

Political Empowerment of Woman in Rajasthan



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“There is no chance of the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on one wing.”

-Swami Vivekananda

Introduction

In the arena of personal development, empowerment forms an apogee of many a system of self-realization or of identity (re-)formation. The concept of personal development is seen as important by many employers, with emphasis placed on continuous learning, increased self-awareness and emotional intelligence. Empowerment is ultimately driven by the individual's belief in their capability to influence events.

Empowerment can be attained through one or many ways. An important factor in the discovery and application of the human “self empowerment” lies within the tools used to unveil the truth.

Empowerment of Women

The Oxford American Dictionary defines “empowerment” as “to make (someone) stronger and more confident, esp. in controlling their life and claiming their rights.” It means to give women power and help them face the challenges of being a woman in society. The most significant and longest social movement continuing is movement for emancipation of women. Though the primary goal for women empowerment is to improve the quality of life of women but it has also deep ramifications in social, economic and political scenario of body polity. The media through its reach to people at large has been instrumental although not to the extent desired in supporting the movement for women emancipation by focusing neglect and marginalization of the position of the women in society. Empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social or economic strength of individuals and communities. It often involves the empowered developing confidence in their own capacities.

Empowerment is probably the totality of the following or similar capabilities: Having decision-making power of their own.

“Women must not accept; she must challenge she must not be awed by that it has been built up around her she must reverence that woman in her which struggles for expression”.

Margaret Sanger

There is inequality and vulnerability of women in all sphere of life. They need to be empowered in all walks of life. Without the active participation of women establishment of a new social order may not be a successful one because women constitute half of the population. Women should realize that they have constitutional rights to quality health care, economic security, and access to education and political power. Mahatma Gandhi firmly states that the status of women would not change merely by bringing legislations; it must be supported by change in the women's social circumstances and situations and also man's sexist attitude to women. Participation of women in political process at the grass root level enhances their social status and it helps to solve the local problems.

Political empowerment of women

Much of the country's governance has been left to the hands of elected representatives and the official machinery. It has been increasingly recognized that such a centralized approach has not produced desired results, especially in terms of the inclusion of marginalized sectors within governance processes. Notable Constitutional, legislative and policy reforms within the last decade, including the 73rd and 74th amendments and the continued administrative decentralization through programs like NRHM, have demonstrated the Government of India's commitment to increasing the political participation of marginalized groups, especially poor women.

Women's increased political participation has yielded positive results. First, issues central to development, including health, nutrition, family income and education, take center stage as women participate in the PRI, village development boards and other governance structures. Secondly, women have shown that they have critical information about community resources, are adept at managing funds, result in more inclusive governance and learn quickly about how to lead effective community- centered development. Despite such positive results, women remain largely excluded from the PRI and other local governance structures. Proxy politics, power brokering and gender discrimination continue, and many women sarpanches

have had to face extreme violence for challenging existing societal power centers. In other cases, women are only within the PRI in name, but in reality, it is male family members who hold the power. In spite of the affirmative action in panchayati raj in favor of marginalized communities, exclusion of caste, poverty, tribal status, gender and caste sharply demarcate those who have political power from those who do not. Governments at both Centre and State should not delay any further, to complete the devolution and decentralization of powers from higher bodies (Government of India or State Governments) to the panchayati raj structures. This devolution right now is lagging in almost all the States. The three 'F's' – funds, functions and functionaries – in most States are still in the same position prior to 1993, especially the latter. In the absence of this basic requirement, the Constitutional provisions are not only being violated, but there is lack of clarity at the field level which leads to dysfunctional situations. Other program bodies are being referred to as 'parallel' structures and since they are often better trained and energetic, their presence is seen as being "genuine" people's organizations. The legal and political status of PRI's as laid down in the Constitution gives them a unique status; mark them quite separately from all other grass roots' bodies created for other development purposes. All these bodies should work together. The delay in genuine devolution and decentralization is causing a serious setback to the political empowerment of the locally elected bodies.

Recommendations

- Amend the provision of the no-confidence clause, often used to remove Women sarpanches, to ensure that a no-confidence motion cannot be passed for a year and a half of having taken office.
- If a no-confidence vote is passed, the replacing incumbent should also be from the same social group as the earlier incumbent.
- Electoral reforms should provide for state funding for women contesting for elections to Parliament, state assemblies, urban local bodies and PRIs
- Greater attention needs to be placed on how central and state policies can promote local governments to monitor the meaningful participation of women on the PRI
- Increased resources need to be placed in the political skill-building of women within the PRI.
- Greater efforts should be made towards the inclusion of poor and other
- Excluded women on state planning boards and commissions.

- Allocate funding for time-series evaluation of the impact of women on the PRI, and what policy and other contextual factors promote and enable women's political participation
- Promote programmes that create greater political leadership training for women and girls.
- All development programmes should be created with an intention to empower women's participation within the PRI and through other governance structures.
- Bill to reserve one-third seats for women in Parliaments and Assemblies to be passed soon.

Suggestion and conclusion

In spite of the various measures taken up by the government after Independence and even during British rule the Women haven't been fully empowered. We may be proud of women in India occupying highest offices of President, Prime Minister, Lok Sabha Speaker, Leader of the Opposition or women like Ms. Chandra Kocher occupying highest positions in the Corporate Sector but the fact remains that we still witness dowry deaths, domestic violence and exploitation of women. The female feticide is not an uncommon phenomenon. The male female ratio though improved over last few years is still far from satisfactory. It is 940 women per 1000 men for India in some states it is as much lower as 877. These are the states where female feticide is maximum. The female literacy rate is also lower than the male literacy rate.

The ground reality is deprivation, degradation and exploitation of women specially women from rural areas and those belonging to deprived sectors of the society. The Urban elite class women have no doubt been benefitted by the efforts of women empowerment. A challenge of 21st century writes "Women are being brutalized, Commoditized, materialized and subjected to inhuman exploitation and discrimination. In spite of reservation being granted to women in Panchayat elections after 73rd and 74th Constitution amendment, in many Panchayats the male Chauvinism does not allow them to function independently.

The Empowerment of women has become one of the most important Concerns of 21st century not only at national level but also at the international level. Efforts by the Govt. are on to ensure Gender equality but Government initiatives alone would not be sufficient to achieve this goal. Society must take initiative to create a climate in which there is no gender discrimination and Women have full opportunities of Self decision making and participating in the Social, Political and Economic life of the Country with a sense of equality

Women empowerment connotes Economic Empowerment which implies a better quality of material life through sustainable livelihoods owned and managed by women, "social empowerment" which means a more equitable social status for women in society, "Legal Empowerment" that suggests the

provision of an effective legal structure which is supportive of women's empowerment and "Political Empowerment" means a political system favoring the participation in, and control by women of the political decision making process and in governance.

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