

Empowerment of Women Through Political Participation

Suchismita Mohanty

Ph. D Research Scholar,
Department of Sociology, Ravenshaw University, Odisha

ABSTRACT

The process which help people to govern their life style by performing the important matters in society is known as empowerment. It is a multidimensional process occurs within different part of the society and also in different sphere such as sociological, psychological and economic sphere. It is a process through which individuals control their own life and participate in decision making process that affects their day to day life. Like men, women are playing a crucial role in progress of all society. Generally empowerment of women is a broad area and there are avalanche of literature and empirical research at the national and international level which shed light on the different aspects of empowerment of women. Empowerment of women is the most important matter across the world which create a field where women are given choice to make their own choices, to form their independent decision for their personal development further as social development. The important instrument for empowerment is participation in the politics and taking their own decision. Political empowerment of female denotes their role in political sphere including involvement in politics and take decision in the governance process. Participation in politics has been considered as any legitimate methods to effect the choice of community plans and government matter to choose political leaders at both native and state level. Women's participation in governance structures is necessary for their actual empowerment.

Key words: *Empowerment, Progress, Political, Politics, Participation.*

INTRODUCTION

In every society women play a crucial role in the development of society as men. Their role in the society has always been undervalued and they occupy an inferior position which has been prevailing in every societies and in all ages however the mind-set differs from one society to another and form different time. Mankind has witnessed several changes over the ages but men's monopoly unilaterally in society may be a queer truism. Women analogically the fifty percentage of the firmament, being ceaselessly deprived and belittled by men is an age old custom. Suppressing voices of the oppressed and women is a common fact of the history of all civilizations. Women rarely enjoy the status compared to men are doing in society and also discriminated. In the words of Choudhry, from the

beginning of human civilisation patriarchy has been the foremost truth to describe the relationship between male and female within the human society. The feminist scholar claims that the whole world was governed and

Address for correspondence :

Suchismita Mohanty
Ph. D Research Scholar
Department of Sociology, Ravenshaw University, Odisha
Email- suchismithaa@gmail.com
ORCID ID -0000000207523299.

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non Commercial Share Alike 4.0 License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work non commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

For reprints contact: voiceforvoiceless2013@gmail.com

Received	Reviewed	Accepted	Published
17-Aug-2022	18-Sept-2022	29-Oct-2022	10-Nov-2022
Volume	Issue	Nov.	ISSN
No. 4	No. 2	2022	2583-1852(P)

How to cite this article: Mohanty S. 2022. Empowerment of Women Through Political Participation. *THE THIRD VOICE REALITY AND VISION*. Vol No-4, Issue No-2, November; P: 21-27. DOI : 10.5281/zenodo.7774300

ACCESS THIS ARTICLE ONLINE

Quick Response Code:



Available online at :
thirdvoice.voiceforvoiceless.in

DOI: doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7774300
Article No - TVRV00019

controlled by the men. Every societies and races dominated by patriarchy. Hence, women have occupied secondary position within the world. As Simon De Beavoir in her book 'The Second Sex' explains that women are treated as second sex, inferior to men. Women are not responsible for their position in the society, they are always need to depends upon men and have no power. They have no status but having different roles. They have no rights to take any decision but have over loaded with duties. In words of Ann Oakley who says that as a social part sex has polarised and grouped primarily. The physical and social separation of the sexes is effectively widespread. The sexual differences spread in societal role and in financial activities in which it takes the form that concern with supremacy and subordination. Hence, gender irregularity is a universal occurrence. Still gender equality movements have not produced their expected results. Gender inequality is well imitated in their disproportion relation within different civilisations of the world. While there are vital socio cultural impacts that the mortality rate of lower age women higher than men. Their participation in different process such as political and economic is very limited and also unable to get different life chance like education, health and nutrition. They are economically marginalized, isolated in participating political process and humiliated socially. The idealized woman within the creation of the Creator who is meant to be placed on a pedestal to be worshipped by man contrasts violently with the widespread practice of gender inequality. Though dreaming of an energetic society, impoverishing women socially, economically and politically in patriarchy, is just a nightmare but empowering them it can smoothly be done. Both women and men have their equal and distinct contribution for creating a virtual society. Nehru enunciated that the upliftment of women leads to the upliftment of state, society and nation.

Generally empowerment means 'to empower' and 'give power to someone'. The term empowerment firstly used in the 17th century which means give authority to someone and give membership for working. So it is a difficult idea. Though, it refers to the transmission of power in a very changing more than a period of time. Empowerment could be a process through which one can increase his/her position within the society. Generally empowerment means giving power to someone. In empowerment power is that the basic concept. In a broader sense Professor Ishita Mukhopadhyaya (2003) explain empowerment as the process by which the people who have no power needs to be empowered.

She opines that, it means get free from deprivation; it provides idea and information for existence in the groups by their own effort as well the resources create idea system. Empowerment is a multidimensional social process which helps people to identify significant issues and to increase regulate their lives and society. It occurs within social, emotional and monetary sphere and also at several spheres like individual, group and community. It is a process through which individuals control their own life and participate in decision making process that affects their day to day life. The individual having no power get the ability and talent to require decision and to form choices that affects their lives through the decision making process. It is a chief component of progress through which individuals take necessary steps eradicate hindrances. Especially empowerment means the collective action by the oppressed and underprivileged to overcome the hindrances of structural dissimilarity which have formerly put them in a deprived position. Broadly it means individual and negligible groups gaining thinking power and perform liberally to realize their expectations and ambition as fully and equally participating in the societal activities. Thus empowerment means growing both the ability of persons or groups to make purposeful selections and their ability to alter these selections into preferred activities and consequences. (Narayan 2005:40). Empowerment can exhibit as confrontation of individual activity still as in group mobilization that increase the choice of activities in all fields such as economic, political, socio-cultural, personal life which vary from time to time. Hence it is multidimensional activities to achieve self-possession and significant contribution in higher cognitive process. Economist Bina Agarwal states that empowerment is a process which increase the flexibilities of demerits and powerlessness of persons to alter for their profit that inferior them on the basis of socio-economic and political participation prevails in the society. Traditionally in India, ladies had enjoyed equal opportunities and equal status, in religion, property and education. In Vedic Period, a man was seems imperfect without a woman. In this period, there were many educated women gave respect as advisors such as gargi, Apala, Lopamudra and Ghosha. However, there was no discrimination among the men and women apart from the patriarchal system prevails in society and women enjoy a satisfactory position. In India during this period, both male and female got equal education and women were also take participation in the discussions and free to share their thoughts. This period also called by the historians as the golden age of Indian culture. Men's position was relatively dissimilar

than women. Throughout the Buddhist and Jainism period, women were sent to different areas as religious representatives for spreading the religion. After Vedic period (post Vedic period), women possess a very low position and status like sudras, participation in the religious education and their performance was minimised. Further, during Smriti period women's position in society was declined and they were subordinated, dependent. *Manusmriti* refers to a woman always depended upon others at every stage of their life such as they depend on father in childhood, husband in youth and son in old age (*Manusmriti* 5/148). In this period women have no property rights and became a subject to men. During medieval women's status started declining and their position was deteriorated. The Islamic invasion very much impact on women's status. In this period the Islamic culture was strengthened the patriarchy system. Women have no property rights and purdah system became compulsory during this period. Women's position became more miserable by purdah system and they were also treated as a mere commodity. During this period many evil practices such child marriage, widow remarriage was restricted and sati practice prevailing in the society. In 18th century women were considered as supplement to male in the society. Women were mainly operating due to their home and family. She became a part of patriarchy of men. Till the beginning of industrial revolution in 1868 women possess equal status within nation. Women were acclaimed for their beauty and motherhood but considered as totally subordinate by men. At the end of 18th century they remained forcefully dominated by men mentally and physically. Neera Desai summarized that women face significantly deteriorated and treated as subordinate species in 18th century. She express that women were completely subjugated and having no rights. In India different scholars take different attempts for study empowerment of women through grass-root politics mainly studying social, economic and political background of female functionaries and their role in PRIs. Susheelakaushtik (1993) studied females' role and involvement in panchayati Raj and found out that females' contribution in PRI was very low in terms of number and quality. Majority of them are over age of 50. Most of them belong to the wealthy family and holding their own land, high caste families and actively participate in politics. The representation of women in the committees at the lower level is not enough. G. Palanithurai (1997) in his work "Empowering people for prosperity: A study in new panchayati Raj" has emphasized the nature of involvement of females voted agents in the village panchayats. In the male

dominated panchayat assemblies they are not get a chance to participate in all the meetings held in panchayats. He conclude that most of the cases the women representative's husbands oftencame with them at the time of attaining such type of meetings.

REASON FOR EMPOWERMENT

As women constitute fifty percent of the nation's population. For a balanced development of the society, each field of the society develops equally and co-operate with each other. In every society gender training and gender sensitization is necessary for gender equality. Through the gender equality the problems of caste, class, race and religion should be removed. The ground level activities should be necessary for change the social outlook and practices that prejudice against women. In India, by increasing their mobility and social interaction creates overall development and they got empower within the society. The development of country depends upon participation of both male and female in national, state and grass-roots levels and also their educational, economic condition and political consciousness level. In 1992, National Commission of Women was made. Council of eradication was approved for abolish all kind of discrimination against women in 1993. When the mind-set of people against women in the family or society can be changed besides the laws and policies formulation the violence against women can be stopped. Across the globe we are in the lowest position in gender equality. In India many things and resources are depleted for the empowerment of women. Still women are unable to control their condition, situation and their activities. In India the developmental model turn into the empowerment model. But besides all the procedures occupied by the Government for women in the ground level there has been no change made. Therefore, for the development of the country empowerment of ladies is very much essential.

FEATURES OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment of women has certain features. Those are the followings:-

Empowerment of women is the process which gave power to women for their overall development including social and personal development through which they were able to take their own decision. Women's empowerment encourage women to be self-dependent, minimise their dependency upon others, creating self-confidence to challenge any critical situation and enabling them to take part in different socio-political activities. Within the

earlier period, women were treated very badly by family and society. They were not given education, not participate any kind of decision making process and were only limited to deed household works like take care of family members, child nurturing etc. They were kept completely unconscious of their privileges and growth. As they create of half of the country, so as to make the country a complete powerful country their empowerment is extremely necessary. There are numerous ways for empowering women. For this Government and individuals take initiative combined. Educating girls must be necessary that helps them became well-educated to create a life for themselves.

FORMS OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment might be understood into five types such as societal, educational, economic, psychological and political. Zaveri Mansi N. and Shas Nisarg P. in their work "Women empowerment in 21st century why and how? Opines that many legislative and constitutional provision and many advanced policies has been passed by the government of India for increasing women's position within the society. Government actions would not be enough to achieve this purposes. To minimise the sexual coordination feeling among the masses some actions were adopted by the society. Through the sense of equity women have able to get opportunities to participate in the decision making processes taking concern in political, social and financial survival. Empowerment of women could only be accomplished if their social, educational and economic status is upgraded. Development programs would be assembled to increase literacy rate and generating talents and ability between females for empowering them to stand on their own feet. In a focused manner a serious prerequisite for a continuous work at all levels to displace the matter of gender inequity. In swami Vivekananda's word "The country which does not respect women have never become great now and nor will ever in future".

- **Social empowerment** – Social empowerment refers to strength the position of women in society which identifies the societal evil practice based on disability, race, ethnicity, religion or gender prevailing within the society. Women get empowered and control their own live through the process of empowerment which is related with feminism. It is the process through which women raise their power and performing important issues in the society.
- **Educational empowerment** – Women must be given equal chances in all sphere. For empowerment

higher education is the most important tool for development which helps an individual for his overall development (The Kurukshetra, September 2012, p.25). Education is recognised as the most significant tool which transform social, political and economic development of an individual. When both male and female get properly educated gender empowerment is possible. The policy makers, administrators, political leaders realised that when a woman is educated she educate the whole family.

- **Economic empowerment** – For securing their live and sustainable incomes people need to empower economically with proper talents, abilities and properties. The unequal chances among male and female creates problems for the upliftment of women in the society. To overcome this problem women need to change their economic status. Women have limited access to resources and they remain caretaker at home. Economic empowerment refers to the role of marginal groups and women in the economics activities of the society and family which enable a marginal group or a community to make their voices in decision making process.
- **Psychological empowerment** – To change their live in the society and to overcome the patriarchy system women need the psychological empowerment which build self-confidence among women and help them to recognise their self-esteem and offers them the prospect to require regulate their income and body.
- **Political empowerment** – Women's participation in political sphere and different decision-making process is vital for empowerment. The term political refers to any action, idea, incidents that relates to power. Political empowerment of marginal group and women denotes their role in political sphere including participation in politics, political behaviour and actions related to influencing the participation and decision making process in the governance process. Participation in politics has been regarded as a voluntary activity engaging authentic methods that impact upon the choice of public policies and administration of public affairs or the choice of political leaders at both local and national level. Throughout the globe women are fighting against their subordination, suppression and overload of bondage and everyone forms of worst behaviour both inside the field of supremacy where they will formulate policies and programmes implement them, the existence of women is very critical. To increase their

efficiency, ability and stimulating the prevailing organisation in the patriarchal society women should participate in the politics. It is a process that takes the way who will get what. Participation of ladies within the political and also in several policy making processes is a very significant instrument for women's empowerment. Women's participation in governance structures is necessary for their actual empowerment. P. Manikymba (1989) in her work "Women in panchayat structure" has positively expressed that panchayati raj system creators preferred that rural women should not only take the benefits of progress but it is important that they also provide to it. Analysing the Balawantrao Mehta Committee she explains that Mehta committee deliberated the situation of the rural women at length and felt that they should be sponsored to invent ways to upsurge their earnings and increase the condition of their children. According to the committee women should represent in the village panchayats. The Ashok Mehta Committee gave emphasis on the recognition of women's role in the decision making process and strengthen them. Political involvement creates a platform that helps the deprived, oppressed and those having no power to take part in the decision making process and to implement the Government programmes and policies. Another way having impact of politics provides an opportunity for those who have no power able to raise their voice and participate every decision making process how things are governed but also allow the likelihood of policies and programs being put into place that job with these discriminated groups. Women's empowerment is closely related with their development and welfare. Amartya Sen viewed that development as the procedure for growth of right that providing life nourishment and self-respect and abilities which giving freedom. He thinks that development is crucial to minimise gender inequalities in economic process, the most causal factor to the scarcity a marginalized status of women which empowers women. Economic empowerment is the important process for development. Once get empowerment the disempowered people should step forward and participate within the development process. When women participate in the development process they get a chance to increase their literacy rate, minimise malnutrition and out from the poverty etc. Due to the hindrances by the patriarchal society women are fail to take part in the development activities. Apart from these barriers women being empowered and actively

participate in the development process. With this point of view Karl (2002) says that, "empowerment could be a process implies it is something given to the people both individually and collectively, when people enhance their awareness and ability by actively participating for bringing change in the society the empowerment process is possible". P. Patnaik (2005) in her research on "Affirmative action and representation of weaker sections: Participation and accountability in Odisha's panchayats" state that after 73rd constitutional amendment women were participating in the Panchayati Raj institutions. She studied four panchayats of Dhenkanal district of Odisha, observe that women exercise their power when number of women's participation increased in the village panchayats. Prasad (2002) opines that, "Empowerment is a process that decide and transfer the activities through awareness and capacity building". As women's empowerment is mainly dependable on the social and political activities, they also need to know about the rule and regulation of political participation. Different researchers have defined the term political participation in several ways. It is mainly found in democratic societies and closely associate with power. When they join politics people feel themselves empowered which is a step for upward mobility in the society. The deprived and powerless segments in the society get empowered in this way. By participating in politics people get a chance to alter and impact people's choices and to bring them in their favour. Also they will protect their self-esteem and authorised rights and encourage justice for the general masses. Usually the concept of politics leads to government organisations but nowadays it found in a new shape. Movements, strikes, demonstrations, struggles, protest etc are the major form of political participation. They need not all these things. The empowerment of women means to distribute equal power and authority among men and women by producing a situation that free them who are dominated and suppressed by others. Vishwanath Ramesh (The Yojana, March 2003, Vol.47, p.5) promotes that, "The empowerment of women is a procedure where women were getting power to control their live and increase awareness, self-confidence and expand their choice to regulate resources". But he strongly opposes the concept of empowering women from outside, because he feels that it should only take off within. Further he highlights that, "Generally, empowerment may be a multidimensional human process that helps people

gain control over their own lives. It is a process that provides power or capabilities which implement among individuals which helps them in their lives, their communities and in their society, by the important matters". With relevant women's political empowerment ShakuntalaNarasimhan (1999) opines that, "Empowerment is a process that taking ladies into the important part of state work equally with their male counterpart". SrilathaBatliwala (1995) explain empowerment as the method of getting power to control and challenge existing process. Kamala Bhasin (1998) also states that empowerment is recognising women's role and their knowledge which help them to fight against the insufficiency and subordination. Through empowerment women became self-sufficient and decrease their load of labour in household, strengthen them and encourage potentials for development, kindness both for women and men. The fourth World Conference on women in Beijing (1995) envisages that, empowerment encourage women who have no power to get power and to strengthen their inner quality and self-respect. Bidyut Mohanty (1999) perceives that the passing of 73rd and 74th constitutional bill passed for empowering women. She states that, "the main theme was that it promotes women's role to participate in panchayati Raj system which empower them and get equal opportunity to take decisions." According to her article "Women and political empowerment" (2002) empowerment has been defined when one can modify insights through information. She explain that through reservation policy makers try to increase the number of nominated leaders and also increase their financial liberation, educating them and after studying their socioeconomic status they check women's empowerment. Though, she advocates that in this way we can get a clear steps for empowerment. Snehalata Panda (1996) conducted her study in Odisha she summarized that for the reservation in panchayati raj system women are participating in political process without their willingness. Most of the women who have no idea about politics entered in the political process due to the pressure of their local community or the influence of their family. The women who unwillingly entered into politics showed great maturity in outlook, passion, increasing political consciousness and increasing perception of their role and responsibilities. In her another study in 1999, she explained that for caste system the higher caste women have not interested to participating in electoral process which gave a

chance for the lower caste women to develop their attitude and increase possibility to participating in local politics.

CONCLUSION

Women empowerment is important factor for socio-economic development of the nation. There are so many welfare programs approved by government are introduced to liberate women from the problem they face in society. Various policies and programs initiated by the government for women's empowerment and also their development. The Government need to look for the lacking areas which are important for the improvement of women. For the improvement of women's position many plans and provisions has been implemented by the constitution of India. Not only Government actions are enough for the improvement of the women position but also society must take up some activities for increasing status of women. Society must look at the domain in which females get full chance to take their self-choice and equally participate in political, social and economic life. When women are getting education and their socio-economic status increased by which women's empowerment could be possible. The major priority given to the education which is the main issue. For empowering women and to make them stand on their own feet advance policies must be built to eradicate woman illiteracy by increasing assistances and ability between them. Women's empowerment is necessary for making India a great country. The progress of the country achieved through socio-economic development which is not significant and sufficient. The mindset of men has to be changed. Women has given equal opportunities in all aspects and also participating in decision making process at all levels.

Financial Support and Sponsorship: Nil.

Competing interests: None declared.

REFERENCE

1. Batliwala, S. (1995). Meaning of women's empowerment. *Women's World*, 23-34
2. Bishwanath, R. (2003). *Empowering women*. Yojana, a Monthly Journal of Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, New Delhi.
3. Bhasin, K. (1998). *Why empowering women?* In Sushama Sahay (ed.), *Women and Empowerment:*

- Approaches and Strategies*, Discovery Publishing House, New Delhi.
4. Djakarta Declaration. (June 7-14, 1994). For the advancement of women in Asia and the Pacific. Second Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Women in Development.
 5. Mukhopadhyaya Ishita. (2003). *Women's studies scenario in India. Presented at a Seminar held on Empowerment of Women Through Information and Technology*, Organized by the American Information Resource Centre; U.S Consulate General; Calcutta, Friday, May 16, 2003.
 6. Mohanty, B. (1999). *Panchayati Raj institutions and women*. In Bharati Roy & Aparna Basu (eds.), *From Independence towards Freedom – Indian Women Since 1947*. Oxford University Press, New Delhi.
 7. Narasimhan, S. (1999). *Empowering women: An alternative strategy from rural India*. Sage Publication, New Delhi.
 8. Prasad, R.R. (2002). *Participation and empowerment – rhetoric and realities*. Kurukshetra, a Journal on Rural Development, New Delhi.
 9. Prasad, S. (2012). *Girl child in India*. Yojana. November, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, New Delhi.
 10. Sen, Amartya. (1999) *Development as Freedom*. New York, Anchor Books.
 11. Patnaik, P (2005) *Affirmative action and Representation of weaker sections: Participation and Accountability in Orissa's Panchayats* EPW, October 29:4753-4761
 12. Mohanty Bidyut, (2002), *Women and political empowerment*, ISS, New Delhi
 13. Panda Snehalata (1996), "Emerging Pattern of Leadership among Rural Women in Orissa", *Indian Journal of Public Administration*, Vol. 42, No. 3-4.
 14. Palanithurai, G. (1997), *Empowering people for prosperity: A study in New Panchayati Raj*, New Delhi: Kaniska Publishers.
 15. Panda Snehalata (1996), *Emerging Pattern of Leadership among Rural Women in Orissa*, *Indian Journal of Public Administration*, Vol. 42, No. 3-4
 16. Manikyamba, P. (1990) *Women Presiding officer at the Tertiary Political Structure*, *Journal of Rural Development*, vol.9 (6)
 17. Manikyamba, P. (1989), *Women in Panchayat Structure*, Gyan Pub. New Delhi.
 18. Vishwanath Ramesh (*The Yojana*, March 2003, Vol.47, p.5)
 19. Assessment of Anxiety Among Students