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Women Empowerment : Through Panchayat Raj System

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Introduction:

India gained its independence after the Second World War with number of other colonial third world countries. India has adopted the democracy as the way of governance and needles to say the welfare state concept is the genesis of the democratic frame work of any country either with parliamentary of presidential form of governance women communities have been very backward in socio-economic and political arenas since a long time. Since independence all round empowerment of the women community have beed in the main agenda of governance of the successive governments at the Centre as well launched to upgrade the status of the women community. Of course, those efforts have yields some positive results but still at the outset of the 21st century. Women community is not equal with their male counterpart by any parameter. This is one of the worst outcomes of our lop- sided developmental process.

'Empowerments' Means 'to authorize'. In the context of the people, they have to be authorized to have control over their own lives. Empowerment is an only effective answer to oppression, exploitation, injustice and other melodies of society. In short, women the opportunity to fulfill their creative capabilities and desires and take decisions independently. If has social, political, economic, cultural dimensions.

Women in panchayat Raj System :

The Indian constitution provided part 4the directive principles of state policy, article 40 for the setting up of village panchayat. But this is non-justifiable, political participation and grassroots democracy have been strengthened considerably by the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment (1992-1993) that have created new democratic institutions for local governance. It provides reservation for women in panchayat Raj system set up two ways.

As we have said that this legislation has provided a new lever to the concept of women empowerment in its real sense. It is pertinent to mention here that under present system is under operation throughout India and out of total 33 lakh panchayat Raj representatives, 33/50 percent are women. Elections have becomes mandatory after each five years. More pertinent to mention is the fact that then is separate provisions for the women of weaker sections including SC, ST and Other deprived class. Interestingly unlike the demand of 33 per cent seats in the parliament and the state legislatures for the women. No body even utter a single word against this noble empowerment of women, which was one of the very lovely dreams of the father of the nation. one could dreams of the father of the nation. One could not simply imagine that the political parties, which supported the Panchayat Raj System with special arrangement for the women community, are bitterly opposing their reservation in the parliament as well as in state legislatures.

It has some other dimensions and it is not the issue which will be focused in present discussion. But is is an open secret that with increasing teeth women dominated Panchayat Raj System is an experiment which has proved with its one decade experience that it is the perfect system to bring all round development at grassroots level.

With the advent of this Act, India today has more than 500 district Panchayats, around 5,100 block Panchayat and more then 2,25,000/- village Panchayat, approximately 90 municipal corporations, 1500 municipal councils, and 1800 Nagar Panchayats and there are also 681258 women elected to gram



Panchayat, 37109 women to panchayat at the intermediate level and 3153 women Panchayat at the district level. Role of Panchayat Raj System in women empowerment can be highlighted by many aspects.

1. Women are taking up the challenge and gearing themselves up to enter politics at the lower level in the spirit of self-governance as committed citizens.
2. Through the experience of the Indian Panchayat Raj Institutions, more the one million women have actively entered into the political life of India, Reservation for women in Panchayat up to one third seats.
3. Women's issues have come to the forefront at the local level and consequently state and national level.
4. Women leaders in the Panchayat Raj are transforming local governance by sensitizing the state to issues of poverty inequality and gender injustice.
5. Panchayat Raj System through women can work on the creation, development and promotion of self Help groups co-operatives, MSMEs for better employment and livelihood options in Rural areas.
6. Women are also taking action against child marriage and child domestic labour, whilst promoting girl-child education. Also women have used their elected authority to address quality health care as critical issues. If then is the good side of PRI in women empowerment, there is some slackness also. It was sad but not shocking to find that even the functions and duties of Gram Sabha are not known to a large majority of respondents.

About 80 percent of women are not aware of rural development schemes like NREGSGRY and funds received under these schemes. Dependence on their husbands and other male members of the family, low-level of education, lack of interest, the causes of women's low level of awareness. Women reservation has led only to formal and not real empowerment of women in the panchayats. It is seen that the participation of the women shall have to get co-operation from their family members participation of the women in preparing budget and plan is also not to the desired extent and it is disasters factory. It is only due to less weight age is given to the women due to patriarchal and male dominated social system and age old social danoos against women in the rural area.

Agriculture is the backbone of Indian economy. Women community is working very hard in the agriculture sector in various capacities, but they are getting less in return. There is an immediate need to upgrade the small scale rural based industries in the leadership of the women and needless to say that Panchayat Raj System needs more legislation to fulfill this important duty.

Challenges Faced by Women :

Structural issues, corrupted system, social and cultural barriers, sex stereotyping, political socialization and Balancing work and family. They are some issues faced by women.

Likewise education, awareness campaign against deadly disease could be also canalized through the Panchayat Raj System. Women communities despite same allegation to be used as an instrument of their male relatives are working nicely in the overall development of the country through Panchayat Raj System with the due course of time, the women representative will understand their due position and the in fluence of their male relatives would be eliminated.

Concluding Remarks:

Panchayat Raj Systems can be the first step for political empowerment of women as the confidence and understanding of polity can allow them to participate in elections to state legislatures and parliament paving the way from panchayat to parliament. It is the only beginning of a journey towards empowerment.

To realize this target, we must emphasize the role of the Panchayat Raj System with fully empowered women community. The fact that without including gender in the mainstreaming of the developmental process, our development would not be complete. The Panchayat Raj System with 50



percent women representation has the potential to create history but the need of the hour is to provide them all possible co-operation

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