

LEGISLATIVE MEASURES FOR WOMEN

EMPLOYMENT

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ABSTRACT

Independent India, made consolidated efforts to improve women's position in society through legislative measures. Several acts were passed for the emancipation of women by the Government in the 20th century. The Tamil Nadu Government has taken special steps to improve the position of women in all fields. Women are now enjoying equal privileges with men in many fields by these legislations. Since half of the human population is comprised of women, the process of creating an environment conducive to the progress of women is dependent on a multitude of socio-economic factors, starting with a political will to enforce the development of women as a priority. Women's equality in power-sharing and active participation in decision making, including decision making in the political process at all levels is ensured for 'the achievement of the goals of employment. All measures are taken to guarantee women equal access to and full participation in decision-making bodies at every level, including the legislative, executive, judicial, corporate, and statutory bodies, as also the advisory Commissions, Committees, Boards, and Trusts. Women's employment is one of the most important indicators of the general development of a country. Women are also employed in large numbers in plantations, factories and mills. A Women's Vocational Training Program was launched in 1977 under the Director-General of Employment and Training. All efforts are being made to improve women's employment and training opportunities for their economic rehabilitation through several programs. The Government provided not only employment opportunities for women but also made them self-confident and economically independent. Women today have achieved or struggling to achieve, new freedoms and a new place in society. Women are nowadays actively involved in all spheres and streams in our society. Now Indian women are proudly entering every sphere of human activity and are enriching their valuable contributions.

KEYWORDS

Independent India - Legislative measures – Emancipation – Population - Socio-economic factors - Power-sharing – Environment - Women's equality – Advisory Commissions - Director-General – Rehabilitation – Independent – Opportunities.

Introduction:

Today the progress has been further accelerated with some women becoming increasingly self-conscious of their discrimination in several areas of the family and public life. They are also in a position to mobilize themselves on issues that affect them vitally and constitute a significant segment in the electoral politics of the nation. Development in its wider perspective covers all aspects of life. The accepted goals of National development such as maximum production, total employment, and attainment of economic equality and social justice apply equally to men and women. Independent India, made consolidated efforts to improve women's position in society through legislative measures. Several acts were passed for the emancipation of women by the Government in the 20th century. The Tamil Nadu Government has taken special steps to improve the position of women in all fields. Women are now enjoying equal privileges with men in many fields by these legislations. Since half of the human population is comprised of women, the

process of creating an environment conducive to the progress of women is dependent on a multitude of socio-economic factors, starting with a political will to enforce the development of women as a priority.

Five-Year Plans:

The Five Year Plans from 1951 to 2007 focused on the welfare of women. In 1953 the Central Social Welfare Board was established as the primary agency at the national level to implement welfare programs for women. In 1954 Tamil Nadu State Social Welfare Board was formed under the supervision of the Central Welfare Board to execute State-level programs. In 1955 the Directorate of Women Welfare was established. In 1961 the work of the Department of Women's Welfare was combined with that of the Tamil Nadu State Social Welfare Board. In 1972 the department was renamed as Department of Social Welfare. As the welfare activities of the Department expanded considerably on September 9th, 1983, the Tamil Nadu Corporation for the development of women was incorporated. The Government of Tamil Nadu gave the greatest priority to the women of the weaker sections of the society like tribal women, poor widows, and destitute women who needed greater support and concern. Service Homes, Moral Welfare works, Women's Hostels, Mahalir Matrams, Community Welfare Centres and Cottage Industries were started for their benefit. The Government of Tamil Nadu had formulated many plans, policies and programs for the upliftment of women. All the programs and schemes were aimed at women's independence and empowerment. They also paid attention to improving their maternal health by way of implementing nutritional programs and opening Maternity Centres. The Constitution of India guaranteed equality of status and opportunities, social and economic justice and liberty and dignity of the individual. The Government has passed special protective laws to protect women.

Legal-Judicial System:

The Legal-judicial system was made more responsive and gender-sensitive to women's needs, especially in cases of domestic violence and personal assault. Women's equality in power-sharing and active participation in decision making, including decision making in the political process at all levels is ensured for 'the achievement of the goals of employment. All measures are taken to guarantee women equal access to and full participation in decision-making bodies at every level, including the legislative, executive, judicial, corporate, and statutory bodies, as also the advisory Commissions, Committees, Boards, and Trusts. Affirmative action such as reservations, and quotas, including in higher legislative bodies, are considered whenever necessary on a time-bound basis. Women-friendly personnel policies are drawn up to encourage women to participate effectively in the development progression. Policies, programs and systems are established to ensure the mainstreaming of women's perspectives in all educational development processes, as catalysts, participants and recipients. Wherever there are gaps in policies and programs, women-specific interventions would be undertaken to bridge these. Co-ordinating 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 especially be addressed and reflected in all concerned laws, sectarian policies, plans and programs of action. There are many centrally sponsored schemes implemented in Tamil Nadu. They are aimed at bringing about a basic change in the status of women through education. Some schemes have recognized the centrality of education and employment in empowering women. Such schemes are introduced by our government for the development of women. The important schemes or programs introduced by the State government are Short Stay Home for women and girls was introduced as a social defense mechanism, by the Department of Social Welfare in 1969. The scheme is meant to provide temporary accommodation, maintenance, and rehabilitative services to women and girls rendered homeless due to family discord, crime, violence, mental stress, social ostracism, or being forced into prostitution. From 1st January 1984, the Government extended the benefits of the Chief Minister ex-servicemen and the widows of ex-servicemen who are receiving a pension from ex-servicemen of Welfare Fund.

Women and Employment

Women form an important part of the Indian workforce. Women's employment is one of the most important indicators of the general development of a country. Women are also employed in large numbers

in plantations, factories and mills. A Women's Vocational Training Program was launched in 1977 under the Director-General of Employment and Training. The Program aims at improving the employability of women in wage or self-employment through skill training and development. In the Central Sector, One National and Ten Regional Vocational Training Institutes have been set up in different parts of the country. These institutes organize regular skills and vocational training courses at basic, advanced, and most advanced levels for women who have passed the 10th or 12th standard and qualify the specified eligibility conditions laid down for various courses. In the State Sector, a network of exclusive Women Industrial Training Institutes (WITI) has been set up under the administrative control of the State Governments. These institutes provide basic skill training to women. Some Women's Co-operative Societies were set up. Training courses for women were organized in fish processing, preservations, etc. The Khadi and Village Industries sector took up measures to increase employment opportunities for women in collaboration with State-level Agencies. The above program helps women to do their business or industry by themselves. Women's Development Corporations is a central scheme, launched in 1986-1987. The objective of the scheme is to provide better employment avenues for women so that they can become economically independent and self-reliant. The Women's Development Corporations are expected to work as catalytic agents to create sustained income-generating activities for women.

Employment Training Opportunities for Women:

All efforts are being made to improve women's employment and training opportunities for their economic rehabilitation through several programs. The socio-economic program of the Central Welfare Board was started in 1958 to improve the economic condition of poor and needy women by providing them a source of employment and income. Another centrally sponsored scheme was set up for the rehabilitation of women in distress and it was launched by the Union Government in 1977-1978. Under the scheme, the Government extends financial assistance to voluntary organizations. Women between the ages of 18 to 50 years are eligible to receive assistance under the scheme. The program covers women who become victims of adversities of life due to economic, social, psychological, or environmental situations, namely, widows, women deserted by husbands, etc. The Program of Support to Training-cum-Employment for Women was launched in 1987 to strengthen and improve the skills for employment opportunities for women below the poverty line in traditional sectors of agriculture, small animal husbandry, dairying, fisheries, handlooms, handicrafts, cottage, and village industries, and sericulture, social forestry and wasteland development where women are employed on a large scale. The focus is mainly on marginalized and asset-less women, female-headed households, and women of other dispossessed groups. The Scheme of Training-cum-Employment Production Centres was launched in 1982-1983. Under this program, financial assistance is given to Women's Development Corporations, Public Sector Corporations, autonomous bodies, and voluntary organizations to train poor women mostly in non-traditional trades to ensure their employment in these areas. Some of the trades are computer programming, electronics, watch assembling, embroidery, and weaving.

Provision of Employment Opportunities:

To release women from their dependent and subordinate status, improvement in their employment opportunities and earning power have been given the highest priority. According to Periyar E.V.R. all women, "must be educated and hold a high and responsible position of women with proper qualification and competence should not give up their jobs after marriage and ruin their lives". It should not be forgotten that economic independence is a potent tool for the emancipation of women. With these aims in mind, the State Government provided employment opportunities for women.

Thirty Percent Reservation in Employment:

To enhance the status of women, the Government of Tamil Nadu reserved 30 percent of the posts for women in Government offices, Government undertakings, and Local Bodies. The usual communal rotation was followed in the appointments. Tamil Nadu is the first state which provided reservations for women in employment. It was a laudable measure taken for the welfare of women. 30 percent of the reservation to women in Government jobs attracted and motivated the women to higher education in all

subjects. In the early period, women preferred to join mostly in the teaching and medical profession. But, now because of the reservation policy, they are joining all courses like engineering, aeronautics, etc. Today the Government recruited a large number of women in the police department and established separate women police stations. These employment opportunities are provided to the women indirectly and encourage women's education. The Government provided not only employment opportunities for women but also made them self-confident and economically independent.

Ministry of Social and Women's Welfare

The Ministry of Social Welfare came into being in August 1979 and was renamed as Ministry of Social and Women's Welfare in 1984. Since June 1964, with the creation of the Department of Social Security with subjects related to social welfare, pooled together from different Ministries like Education, Home Affairs, Health, Labour, Commerce, and Industry. Later, some of these subjects which did not fall within the department's purview were transferred to other departments. 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. The Department of Social Welfare was set up to provide the required impetus for the holistic development of Women and Children in the State of Tamil Nadu. The Department's primary objective is to formulate plans, policies, and programs for the welfare of women and children, and implement innovative programs in areas of welfare and support services for destitute women and children and elderly citizens. The main functions of the Ministry are: to promote, develop and implement welfare services, preventive, rehabilitative and curative for the physically and mentally handicapped women and children who come from weaker sections of the society; to formulate policies, draft legislation and assist voluntary organizations in the field of social welfare; and to function as the nodal Ministry for the activities of the United Nations Children's Fund in India.

Organization and Structure

The Ministry is headed by a Minister of State who is assisted by a Deputy Minister. A Secretary to the Government of India heads the secretariat and is assisted by three joint secretaries, each in charge of the Bureau of Nutrition and Child Development, Handicapped Welfare and Research and Women's Welfare and Social Defense, respectively. The Ministry is assisted in its functions by subordinate offices like the National Institutes for the Physically Handicapped and the National Institute of Social Defense and autonomous bodies like the Central Social Welfare Board and the National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development. The activities of the Ministry of Social and Women's Welfare broadly cover the welfare and development of children and women, welfare of the physically handicapped and social defense.

Besides functioning as a coordinating Ministry in the above areas and laying down policy, the Ministry undertakes many programs. To promote child welfare, crèches for children of working and ailing women are organized and services for children in need of care and protection are rendered through Voluntary Organizations. Through the Integrated Child Development Services Scheme, a package of services of education, health care and nutrition is made available to preschool children. A National Children's Policy was formulated in 1974 to provide an integrated approach to child welfare and development. The formation of the National Children's Board and State Boards and the creation of the National Children's Fund are the other important activities. Women's Welfare includes the implementation of schemes like condensed courses of education providing opportunities for young women to appear in school examinations; socio-economic program providing work and wages to needy women; construction of working women's hostels to provide cheap and healthy accommodation to working women belonging to lower-income groups; rehabilitation of destitute women and their children. Programs for education, training, rehabilitation and employment of disabled persons are organized through various national institutes for the physically handicapped and voluntary organizations. Besides, scholarships are awarded to handicapped students for both general and technical education. For accelerating voluntary action, financial

incentives are provided to voluntary welfare organizations to undertake programs for the welfare of children and women, and the disabled.

Conclusion:

Women today have achieved or struggling to achieve, new freedoms and a new place in society. Women are nowadays actively involved in all spheres and streams in our society. Now Indian women are proudly entering every sphere of human activity and are enriching their valuable contributions. In free India, women are serving the nation as judges, magistrates, ambassadors, cabinet ministers, teachers, doctors, governors, ministers, vice-chancellors, managers, clerks, peons, drivers, journalists, scientists, engineers, professors, and so on. But today they are found everywhere in all sectors including police and the army. We find them holding all kinds of positions and sharing authority and responsibility in all walks of life. Many doors are open to her, she can work in many fields, her vote can sway elections and education is expanding her universe. She still cherishes the family sphere, but she has drawn into her life-space the outer world of work and citizenship and the inner world of the intellect. Since women form an important part of the Indian force and they bear a double burden, special steps have to be taken to promote their welfare and development. It is more important to create general awareness and understanding of the problems of women's employment in all the top policies and decision-making and executive personnel.

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