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## NEW ECONOMIC POLICY AND WOMEN

So the curtain has finally been lifted and India has at last been declared a "Laizeez Fair" economy, with no regulation of domestic industry and trade, no tariffs no planning and no central control over the gambit of economic activity foreign as well as indigenous. It is the demise of the freedom we won in 1947 to decide on our own the process of economic development.

It is also the final swing away from commitments real or rhetorical to socialism. The stage is now set for complete take over the Indian Economy by the Transnationals of the G7. India has now accepted the infamous GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) Treaty based on Dunkel Draft which stipulates lowering of Tariffs, cut in subsidies and dilution of social security measures TRIPS (Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights) which will require a new patent law which will replace the 1970 Patent Law which is being amended in Monsoon session. This will hit hard the further development of Drug Industry and result in much higher prices for the consumer. Seeds are also to be patented and access of Indian farmers to free and cheaper seeds will be denied. It will run the agriculturist of India and for self-sufficiency.

But the criteria for any Economic Restructuring is of some significance for Women Activists if there is some stake in it for women to better their day to day living and also to raise their social status. Therefore we should judge the (S.A.P.) Structural Adjustment Programmes of the present government from the above stand point.

Women, inspite of all the freedom of voting rights and access to all educational institutions or the choice of a profession, are essentially in a secondary position as compared to their male counterpart because;

1. "Patriarchal" values in family and society are so strong, that the son preference plays a decisive role in determining parent's priority to educate and train their children from childhood onwards. Even the nutritional and health status of the girl child is second to her brothers in family.
2. At the lower rung of the economic levels e.g. agricultural labour and marginal farmers as well as scheduled castes and tribes, there is a definite shift, of Male children from work to school and the reverse for the girl child who has to forego school not only for attending to younger siblings but also

to augment the family income. This is a development which must be taken note of as it restricts female education even at the primary level.

3. Most of the women workers almost 84% are working in Agriculture at very low level of wages. The proportion is still higher in the case of scheduled castes and tribes.
4. Agriculture is also becoming capital intensive and needs new technology. Therefore, women's paid work will be replaced by unpaid chores at home.

Therefore it is evident that in a system where newer and higher technology is the crucial criteria, the weaker sections of society and women of all sorts are likely to be at a great disadvantage because of their low educational level and technical skill.

Because of patriarchal social system, the health status of women is much lower in our society than that of men. Women themselves neglect their medical checkup and treatment because of shrinking family purse.

The new danger that is emerging very clearly in the recent years is the conditionality of international 'Aid-giving' agencies e.g. UNICEF and World Bank. It is incorrectly decided and propagated by the government that family planning or population control is in the interests of women. It is also said that the sole hinderance in the way of rapid economic development or environmental decay, is the rapidly multiplying number of the poor. 'Poverty is polluting' is the often repeated phrase.

They very conveniently forget that the number of poor is multiplying precisely because of the very low levels of living and cramped dirty environment in which they live e.g. slums of the city, no clean drinking water and lack of bath rooms and hydrants. The examples from world history tell us that Malthus was defeated in England not because of the disease and disaster theory which said that men must voluntarily limit their numbers because "the food or corn" is in limited supply." His prophesy that if men are not prudent enough to limit their numbers famine and disease will result in higher death rates and limit their numbers. His over population theory was defeated because of rapid economic development, opening up of new colonies, where British in the past could exploit and get both new materials and food. This resulted in higher and

higher living standards and smaller families. The Europe than faced the scenario of stagnant or declining population. The proportion of above 60 years in population increased very much.

Therefore, the 3rd World cannot solve its problem by population control but by raising the minimum levels of its people. This can be better done by adopting an intermediate technology which is labour intensive and useful in rejuvenating our agriculture, handicrafts and small rural industries by several measures e.g. land reforms, land ceilings and dry farming etc. The unscrupulous option of 19th century i.e. colonisation and genocide is not available to the developing world. They have only to maximise their internal resources.

We, therefore, conclude that these contraceptive technologies and population policy of this government is only a part of the SAP or economic policies of the Government of India. Thus women have to wage their battle on three fronts;

- (a) Inside the Family for daughter's and women's rights in general.
- (b) Against state because of its anti women policies especially regarding dangerous hormonal contraceptive.
- (c) Against society for accepting Patriarchal and rigid religious exploitation of women.

The capitalist world is in crisis and wants to solve it at the expense of poor third world countries. This is "Neo Colonialism.

### Effect of the SAP on Employment, Prices and National Sovereignty.

The following unemployment data shows that it is on the increase.

Years	Numbers in millions
1990	28
1995	37
2000	43 (Estimate)

Another body of fact which highlights the rates of change of employment is:

Employment rate decreased during 1973-83.

From 2.2% to 1.6% (All India)  
and 1.87% to .8 (Rural)

Secondly the nature of whatever new employment opportunities emerge is that of "Open Employment and not that of Seasonal". This effects the women more than men because women have to get busy into the later type of employment near her home in the village or city slums. Overall employment picture is that while population increases at the rate of 2.5% the later rise at less than 2%. The right to retrench workers is also recognised now and worsens the situation.

Therefore, India is not likely in future and has not already gained any thing inspite of all the sacrifices for women and poorer sections of people, these programmes entail.

PRICE RISE			
There has been continuous and sharp rise in prices since 1990-91 when this new Economic Policy was adopted. This is clear from the following Table :			
Percent rise in prices during SAP			
Item	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
Food	11.9	20.2	12.3
Consumer goods (durables)	6.3	9.7	6.3
Non durables	10.1	11.8	9.8

We find that the rates are quite high in the case of items of mass consumption e.g. food and non-durable consumer goods. Durable consumer goods are only for elite consumption. Both unemployment and price rise lowers the standard of living of poorer sections of society as their effective demand in the market is shrinking because of loss of gainful employment and price rise. Therefore, more and more people are driven out of market by these policies. Women have to bear the brunt of this inflation as they are responsible for feeding the family. If they confine House work with outside employment they will be as a consequence deprived of what ever domestic help or household gazzet they previous could procure because of inflation. At the lower levels and even middle classes men drink away the salary and women run the household.

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Subsidies helped Indian farmer (though Rich farmers only) by fixing profitable prices, while the consumer was given subsidised food grains. This is how agriculture developed in Punjab and Western U.P. since mid sixties and India achieved food self-sufficiency.

Latin American and African countries show the results which may be a lesson for us.

Destruction of their "food self sufficiency". African people are facing famine conditions as new Agricultural Strategies and seeds are destroying their fertility and reducing the land to barren tracts and deserts.

Between 1980-90 decade, Argentina had only 1.5% rise in its output per capita, while Mexico had only .5% increase in her per capita output.

Russia and Eastern Europe had 25 to 40% decline in its GDP.

Three years of N.E.P. for India has meant the following Growth of GDP of only 2.9% while previously it rose almost more than 5% per annum.

Agricultural output grew by .4% while Industrial output is growing by .8% Per capita GDP grew by only .8%.

Therefore, the Indian people have the uphill task of defeating these Neo-colonial policies which are thrust upon the poor countries as a way out of the crisis of Rich World's Economy. They want markets for their manufactures to fight the unemployment in their own lands and Indian collaborationist bourgeois and government has surrendered their sovereignty and political will under this pressure. They have a personal stake in the whole bargaining.

That is why they have to spend such a large proportion of GDP on Defence and police so that they can suppress the resistance movement of Indian people against these New Policies.

India is being de-industrialised to benefit the industries of American and other rich nations, our huge internal market is left free for them to exploit new. This is a clever game that Clinton is playing and P.V. is going to pay his abeyance to the mighty American President suspending the Prithvi and Agni Launches.

So there is no room for social conscience pricking and to ensure the human rights of women, tribals and other poor of the third world because it will mean depriving the rich of their conspicuous consumption standards. This conspicuous consumption standards. This process is called New Economic Order which is in essence. Neo Colonial system thrust upon us.

Moreover Indian government has adopted a policy of laissez. The success examples of Taiwan and South Korea tell us another story. There the state directs the course of development by proper linkages between both national and foreign enterprise and capital, indigenous as well as foreign. State is actively channelising such joint ventures into derided areas and insulate the rest of the country from the beneficial influences as in China. The result is that in India the indiscriminatory large foreign debts are accumulating and the country is in a severe "debt trap" where almost 30% or more is our debt repayment liability and we have to take loans to pay interest and repay the old loans. This is a downright sell out of the whole country, worse than the successors of Mugals did in the case of British.

