

DRAVIDIAN MODEL FOR INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT OF GIRLS IN TAMIL NADU- A STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The pace of a nations' development hinges on equitable and sustainable growth of its people from all strata of the society. The sluggish development of India can be attributed to uneven growth due to the existing stratification of the society based on caste, gender, class among other things. To ensure equitable growth by removing inequalities, sustained policy interventions by the Government is vital. Fundamental Rights assures certain rights to people. Part IV of the Constitution directs the Government to provide good governance enriching and uplifting the lives of the people. Many welfare policies are implemented by the Government of India. This research paper analyses the Dravidian model of development and inclusive growth in Tamil Nadu pertaining to policies towards education of girls and its impact on socio-economic indices of the state and the individuals. Targeted intervention by the welfare state to end social exclusionary practices for empowerment of girls by educating them and taking care of their myriad needs are discussed in this research article. Among the schemes discussed in this paper some are gender specific, whereas some are gender neutral and they are analysed here since they have a positive bearing on girls' education. The research question that is probed in this paper is whether the Dravidian model of Governance hailed by some politicians has indeed helped in empowering girls and women in Tamil Nadu.

KEYWORDS: *Policy Inclusion, Inclusive Development, Empowerment of Girls, Social Exclusion, Targeted Interventions.*

INTRODUCTION

The elephantine Constitution of India is hailed as an inclusive document designed specifically for that purpose. The Indian Society may present a unified exterior, but when the outer layer is peeled, layers and layers of a highly stratified social structure – divisions both horizontal and vertical are visible to the discerning eyes. These divisions are on myriad factors like gender, caste, class, region, sub-caste, etc. This geographically diverse and vast country also abounds in regional and local based distinct divisions in the society. But there seems to be one factor that remains common from the past to the present, be it global, national, regional or local. That one common factor is gender inequality or gender disparity.

The superior status of men and inferior status of women in our patriarchal society is the cause for imbalance in gender structure, affecting gender equality. Its repercussions are felt in all walks of life. A nation's development does not vest on the advancement of its menfolk, but also on the other 50% of the population – namely women. The Constitution makers have included several gender protective provisions in the fundamental rights. The Directive

Principles of State Policy are also loaded with directions to the state to transform the society by ushering new laws and policies. The term ‘policy inclusion’ means the policies or schemes brought out by the Government to weed out specific exclusionary practices affecting different categories of people, be it national, regional or localized customs.

EDUCATION AND INCLUSIVE POLICIES

The socio-cultural exclusion of girls and women and policy inclusion by the Government of Tamil Nadu to not only bring them into the mainstream, but also propel the overall development of the state is attempted in the paper. Of all the policy measures, those related to education of girl children and other related policies linked to their development is mainly analysed in this article. Education is the key to success and development. Democratisation of education is vital for the holistic development of the nation, society and the individuals. The framers of the Constitution did not include education as a fundamental right due to the apprehension of the State’s inability to provide it to all children. Later the 86th Amendment¹ made education a fundamental right mandating the state to provide free and compulsory education for all children between the ages of 6-14. Based on the amendment, Right to education Act was passed². Education is now a fundamental right.³ The Central Government launched the “Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan”, [SSA], and India’s flagship programme for “Universalization of Elementary Education” [UEE] in 2001, with a special focus on girls’ education and children with special needs. It is conducted in partnership with the State Governments.

FIVE YEAR PLANS AND EDUCATION

Five Year plans were introduced by the Congress Government under Jawaharlal Nehru who was inspired by the Russian Model. They reflected the futuristic development goals of the party in power for the nation’s development. The first Five Year Plan period was from 1951-1956. The third Five Year Plan (1961-1966) stressed the need to reduce female illiteracy⁴. The 5th Five Year Plan Period [1974-1978], coincided with the International Women’s Decade [1975-1985] and International Women’s Conference [1975] at Mexico.⁵

The 7th plan period [1985-1990] is important as during this period that is in 1986 the “National Policy on Education” [NPE] was passed, with a chapter on “Education for Women’s Equality”.⁶ The NPE’s aim is to promote education from elementary to college level. It was first passed by Indira Gandhi and later by Rajiv Gandhi in 1986. The later plans also focused on providing education for girls.

¹ 86th Amendment of the Constitution, 2002

² Right to Education Act, 2009

³ Article 21A of the Constitution of India

⁴ <http://WWW.planningcommission.nic.in/plans/planvel/five yr/welcome.html>

⁵ <http://WWW.choike.org/nuevo.eng/informers/1453.html>

⁶ Government of India, Seventh Five Year Plan [1985-1990], Volume II, Planning Commission, Government of India, Yojana Bhavan, New Delhi

The Government of India declared 2001 as Women's Empowerment Year⁷ with a stress on providing equal access to quality education for girls. 'National perspective plan for women' (1988-2000), was introduced by department of Women and Child Development, MHRD and priority was given to girls' education.⁸In the global level, right to education was declared as basic human right.⁹ The "UN Convention on the Rights of Child" clubbed education child health and nutrition for their overall development¹⁰.

INCLUSIVE POLICIES FOR EDUCATION IN TAMIL NADU

The Dravidian model of Government is hailed by the political parties in Tamil Nadu, especially the Dravida Munetra Kazhagam or DMK in short, for having brought in many social changes. They claim that, "The Dravidian Model has brought a paradigm shift, in societal thought, which provides aspirations for the downtrodden"¹¹.

It is further claimed that the "Dravidian model of Governance is a political philosophy focused on providing inclusive growth to people belonging to all walks of life, through targeted social interventions. These interventions are primarily focussed on negating caste and gender based externalities"¹². Let us analyse the policies introduced by the Dravidian parties in power both before and after Indian independence towards not only providing access to free education, but also in taking care of the many needs of the girls.

The research question that is proved is whether the 'Dravidian Model of Development' is indeed working towards an inclusive and sustainable growth especially relating to the policies for educating the girls and other attendant policies that are needed for increasing literacy of women and the nation. For that purpose gender specific and gender neutral education related policies that have enhanced the quality of girl's lives are taken up for this study.

THE JUSTICE PARTY AND EDUCATION

The Justice Party was established by E.V. Ramasami Naicker in the erstwhile Madras Presidency in 1916 with the main objectives of Universalization of education. After the 1919 Act, also known as The Montague-Chelmsford Reforms], the Justice Party members were part of governance after the introduction of diarchy in Madras Presidency. The Dravidian ideology of inclusive growth was promoted from that time itself. It stems from blatant discriminations

⁷ National Policy for Empowerment of Women, 2001

⁸ Kalbaugh Chetana, "A Better Deal for Women by 2000AD", Social and economic Dimensions of Women's Development Kalbaugh Chetana, Discovery Publishing house, New Delhi, 1992 P.180.

⁹ Article 3, 1st Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights, 1953.

¹⁰ Article 24 (2) (c), The UN Convention on the Rights of Child.

¹¹ "Lessons from the Dravidian Model for Inclusive Growth.", Salem Dharanidharan, The Times of India, August 30, 2022

¹² Ibid

in the society due to caste, gender among other things. They realised the key role of education in rooting out discriminations. They were the first to link free meal scheme and nutrition as an integrate part of children's education that the State has to ensure. Let us now analyse the various Government policies to ensure students are provided with necessities for hassle free education. Of all the policies, free meal scheme is of prime independence, so it is taken up for study at the outlet.

FREE MEAL SCHEME

Free meal includes free providing free breakfast and free lunch in the schools and dry rations during periods when schools are unable to provide cooked food. It is a gender neutral scheme, but is immensely beneficial to the girl students in many ways. "Right to food and right to education" have been viewed as twin projects intertwined like two sides of a coin by the Dravidian parties even before independence.¹³

FREE BREAKFAST SCHEME

"School Tiffin Programme" as one anna per day per student was adopted by the Madras Corporation Council more than a century ago on the 17th of November 1920. Despite the reluctance of the British Government to spend money, the programme was introduced in a corporation school in Thousand Light Area of Madras mainly due to the insistence of Justice Party member Sir Pitti Theagaraya Chetti. The student strength doubled in two years and it was extended to two other schools¹⁴. Citing lack of funds, it was stopped by the British government in 1947 despite vehement protest by the Justice Party members. After two years, it was revived benefitting to the students of 25 corporation on schools in Madras¹⁵.

CHIEF MINISTER'S BREAKFAST SCHEME

The New Education Policy envisages the provision of free morning breakfast to school children. Tamil Nadu has taken the lead and shown the way by introducing the schemes on Anna's birthday on 15th September 2022. The Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, M.K.Stalin launched it from the Madurai Corporation Athimoolam Primary School, Madurai. It is being extended to 1,545 primary schools in Tamil Nadu.¹⁶

The cost of breakfast comes to Rs 12.7 per child per day, costing the exchequers Rs 33.5 crores per year. It is proposed to benefit 1.14 lakh children in the first phase¹⁷. Cooks were carefully chosen from self-help groups or SGH's and those women with children studying in corporation or Government schools were given priority. Renowned Chefs were roped in by the Government to train the cooks. The breakfast menu was decided by the Government after consulting nutritional experts. This scheme is proposed to be extended to include around 18 lakhs students studying in 30,122 Government Primary Schools from the academic year 2023-

¹³K. S.Sarwani, "Pandemic, lockdown and hunger pandemic", Shodha Prabha, vol 47, Issues.01.No.18, 2022,p.2

¹⁴Ibid.p.1.

¹⁵T. Rama Krishnan , "Tracing the history of Tamilnadu mid-day meal scheme" The Hindu, 21/02/2020.

¹⁶The Times of India, September 16,2022.

¹⁷ The Times of India, September 5,2022.

2024.¹⁸

Surveys conducted worldwide have revealed that morning breakfast is vital for enhancing cognitive skills of children. It is in vogue across Europe, America and Australia. Stalin, the Chief Minister, while inaugurating this scheme said, “The morning breakfast scheme will go down in history as an eternal and indomitable scheme to encourage more children to focus on studies and contribute significantly in future for the upliftment of society. Neither poverty nor caste should be an obstacle for school children to get their due education to progress in Tamil Nadu”¹⁹.

MID – DAY MEAL SCHEME

Mid-day Meal Scheme [MDMS] is now a flagship policy of the Government of India. Around 120 million children across India benefit from this policy measure. Linking education and nutrition for school students first emanated from the Madras Presidency. After Independence, Tamil Nadu under the Chief Ministership of Kamaraj introduced mid-day meal scheme in 1956-57. It was provided for around 65,000 students in Tamil Nadu for 200 days in a year and food was cooked in 1300 feeding centres and transported to schools.

In 1982, this scheme was strengthened by the then Chief Minister, M. G. Ramachandran, MGR in short. It was first introduced for rural and Anganwadi children and later extended to urban children studying in all classes. MGR made it as the state’s Flagship Programme. The DMK as the opposition party was sceptical about the working and impact of this scheme. But once they came to power, the Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi, increased the nutritive value of the meals by including eggs and bananas.

The AIADMK party that formed the government under the leadership of J.Jayalalitha, invested their time and resources for making the noon meal programme even more nutritious. She renamed this scheme as “Puratchi Thalaivar MGR Nutritious Meal Programme”. In fact M.G.Ramachandran, who inducted her into politics, first entrusted her with the task of implementing the noon meal scheme properly to benefit the children. She consulted nutrition experts who drew up a daily menu for different age group of children in all Government, Corporation schools and Anganwadis for their cognitive and physical development.

Each successive government added their own bit to make this a tasty, wholesome and nourishing experience for the school children. The Tamil Nadu model of noon meal scheme is hailed as a pioneering welfare measure. Inspired by this model, other states and countries followed it. In fact, the Government of India too was inspired by the Tamil Nadu model and started the Mid-Day Meal Scheme [MDMS] across India on a large scale. Around 48.6 lakh students are covered under this scheme in Tamil Nadu, whereas around 120 million children are covered under the central government scheme. In Tamil Nadu, food for each school is cooked in that school to ensure local taste is retained and food can be served piping hot. But for the Central Government Scheme covering other states, food is cooked in Akshaya Patra Foundation Kitchens and food packets are sent to different schools. Food security has a positive impact on enrolments in schools.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

BICYCLE SCHEME

Male superiority and conditional upbringing in patriarchal society leads to many problems for women and girls in their day to day lives. Harassing and teasing girls, is considered men's birth right. Tolerating that is dinned into girls' mind-set. Due to eve teasing many girls drop out from schools, especially if they have to travel long distances. Family's honour is securely fastened on girls and women. Even if somebody harasses them, it is deemed as an insult to the honour of the girl's family. Dropouts by girls in middle school remained a persistent problem. To offset it, the Government of Tamil Nadu commenced the supply of free Bicycles.²⁰

Free bicycles were initially meant for girl students only. Under this scheme, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribe girl students studying in XI and XII classes were the first to be benefited. From the academic year 2005-2006, it was extended to all students studying in all Government and State aided schools. Around 6.5 lakh students received free cycle in 2015-2016.²¹ This gender specific scheme later became a gender neutral scheme was started by a lady Chief Minister. It not only boosted the morale of girls and their parents, but it also helped to retain girls in schools.

FREE BUS SCHEME

Yet another scheme launched by the Government of Tamil Nadu was the "Free Bus Scheme" for school and college students on July 5, 2011, benefitting 27.2 lakh students annually.²² All Government, Corporation and aided school students and college students benefit immensely from the scheme. Though gender neutral, this policy is highly beneficial to girl students pursuing their school and collegiate education.

FREE LAPTOPS

Laptops makes students tech savvy. But not all can afford it. Even if a family has one, the last to access it would be the females at home, leading to digital divide. Sensing the need for such devices in the IT driven world and to help students to tap into web resources, the Government of Tamil Nadu started this policy in 2011-2012, whereby free Laptops were given to XII standard students. This gender neutral scheme helps to reduce the gender digital divide.

POLICIES FOR OTHER RELATED BASIC NEEDS OF STUDENTS

The policy makers in Tamil Nadu at the highest level, with a broader vision of reducing dropouts from schools started introducing many other necessities vital for school students like uniforms etc, from the academic year 2011-2012. Initially one set was given and it was increased to four sets.²³ Students in hilly areas were provided "woollen sweaters" from 2013-2014. Foot wear too was supplied to the school students from 2011-12.

The policy to give free text books and note books commenced from the academic year 2011-2012. Students from 1st to 12th standards were covered under this scheme, which they received in their schools at the beginning of each academic year. An educational kit that

²⁰Supply of Bi-cycle Scheme, 2001-2002, Government of TamilNadu.

²¹ Policy Note, 2015-2016, School Education Department, Government of TamilNadu, 2015,p.19

²² The Hindu, July 5,2011

²³ Policy Note 2015-2016,Ibid,p.14

included an Atlas, school bag, colour pencils/crayons and geometry boxes was also given every year to the students.²⁴ The beneficiaries of the above mentioned schemes are students studying in Government schools, aided schools, Adi-draavidar welfare schools, Government run tribal residential schools and corporation schools.

It is also worth mentioning that both then DMK and AIADMK Governments that is the Dravidian parties are doing great service by ushering in so many inclusive policies. Special mention must be made of Madam Jayalalitha for introducing schemes to cover most of the day-to-day needs of children in school. Most of these policies were introduced in the academic year 2011-2012 by her, some were gender specific and some gender neutral, but at the same time they ensured increase in girls' literary rate. It is co-parenting by a welfare state at its best and so emulated by other states and also by the Government of India.

SOCIAL WELFARE POLICIES TO PROTECT GIRLS

Providing necessities in general is different from catering to specific needs to protect the girl children. Schemes like Chief Minister's Girl Children Scheme (2006), also known as Sivagami Ammaiyyar Ninavu Girl Protection Scheme, Menstrual Hygiene Programme, Cradle Baby Scheme etc. These gender-specific schemes too have an impact on girls' education and hence they are analysed.

MENSTRUAL HYGIENE PROGRAMME

Young girls tend to drop out of school due to a lack of toilets and also general discomfort during their monthly menstrual cycles. To increase awareness about menstrual hygiene, promote self-esteem and confidence as well as socialize to live in the society. The Government of Tamil Nadu introduced the 'Menstrual Hygiene Programme' for different categories of girls and women, especially in rural areas. Each adolescent school-going girl (10-19 years) in the rural areas receives 18 packs of sanitary napkins from her designated teacher in her school. Each pack has 6 pads. Those girls not going to school receive it from the village nurses and Anganwadi workers.²⁵

CRADLE BABY SCHEME

This scheme was introduced by the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Jayalalitha in 1992, to stop infanticide. Reception Centres were opened in the infanticide belt in Salem, Dharmapuri and other places where cradles were placed. Those who do not want to bring up their daughters could just keep the children in the cradles and leave. The Government assumes the role of a full-fledged parent, bringing up the child, empowering and equipping them to get good jobs and also helping with their marriage expenses. The Government may also give them for adoption. In 2014-15, the central government brought a similar scheme, to reduce foeticide, especially in Punjab, U.P, and other north Indian states, known as "Beti Bachao Beti Padhao"²⁶.

²⁴ Ibid,p.17

²⁵ Demand No. 19, Policy note 2015 – 2016, Health and Family Welfare Department, Government of Tamil Nadu, 2015, p.73.

²⁶<http://wcd.nic.in/schemes/beti-bachao-beti-padhao...>

It attempts to stall the declining trend in Child Sex Ratio [CSR]. The differences between these two schemes are

1. Tamil Nadu was the first to bring it, Central government was inspired to start such a scheme 25 years later.
2. Tamil Nadu Government assumed the role of a parent for the cradle babies, but the Union Government was content to be a co-parent only.

CHIEF MINISTER'S GIRL PROTECTION SCHEME & FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE SCHEMES

In 1992, yet another policy measure was passed by the Government of Tamil Nadu under Madam Jayalalitha and named it as 'Thiru Kamarajar Scheme'. This scheme was renamed by the DMK's party under the Chief Minister of Karunanidhi as 'Sivagami Ammaiyar Ninaivu Girl Child Protection Scheme'. Under this scheme financial assistance is provided to poor girl students for their day-to-day needs. There are two parts under this scheme. Scheme I is for one girl child family and Scheme II is for families with two girl children. For both schemes, annual income ceiling should not exceed Rs. 72,000.²⁷

As per Scheme I, Rs. 50,000/- is deposited in the single girl child as Fixed Deposit and Rs. 25,000/- is deposited in the names of the two girl-child family under Scheme II. The amount is deposited by the Government of Tamil Nadu with the Tamil Nadu Power Finance and Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd. This Fixed Deposit is renewed every 5 years and matured amount with interest is given to the girl child once she completes 18 years.²⁸

CASH INCENTIVES FOR GIRL STUDENTS

"Special Incentives for Adi- Dravidar and Tribal Girls Scheme" was introduced by the Government of Tamil Nadu for tribal girls. Monthly cash incentives are given to the tune of Rs.50/- for girls studying in 3rd to 5th standard; Rs.100/- for 6th standard girls and Rs.150/- for girls studying in 7th standard and 8th standard.

SPECIAL CASH INCENTIVE SCHEME

This policy introduced in 2011-12 is a gender-neutral policy benefiting Government and aided school students. The amount Rs.1500/- is put into the 10th and 11th standard students and Rs.2000/- is given to 12th standard students. It is deposited in the names of individual students every month with the Tamil Nadu Power Finance Corporation and the total amount is given to the students once they complete their higher secondary education.²⁹

Likewise, Rs. 75,000/- is deposited in the name of the student under "Finance Assistance to students who have lost their Bread Winning Parents Scheme". On completion of schooling, the students are given that Amount³⁰.

SCHEMES FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

First Generation Graduate Tuition Fee Concession

This gender-neutral scheme for first-generation Graduates in a family introduced in

²⁷Demand No.45, Policy Note 2015-16, Social Welfare and Nutritious Meal Programme Department, Ibid, p.37.

²⁸http://kalvimalar.dinamalar.com/news_details.asp?cat=14&id=7

²⁹Policy Note 2015-16, School Education Department, Government of Tamil Nadu, 2015.

³⁰Ibid

2011-12 provides Rs.50,000/- for the students who join the professional courses and Rs.30,000/- for those pursuing a degree or diploma courses. It is also extended to ex-inmates of Government Children's homes. Girls staying in the service homes with their mothers are given free education up to 12th standard and are taught life skills like computer training, spoken English, repairing electronic items, plumbing, etc. under Tamil Nadu Skill Development Mission³¹. Interested Girl Children from government homes are given admission to 2 years B.Ed. course at Secondary Grade Teacher Training Institute, Tambaram at Chennai.

Girls from low-income groups pursuing PG courses in Government or Government aided arts and science colleges are exempted from payment of special fees and examination fees. Rs.10 lakhs is set aside by the Government of Tamil Nadu to coach girls for civil service exams, which are conducted at Queen Mary's College, Chennai, and Sri Meenakshi Government College for Women, Madurai.

Linking Marriage Assistance Scheme with Education

With the twin objective of educating the girls and also provide them social security like assisting their marriage, the Government of Tamil Nadu have brought in many laudable schemes. Parents of girls cannot afford to educate and also take care of their marriage expenses. The state as part of its co-parenting duties reduces the burden of parents and has linked educational qualifications to get more benefits under the marriage schemes. Girls with degrees or diplomas are given more money compared to non-graduates, in order to stress the importance of education for empowering women. The major schemes are "Moovalar Ramamirtha ammaiyar ninaivu Marriage Assistance scheme" for poor girls³²; Dr. Dharmambal Ammaiyar Ninaivu Widow Remarriage scheme³³; E.V.R. Maniammaiyar Ninaivu Marriage Assistance scheme for daughters of poor widows, Annai Theresa Ninaivu Marriage Assistance scheme for orphan girls and Dr. Muthulakshimi Reddy Ninaivu Inter-caste Marriage Assistance scheme³⁴.

CONCLUSION

These are the major welfare policies introduced by the Government of Tamil Nadu to increase the literacy rate and improve the standard of lives of girls and women. When we analyse the role of the Government of Tamil Nadu, we understand that as a welfare state, it has taken upon itself the duty of co-parenting actively with the parents. Discerning the reason for the lower status of girls and women, the Government of Tamil Nadu have looked at the problems from the perspective of girls and come up with solutions to end discriminations and enable the well-being of girls. There are many small schemes not thought of by policymakers earlier.

The period from 2011-12 saw the Government passing innumerable beneficial schemes, both gender-specific and gender-neutral. It is also revealed from the above analysis that the Dravidian parties have immensely contributed toward inclusive development in Tamil Nadu,

³¹Demand No.45, Policy Note 2015-16 Social Welfare and Nutritious Meal Programme Department, Ibid, p.15.

³² The Hindu, September 7, 2013

³³ Demand No. 45, Policy Note 2015-16, opcit, p.10-12

³⁴ Ibid

inspiring other states and Union Government to implement such policies. Hence the claim that the Dravidian model has brought a paradigm shift in society is indeed true by governments' co-parenting and at times taking over the responsibilities of parents like in the Cradle Baby Scheme. By educating and retaining the girls in schools, many other issues like Child Marriage, Early Pregnancies, lost childhood etc can be averted. With educational background, women can go for high paying jobs and have better control over their lives. So these minor and major policy inclusions that the Government of Tamil Nadu introduced has indeed paved the way for a better future.

SUGGESTIONS

The policies and schemes discussed in this article are indeed good, but diluted after sometime. Standard or quality of food, uniforms, shoes, notebooks etc is not maintained after initial few years. Hence those policies that are really beneficial should not be disturbed. Some Committee with Teacher- Parent and local political heads should keep monitoring on a monthly basis to ensure its proper implementation. Politicisation of schemes and introducing schemes before elections should be stopped. The present Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K.Stalin, is undertaking state wide visits regularly to monitor the working of government institutions and implementation of schemes. It is a good move and should be structured well so that all departments and all districts are visited. All ministers and administrators too should do this regularly and meet people and rectify their grievances. Morning breakfast scheme is now only for elementary school children due to lack of funds. It can be introduced for all class students too. Companies and individuals may be allowed to contribute so that government's burden is shared.