

RURAL WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH PANCHAYAT RAJ INSTITUTION IN INDIA: AN OVERVIEW

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Abstract: Panchayatiraj is not a new phenomenon in India. It was evidence in the several years goes back to more than 1000 years. After the implementation of various legal and constitutional provision, particularly the 73rd Constitutional Amendment act 1992 and 73rd alterations 1993 make the space for active participation of women in panchayat raj institutions and the decision making process at the gross-root level by providing that One-Third of the seats would be reserved for women particularly for rural women. Seventy-Third Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 exclusively created the reservation for Women in Panchayatraj system it's set-up by two ways for the office bearers of the members and also for that of the Chair-Persons and also not below than One-Third of the seats intended for shortest election of the members at each step of the local bodies are to be reserved for women. Therefore, it would be adopted the qualitative and descriptive research methods alongwith collected the secondary sources from books, journals, magazines, appropriate websites.

Key Words: Constitutional Amendment, Women Empowerment, Panchayatraj, Reservation

I. INTRODUCTION

Women population is little more than half of the whole population in India. In the medieval period women were denied all their rights and privileges in the home and outside. Then, women were treated as vulnerable and weaker sections of the society. They were treated as inhumanity and unfairly by the male dominated society. Besides, in our contemporary society women are also enjoying an equal status with men as per the constitutional provision and necessary legal requirements but still; they have aextended way to go. It is truthful and confirmed that "a country empowered if its women empowered". Hence, women's empowerment is energetic towards the enlargement of society. 'Empowerment' defines 'to authorize'. In this circumstance of the people, they have to be ratified to have mechanism over their own lives. Empowerment is an only actual answer to repression, ill-treatment, unfairness mistreatment and other melodies of the society (Murugesan D & Ramakrishnan D, 2019).

During the medieval epochs the status of women social, economic, cultural and political participation was usually unavailable to them. Besides, our present society the definition of 'political participation' has wide importance that not only related to voting rights, but also instantly relates to involvement in leadership position as well as decision-making process, political involvement, and political perception and etc. According to our constitution highlights to eliminate gender discriminations by banning discrimination based on gender and class, elimination of human trafficking and forced labor and reserving elected positions for women. (Prathiba, L, 2017). The traditional role of women has been transformed along with the alterations made by the impact of globalization. In the modern India, only a sizeable number of women had been held the utmost leadership in our political system such as President of India, Prime Minister, Speaker of the lower and upper house, Union and State Ministers, Governors, Chief Ministers, etc. Apart from that, the 73rd Amendment Act related to Panchayat Raj Institutions came into strength and constitutionally empowered the women by giving them 33% representation in the Panchayati Raj Institutions as well as reserving one-third of the chairperson's post in the three-tier system.

II. CONCEPT OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN

The concept of 'political participation' has a defined wide suggestion. It is not only deliberated on 'Right to Vote for women but concurrently narrates to participation in the decision-making process, political commitment and political awareness, etc. Essential role of women in India contribute in voting, run for public offices and political parties at lower levels more than men. Political involvement and voting are the predominantly solid areas of women's political participation. To fighting gender inequality in politics, the Indian Government has established reservations for seats in local bodies.

Political involvement is mostly defined as being a progression through which individual plays a key role in political life of their own society, who has been the chance to take a part in decisive what the shared goals of that society are and the greatest way of attaining these goals. Therefore, Political participation refers to actual participation in these voluntary activities by which participants of the society part in the selection of rulers and directly or indirectly in the preparation of public policy (RashmiSrivastava, 2000, p.206).

III. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF RURAL WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Madras was the first time granted voting rights for women in 1921, but it was only to those men and women who possessed land property according to British government statutes, these rights approved in response to the undertaking towards voting rights were limited to eligibility of literacy and ownership of certain property rights by either herself or husbands. This omitted vast majority of Indian women and men from voting because they were not possessed any land property. This altered in 1950 when universal voting rights was allowed to all the adult Indian citizens both men and women. Furthermore enlarged partaking is happened in both rich and poor states in India (Murugesan, D & Ramakrishnan, 2019). The Committee on the Status of Women had recommended in 1976 that one assenting way to instigate women's access into politics is the formation of all women Panchayats by means of the legislature. The Committee suggested that these women Panchayats would not be corresponding organizations to Gram Sabhas of village Panchayats. They had suggested as a provisional portion to break through traditional attitudes in rural society which inhibit women's political participation. But the current position is, women find it very difficult to face the lot of struggle with men and are able to get nominated or co-opted only from allotted seats by reservation. As a transitory measure, all women Gram Sabhas should be organized (Selvi T, 2019).

IV. RESERVATION FOR WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN PRIs

According to Constitutional provision that 73rd Amendment Act, 1993, affords for voting provisions for women. It has been delivered that not less than one-third reservation of a total number of posts of Members and Chairpersons at all three tiers of Panchayat Raj Institutions (i.e. Gram Panchayat, Provisional Panchayat, and District level Panchayat) shall be reserved for women. The women reservation has been proclaimed obedience in the mind the maximizing involvement of women in the progression of decision making in Panchayati Raj System. Considering the involvement of governance on women in the civilized society, it is expected that the outline of reservation policy on Panchayati Raj system may be an insignificant powerful step to strengthening the participation of women in the political system. In this situation, the enablement of Rural Women is needed for the expansion of Rural India. Transmission of women into the mainstream of expansion is a key concern for the state of India, the persistence of which 2001 has been acknowledged as the "Year of Women Empowerment" (Minaketan Bag & Manjulata Jagadala, 2016). After various decades, In the year 2009, The Government of India authorized 50% reservation for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions. The number of Indian states has implemented 50% reservation for women in Panchayat Raj. The mainstreams of candidates in these Panchayats are women (Selvi T, 2019).

V. STRUCTURE AND CLASSIFICATION OF VILLAGE PANCHAYAT SYSTEM

Constitutional Amendment brought in Part IV, Directive Principles of the State Policy, Article 40 for the established of village panchayats. But this is non-acceptable. Political involvement of women and proletarian democracy has been reinforced significantly by the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Alteration during the 1992-1993 that have created new self-governing constructions for local governance. It also provides reservation for women in Panchayat Raj institutions formed two ways: initially it delivers for the office of the members and for that of the leader. The recent statistics reveals that, India had approximately more than five hundred district panchayats, about 5,100 block panchayats and little more than 2,25,000 village panchayats, nearly 90 municipal corporations, 1,500 municipal bodies, and 1,800 Nagar panchayats. And there were also 6, 81, 258 women designated to Gram Panchayats: 37, 109 women to Panchayat at the provisional level and 3153 women Panchayat at the district level. Role of Panchayat Raj Institutions in women empowerment can be emphasized in different aspects. Such as concluded the involvement of the Indian PRIs, approximately, more than one million women have dynamically accomplished into the political life of India. The reservation for women in panchayat level (president and members) about thirty-three percentage of seats in PRIs. Usually the women's issues have come to the front at the indigenous level and successively state and national level. PRIs through the rural women can essential work on the creation, enlargement, and encroachment of Self Help Groups, Cooperatives for enriched livelihood and conservation opportunities in rural areas. Women representatives in the PRIs are changing local governance by preparing the State to disputes of lack of poverty, inequity, discrimination and gender discrimination. Through PRIs, women are fluctuating authority are obvious in the arguments they choice to antagonism; basic amenities like water, alcohol abuse, education, health, and internal violence. Women are also appealing action against child marriage and child domestic labour, where supporting girl-child education. Likewise, women necessitate using their nominated power to address renowned health care as critical issues. If there is the straight side of PRIs in women empowerment, there is some inattentiveness also. It was despondent but not shocking to find that even the gatherings and duties of Gram Sabha are not recognized to a great majority of the respondents (Madonnah Jebhi, 2018).

VI. RURAL WOMEN ACTIVITIES THROUGH PRIs

The essential participation of combined women members in several activities such as attending Gram Sabha meeting, Women are vigorously participating in rural development programmes as per their proficiency right from laborers to policy-makers. Therefore, Participation of women as elected as well as non-elected members are expanding due to implementation in the reservation for women at all level. It acts as a pull factor for women to voluntarily participate in the meeting. They give their opinions for numerous works and problems faced by them (Gadadhar Behera 2017, pp.1-5). Particularly, the rural women energetically participating in the activities related to the welfare and total upliftment of women in their area as being the members of PRIs. The leading activities of women through Panchayat Raj Institutions mostly take part of as elimination of dowry and female illiteracy, prevention of domestic violence and violence against women and Dalits to prevent the female foeticide, eliminating discrimination against female child, registration of girl child in schools and other educational institutions, to advancement of women in looking for employment in government developmental arrangements, to support

women in attaining economic provision for running small scale business, to consolidate self-help groups and co-operatives among the women, to make awareness among the women about the voting and other political rights as well as assisting better mother and child health care facilities and implementing family planning programmes and etc. (Srivastava, A.K, 2009, p.364). Moreover, the rural poor, with the intermediation of voluntary organizations, join together for self-help group to secure better economic growth. It has caused in the formation of a huge number of self-help groups in the country. Which mobilize savings and re-cycle the resources generated among the members. SHG's are necessary to overcome exploitation, make confidence for the economic self-sufficiency of the rural poor, particularly among the women who are mostly invisible in the social structure. (Singh, S.K and Pandey, S.P, 2007).

VII. DISADVANTAGES OF RURAL WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN PRIs

The constitutional amendments and all other legal provisions also supported to the rural women empowered through PRIs. But, it is necessitate to eradicating the problems of various issues and challenges faced by rural women during the implementation of Programmes through PRIs such as Non-co-operation from the male members they are largely based on the foundation of gender discrimination during the accomplishment of programmes at rural panchayat level. Moreover, undue political interference by the male dominance from the ruling parties during the functioning of panchayats. Apart from that, Interference of male members in the family of women leaders of PRIs. Husband's involvements of annominated woman in her functioning in her panchayat welfare accomplishments and also frequently concrete resolutions are being taken by their husband's and his family members. Besides, Lack of political, constitutional and legal awareness among the women particularly in rural areas. In the patriarchal set up in our contemporary society, negative general public opinion regarding women's leadership and capacity in political participation in rural areas. Furthermore, Lack of literacy and low level of education among the women mostly in rural provinces is a cautious combination. All the above, inadequate training courses and awareness programmes specifically for women representatives at the rural panchayat level. Violence against women has seen an increase by politically motivated by a male-dominated society and etc. (Nagarajan P, 2019).

VIII. CONCLUSION

The above discussions clearly indicate that legal and constitutional provisions also ensured certain rights and functional authorities to the rural women when the active participation in the panchayat raj institutions. The government of centre and state join together appropriate initiatives to strengthening the local bodies through various developmental activities in rural areas for empowerment of women through PRIs. The historical enactment of 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments and alteration during the 1992- 1993 was formed a new self-governing constructions for local governance. It also provides reservation for women in Panchayat Raj institutions formed two ways: initially it delivers for the office of the members and for that of the leader. But there was no sustained development in the rural areas when the women participation in panchayat raj institutions. Our patriarchal set up does not recognized and motivates the women leadership particularly in rural areas. Apart from that, the interference of husband and his family members of women leaders does not allowed them to decision making process by the independent. Besides, interference of ruling political party also influence on women who does not make any decision due to the political pressure. The constitutional amendments, legal mechanisms and existing policy measure not only enough to empower the women particularly in rural areas. The government take appropriate actions along with NGOs, concerned stakeholders, academicians, media organization and others should be create the awareness among the public about changing the mind set of men on women as weaker section and vulnerable.

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