

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH PANCHAYAT RAJ INSTITUTIONS IN INDIA: CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

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Abstract: In the medieval period, the women were treated as one of the marginalized groups in that society, their statuses are vulnerable and their rights were deprived in both houses an entire society. The socio-economic and political participation were generally deniable to them. Only the past few millennia the status of women had raised up by the several reformers who were men and women. In modern India, women's had to participate very crucial role in India politics, such as President of India, Prime Minister, Union Ministers, Speaker of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, Chief Ministers, Governors, Members of Parliament and Legislative Assembly and etc. The formation of Panchayat Raj Institutions from Independence provisions concerning the reservations for the weaker gender and particularly women in the 73rd constitutional amendment. It is factual that reservation for women in Panchayat Raj Institutions has unlocked up enormous landscapes for women empowerment, especially the effective participation of women through PRI's. Even though, there are many contemporary issues and challenges faced by women. Embedded patriarchal arrangement and attitude, inflexible caste system had been distributing and widespread kind of discrimination particularly in the rural society, a significant level of illiteracy and women dependence on male, Apart from that, many cases of women have been used as rubber-stamps. Actual decisions are being taken by their male partners and his family members. The real key powers are still in the hands of males. Many studies have been found that several states allotted 50 % reservation for women who are effective participation in panchayat raj institutions. Therefore, our male society should change our mindset that women are weaker section and vulnerable groups in society. In this juncture, this present paper made an attempt to explore the contemporary issues and challenges of women participation through PRI's. It would be adopted a descriptive research method and collecting the secondary sources from books, journals, government reports, statistics, newspapers and appropriate websites.

Index Terms- Empowerment, Issues & Challenges, Participation, PRIs, Reservation.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the medieval period, the women were treated as one of the marginalized groups in that society, their statuses are vulnerable and their rights were deprived in both house an entire society. The socio-economic and political participation were generally deniable to them. Only the past few millennia the status of women had raised up by the several reformers who were men and women. Meanwhile earliest times, Panchayats have been the symbols of indigenous self-governance and centers of village egalitarianism – true grass-roots democracy. The previous generation of the rural community conventionally designed the governing body of the village Panchayat, to accomplish all local issues and challenges of the people. Mahatma Gandhi desired the entire village to be a self-reliant Democracy with a Panchayat that replicates villagers' voice. Formation of the three-tier Panchayat system satisfied his dream. If instigated solemnly, India's polling democracy would be definitely grounded in the people's voices. Even though, members of parliament and state assembly don't seem to understand the democratic importance of village panchayats or gram sabhas. In modern India, women's had to participate very crucial role in India politics, such as President of India, Prime Minister, Union Ministers, Speaker of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, Chief Ministers, Governors, Members of Parliament and Legislative Assembly and etc (Murugesan D et al, 2019, p.1). The formation of Panchayat Raj Institutions from Independence provisions concerning the reservations for the weaker gender and particularly women in the 73rd constitutional amendment. Women constitute about half of the Indian Population. In the 73rd and 74th Amendment Acts of 1992, the Panchayat Raj System was established in India. This system provided grass-root level democracy. Particularly, rural women were not getting their due segment in the development process. But these amendments made provision for one-third of reservation for women participating in Panchayat Raj institutions (Nagarajan P, 2019, PP.87-88).

1.1. The concept of Women Empowerment

Political empowerment of women refers to the presence of a political system in favouring the participation in and control by the women of the political decision-making process and in governance. The greatest son of India, Swami Vivekananda, cited that, "There is no opportunity for the well-being of the world except the condition of women is improved, It is not possible for a bird to fly on only one wing." (Murugesan D et al, 2019).

Robert Adams defined the term: 'Empowerment: the capacity of individuals, groups and/or communities to take control of their circumstances, exercise power and achieve their own goals, and the process by which, exclusively and jointly, they are competent to help themselves and others to maximize the quality of their lives.

Rappaport's (1984) expressed that "Empowerment is observed as a process: the mechanism by which people, organizations, and societies gain mastery over their lives.

1.2. Constitutional Provisions for Women Empowerment through PRIs

The Drafted Constitution for new India and the Conscribing Committee set up by the Constituent Assembly published its report in February 1948, but it gave no reference to the village panchayats. Numerous initiatives taken by the number of leaders, proponent K. Santhanam, and Shriman Narayan, village panchayats did get an inhabitation in the Indian Constitution. According to article 40 of the Indian Constitution under the direction of "Directive Principles of State Policy" runs as follows: "The government shall take initiative to establish the village panchayats and provide them with such powers and ability as may be essential to empower them to gather as units of self-government". After various decades, In 1988, the Sarkaria Commission was constituted to look into the working of Panchayat Raj Institutions and the basic question of the relationship between center and state. The Commission also suggested that the local self-institutions like ZilaParishads, Municipal Corporations should be considerably reinforced both financially and functionally. The Commission recommended that related provisions should include. Panchayati Raj Institutions as found in Article 172 and 174, which made it essential for National Parliament or State Legislative Assembly to fix the duration for five years. After several decades, various committees recommendations to the formation of PRIs in few states.

Seventy-Third Amendment Act 1992 came into power with the result from 24th April 1993. It forms the establishment for a strong animated Panchayati Raj Institutions in the country. Whereas retentive the three-tier system of Panchayati Raj, from the point of vision of social justice, and political mobilization, the aim of this amendment include: (i) empowering weaker sections of the society, viz., Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, Backward Classes and women in local self-government through reservations in elective offices; (ii) reinforcement the Gram Sabha for direct involvement of the people in recognizing their felt necessities and gratifying the same through Panchayati raj institutions; (iii) creating a mechanism (State Finance Commission) to guarantee the course of funds to rural local administration to enable them to unrestraint their gatherings and accountabilities; (iv) safeguarding decentralization of functions as mentioned in the 11th Schedule of the Constitution; and (v) creating for systematic and timely elections to multi-level panchayat raj institutions through State Election Commission. Thus, in fact, the Constitution 73rd amendment has become a landmark in the Constitutional History of India. (Geeta & Sanjay Mishra, 2017, PP.7-8).

In this backdrop, Indian Women who can essential participation of entirely in areas such as social, economic, cultural, education, employment, sports, politics, media, art and culture, service sectors, science and technology and etc. The Constitution of India promises to women equality (Article 14), non- discrimination by the State (Article 15(1)), equality of opportunity (Article 16), equal remuneration for equal employment (Article 39(d)) and Article 42. Moreover, it permits special provisions to be made by the State in favour of women and children (Article 15(3)), renounces practices insulting to the dignity of women (Article 51(A) (e)), and also consents for necessities to be made by the State for safeguarding just and humane conditions of work and for motherliness relief. (Article 42) (SudiptaBiswas (2016).

1.3. International and UN Conventions on Women Development

The national government and numerous International and UN conventions ensure conscripted numerous virtuous policies to conscious the women about their rights which were "Mexico plan of action (1975," the Beijing declaration", moreover, "the platform for action(1995)" and the outcome document adopted by the UNGA session on gender equality and development and reconciliation for the 21st century, titled "promote actions and establishments to device the Beijing declaration and the platform for action have been completely authorized by India for appropriate follow-up, strategic among them is the endorsement of the "Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)" in 1993 (Sasireka R & Revathi Thomas (2018, PP.871-874).

II. RESERVATION FOR WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN PRIS

According to the Constitutional (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992, affords for elective supports for women. It has been provided that not less than one-third reservation of a total number of posts of Members and Chairpersons at all three tiers of PRIs (i.e. Gram Panchayat, Transitional Panchayat, and District level Panchayat) shall be reserved for women. The women reservation has been announced adherence in the mind the maximizing participation of women in the process of decision making in Panchayati Raj System. Considering the participation of dominance on women in the civilized society, it is estimated that the outline of reservation policy on Panchayati Raj system may be an important influential step to reinforce the participation of women in the political system. In this circumstance, the enablement of Rural Women is essential for the enlargement of Rural India. Conveying women into the mainstream of development is a key concern for the state of India, the perseverance of which 2001 has been acknowledged as the "Year of Women Empowerment" (Minaketan Bag & Manjulata Jagadala, 2016).

III. IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN PRIS

The effective participation of Women's in PRIs may be used both for provision by intervention and as a control method by the law-makers. Generally, participation may be direct or indirect, formal or informal; it may be social, political or organizational in nature. Women's participation in PRIs may take many arrangements. It also refers to all those activities which appearance the women's participation in the procedures and administration, that is, participation in the formulation of strategy and programme planning, enactment and estimation of policies and programmes meant for development targetable groups. In the civilized societies, the traditional definition of people's participation often becomes inappropriate due to lack of time, inventiveness, and resources of the citizen who fails to show the essential enthusiasm or collaboration towards governmental programmes meant for their benefit. Government aid required to generate an institutional infrastructure to encourage prevalent participation. Panchayat Raj and community development programmes were introduced essentially so solicit women participation in the development administration of the government. The community development programme was a method of soliciting community participation to support the

government authorities in improving the social, economic cultural and political participation of the women in the rural areas (Maralinga, 2013, p. 152)

IV. WOMEN ACTIVITIES IN PANCHAYAT RAJ INSTITUTIONS

The effective participation of collective women members in numerous activities such as attending Gram Sabha meeting, Women are actively participating in rural development platforms as per their competence right from laborers to policy-makers. The essential participation of women as elected as well as non-elected members are expanding due to enactment in the reservation for women at all grass-root level. It acts as a pull factor for women to participate in the meeting. Women give their suggestions for numerous works and problems faced by them (GadadharBehera, 2017, pp.1-5). The rural women vigorously contributing to the activities related to the prosperity and upliftment of women in their area as being the members of PRIs. The major activities of women through PRIs mostly take part of as abolition of dowry system and reduce the female illiteracy rate, reducing the domestic violence and violence against women and Dalit's, prevention of female foeticide, eliminating fortification against female child, enrolment of girl child in schools and other educational institutions, to promotion of women in seeking employment in government developmental schemes, to assistance women in obtaining economic support 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, to create the awareness about women political participation in PRIs, conducting seminar and leadership development programme women and etc. (Srivastava, A.K, 2009, p.364).hh

V. ISSUES AND CHALLENGES OF WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN PRI

- I. Lack of support from the male members they are predominantly based on the basis of gender discrimination during the participation and implementation of programmes at panchayat level
- II. Political intervention by the male domination from the ruling political parties in the functioning of panchayat activities.
- III. Intermediation of male members and his relatives in the family of women representatives
- IV. Husband's interventions of an elected woman in her functioning in her panchayat welfare activities and also mostly actual decisions are being taken by their male partners and his family members.
- V. Husbands, family members or other village headmen performance and significant role in the decision-making process of Panchayat activities. Women representatives are considered to be rubber stamp (Prathiba, L, (2017).
- VI. In-sufficient political, constitutional and legal awareness, among the women in rural areas.
- VII. The negative public perception of women's leadership and capacity in political participation in rural areas.
- VIII. Illiteracy and low level of education among the women particularly in rural areas is a cautious coalition to insufficient knowledge and conscious about leadership.
- IX. Inadequate training courses and awareness programmes particularly for women representatives at the local panchayat level.
- X. Dominance and atrocities of elected male members of the panchayat, legislative and parliamentarians.
- XI. Violence against women has seen an increase by politically motivated by a male-dominated society and etc. (Nagarajan, P, 2019, p.89)
- XII.

Moreover, women are facing a lot of issues and challenges to implementations of their goals in PRIs. The financial situations of the Panchayat Raj Institutions are also not so well. As a result, women are incapable of implementation appropriately and efficiently the 29 items assigned to them. In such a circumstance, their development objectives will continue only on paper. "If the size of resources is insignificant in comparison to local necessities, it consequences in the scarcity of funds for an enormous number of activities... Generally, Panchayat Raj Institutions have a low level of interior funding as compared to their local necessities. The representatives are frequently reliant on outside funds, which are in the arrangement of grants disseminated over a large number of Panchayat Raj Institutions and are quite insufficient to cater to the monumental task of strengthening local development base (Geeta& Sanjay Mishra, 2017, PP. 10-11).

VI. CONCLUSION

It also attempts to conclude that the village people are not at all aware of egalitarian devolution and effective participation in politics. This present paper also found that the predominant male classes associated with the Panchayat Raj Institutions control some women representatives' utmost of the times in their role performance. Therefore, men influence to women leaders in their role performance almost interrupts the strength of women reservation. Subsequently, political parties, specifically, the prevalence of ruling party interference over the Panchayat Raj Institutions violate the very essence and viewpoint of democratic devolution and grassroots democracy. Hence, it is clear that a number of factors have been influencing grassroots legislations in the Panchayat Raj Institutions. Such factors as unrestricted consciousness, involvement in elections, the welfare of the grassroots, and fulfillment on the functioning of local bodies, improve the standard of education, rural co-operative banking sectors, strengthening the SHGs and also voters. There is a need to encourage women's participation in other kinds of groups and associations which contribute to an atmosphere of leadership by women as well as supporting training, the creation of awareness about effective participation and networking for elected women. The political empowerment of rural women has become one of the most important concerns in our present scenario. It's not only possible alone by the Government. while the Government should take necessary action along with political parties, lawmakers, social activists, academicians, and public participation to create gender equality and give the opportunity to women for self-decision making and effective participation in their political life of the state with a sense of equality. So the strict implementation of rural women empowerment in all levels of politics, not only with respect to the reservation, without the interference of families, dominant males, and any other social force is highly indispensable for the future of women and nation-building.

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