

EMPOWERMENT OF MARGINALIZED SECTION (WOMEN, DALIT, TRIBAL) AND THEIR PARTICIPATION

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The basic purpose of the Indian Constitution was to uplift the marginalized community. The constitution indeed works for that and realise fundamental rights to empower the people which would ensure economic and social democracy. The work for the benefit of the people should be at first hand and it is essential to have community of purpose, desire for welfare, loyalty to public ends and morality of co-operation as roots of democracy and in this democracy the incoming of the 73rd constitutional amendment has indeed worked a lot. Through this intense effort has been made to guarantee equality to the disadvantaged sections of the population through constitutional provisions aimed at preventing discrimination and promoting social justice. The concept of micro-management and bringing good governance was the primary aim and moreover bringing it to the remotest corner was the biggest challenge in this country. The concern of social justice implied the absence of discrimination on the ground of caste, race, religion, sex etc. in present scenario. This all perspective somehow or the other meant for giving equal opportunity to each and every person in every sphere to develop their total personality which also should work for removing the imbalance of society in socio-economic and political life. Today, in this political lifestyle the competent person is always left behind whereas the incompetent person leads the front. It is indeed the irony that we in live in this democratic country but we tend to live in an undemocratic society whereby the social justice becomes a distant dream. The Panchayati Raj system has to fulfil its aim for what it comes for and for this we indeed require the support because as soon as the conflict between parties comes to existence we start losing the track. This research paper tries to check out the challenges in effectively implementing the constitutional provisions.

Keywords- *Fundamental rights, Social Justice, Good Governance, Public ends, Challenges.*

Introduction

Empowerment is the enhancement of the political, social, economic or spiritual strength of individuals and communities. Empowerment envelops developing and building capacities of individuals, communities to make them part of the main stream society. Education is the means by which societies have been known in history, to grow out of oppression to democratic participation and involvement. It is a powerful tool for empowerment of individual. It is intrinsic to human personality. It carries both intrinsic as well as instrumental values. This empowerment should be there for all. Speaking precisely, the marginalized community has been the most affected in the whole process. It's not that the government has not done anything but what can be the very base is the fact that the implementation at the very ground level is very poor. Today, the incoming of panchayati raj system has somehow given various kinds of opportunities to the marginalized community. But still they are affected by the vicious circle of the society.

The idea of empowerment in its current usage is new, yet it is frequently used in recent discourses on development. It may be invoked in virtually any context: in speaking about human rights, about basic needs, about economic security, about capacity building, about skill formation or about the conditions of a dignified social existence. This idea is also used in the context of the upliftment of the marginalized, unorganized and other disadvantaged sections of society. After all, oppressed groups such as unorganized workers, poor peasants, tribal people, dalits and women are all engaged in a struggle for power and judge the development process for their own experiences. Thus empowerment represents the hopes and dreams of the marginalized groups for a social environment free of inequalities disfavours them in different spheres of life. The deprived people and their organisations at grassroots level are striving relentlessly to realize their dreams and hopes for a better future and empowered life. This study seeks to relate the dynamism of Dalit organizations with the empowerment of Dalit and develop a theoretical framework to analyse their dialectical interaction.

Empowerment refers to creating capacities in the individuals or groups to participate actively in their own welfare. Theoretically, empowerment should be a process that helps people to gain control over their lives through raising awareness, taking action and working in order to exercise greater control. As Jo Rowlands says, 'it is about the individuals being able to maximize utility and use the opportunities available to them without or despite constraints of structure and state'. According to Gutierrez, 'it is the process of increasing personal, interpersonal or political power so that individuals, families and communities can take action to improve their situation'. Thus empowerment refers to building capabilities among individuals and groups through which they become self-reliant and organized.

Empowerment is related to certain context in Indian society. In a nutshell, that context is the contradiction between a hierarchical social order and a democratic political system. Implicit in the idea of empowerment is certain theory of social change, in particular of change from a hierarchical to an egalitarian type of society or in a slightly different language, from an aristocratic to a democratic type of it. Thus empowerment presupposes social change through the rearrangement of power. Among the different means suggested to achieve this goal, empowerment through the expansion of the civic, political and social rights of citizenship is important. It is a way of seeking empowerment within the democratic political process. Another way, as in our country, is by providing as extensively as possible, quotas on the basis of community, caste and gender. If we analyse empowerment of the weaker sections in the light of the above mentioned ways, we find that the government and civil society have often made earnest efforts in guaranteeing these rights to them. However, they continue to remain disempowered and one of the main hurdles in their empowerment is the traditional social ethos which restricts their involvement in public decision making process.

1. Types of Empowerment

Empowerment is multi-dimensional in the sense that it occurs within social, economic, political and cultural spheres. These dimensions do not necessarily move together at the same pace or even in the same direction. Two studies can look at the same phenomenon, yet come up with different conclusions depending on the dimensions of empowerment they measure. Empowerment also occurs at various levels such as individual, group and community.

Social Empowerment- The focus of social empowerment is on building up social capabilities, social status and opportunities among individuals, classes and communities who are denied access to these vital components of social life. The origin of marginalization in Indian context is deeply rooted in the social structure of Indian society where discrimination based on caste, class and gender is largely prevalent from time immemorial. Deep-rooted ideas of purity and pollution governed the social standings of different castes and sexes; men and women were deemed to be of unequal moral worth as were the different 'varnas'; and the social hierarchy was underpinned by a legal order in which privileges and disabilities were carefully modulated according to caste and gender. Social empowerment is aimed at social change from a hierarchical to a democratic type of society where the equal rights of all individuals are recognized. It is about the transformation of the existing social structure by providing better education, healthcare system, employment opportunities, social security measures etc to those people who are deprived of these benefits.

Economic Empowerment- It is the process by which better economic growth and access to economic resources are generated and enhanced. An economically backward society lacks all those dynamic qualities that support and sustain economic growth. This is very much true with regard to the plight of disadvantaged sections of society who are kept away from the ownership of economic resources. Though society, social groups, NGOs etc can play a major role in economic development, there is no doubt about the key role of the state as the most effective and suitable agency of sustained economic development. It acts as the biggest agency which manages and mobilizes resources including infrastructural and others for promoting and sustaining growth in the economic sphere. However, even the state-sponsored, supported and supervised process of development has made only a slight dent in the dense structure of inequality, exploitation and oppression that have played havoc with the lives of marginalized people for centuries. This situation calls for empowerment of the weaker sections sought within the framework of democratic process, as a remedy for them to get their due share in public economic resources. It is in this context that Max Weber's suggestion that the poor, who constitute a majority, can use their own resource, their number, to influence political and legislative decisions for radically changing socio-economic conditions in their favour, merits consideration. In the democratic process, political mobilization of the poor and deprived, acts as a powerful weapon, to influence political decisions which determine the modes of distribution of wealth.

Political Empowerment- Political Empowerment is the process of equipping the people with political resources and enabling them to actively participate in the shaping and sharing of power. It increases the potential of the people to effectively control or influence the decision-making process of the state. In fact, the core of the idea of empowerment itself is its political dimension which highlights the concept of power. In this sense, empowerment conceived as a process which endows individuals, groups and communities with power. They acquire the capacity to make free choices and transform them into desired actions or outcomes. It enables them to influence the course of their lives and the decisions that affect them. As far as the empowerment of the marginalized groups is concerned, their political mobilization has been counted as the most effective way to solve their socio-economic, educational or other backwardness. They should become politically organized as to exercise their franchise for the empowerment of the community. It is a part of the endeavour of the state to empower them that reservation of seats in Parliament and state Legislatures as well as in local bodies is assured. The decentralization of power to Panchayati Raj Institutions by the 73rd and 74th amendments of the Indian constitution is counted as an attempt to politically empower people at the grassroots level especially the weaker sections.

Cultural Empowerment- Culture may be described as the organic whole of ideas, beliefs, values and goals which condition the thinking and acting of a community or people. Understood thus, culture finds conceptual expression in ethics, philosophy and law: symbolic expression in art, literature, myth and cult. It is the normative consciousness of a community inherited from the past and transmitted, with or without modification to coming generations. Cultural empowerment is a process which strives to protect and reconstruct the cultural identity of the people. Viewed from a subaltern perspective, cultural empowerment of Dalits is a challenging task. Compared to the dominant culture which is governed by economic and political elites, the subaltern culture is a counter-cultural movement and a protest culture. It represents the antagonism of dalits against the dominant class structures and their struggle to assert equality and human dignity. Empowerment of the marginalized groups entails sincere pursuits for perspective cognition and analysis of the composite processes of new identity formation, concretization of these groups for the demolition of the structure of the subordination imposed on them and finally the sharing of power with this powerless lot.

2. Importance of Education

The development of any nation depends on its educational system and it is proved that education is the key to human progress and social change. Education is a powerful tool for empowerment of individual. It helps in developing confidence in individual and community about their own capacities, inherent strengths to shape their lives and thus enhance the inner strength intellectual, political, social and economic against oppression, exclusion and discrimination. The education forms the most important and this is the particular thing which forms the base of the nation's development.

If look back in to the history of India, education was never in reach of its entire people. Unequal access to education has been rampant in India. Discriminatory order in the caste system has been instrumental in perpetuating this. Over the generations one section of the society were enjoyed the fruits of the education and remaining majority of Indian communities particularly marginalized sections like Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), Other Backward Classes (OBC), Religious Minorities and Women were denied the opportunity. Right since Jotirao Phule, Narayan Guru, early education movements to present day, education campaigns all are non-Brahmin in origin and they strongly believe that 'education is enlightenment and enlightenment is empowerment'. It helps to make for a better future society.

Some Facts- Indian constitution recognizes socially marginalized communities based on the Caste they belong to. On the basis of caste, Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), Other Backward Classes (OBC) and the religious minorities, and also women are marginalized in the field of education. According to census of India 2001, the total population of SC account for 16.2% of Indian population, ST account for 8.1% of the total. Though there is no official head count for OBCs the National Surveys suggest that the population of OBCs form 41% of the population. Literacy data by social group are available from the 55th Round of National Sample Survey (NSS), which was conducted just 7 months before the Census, 2001. As per NSS, 55th round, the literacy rate of SCs in rural India was 46.6%. In urban India, the literacy rate was 66.2%. The literacy rate of ST population was 42.2% in rural areas, and in urban areas, it was 70%. The literacy rate of Other Backward Class (OBC) was 54.8% in rural India. In urban India, the literacy rate of OBC was 75.3%. The enrolment of SCs up to Class 8 was 19.87%; for STs It was 10.69%. Among OBCs, the figures were 42% in the primary classes and 41.23% at the upper primary level.

Government data on the Muslim community's enrolment in schools, collected for the first time, confirms what the Sachhar Committee (2006) report indicated about their educational status. The findings showed that Muslims were the most educationally backward community in the country. Comprising nearly 13% of India's population, Muslim enrolment at the primary school level (Class 1-5) was a meagre 9.39% of total enrolment figures for 2006-07., The national educational policy (1986) stressed the need of the liberalization of education to liberate marginalized sections of the society. The policy recommended for the use of distance education media in a massive way to reach those un-reached. A large majority of our people SC/ ST's, backward classes, Women and physically disabled remained for reaching out of educational institutions. Distance education provides them with new avenue for getting education (Hemalatha, 1992).

Education is a very powerful agent of social change. If the higher education system is not streamlined or improved according to the needs of the present day, the primary promise of justice- social, economic and political, equality of status and of opportunity, liberty of

thought, faith and worship will ever remain unfulfilled. Education should aim at socialization and democratization in true sense of the word. It is clearly evident that Education in India is playing a vital role in catering the higher education to the needs of diversified groups of students including socially disadvantaged sections. Marginalised communities in India are suffering with lack of access to education in India for generations. For a quite long time Dalits were not allowed to enter to the doorsteps of educational centers and institutions. With different policy in India working for bringing education virtually to the door steps of several disadvantaged sections including Dalits and women, the brighter days are coming. If this system has more accessible the marginalized communities especially Dalits will definitely emancipate themselves from traditional bondages, exploitations and humiliations.

3. Elimination of Caste System- Vision of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar

Touching this aspect in this paper is important because of the reason that undoubtedly the aspect of caste is still with us in this society and we approaching 70 years of independence have not been able to eradicate this. These are indeed not been touched by any of the government but in a true sense the caste division is a great hindrance in the development process. We live in 21st century but there are some intricacies which is difficult to understand when it comes to caste differences. Today, in India a child work is decided before birth seeing his or her caste. The question is that whether we can imagine a Brand India where still the caste system is prevalent. The Branding in a true sense does not check the caste of a person but on the ground level this is always asked upon. My whole perception lies on the assumption that we live in Good Society and there is society where the work is not defined according to caste. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, who chaired the Drafting Committee, is notably considered as the Father of the Indian Constitution and played a very pivotal role in the constitution-making. Though when the leadership in the Constituent Assembly selected him to be the Chairman of the Drafting Committee, B.R. Ambedkar was very pleasantly amazed at the choice and said that came into the Constituent Assembly with no greater aspiration than to safeguard the interest of the Scheduled Castes greatly surprised when the Assembly elected me to the Drafting Committee. I was more than surprised when the Drafting Committee elected me to be its Chairman. Through these words one can easily denote the exact purpose that led Dr. Ambedkar thought. He precisely worked for the downtrodden class and what he expected was the constitution with everybody co-operation and co-ordination because he knew that he cannot dream of a brand India without the support of all and which was easily understood by Dr. Ambedkar. ***The demon in this part is the inhumane treatment given to the marginalised community and we still fight the demon.***

Caste-system in India assigns particular sets of functions and roles even before one's birth, and also provides specific economic, civil, cultural and educational rights to one without a freedom to change. It ignores therefore an individual capability, preferences and choices.

In this regard, the social order prevail in the Indian society provides no entailments, social and economic rights and freedoms to lower castes, and in contrary, gives manifold opportunities, privileges and rights to the higher castes, particularly the Brahmins. Therefore, the fact was much known to the Constituent Assembly that the constitution was going to be introduced in a deeply unequal and discriminatory society. This is probably why its member greatly debated and drafted the constitution with the explicit purpose of dislodging the status.

B. R. Ambedkar, undoubtedly and noticeably, was the man who borne the responsibility to fight against the untouchability and exploitation based on Hindu caste system, and struggled for the untouchables 'rights and carved for them a place in the Republican Constitution of India. B.R.Ambedkar though managed to include certain provisions in the Constitution of India for empowering lower castes, but the fact was much known to him that establishing equal human and civil rights for depressed classes' was not sufficient in ensuring justice and welfare to them unless it would be accompanied by the legal provisions and safeguards to uphold those rights in the case of its violation and denial. He believed that providing rights to all citizens would not enough because the more powerful, the highly privileged higher classes might be able to deny them to lower strata of society. Law therefore should provide remedies against the invasion of fundamental rights. B.R.Ambedkar said in the Constituent Assembly that all of us are aware that rights are nothing unless remedies are provided whereby people can seek to obtain redress when rights are invaded. Within this background, constitutional remedies have been arranged in the Constitution of India. Article 32 provides the right to all citizens of the country to approach the Supreme Court, if their fundamental rights and constitutional privileges are violated by any state institution or individual. This is perhaps why B.R.Ambedkar considered this provision as the very soul of the Constitution and the very heart of it. It is important to note; the Supreme Court later has declared that Article 32 is a part of basic structure of the Constitution.

The caste division can only be change when we change the mentality. When a child is big and he starts understanding the situation then it becomes difficult to extract the character of caste system because it mixes with the blood. What is necessary is to have a system where the education should be given at a very base level that the caste system should be never taken into consideration. The Brand India that we dream of will be only possible when we are free from this thinking of caste else it will surely be a hindrance. Seeing the current scenario, we can say that we have moved into the direction where we don't give much importance to the caste but this environment is not prevalent everywhere in the country and our aim should be to touch it everywhere.

4. Women in Panchayat Raj Institution and Participation in Politics

Political system and decision making process is seen clearly in the changes incorporated in the Panchayati Raj Institution. The objective of bringing improvement in the socio-economic condition of women could be successful only by taking suitable initiatives and measures for empowering them. Empowerment of women will not be possible unless they are provided proper representation in the political system. This objective should be achieved at desired level through making the provision of linking and associating maximum number of women in political affairs even at the lowest level of political activity. In recently introduced Panchayati Raj Institution, the policy for reservation in favour of women has therefore, been thought as an important approach to maximize their participation in the local level. Political system and decision making process in the activities of rural area. Under the 73rd amendment of constitution of Panchayati Raj Institution, one third of the total seats for scheduled caste, backward class, scheduled tribes and general caste women members in Grampradhan of village Panchayat, Block Panchayat, District Panchayat are reserved for women candidate. Conceptually, providing representation to women in Panchayati Raj Institution could be accepted as an important planning approach regarding minimizing the traditional felling of people about the status of women in our society, particularly in terms of keeping women under the subjugation of men, imposing restrictions by the households and society against them in the availment of certain opportunities and several other social, cultural and traditional binding disfavoring them for improving personal life style and status in existing social and economic setting. Consequently this newly introduced policy would enhance the possibilities of increasing equalities in the process of socio-economic development, participation in different activities in mutual understandings, status and role to play in the house hold and the activities performed outside households and different decision making processes of the family among men and women. This would also develop the understanding of women regarding their duties and right about national welfare and its integrity and they will be able to contribute effectively along with their male counterparts. A general perception in societies around the world is that women's major role is to cook food, take care of the children and the household. Different societies have different social norms and values. In some societies both men and women are assigned specific roles and duties. In most of developing countries, only the reproductive role of women is recognized. Under such circumstances, it is not possible for women to participate in the public sphere of life. Cultural factors therefore offer constraint to women participation in politics. Institutional factors may also impact women's political participation. Electoral system with more seats per district and proportional formula for allocating seats can enhance women's participation (Darcy et al., 1994). Quota system is another important institutional device that can guarantee a minimum number of women seats-holders in legislature.

It has to be considered that the inclusion of well qualified women in village Panchayat at the initial state of the interlocution of Panchayati Raj Institution in rural areas would be an important instrumental measure in planning for improving social status and empowering

women. This group of women, if provided representation at village Panchayat level can strongly rise in the issues related to the betterment of women, can play dominant role in decision making process and make suitable recommendation for improving the status of women in the meeting. It creates opportunities for women to exercise more control over design and provisions of services and the management of resources it may benefit. Good number of women competing with men in local politics, forwarding gender related agendas is looked as a way towards gender equity.

Conclusion

Seeing the current perspective, we reach to a conclusion that it is indeed very important to have a system where the participation of different communities should be appreciated. We have policies but the implementation is very poor. What is the need of the time is to work for that. We should not always rely on the government for the work but our duty is to do something what is in our hand. For example, we can slowly eliminate the caste system from the society as the caste system starts from our house. What can be done by ourselves should be done in that sense. Empowerment of marginalized is at the current agenda of international political and social reformers. According to them the empowerment of marginalized is a key to inclusive democracy. It is an established fact that government in state or centre provides mechanism to empower marginalized, because, this institution operates as an agent of politico, economic and social development at grassroots level in contemporary age. In this capacity, it empowers the marginalized, no need to mention that it is essential for positive social change. The goal of inclusive growth as envisaged by the government cannot be achieved without the effective participation of local people and the Panchayati Raj Institutions and these institutions should be considered as an integral part of the governance of the country.