rural and many of urban women have not even heard of the existence of various laws, very few of them know about the rights of women and are able to enumerate provisions incorporated in these rights. It was observed that women prefer enforcement of social legislations which prohibit dowry. Child marriage, laws which sanction widow re-marriage etc. But other laws like medical termination of pregnancy, property rights, divorce and the law raising the age at marriage are less favoured by majority of uneducated
women. To ask for a share in paternal property, to ask for separation from husband through divorce and to destroy the gift of god in mother's womb are some of the notions disliked by majority of women; social customs and values are dominant in this regard but some women indicated positive attitude in this regard.

Though there has been considerable legislation, government has passed various legislations for emancipation of women but the objective could not be achieved by legislation alone. The actual position of women to day is not much better than earlier periods. The problems have resumed new dimensions more fatal and ugly than before. The equality clause in the constitution has made little or no impact on the social and economic life of women in India. The women who have benefited is a microscopic minority belonging to dominant strata of society. Legislations enacted during the last few decades are out of reach for most of women, because, by and large, they are neither aware nor have financial resources to take advantage of their provisions.

Unless women in different parts of the country and different state of society are aware of their rights, their condition cannot improve. Other problems are also involved in enforcement of these rights. So long as the law is a closed male shop, so long as the law hides the truths of its printed lies, the female fate cannot be improved. The existing legislation is skin-deep, not soul-deep. Superficial amendments and enactments, with good top dressing are enacted but in effect the prejudiced core is untouched.

The other problem hurdling the enforcement of these legislations is
the tradition ridden Indian society in which back of Indian women live. How can the written laws can change the society which is being run/governed by unwritten customs and traditions?

The social structure militates against these rights gender inequality is deeply and intricately built into our customs, traditions, beliefs and practices. It is obvious that the person who is not aware of his or her rights cannot claim or gifted for it. It has been observed that there is a lack of coordination between the law and law enforcing agencies and lack of will in those who have to enforce and implement it.

During discussion, many rural women wished that had they been educated, they would have been economically independent and been aware of their legal rights. They disclosed that they want to have education and get into better paid jobs but poverty and burden of domestic work, early marriages obstructs them to do so. The study also revealed that because of illiteracy, they are exploited and discriminated more in unorganised sector. They face gender inequalities in every aspect of life unless and until these women are integrated and attitude of male dominated society do not change, development cannot take roots. Development will be thwarted, if it by - passes women, whonot only represent half the humanity but also the carriers of the future generation.

Policy Recommendations:

Based on the study conducted and observations made, following are some of the important policy recommendations made which would enhance women's participation in development through reducing poverty and inequality.
and achieving social justice.

**Education:**

Illiteracy is a curse for any society, but illiteracy among women, particularly in a male dominated society, is a national disaster. Educating women is one of the best investments a country can make in furthering economic development and welfare even if women never enter the labour force, most women become mothers and their influence, much more than the father on their children is crucial, "Teach a boy and you will train an individual, Teach a girl and you will train the whole family."\(^1\) Through education they can beautify their social garden by the way of watering and giving proper care and healthy nourishments to their budding generations and teaching then carefully. They are, thereofre, to serve like social gardeners. So investing in women's capabilities and empowering them is the surest way to contribute to economic development.

Education is a catalytic agent and has a positive correlation with employment and all round development. Female education reduces fertility and slow down the population growth rate. Therefore, female education can be a big catalyst in development of women as well as the nation. Hence:

* Female literacy has to be increased and awareness should be created about the importance of female education at the grass-root level and to individuals. This will increase the enrollment ratio of females at lower levels of education and bring down the drop out rates in female education.

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1. **AIBN Badis**, Algerian Reformer (1889-1940)
More economic incentives should be given to poor students to stop drop out rates. Moreover, socio-cultural constraints to girls's continuance in school are deeprooted which require to be tackled effectively.

* Right to education should be made a fundamental right. The state should provide the compulsory free education for boys and girls, special emphasis should be given for female education.

* Education and training should lay more and more emphasis on economic survival skills. Primary and Secondary education should offer practical, technical and vocational training to girls to equip school leavers with self-employment survival skills in the current labour market in which formal employment opportunities are limited.

* Emphasis should be placed on girls acquiring academic education that are relevant for formal sector employment, on-the-job training and productive to girls's continuance in self employement. The accessibility of women and girls for education and job oriented training through formal and informal education should be increased.

* Government should achieve gender balance in government bodies and administration, committees and the judiciary.

* Women should be given reservation in all the fields of education to emphasis gender equality in India.

**Emploment:**

Women have been involved both as unorganised and organised
Workers. In the industrialisation and economic transformation process, they have been the worst-hit victims. Illiteracy; lack of job skills and poverty have already pushed women to the low paid job strata. Technological changes have reduced the demands for unskilled labour. Since majority of women employed in the modern industrial sector have been unskilled workers, they have become the main victims of change. Therefore:

* A well articulated employment generation policy be formulated aiming at more productive participation by women, at the same time assuring them greater employment benefits, social security and better working conditions.

* Wherever possible women's employability should be increased by diversification or provision of skill training in new or non-traditional areas of employment in the organised sector.

* Displacement of women from traditional sectors due to modernization and new technology, particularly in agricultural, fisheries, textile and handloom sector is well known. It is essential to provide alternate skills for women displaced by new technologies. Qualitative study of every new technology and its adverse impact on women must be undertaken before introduction of technology and formulation of policy.

* Economic value should be given to various types of household chores performed by women. Organisation and mobilization are critical for women to perceive themselves as workers and productive contributors, not merely as housewives. Special programmes for non-formal education and
awareness generation of women workers should be strengthened and expanded on a national scale.

* At least one employment exchange for "women only" should be started in each state. All employment exchanges should be instructed to send 30% women applicants names to prospective employees.

* To facilitate paid employment of women by encouraging increased involvement of males in sharing domestic and child care responsibilities. Men need to inculcate new values so that they will willingly share the family responsibilities.

* To promote technology that will improve the labour productivity of women while decreasing their work time and to guarantee that women workers are the ones who benefit from such an improvement.

* The importance of freedom of association and the protection of the right to organise should be emphasized. This is particularly relevant for improving the position of women in employment.

* Efforts should be made to stop harassment of women at workplace. Such person should be severely punished and ensure that such women, making complaint against employer may not suffer in service terms. Onus of the crime should lie with the employer/ the floor boss / supervisor and not only on the assaulted.

* Information programmes should be instituted aimed at making women, especially those in rural areas and in socio-economically disadvantaged
groups, aware of employment opportunities and of the opportunities for education, training and skill acquisition.

* Legislative and other measures should be adopted and implemented which guarantee women protection against any sexual harassment practice that endangers a women's access to or maintenance of employment, that undermines her job performance and thus threatens her economic livelihood.

* To ensure right to protection of health and safety in working conditions including the safeguarding of function of reproduction. Special protection should be provided to women during pregnancy in types of work proved to be harmful to them.

* Ways should be investigated in which the unpaid work in household and in agricultural tasks which women perform can be recognized and reflected in official statistical data collections.

* The access of women workers to recreation and culture should be increased to make their monotonuous life interesting since their double workload prevents them from having enough necessary free time.

* Equal employment opportunity programms should be developed to promote the access of women to top level management and decision making positions more opportunities should be promoted to women and girls in non-traditional skilled trades.

* Women should not, be allowed to be used as cheap labour by multinational companies. Their interests/jobs should be protected by special legislations.
Health:

Illness and deaths from complications of pregnancy, child birth and unsafe abortion, from diseases of reproductive tract and improper use of contraceptive methods top the list of health threats to women. Reproductive health problems is a serious cause of concern for women. Hence:-

* Give high priority to meeting the health needs of women within primary health care, with particular attention to the special needs of women in rural and depressed urban areas and monitor health programmes to secure that women's health needs are properly met.

* Promote accessibility for all women to maternal health care, nutrition, family planning, prevention and treatment of infectious diseases-including sexually transmitted and non-communicable diseases through the establishment of a comprehensive family health, nutrition and health education network, in order to give women better access to health care.

* Original research should be made for analysis and assessment of the status of women from time to time to promote the physical and mental well being of women.

* The inclusion of mental health aspect as well as an improvement in physical health status of girls and women, as necessary aspect of overall socio-economic development.

* Participation of women, not only as beneficiaries of the promotion of health but also in the formulation and implementation of policy decision regarding
health at community and national levels.

* Increased promotion of programmes to improve hygiene, nutrition sanitation and access to safe water and shelter as fundamental basis for good health.

* Promote research into extent and the causes of domestic violence with a view to eliminate it. Provide effective help for women and children who are victims of violence by the establishment of centres for treatment, shelter and counselling of victims of violence and sexual assault.

**Steps needed in National Development Plans and Policies:**

Planning has been going on in India since 1951 but it has not aroused much interest among women in a big way. Women are not able to get their needs included in the plans and thus unable to get them implemented. Unless village or block level plans are prepared, women will not be able to get their needs included in the plans. The element of decentralisation should be added to our macro nature of planning process. Local area planning should be encouraged.

* Systematic and sustained linking of efforts be made to integrate women into national development planning and policies, particularly in the sectors of employment, education and health and in the allocation of resources, adequate material, technical resources within each sector of national development.

* Appropriate arrangements should be made for monitoring and evaluating the extent to which women participate in and benefit from both general and sectoral development programmes. Reliable data should be collected and
periodic reviews be made at all levels of society in every major sector of national development programme.

* The development and improvement of infrastructural technology, basic services and incentives, particularly for the rural sector of the population and the urban poor.

* Women should be given equal rights of land ownership, equal access to credit and financing, basic sanitation, safe water and energy resources and the skills to maintain and build community self reliance. Special attention should be given to women in the area of health in general and reproductive health in particular.

* Special measures should be adopted for promoting the development of women in rural areas.

* To organise and mobilize women, particularly poor women in rural areas.

* To organise learning and productive activity and access to needed development services and inputs such as education, primary health, child care, credit and marketing facilities, skill development in rural areas.

* To organise working women, particularly those in unorganised sectors for protection against exploitation.

* Systematic efforts to promote and assist grass-root level organisations as an instruments of development.

* Initiate consultations between government and employer and employee organisations as well as community groups to examine and improve
conditions for women workers.

* Effective institutional links between national planning units as well as national women's organisations should be established in order to -

a) Increasing their decision making powers.

b) Increasing their technical, financial and personnel resources.

c) Advising on new approaches to accelerate the full participation of women in every sector of the development process, according to national priorities.

* The improvement of the status of women requires action at the national, local and family levels. It also requires a change of men's and women's attitudes towards their roles and responsibilities in society. The joint responsibility of men and women for the welfare of family in general and the care of their children in particular should be reaffirmed.

* Providing women in the most disadvantaged sectors of the population with the increasing of their access to infrastructure, basic services and appropriate technology in order to alleviate the heavy workload imposed by the basic requirements and demands of their families and communities.

Rural Women

The vast mass of poor women belonging to rural areas continue to be exploited. These women are poor and illiterate but economically very active. They are the centre of household economy in rural areas but these women are living in very miserable conditions. Therefore, concern for these women is very necessary. Following measures are advocated for upliftment of rural women -
* Improve the living conditions of women in rural areas. Provide rural women with basic human needs, including clean water, effective sanitation, adequate food and nutrition, basic health services, shelter and appropriate fuel supplies. They should have access to formal and non-formal education programmes, which should be available at minimum cost in convenience to already overburdened women.

* Devising statistics which measure rural women's contribution on equal basis with men, including labour in domestic work and food production for family consumption. Increased workload and income earning opportunities for women should be identified.

* Take steps to ensure that rural women participate equally and effectively in the development process as agents for change by affording them participation as policy makers, organisers and implementers of development programmes. In this context, the experience of Kalva Village of Kurnool district, Andhra Pradesh deserves mention where village women, under the leadership and guidance of village sarpanch, Fatima Bi, an illiterate women, have made surprising efforts for development of village through self-help groups of village women. Women were given training in tailoring and embroidery to become self employed. Fatima Bi has received the UNDP's "Race Against Poverty" award in 1998 for her outstanding contribution in organising women for such activities and making self-help groups. Such models of development through self help groups at grass-root levels should be developed in another
rural areas also. Strengthen and Tap full potential of rural women's full participation and contribution to development.

* Design and carry out literary and training campaigns for specific rural areas for effective participation of women.

* Make rural women aware of their rights so that they can exercise their rights and benefit from them.

* Provide rural women with improved transport and communication systems and to all forms of media.

* Extend to all rural women free and equal access to credit facilities. Credit should be easily and conveniently available to them.

**Political Participation and Decision Making:**

Political participation of women is severely limited due to a nexus of traditional factors of caste, class, religion, feudal and family status which are essentially patriarchal forces that work in favor of men against women. Women are not aware of the importance of exercising franchise and are dependent upon men to tell them which party to vote for -

* Political participation can be considered to include an involvement in any form of organized activity that seeks to influence the attitudes and behaviors of those who have power of decision making. Political participation does not mean the participation only in the electoral and administrative processes. It would include the gamut of voluntary activities with a bearing on the political processes including voting, support of political groups,
communication with legislations, dissemination of political views and opinions among the electorate and other related activities.

* Special governmental instructions should be issued for achieving equitable representation of women in different branches of government and in departments at national state and local levels.

* More women should be inducted in ministries at the centre and the states and allotted areas suitable to their capabilities.

* Whenever a committee or commission is set up by the government for any purpose, 30 percent of its representation must be for women.

* Reports should be compiled periodically on the number of women in public service and the levels of responsibility in their areas of work.

* Special activities should be undertaken to increase the recruitment or promotion of women to decision making and policy making positions by publicizing posts more widely, increasing upward mobility, reservation of seats for women until equitable representation of women is achieved.

* Not only in political and administrative field, women must have decision making power over her own life and body. It should be the female and not the male who decide the timing, spacing and number of children. Female should be free about her reproductive rights.

Legislative Measures:

Women, like other disadvantaged sections in Indian society, have not fully realised the potential power, that laws and legal processes hold for them in
matters of development. They are ignorant of their own rights or are afraid or unable to get enforce them due to expensive, complicated, harassing and long drawn out proceedings. Thus they do not have easy access to justice. There is an urgent need for organised articulation on the part of women and for all those who support women's development with equity and justice.

* All discriminatory legislative provisions in the social, economic and political spheres and in penal and civil codes should be examined with a view to repealing all laws and regulations discriminating against women with regarde to the rights concerning inheritance, ownership and control of property, laws relating to marriage and divorce, the custody of children and the labour laws concerning women.

* Prostitution is bad and destroys dignity of women. But the real criminal is the man who purchases the flesh and does not help a needy women as well as the organisers of brothels who run rackets under different guises. It has hightened the danger of AIDS attracting foreigners investing dollars as well as AIDS. Unless the law enforcement is aimed at the real male criminal and saves the women victim, the vice will never vanish. The govenment should provide them employment and rehabilitation because the root cause behind prostitution is poverty.

* Imagine the rape of a three months old child or 90 years old women. We know what happened to Bhanwari Devi. The district court dismissed the case saying that an upper caste Hindu cannot rape a lower caste girl. Does
India has the dubious distinction of having the largest number of rape cases. Here a father rapes his daughter, a teacher his student. The legal provisions regarding rape should be made strict. There should be punishment not less than death penalty for rape. The rapist should be publicly hanged so that the rest may learn from it.

All forms of marriages should be required to be registered with the Registrar, Marriages. Compulsory registration of marriages will be an effective check on child and bigamous and mock marriages. It will offer reliable proof of age at marriages. It will also ensure legitimacy and inheritance rights of children.

Under all the personal laws and under the guardians and wards Act, 1890, the father is the natural guardian of the children. The Hindu Minority and guardianship Act, 1956 provides that the natural guardian for both boys and unmarried girls is first the father and after him the mother. This provision is against the law of equality provided by constitution. The mother, who bears the burden of keeping the child in womb for nine months and painful act of delivery should be given the first right of guardianship of the children.

The Hindu succession Act, 1956 has given the women many new rights, but she cannot be a member of the coparcenary property. To strengthen the economic position of women she should be given equal share in coparcenary property. Social hurdles in the way of right to property of the women removed.
* The practice of dowry should be eradicated. The legislation should be strictly enforced. This is a social evil which requires sustained action not only on the part of government agencies but also on the part of voluntary organisations, public leaders, Bureaucrats and the people itself.

* Active public support should be mobilised by government agencies, voluntary organisations and public leaders against child marriage, particularly in rural areas. Special attention should be given to streamlining the enforcement machinery and involving local authorities and voluntary organisations in the implementation of the Act. Simultaneously, systematic programmes of education and training should be developed for girls till they marry.

* Legal safeguards available under various labour laws such as minimum wages Act, Equal Remuneration Act, employee's state Insurance Act, Maternity Benefits Act should be extended to unorganised sector such as agriculture, construction work and home based work.

* The right to work already a directive principle should be made a fundamental right.

* Exemption from payment of minimum wage under any circumstances should be prohibited.

* The retrenchment of women in any establishment, irrespective of the number of persons employed, must require the prior permission of a designated authority.

* Legal literacy particularly in respect of labour legislation should be widely
generated. Both the government and the voluntary organisations should come forward for setting up legal aid centres at local levels, grassroot levels particularly so as to develop an informed and aware female labour force.

* Educational and Informational programmes on the socio-economic implications of laws should be launched in order to prevent, where possible, the law from being applied inequitably.

* The existing provisions of various laws should be implemented rigorously wherever necessary, new provisions should be made.

Constitution of Special Commission in the Different States:

One important reason for failure of various laws and administrative programmes to make the desired impact is the absence of any single agency, which could coordinate and examine these measures and provide expert advice on methods of implementation. Therefore, statutory autonomous commission should be constituted at state levels -

* For collection of information on different matters and suggest measures and

* Evaluation of existing policies, programmes and laws that have a bearing on the status of women with power to censure non implementation of these measures and to point out lacunae or deficiencies and to suggest amendments or improvements.

* The comments and suggestions of the commission should be placed before the legislature in the form of a report and should be answered by the government concerned within a stipulated period.
Improvement of Data Base:

* All data collecting agencies should give a sex and age breakdown of any information, they gather.

* Concepts and analytical tools of research, particularly those relating to economic process - evaluation, labours, work, employment, social productivity, household, family etc. should be re-examined so as to improve tools for the analysis and conceptualization of the economic and social roles to women within the home and outside.

* A set of statistical indicators should be established by which progress towards equality between the sexes can be monitored. A system should be devised for giving a monetary value to unpaid work, in order to facilitate its reflection in the gross national product.

* Priority should be given to research concerning those groups of women that have been neglected in social research namely rural workers in agriculture and allied activities, construction workers and working women in underprivileged sectors of society. These women have to perform multiple roles in order to ensure the survival of their families.

Role of Non-Governmental Organisations:

* There should be mutual cooperation between governments and non-government organisations, women's and youth groups, employers and workers unions, voluntary agencies, community organisations, the mass media, political parties and the like in implementing programmes for women's
development.

* Government should recognize the importance of the role of women's organisations, encourage and assist them and provide them with financial and other assistance, particularly at grass roots levels to enable them to perform their functions.

* The establishment of organisations for women workers particularly in non-trade union occupations both in rural and urban areas as a means of protecting them against exploitation.

* Government should promote the grass-roots organisations of women as an integral part of their over-all development efforts and should provide adequate financial and personnel resources for such efforts to succeed. Such grass root organisations will serve as forums for women to develop self reliance and enable women to obtain real access to resources and power and to shoulder greater socio-economic and political responsibility within their communities and their societies.
Development inputs required for women's empowerment

- Space to grow
- Education
- Political Participation
- Access to credit
- Decision making
- Skill acquisition
- Technology
- Training, entrepreneurship
- Legal Rights
- Social Support