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DEVELOPMENT POLICY, PLAN IMPLEMENTATION AND SCHEDULED CASTE WOMEN

[A Sociological Study of Agra District of Uttar Pradesh]

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Abstract: - "I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress which women have achieved" – **Dr. B.R. Ambedkar**

Women's welfare is the greatest need of today. In this study an attempt has been made to measure the reach and impact of different welfare and development programmes on scheduled caste women in rural area of Agra district of Uttar Pradesh. The study, based as it is on hard field data, leads to certain broad generalizations and conclusions. The analysis reveals that as a result of the proper implementing and utilization of the different government schemes, the social status of the scheduled caste women has certainly moved on the improvement side. The finding suggest The officials at the block level do not function in a systematic and planned manner and usually adopt an easier mode of functioning such as financing of the schemes without paying any attention on the requisite infrastructural facilities. It is therefore suggested that before offering any scheme to the beneficiaries under the programme, plans based on local resources should be prepared.

Keywords: scheduled caste women, development policy.

INTRODUCTION:

Development must be redefined as an attack on the chief evils of the world today: malnutrition, disease, illiteracy, slums, unemployment and inequality. Measured in terms of aggregate growth rates, development has been a great success. But measured in terms of jobs, justice and the elimination of poverty, it has been a failure or only a partial success. (Paul P. Streeten, Former Director, World Development Institute) The Government of India had in the new millennium by declaring the year 2001 as 'Women's Empowerment Year' to focus on a vision 'where women are equal partners like men'. The most common explanation of 'women's empowerment' is the ability to exercise full control over one's actions. The last decades have witnessed some basic changes in the status and role of women in our society. There has been shift in policy approaches from the concept of 'welfare' in the seventies to 'development' in the eighties and now to 'empowerment' in the nineties.

This process has been further accelerated with some sections of women becoming increasingly self-conscious of their discrimination in several areas of family and public life. They are also in a position to mobilize themselves on issues that can affect their overall position.

Rationale for Scheduled Caste Women in Development Policy:

One of the premises of scheduled caste women in development policy is that gender-roles constitute a key variable in the socio-economic condition of any country one that can be decisive in the success or failure of development plans. Research from the last decade portrays a fairly consistent pattern of findings that in most developing countries, females differ from men in their:

access to and control over productive resources;
stakes in development outcomes;
Responses to incentives introduced to encourage development.

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Briefly stated, the constraints which women face in the task of self and therefore national-development are often different constraints than those men face. The particular ways in which females are constrained function as limitations to the overall development process itself. Some constraints relate to socio-cultural norms of Indian society structure as well as physical mobility, while others derive from the pre dominant sexual division of labor and the consequent segregation of women in the economy. Time can also act as a constraint when women must fulfill childcare, home production, and market responsibilities.

The implications of these differences for development planners are substantial. The experience of the past ten years tells us that the key issue underlying the women in development concept is ultimately an economic one: misunderstanding of gender differences, leading to inadequate planning and designing of projects, results in diminished returns on investment. Gender, therefore, is a critical category of analysis in their work, which has not received sufficient attention to date. It is observed that the Government programmes - especially those pertaining to SC and ST women welfare are never taken seriously, and there is no effective monitoring system to pinpoint the failures of the plan objectives. There are diversion of resources and lack of utility of the schemes. Therefore, the condition of these women of such communities is still remained very miserable. Therefore, remedial measures and effective course corrections should have to be implemented. Most of the SC and ST women are still striving to fulfill their basic needs of food, clothing and shelter. Besides these, today they require better opportunities to live in dignity and self-respect. Hence, ample opportunities should be made available to them, which would ensure them a secured and dignified life in this 21st century.

All these evidences show that the process of gender equality and women's empowerment still has a long way to go and may even have become more difficult in the recent years. The main reason for the contradiction is that, targeted schemes tend to have only limited impact when the basic thrust of development is not reaching an average woman, making her life more fragile and vulnerable. To make a positive change basic infrastructure should be provided in every village and city.

Thus there is a need to have women-friendly socio-economic policies that can enhance their social and economic position and make them self-reliant. There are no doubts about the fact that development of women has always been the central focus of planning since Independence. Empowerment is a major step in this direction but it has to be seen in a relational context. A clear vision is needed to remove the obstacles to the path of women's emancipation both from the government and women themselves. Efforts should be directed towards all round development of each and every section of Indian women by giving them their due share.

OBJECTIVES

(1)To find out the level of awareness exist among scheduled caste women. (2)To find out the operational status of various developmental programmes in the study area. (3)To find out the level of changes in the socio, economic, political, educational and health status of Scheduled caste women due to the intervention of government and its policies and plans.

METHODOLOGY

To explore a sociological perspective qualitative analysis will be made. This will be done by understanding and involved interactive process. Apart from this an analytical and explorative method will be used to explore the secondary sources. Extensive review of literature will be made. A well-knitted interview schedule will be prepared and finalized through a pilot survey and then it will be used for collection of data. Moreover, apart from this a quasi-participatory observation method will be followed besides focused interview of development authorities and government officials.

Blocks had been selected on the basis of the following criteria to ascertain the impact of development programmes of the target groups. There are total fifteen number of blocks in Agra district out of fifteen blocks 0.6 percent blocks (i.e four blocks) will be selected on the basis of following criteria purposively.

- (1)Two blocks has been selected on the basis of their distance from district headquarter, BaroliAheer block is the nearest whereas JaitpurKalan block is located is a far of distance from District headquarter.
- (2) Other two blocks has been selected on the basis of the literacy rate. The block which has higher literacy rate namely Ethmadpur and the other blocks namely Fathehabad block which has lowest literacy will be selected purposively.

Selection of Villages:

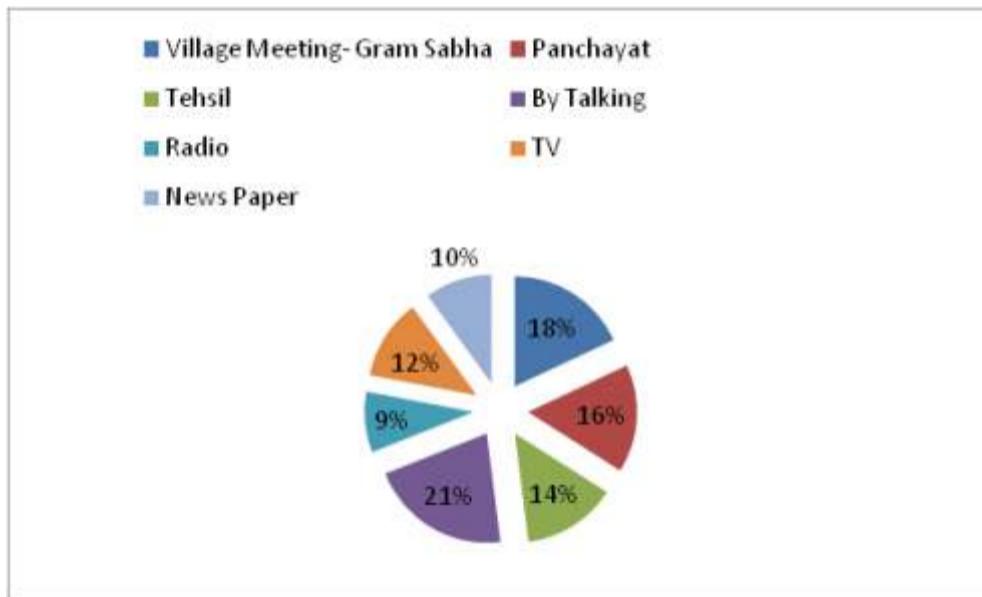
From these four blocks 20 villages will be randomly selected and from one block minimum 5 villages will be selected purposefully.

SELECTION OF RESPONDENTS:

The respondents to this study will be village level scheduled caste women who are the beneficiaries of developmental policies and programmes. A beneficiary list of various programmes will be collected from the block office and on the basis of random sampling the respondents will be selected. The total respondents will be three hundred. From each village fifteen will

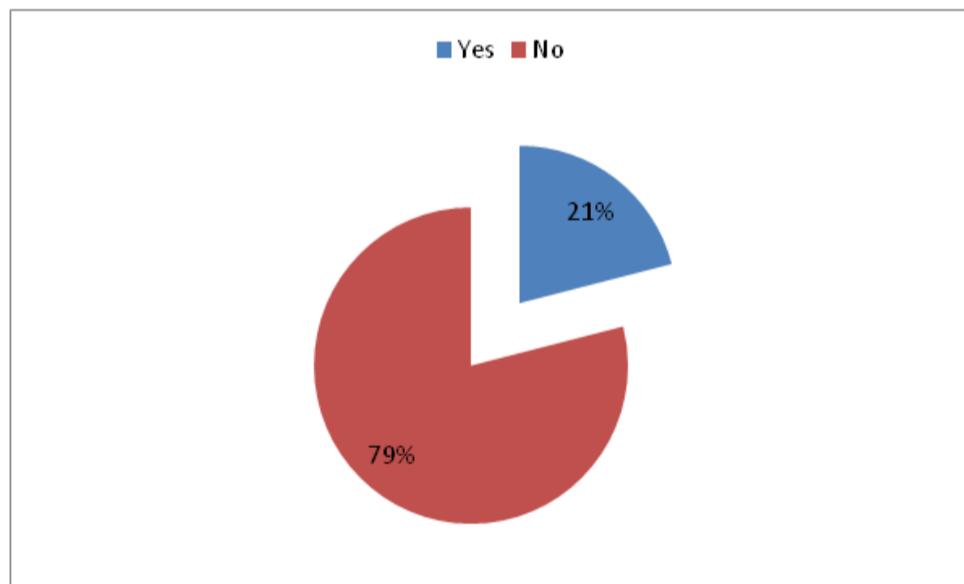
be interviewed.

Source of Information about Development Programme



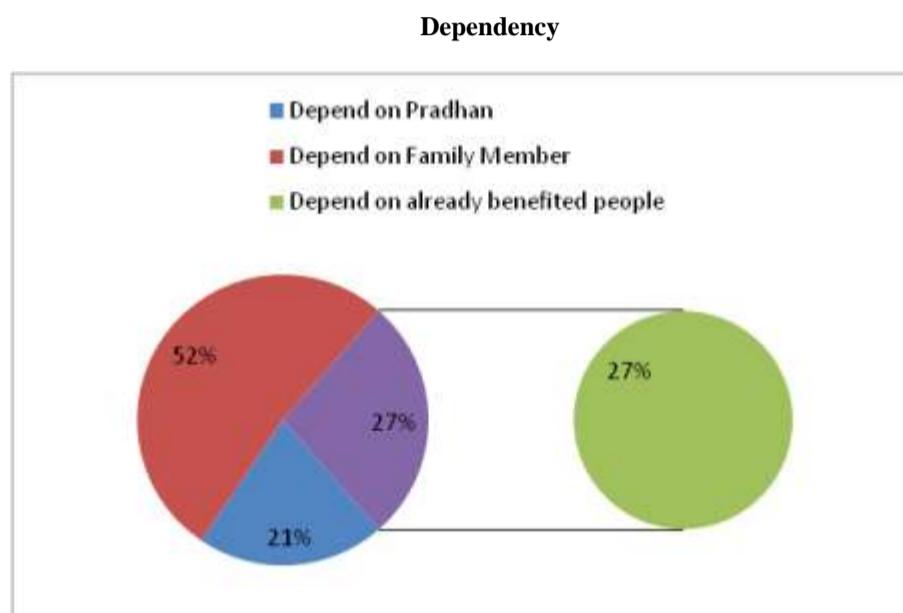
Development programmes aims at improving people's livelihood in an equitable and sustainable manner, both socially and environmentally through better access to assets (natural, physical, human, technological and social capital) and services and control over productive capital (in its financial or economic and political forms) that enable them to improve their livelihood on a sustainable and equitable basis. Above figure presented the data related to the source of information from where the respondent can find the information about development programmes. 21% of the respondents became aware about the development programmes by interacting each other. 18% respondents get the information in village meetings of gram sabha, further 16% from panchayat, 14% from Tehsil, and 12% respondents receives the information from radio. Thus it may be concluded that most of the information disseminates through the informal interaction among the members.

Getting Benefits of Government Plans and Policies



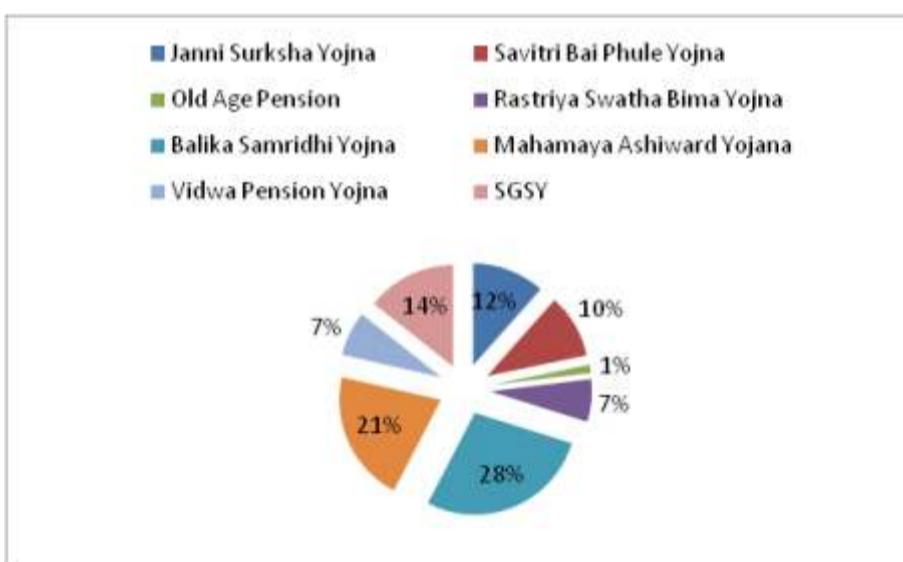
Government plans and policies play a vital role for better development and growth. It improves the living standard of the people. Above figure is concerned with government plans and policies; this table shows that 79% respondent did not receive the benefit of government plans and policies directly or without any middleman. Only 21% of the respondents are able

to exploit it. It means most of the respondents are not getting benefits of government plans and policies.



The above picture explains that who mediates between the beneficiaries and the government and help the respondents in getting the benefits of plans and policies. According to this table 52% respondents are depends only on their family members. 27% respondents depend on already benefited people and approximately one fourth of them receive help from the panchayatpradhan. Thus it may be concluded that most of the respondents depends on their family members.

Taken Benefits of Women Development Policies



Source: Field Based Data

The above figure show that the beneficiaries of different government policies in the field of education, health, and livelihood. In this table the numbers of beneficiaries have increased in comparison to actual respondent because many of the respondents are taking benefits from more than one scheme. It is the multiplicity of different schemes which gets reflected in increased number of respondents. Here most of the respondents are utilizing the BalikaSamridhiYojna (27%) and MahamayaAshirwadYojna (21%).

After taking Benefits Change in Scheduled Caste Women

Scheduled Caste Women									
Response	Jatav (f)	%	Dhobi (f)	%	Kori (f)	%	Balmiki (f)	%	Total
Increase of level of social life	16	18	17	20	13	24	9	13	55
Women become self dependant	25	27	22	25	12	23	16	24	75
Women get power of decision making	17	19	18	21	13	25	16	23	64
Increasing of social interaction of women	33	36	30	34	15	28	28	40	106
Total	91	100	87	100	53	100	69	100	300

Source: Field Based Data

The above table explains about the changes in the lives of respondents. Due to better plans and policies, 106% respondents experienced the increasing of social interaction of women in the public sphere, 75% of the respondents became self-dependent, 64% can take their own decision and 55% respondent felt that there level of social life had been increased. Thus it may be concluded that there are several positive changes have been noticed in the life of respondent.

SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

The study, based as it is on hard field data, leads to certain broad generalisations and conclusions. The analysis reveals that as a result of the proper implementing and utilisation of the different government schemes, the social status of the scheduled caste women has certainly moved on the improvement side. Now the women belonging to scheduled caste discuss their problems with the economically well-off high caste persons of the society. They have started sending their children for getting education in or nearby educational centers. Some of them now get due importance in village politics too which is very much in accordance with the capability approach which allow for fully democratic participation of all those who are at the periphery. Many aspects of the social and economic life of scheduled caste women are changing and the quantum of the change, though small, is significant. These quantitative and qualitative changes in the life of the scheduled castes indicate that the initial programmes are capable of changing their way of life. Despite its shortcomings the SCA assistance has definitely yielded positive results. The major drawback, however, has been its inability to reach to larger number of households. This does not, however, mean that something has not been done which has helped enhancing the capabilities of the downtrodden. An effort step has been taken and what is necessary to be done is its effective implementation in the right spirit. It is expected that as the programme expands and the members of the scheduled castes become more conscious and informed of their rights and duties, the loopholes that plague such schemes will get plugged effectively and bring them at par with other segments of the society.

The main recommendations, emerging from the analyses of the data, are presented hereunder.

The officials at the block level do not function in a systematic and planned manner and usually adopt an easier mode of functioning such as financing of the schemes without paying any attention on the requisite infrastructural facilities. It is therefore suggested that before offering any scheme to the beneficiaries under the programme, plans based on local resources should be prepared. Care should also be taken to ensure that schemes so selected for finance are viable and adequate infrastructural facilities available in the region.

For the proper implementation of the welfare programmes the process of governance need to be made more accountable and transparent.

The loopholes and complexity of the system works as a major hurdle for the maximum achievement of goals. The mechanism for government schemes should be made simpler and hassle free.

All these government initiative and efforts will brought positive results only if the perception of the upper caste India became more accommodating and adopting for scheduled castes.

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