



# DYNAMIC ADMINISTRATION

Indian Institute of Public Administration (U.P. Regional Branch)

**Women's Empowerment & Social Justice in India (with Special Reference to U.P.)**

## Editorial Board

Sri R. Ramani  
Sri K.N. Trivedi &  
T. N. DHAR (Editor)

## (A) Editorial

Women constitute a big proportion of India's population which is also, by large, its weaker section. As citizens they bear many major responsibilities. They bear and rear children, look after homes and hearths, raise families, serve as members of people's democratic and elected institutions and are increasing share holders not only in labour and employment markets but even in entrepreneurial fields. Their welfare is rightly considered to be a consequential emergent of planned social and economic development in the country, and in U.P., too. Women comprise 47.6% of the state's population (2011 census). The sex ratio has improved in recent decades but still remains lower in favour of women. We need to ask ourselves the question as to why are women comparatively poor, more hard worked, less likely to possess equitable access to education, health care, employment, entrepreneurship and influence in social, economic and political contexts. The telling fact is that, whether women are passing through childhood, maidenhood, married life or, unfortunately, widowhood, they have still, in many ways, been left out or

marginalised in terms of voice, authority and power in the mainstreams of life, family, governance, development planning and economic growth. Many of the barriers to women's empowerment and equity lie ingrained in social and cultural norms. Women still face economic, social and gender discrimination. According to ILO, sexual harassment is a clear form of such discrimination. They face more barriers in homes, at workplaces, in shopping areas and even while using public facilities. The fact is that we can observe sustained gender biases of various types and forms (legal, social and economic) in everyday life, in educational fields, in labour and employment markets, in property matters, in succession rights, in access to social and economic support structures, in their status within families and even in the constitutionally recognized people's institutions, namely, State Legislatures and the Parliament.

Many policy and law based measures have been taken in the country to improve the lot of women and empower them in multiple contexts – social economic, educational, healthcare related and familial. The Dowry Prohibition law was

enacted in 1961. The Immoral Traffic Protection law had been enacted earlier in 1956. The National Plan of Action for Women was formulated decades ago in 1976 followed by a Perspective Plan for Women in 1999-2000. The National Commission for Women was constituted in 1997. Then we had the National Plan of Action for the Girl Child (1991-2000) and the National Plan for Empowerment of Women of 2005. In the field of development planning the practice of Women's Component was adopted to foreground resource allocation for women's development. There are many other policy and law based measures taken to protect the interest of women and children. But, gender inequalities still persist. Only laws will not do. Women's empowerment means more of economic and societal empowerment and elimination of all forms of discrimination. The mind set of the society has to change. It is these crucial issues

that are being covered in this 110th issue of our quarterly newsletter "Dynamic Administration" and in a high level workshop that is being organised by us at Lucknow in July-2016. A comprehensive document for the proposed Workshop has been put together which also includes a theme paper developed for this important interaction that is going to be convened jointly by the Indian Institute of Public Administration (U.P. Regional Branch) and our sister NGO, SHERPA.

I would like to thank my colleague in IIPA (U.P.), and SHERPA, Shri K.N. Trivedi, as also our staff members, Shri M.R. Pant, Km. Veermati, Shri Akash Singh, Smt. M. Oberai and others whose co-operation, assistance and assiduity have made this interactive Workshop possible.

T.N. Dhar  
Editor

## (B) THE NATIONAL SCENARIO

### (1) WOMEN' EMPOWERMENT: SOME KEY ISSUES & SUGGESTIONS

Women's empowerment in the truest sense of the word is largely the creation of an environment where they can claim and obtain their rightful, equal and open opportunity-based status as citizens, where they can take independent decisions in their personal capacities as well as become truly equals in society in different spheres of life, namely, economic, social, political and administrative, as also in areas like income, employment, skills and status. Inequalities of women have many expressions. They are less educated. In 2011 male literacy in India was 79.3% and female, 57.9%. The Maternal Mortality rates are still unacceptably high nearly at over 200. So are their malnutrition and anaemia rates. Only 12%

is the percentage of women in the Indian Parliament and only 29% of them are in the country's labour force. Over 2.5 lakh incidents of crimes against women are reported yearly in India. Such crimes have increased in last decade (though a National Policy for Women is in place since 2001) and these are related to murders, abductions, torture, trafficking, child marriages, prostitution, etc. The presence of women in employment and labour participation is much below their proportion in the population. They still lack voice, suffer abuse, experience exclusion and do not as yet have easy access to redressal. Half of India, or nearly so, is largely disempowered or poorly empowered. Gender disparities abound in many

arenas—population, education, health, employment, business opportunities social stereotyping, domestic violence and women's safety and security.

### National Policy On Empowerment Of Women (NPEW):-

The principles of gender equity are enshrined in India's Constitution which has granted equality to women and had also empowered the state to adopt measures of 'positive discrimination' in favour of women. The National Commission of Women was set up through an enactment in 1990 to work towards ensuring of rights and legal entitlements of women. The 73<sup>rd</sup> / 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendments provided reservations for women in ULBs/PRI, and this has helped millions of women to participate in local institutions of democracy and in their decision-making. Unfortunately, this kind of a general national law for the Parliament and State Legislatures is still awaiting parliamentary approval.

Gender Disparities:- Women in India, it is generally recognized, have not been accorded respect, equality in status and empowerment that is due to them. True, after Independence, women in the country as a community have in several ways worked towards their upliftment and many laws, policies and programmes of the Central as also State Governments have been launched in recent decades towards the achieving of this objective. But, in real terms, they, as a collectivity, women are generally way behind in having been conferred their basic and inalienable rights. Every year the nation observes Eighth of March as the "Women's Day" and when we look at the large picture and the distance we have covered so far towards the goal of actualizing women's equity and empowerment, great many deficiencies, gaps and lapses become evident.

Many initiatives have been taken by the

Central Government for reducing gender disparities and empowering women. India signed the Convention on Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1980 and ratified it in 1993. The UN General Assembly adopted a Declaration on Elimination of Violence Against Women. This declaration has as helped many nations including India in enacting laws, initiating programmes and launching awareness campaigns to reduce gender disparities and also bring down the incidence of crimes against women such as kidnapping, rape, forced marriage, genital mutilation, honour killing, domestic violence and other types of atrocities. The U.N. Commission on Status of Women has also been foregrounding in its meetings the theme of elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls.

### Status Of Indian Women In History And Changes In Modern Times:-

The National Commission for Women (NCW) was constituted in 1991 to safeguard the interests of women. It has a wide mandate but lacks teeth. It does not have powers of prosecution and is, by and large, an investigative and advisory body. By way of example some of the key laws enacted include: (a) Immoral Traffic Prevention Act, 1956, (b) The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, (and amended in 1986), (c) The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (2006), (d) Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005), (e) National Commission on Women Act (1990), (f) Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (2012) and (g) Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2012. And, some of the key national programmes for women have been launched include: (1) Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (RGSEAG), (2) Indira Gandhi Matritav Sahyog Yojna (Cash Transfer Scheme for Pregnant and Lactating

Women) (GMSY), (3) STEP: Support for Training & Employment of Women, (4) Short Stay Homes and Working Hostels, (4) Ujjawala for Prevention of Trafficking, etc. The National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW), a centrally sponsored scheme, was launched in 2010 to empower women holistically by securing intersectoral convergence of schemes/ programmes of different Ministries / Depts. of GOI as also State Governments. Another centrally sponsored scheme SWADHAR had been launched earlier in 2001-02 for providing holistic and integrated services to women in difficult circumstances, those without any family, social and economic support, destitute widows, women prisoners released from jails, trafficked & homeless women, victims of terrorist violence and mentally challenged women. Awareness generation camps for women have been held to increase their active participation in development.

Many women related laws have been enacted in the country to provide justice and relief to them. For example laws prohibiting child marriage, protection of women against domestic violence, prevention of sexual harassment at workplace, dowry prohibition, etc. While laws have been enacted crimes against women continue. In the last decade alone 22.4 lakh cases of domestic violence were reported at police stations in India. A crime against women is reported every two minutes in the country and, again, in the last decade, women's kidnapping cases have tripled. The adjacent Table 2 would give some trends and indications in respect of murders and dowry deaths of women:-

Table No - 2

**Murders & Dowry Deaths of Women in India (Nos)**

Year	Dowry Deaths	Murders
2011	8,618	9,377

2012	8,233	9,457
2013	8,083	9,180
2014	8,455	9,224

**Source:** National Crime Record Bureau, Min, of Home (GOI)

It is well recognized that the state has a clear role and responsibility in ensuring gender justice and this duty must be embedded in laws, institutions and also systems and structures of government and elected bodies at all levels, and even in corporate bodies and business establishments. Domestic violence comprises a substantial proportion of crimes against women. Some of the main reasons identified by researchers and social organizations there - of are rooted in causes like: (a) Literacy gaps, (b) Unfavourable sex ratios, and (c) Majority of women being located in rural areas where both literacy levels and levels of empowerment of women are poor.

It is not only desirable but essential to promote respect for women through education and social mobilisation and, in this context, there is also need for strengthening women's social organisations and for constructive and co-operating police - social worker partnerships. We need to enhance the proportion of women in jobs (governmental, industrial and commercial), in police and paramilitary formations, (even armed forces), in skilling and training facilities and in education at all levels. It is also necessary to fast-track cases of crimes against women and of domestic violence at stages of investigation and trial. The society needs also to lift the veil of silence that generally pervades domestic violence which has become an insidious part of the lives of the victims.

Women's contribution to economic growth is indeed substantial, largely through labour

participation. But, most of such participation is through unpaid or underpaid work. Women work in homes, at farms and for wood / fuel / water collection in rural areas. They do house cleaning, nurse children, wash clothes, take care of livestock, maintain kitchens, carry food from their homes to males working on farms and, at the same time, many of them have full time jobs. They rear children which is a long and strenuous responsibility. An enormous expenditure of energy is involved in these unpaid and underpaid tasks. All this is besides women's paid and income generating occupations like jobs teaching, businesses, trading, professions and running of enterprises. Most of these unpaid and underpaid tasks, which are often onerous, do not get counted in the country's GDP. This distorts the picture and needs correctives. Concerted and policy driven decisions need to be made to ensure that planning, budgeting, resources allocation and expenditures, whether plan or non - plan, as well as auditing processes contribute to advancing gender equity and the contribution of women to the country's economy is fully accounted for in its GSDP calculations.

#### State Policy and Programmes For Women In Uttar Pradesh:-

The GOUP announced its policy for women in the year 2006 which lays clear emphasis on their development in all spheres of life. The main objectives of the state policy are:-

1. To ensure women's participation in all decision-making processes and strengthening their capacities to negotiate,

2. To ensure identity and safety of women,
3. To change the attitude of society towards women,
4. Enhancing women's self-esteem and dignity,
5. Building women's capacity to access social and development resources through training,
6. To take steps for women's active participation in economic activities,
7. Implementation of various laws for protecting women/children's rights and provide a platform of equality in society.

These policy objectives have since 2006 been further supplemented and strengthened by refining the goals and strategies, e.g.

- (a) Provide women access to credit, vocational training and employment opportunities,
- (b) Promote women's economic rights, independence and control over economic resources &
- (c) Promote harmonization of women's family and work responsibilities.

The State Government set up a separate Department of Women and Child Welfare over two decades ago to address their needs. To ensure that women get due importance in development processes women specific schemes and programmes are implemented by different departments through Women Component Plans.

## SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING WOMEN AND CHILD WELFARE IN U.P.

1. Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) at 359 per lakh of population and Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) at 53 per thousand live births (SRS-2012) respectively, in U.P. are still quite high. These can be attributed to subsisting deficiencies in health services and education, specially in rural areas. Vigorous efforts are required to reduce both MMR and IMR in the state. The National Rural Health Mission has been in operation for many years and, now, the National Urban Health Mission has been initiated. Both these missions have since been integrated and designated as the National Health Mission (NHM). If their operational efficiencies are improved both IMR as also MMR can be very substantially reduced. Timely funding, adequate support of doctors and specialists, physical infrastructure and adequate technical support with efficient and localized services delivery arrangements are needed to improve health indicators. Monitoring, feedback and quick corrective interventions are clear needs in these contexts.
2. The marriage of girls at an early age (before 18 Year) is prohibited by law but this practice is still continuing to a considerable extent, particularly amongst traditional, poverty ridden and poorly educated rural communities. This leads to women suffering from various disempowerment and health problems. Law enforcement as also public awareness and education in this context are still weak. A wide based awareness campaign should be launched to educate people against the undesirable as also unlawful practice of early marriage.
3. Determination of the sex of an unborn child is prohibited by law. The Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques (PNDT) Act of 2003 forbids determination and disclosure of the sex of foetus which is a cognizable offence. Despite that, this illegal practice is continuing with the connivance of many private healthcare facilities, doctors and even family members and parents. This is both a social problem as also a law enforcement issue. People prefer male children and that leads to this illegal practice. It needs to be put a stop to firmly both through strict enforcement of law and public education.
4. The 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendments have empowered women politically as 33% seats of elected members of PRIs/ULBs have been reserved for them in these 3 tier local bodies. But, such reservation of seats by law for women in the Parliament and State Legislatures are not provided for at present. This is the situation naturally obtaining in U.P. as well. A bill for such reservations is pending in the Parliament for a long time now. Recently even the President and Vice-President of India in their public speeches have supported such reservations. That would require a constitutional amendment which has not materialised. Such reservation is not only desirable, it is essential for promoting social, economic and political rights of women and for advancement towards gender equity. The other ground reality is that the women candidates elected to various positions, in many cases, are not able to function as effective people's representatives. Many a time their functions are discharged by male members of their families. With spread of education amongst women this situation is likely to improve.
5. Peoples' preference of a male child as against the girl child is still prevalent. A disturbing indicator of the 2011 census in this context is the still subsisting imbalance between sexes in 0-6 age group. A girl child is generally not preferred and, therefore, may not be allowed to be born (Yojna 2011). The child sex ratio (CSR) in many states is adverse. Nationally, it declined from 976 in 1961 to 927 in 2001 and went down further to

914 in 2011. The situation in U.P. is no better. The PNDT Act was amended and made more stringent in 2003. But, this illegal practice has not stopped. This law must be enforced strictly.

6. Education for All is an important goal of both national and state policies. Their objectives are yet to be fully realized. A large number of girls are still out of school and their dropout rates are also higher. Many schools do not have separate toilets for girls. This is also a reason for higher dropout rates of girls as also their lower enrolment rates. It is important that separate toilets are provided for girls in schools. Funds under the Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC) can also be utilized for this purpose. It is now nationally realized that absence of toilets is a serious handicap faced by people, especially women. It is time to pursue with purpose and determination the goal of the saturation of public and private toilets and elimination of open defecation.
7. The incidence of crimes against women such as chain snatching, eve-teasing, molestation, kidnapping, rapes, physical assaults and dowry deaths is still high. In many such cases even FIRs are not registered. Even child abuse is prevalent. This is indeed a sorry state of affairs. First, there is need to control and minimize incidence of such crimes. Simultaneously crimes against women and children should be registered and fast-tracked in courts and offenders punished deterrently. Mahila Thanas should be strengthened in numbers, staffing and technical equipment including transportation.
8. ICDS, a flagship national programme, is being implemented since 1975. It caters to needs of women and children. Under this programme children of 3-6 years age group are imparted pre-primary education. Supplementary nutrition is also provided to children and pregnant women and lactating mothers. For children above six years there is the Mid - Day - Meal (MDM) Programme. Both ICDS and MDM programmes are massive in size and cover children widely but both suffer from many shortcomings. The staffing and operations of Anganwadi centres need to be streamlined and both the quantity as also quality of nutrition provided ensured. The National Food Security Act (2013) in its Schedule-II provides nutritional standards to be followed for infants, small children, schools going children (upto upper primary level) and pregnant/lactating mothers in terms of kilo calories and protein content in ICDS/MDM programmes. These standards need to be ensured.
9. The Self Help Group scheme for women has considerable potential of providing gainful employment and incomes to them. It was expected that by forming SHGs the economic and social conditions of women would improve. But, these expectations have not materialized in the required measure. Many such groups have even become dysfunctional after having been formed. SHGs need to be revived and dynamised through better programming and liaison with the institutions of democratic decentralization, banks, block personnel and related government agencies. Successful functioning of SHGs can yield good results and improve women's economic and social state and also status in the society.
10. Due to spread of education more and more girls are entering job markets. Many such girls, for getting jobs, have to leave their homes and work in towns, cities and distant locations. For such girls there is a growing need for more and more Working Women's Hostels and for Married Women Day-care Centres. The number and capacities of these hostels at present are very limited and these facilities need to be considerably be expanded.
11. Gender budgeting in government and public

funded institutions should not be given only a lip service. All departments and agencies of government (and not only Women Welfare Department) should assign priority and funding to programmes that are meant for women and child welfare. In fact the plans and programmes of every department/public agency should include a distinct and separate part i.e. Women's Component Plan.

12. Shortage of trained human resources in hospitals and health facility centres practically at all levels is a main cause of problems and shortfalls related to women and child welfare. These human resource deficits need to be addressed urgently. More doctors and specialists, more nurses, social health workers, technicians and paramedics need to be trained and deployed to improve healthcare delivery qualitatively as also quantitatively.
13. The IMR and MMR have declined in U.P. in the last few years but not in the needed measure. The rates are still unacceptably high. The limited improvements recorded so far are the result of increased availability of preventive as also curative health care, immunization of mothers and children, clean water, sanitation and increased field based coverage of social health workers. These efforts have to be enhanced in terms of removing trained personnel shortages, of capacity building, of technology upgradation and ensuring adequate availability of medicines, equipment, transportation facilities, etc.
14. The public, private and voluntary sectors have to play progressive and socially motivated roles in

the delivery of educational and health services to women and children. Private sector should be incentivised to play its role working together in partnership with government agencies. But, appropriate regulation is also needed to protect people from exploitation by it.

15. In women's welfare contexts it is essential and important to reduce MMR and provide quality reproductive healthcare that is accessible. The "focus of health provisioning for women has to be on planning for women's survival and health throughout the life-cycle".
16. Women and Child Welfare Programmes are handled by many government departments and agencies in U.P. These need to be co-ordinated. That objective can, in all likelihood, be achieved through a high level empowered State Women & Child Welfare Council that should be headed by the Chief Minister of the State.
17. The total budgetary support (planned non-plan) for programmes of Women and Children Development is still limited and it needs to be very substantially enhanced. In global, historical and cultural contexts, vehement and repeated voices have been raised in different countries for seeking and achieving equal rights for women. In fact such voices have been raised widely across countries in the last two centuries through movements for women's suffrage and for their rights. In fact respect and care for women is an essential part of India's cultural and historical heritage. And this can be no better expressed than through the well known words of wisdom that have come down to us through ages:

**“YATRA NARYASTU PUJYANTE  
RAMANTE TATRA DEVTA”**