

An Analytical Study of Empowerment of Women in Panchayatiraj System in Assam

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Abstract

The present study aims to prepare an analytical study of empowerment of women in Panchayatiraj System in Assam. The present study explores the main focused on the nature and concept of Panchayati Raj is deeply entrenched in the process of strengthening the basic democracy at the grass-roots level by ensuring people's participation in local governance and administration. Women in India now participate in all activities such as education, politics, media, art and culture, service sectors, science and technology, etc. The Constitution of India guarantees to all Indian women equality (Article 14), no discrimination by the State (Article 15(1)), equality of opportunity (Article 16), and equal pay for equal work (Article 39(d)). The method of investigation in the present study is descriptive survey method employed. The present study was conducted to an unexplored the social and economic problems experienced by senior women residing within the Gaon Panchayat limits of Kamrup district in Assam. The sample for the present study consisted of 112 women. The present investigation has broad in to light some interesting fact and a significant relationship existing between socio-economic condition and women empowerment of the investigated. The findings of the present study revealed that majority of senior women were found to have severed health and financial problems and moderate level of problems in social, familial, emotional and psychological areas. Senior most women reflected the experience of more psycho-social problems as compared to their women. Assam Panchayat Act 1994, A three-tier system with Zilla Parishad has been introduced Gaon Panchayat, Anchalik Panchayat and Zilla Parishad.

Keywords: Empowerment, Women, Panchayatiraj System, Equality, Opportunity.

Introduction:

A democratic society rests on major pillars of liberty, equality, social justice and fraternity. The Indian constitution is committed to these noble principles. All citizens of the country must get equal opportunities for progress in life. To build up the democratic society, the new generation needs equal educational opportunities. Women constitute almost half the human race. Education has been recognized as an essential agent of social change and development in any society of any country. Therefore, the emphasis with regard to women education should be to equip her multiple role as citizens, housewives, mother, and contributor to family income, builders of new society and builder of the nation. In this study, researcher wants to discuss impact equality opportunity policy for academic women.

Today the scenario has changed in terms of interrelationships and the family dynamics existing within the family. Industrialization, migration, urbanization and westernization have severely affected our value system. These social changes have seriously affected the social context and adjustment of the aged and thereby exposing them to several serious problems. The constitution of India guarantees to all Indian women equality (Article 14), no discrimination by the state (Article 15(1)), equality of opportunity (Article 16), and equal pay for equal work (Article 39(d)). In addition, it allows special provisions to be made by the State in favour of women and children (Article 15(3)), renounces practices derogatory to the dignity of women (Article 51(A) (e)), and also allows for provisions to be made by the State for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief (Article 42).

The concept of women empowerment has become a global phenomenon in the 21st century world. Empowerment of women appears to be a much publicized concept of this century. The media talks about it, the local politician's talks about it, the national leader's talks about it, policy maker's talks about it, the international community talks about it. All over the world the year 2001 was celebrated as the "Year of Empowerment of Women." Modern age is the age of democracy. Democracy stands on the basic principles of equality and justice. In recent, Lok Sabha election women presently hold only 59 seats (2014). So, it is clear that women's participation in Indian political life is entirely not satisfactory in India. Empowerment of women appears to be a much publicized concept of the 21st century. The empowerment process is facilitated by creating awareness about one's rights and responsibilities and socio-economic and political opportunities (Banerjee, 1992).

Panchayati Raj is a system of governance in which gram panchayats are the basic units of administration. It has 3 levels: Village, Block and District. The term 'panchayat raj' is relatively new, having originated during the British administration. 'Raj' literally means governance or government. Mahatma Gandhi advocated Panchayati Raj, a decentralized form of Government where each village is responsible for its own affairs, as the foundation of India's political system. This term for such a vision was "Gram Swaraj" (Village Self-governance). It was adopted by state governments during the 1950s and 60s as laws were passed to establish Panchayats in various states. It also found backing in the Indian constitution, with the 73rd amendment in 1992 to accommodate the idea. The Amendment Act of 1992 contains provision for devolution of powers and responsibilities to the panchayats to both for preparation of plans for economic development and social justice and for implementation in relation to twenty-nine subjects listed in the eleventh schedule of the constitution. Assam Panchayat Act 1994, A three-tier system with Zilla Parishad has been introduced Gaon Panchayat, Anchalik Panchayat and Zilla Parishad.

Historical Development of Women Empowerment:

The history of Indian women can be divided in to three periods i.e. Ancient, Medieval and Modern. The East India Company established its rule over India since 1757, which call modern period. During this period education of men was modernized and institutions were opened to promote this but nothing was done to promote women education. In 1858, the British government took upon itself the direct responsibility of the administration. But in spite of this, they did not pay any attention towards the education of women of this country. Despite these government efforts to the education, still women are lagging behind than men. Women of India generally remained unlettered and uneducated. As a result of ignorance, women become victims of man dominated society.

Origin of the Problem:

The purpose of this study is to know the impact of women participation in the rural politics or rural development of Kamrup district in Assam. Among all the efforts mentioned above, participation in politics and decision making is the most significant means. It is because the modern age is the age of democracy which provides equal political rights to both men and women and successful functioning of democracy pre supposes active and equal political participation of both men and women. Political participation means to take part in the political affairs of the state in every level-local, state and national and at every spheres of policy making and decision making like legislative, executive, administrative, judicial etc. through exercising franchise, contesting election and getting elected as members of the elective bodies, holding public offices, giving petition, criticizing the government's policies and resisting such laws and authority having demoralizing and degenerating effects on the people. In other words, political participation is regarded as the principal means by which consent is granted or withdrawn in a democracy, and rulers are made accountable to the

ruled. Thus political participation provides the citizens with "channels of direct access to the sources of authority. Therefore healthy, free and fair political participation are regarded as the life-belt of genuine representative government, serving important functions for both the citizen and the political system. It also related to shaping and reshaping of power, authority or influence. Therefore, a broad frame work and perspectives for empowerment of women exists at the policy level in India. However, the need of the hour is to translate these ideas into actual practice. To make reservation policy effect able, women need to be made conscious of their rights. As it is cited "Human right is a dynamic concept and this fact has significant implications for women." Women are really in need of being conscentized and conscious of their right which is not less than the right of their men. So they need not to be afraid of their men when their man is trying to let them denied of their rights. If human right is dynamic it should surely have strengthen the human of the past and of the present, too. Also it must imply necessarily the political right, economic right and any other rights to women.

RELATED LITERATURE:

A careful review of the research journals, books, dissertations and other sources of information on the problems to be investigated is one of the important steps in the planning of any research study. Banerjee (2014) found to empower women politically and to increase their political participation, various significant attempts have already been started at national and international level. Socially, in most of the places, at least in practice, if not formally women have only secondary status to man. Bhattcharjee (2011) argued that senior males were found a significant relationship existing between socio-economic condition and women empowerment of the investigated. Irfan (2003) conducted a study on adjustment and frustration among truants and non-truants in Punjab, found an insignificant negative correlation between adjustment and frustration. Blase (1992) in his study indicated that a number of women lower their level of job involvement or involved as result of experiencing stress which further increase their like hood of future burnout. Maitali & George(2013) reported that women is to empower and enable women, to overcome the obstacles which prevent them from participating on an equal footing with men, through a combination of education training, networking and lobbying. A result reveals that interaction between the social and economic problems of women rural area in Panjab not significant.

Significance of the Present Study:

Women are nearly half of the human capital in the society. They also play varied role in the society. Progress and development is human centered process. Without women equal evolvment development process at every level will be inadequate. Vivekananda said that "there is no chance for the welfare of the world unless condition of women is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly only with one wing." Human Resource Development applies equality to women and men. Education is an important for everyone, but it is especially significant for girls and women. Assam is situated in the North Eastern region of India. It has a glorious past with rich culture, society in north-east India and as such in Assam. Assamese women possessed great freedom of work and movement in the past time. Education was limited to the high caste and equivalent castes only. There were no provisions of education for lower caste women. Women slaves were called Bandis or Betis. The women are an integral part in every society. But status and education of a women in Assamese society are still backward than men. The Indian constitution has granted equal right and status to all irrespective of caste, creed and gender. But in practice women have been deprived of their constitutional rights in various ways. They are becoming victims of various social injustice and they are not being able to enjoy their due right and status in society. The women are an integral part in every society. But status and education of a women in Assamese society are still backward than men. The Indian constitution has granted equal right and status to all

irrespective of caste, creed and gender. But in practice women have been deprived of their constitutional rights in various ways. They are becoming victims of various social injustice and they are not being able to enjoy their due right and status in society. Participation in decision making empowering people these skills should be learnt and applied according to the Scio-cultural contexts of different group and stakeholders. It has taken a long time to realize that the paradigm of development that largely ignored the environment was a disaster. Broadly speaking the problems of senior women is mainly related to health, finance and socio-economic aspects. The present study is an attempt to analyze the status of women and their empowerment in terms of various indicators such as access to education, employment, household decision making power, financial autonomy, freedom of movement, exposure to media, political participation, experience of domestic violence etc in the state of Assam using secondary data obtained from various sources.

Statement of the Problem:

Present study is an entitled as, “An Analytical Study of Empowerment of Women in Panchayatiraj System in Assam”.

Objectives:

- i) The new concept of study will surely deals to the special features of the Assam Panchayati Raj act. of 1994.
- ii) To find out the actual powers-function and terms of duties of each and every members of the Gaon Panchayat body.
- iii) To identify the effect of Empowerment of Women in Panchayatiraj System.
- iv) To find out the influence of gender on socio-economic problems of women empowerment.
- v) To study the women empowerment residing in rural areas within the introduced Gaon Panchayat limits of Kamrup district in Assam.

Limitations:

Following are the main limitations of this research work –

- i) The study is restricted within educated and uneducated sections of Empowerment of Women.
- ii) The study is strictly conducted only within the rural areas of Kamrup district in Assam.
- iii) The study is restricted only women of participation in the rural politics of Kamrup district (PRI) only.
- iv) The study was covering the SC, ST and general community women from the Dhubri district.

Methodology:

The Normative Survey method is chosen for the present study. For this purpose a sample of consists Empowerment of Women in Panchayatiraj System. They were randomly selected from different Colleges of Kamrup district in Assam. Two types of data i.e. primary and secondary data have been used in this study. Primary data were obtained by interviewing the sample farmers and agricultural extension workers through a set of questionnaire. Relevant unpublished official records have also been used as primary data.

Collection of Data:

The data collection was employed by means of questionnaire and was given to the 112 respondents for the purpose of the study.

Tools Used:

Investigator used a self- constructed questionnaire for collection of data. After collecting the data researcher edited, coded and checked the validity to get accuracy. This data is used for the purpose to present a paper.

Discussions and Analysis:

Major Conclusions:

In this paper an attempt has been made to summarise the finding and also put forwarded some concrete suggestion to increase the women's participation in politics. The Indian constitution has granted equal right and status to all irrespective of caste, creed and gender. But in practice women have been deprived of their constitutional rights in various ways. They are becoming victims of various social injustice and they are not being able to enjoy their due right and status in society.

Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI)- the grass-roots units of local self-governance have been proclaimed as the vehicles of socio-economic transformation in rural India. With Panchayat Raj Institutions the countries are gaining their rightful constitutional status, rural citizens would be approaching these institutions more and more for attaining basic services. The concept of decentralisation of power through Panchayati Raj Institutions is not a new one in the political history of India. The Panchayat system has existed formally in most of the major states of India since the early 1950s. However, in most states, the system was not an effective body of governance until the early 1990s. As the elections were not held, the Panchayat did not assume any active role in the country. But observing its need, the 73rd Amendment to the constitution of India in 1992 made the frame-work of a three-tiered panchayat system with regular elections after every five years throughout the whole country. Thus it gave the Panchayat the primary responsibility to implement development programme by identifying the needs of the villages. In response to the provision made by the Amendment almost all major states excluding Assam, Bihar and Panjab had at least three Panchayat elections within 1993 – 2009 and 2013.

The study, exposes 96.66 % village girl have not received any facilities separate reading room at home, 55 % girl were not received the proper study materials and stationeries which are needed for faire study, 93.33 % girls have to engage in house hold duties. In this study, it has been found that 93.33 % girls were not received proper education due to financial crises and 85 % were due house hold works and taking care of brothers and sisters. In this study, it has been found that 88.33 % village women are housewives, 8.33 % women are wage earner and 2.33 % women were working in different govt. semi govt. and private sectors. There are no single professionals and business women in the village area. Most of the village women are poorer and they live under the billow poverty line. In this study, 73.33 % women in the village area come from the BPL families. There are no single respondent above group 1,00,000 in village area. There for women from the village area are not able to bear the expensive expenditure of education, health care and family welfare, nutrition, co-curricular activities, uses of mass media etc. out of total 60 of our respondents only 10 % women living in rural area plan their family budget and 90 % depend on their husband and guardian.

Right and Legal Awareness of Women Table-1

Category	Yes	Partially Yes	No	Total
General	2 (10 %)	3 (15 %)	15 (75 %)	20
SC	1 (5 %)	4 (20 %)	15 (75 %)	20
ST	1 (5 %)	2 (10 %)	17 (85 %)	20
Total	4 (6.66 %)	9 (15 %)	47 (78.33 %)	60

This study shows that 33.33 % women living in rural area still don't know about the Janani Shuraksha Yojana, 85 % women of rural area do not have knowledge about the ICTC testing centre. In this study, it is found that 80 % women do not know about the cause of Night Blindness, 80 % women don't know about the causes of Anemia, 51.66 % women don't know about the HIV/AIDS and STDs and its related diseases. In this study shows that 40 % women living in rural area still do not have knowledge about the national immunization programme, DOTs, J.E. vaccine, adolescent reproductive health clinic etc. In this study, it has

been found that women living in rural area are not aware of the current affairs of the world. The study shows that 55 % ST, 47.07 % SC and 39.13 % General women living in village area were incapable to answer the name of President of India, where 76.66 % women of village area do not know about the GYANPITH AWARD winner writer and social activist Indira Goswami alise Mamoni Raysom Goswami. On the other hand 75 % women living in village area do not read News Papers and Magazines, 73.33 % women do not enjoy TV due to not availability of TV set and 71.66 % house hold there are no proper electricity facility in the village area. No single women in rural area use interment facilities.

Table -2

Elected Female Members of Kamrup District in 2007 Election

Panchayat	No. of Panchayat	Total Elected Members	Women	(% of women)
GP	129	1290	426	33
AP	12	129	46	35.6
AP	1	29	10	34.4

Source - Deputy Commissioner's office.

Table -3

Party Affiliation	AP seat status	Zilla Parishad seat status
INC	39	11
BJP	1	-
CPI(M)	4	2
AGP	19	6
AUDF	36	8
Independent	30	2
Total	129	29

Table -4

Year	GPs	APs	ZPs	Total
2007	9 out of 25	10 out of 25	1 out of 4	20 out of 54

Table -5

Respondent	Answer		Total
	Yes	No	
G.P. Member	-	20	20
G.P. President	5	-	5
G.P. Vice President	1	1	2
A.P. Member	2	1	3
Total	8	22	30
Percentage	26.67%	73.33%	100%

(Source: Data obtained through field study)

In conclusion, Women is a backbone of a family planning multiple roles, by nature, she has dynamic source of power. By educating women the process of development of the nation can be accelerated. Higher education has been playing a significant in empowerment of women. It can add more to strengthen the movement of women empowerment. Thus higher education is pathway of women empowerment. In terms of North East India, one of the basic features of its society is diversity. Diversity as a social fact always existed in the world at a large but it becomes a problem mainly when it exists in the name of gender inequality. It becomes a problem when the gender differences become the basis of group

inequality or when the different groups perceive one another as threat to their identity or a challenge to their status. Therefore, prospective women leaders and existing women representatives of PRI of the project area were identified and organized. Representatives of local CBO, NGO, socio-cultural organizations, influential community leaders, development officials were mobilized. Media sensitization workshops were organized to enhance participation of the local media in order to increase participation of women in Panchayat process and to cover their issues. As a part of Assam, the Assam panchayati Act of 1994 have been fully implemented in Kamrup district. According to the provisions of this Act of 1994, Zilla Parishad at the district level, Anchalik Panchayat at the Block level and Gaon Panchayat at the village level were formed.¹ Hence Kamrup district of Assam has also not far behind in implementing the 33 percent reservation for women at panchayat level. In both the elections 2001 and 2007 held under Assam Panchayati Raj Act of 1994, a large number of women from rural areas of Kamrup district came out successfully, got elected and entranced into the grass-root level decision making system. In the election 2007, out of one Zilla Parishad, 12 Anchalik Panchayat and 129 Gaon Panchayats a large number of 10, 46 and 426 women got elected respectively. The decision making power is the soul of the democratic working of the local bodies. The study reveals that not all the women representatives but only the influential women can take share in the process of decision-making. Hence the women have to come forward to take active participation in the process.

Suggestions:

Following measures may be suggested to overcome the problems which are found in the study: Suggestions further research can be study large number of variables as well as sample. Reflective studies involving large sample and different population as well as follow-up in the age of women empowerment, job-satisfaction, adjustment and sex has emerge as an important factor in the measurement and prediction of women achievement. In such way through the experience of the Indian Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) around one million women have actively entered political life in India.

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¹ The Panchayat Elections in Assam have been due since December 2006 Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, New Delhi.