

The Study of Government's Efforts of Psycho-socio-political Empowerment of Women in the Panchayat Raj Institution: Document Analysis Approach

Smita Kulkarni¹ and Dr. Sadhana Natu²

¹(Deputy Collector and Research Student, Department of Psychology, SavitribaiPhulePuneUniversity, India)

²(Associate Professor and Head, Department of Psychology, Modern college of Arts, Science and Commerce, Pune)

ABSTRACT: -After the milestone of one third women reservation set by 73rd constitutional amendment, women have come to play a very significant role in Panchayat Raj Institution (PRI). Keeping in accordance with its progressive outlook, Maharashtra has provided 50% reservation to women in PRIs. This gives a special significance to the Krantijyoti Project (i.e. elected village women's capacity building training programme, a collective effort under the leadership of Rural Development Department, State Election Commission along with YASHADA - an apex training institute and NGOs). The current study focuses on the various intertwined psycho-socio-political aspects involved in Krantijyoti project which are documented. The document analysis approach here throws light upon various challenges before us/government for ensuring the fulfillment of the constitutional provisions not only in words but in spirit. Also it underlines the need for support for woman's psychological make up (i.e. her assertiveness, self-perception/self-esteem etc.) along with need to increase the awareness of social issues like female infanticide, gender discrimination, etc. This in turn will help to strengthen the functioning of the local bodies by effective and participative involvement of women panchayat members and for changing patriarchal attitude of both women and men.

Key words: *document analysis, women elected representatives, Psycho-socio-political empowerment, self-perception, self-esteem, social issues*

I. INTRODUCTION

After the 73rd amendment to the Constitution of India, the progressive and modern state of Maharashtra has taken it a step further and reserved 1/2 seats for women in the Local Self Government. It is seen that most women do not participate in these elections on their own initiative. And even after getting elected it is observed that due to social - domestic obligations, somebody else other than the elected woman representative runs the administration. To address this undesirable situation and to take corrective actions for ensuring the fulfillment of the constitutional provisions not only in words but in spirit, in 2010 Election Commission of Maharashtra decided to embark upon an innovative project for socio-political empowerment of women representatives of local self-bodies for effective decision making and governance. It was expected that these empowered women representative would become role models and in turn instill confidence in aspiring women candidates in the ensuing elections. This project ensured the fulfillment of the constitutional mandate of free and fair conduct of elections and would also go a long way in addressing not only social problems (such as female infanticide, illiteracy, gender discrimination, domestic violence, alcoholism, superstition, violence against women, environmental issues, social evils etc.) in the rural areas but also strengthening the functioning of local bodies by effective and participative involvement of women representative in decision making process.

II. AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Aim: The specific aim of this study is to study the various intertwined (psycho-socio-political) aspects involved in the empowerment of the elected women representatives after the 73rd constitutional amendment and Government of Maharashtra's decision of 50% reservation for women in Panchayat Raj Institution in 2011 and also to study the Government's efforts till date and challenges before it.

Objectives: The specific objectives of the study are 1. To study the government's efforts to empower the elected women representatives in PRIs. 2. To study the various aspects covered in the implementation of Krantijyoti project (a training programme for elected women representative). 3. To study the impact of Krantijyoti project. 4. To study and analyse the need for psychological empowerment of women representative in detail.

III. WHAT IS EMPOWERMENT?

Over the last decade, the concept of empowerment has emerged as the main paradigm of development throughout different governmental sectors (Zens, 2007)¹. A review of definitions of empowerment reveals both diversity and commonality. Throughout the world the term empowerment has different meanings in different sociocultural and political contexts and these terms include self-strength, assertiveness, own decision making, self-power, own choice, life of dignity in accordance with one's values, control, capable of fighting for one's rights, independence, awakening, and capability—to mention only a few. Kabeer (2001)² has defined empowerment as the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them. Rappaport(1987)³ defined empowerment as a process by which people, organizations, and communities gain mastery over issues which are of concern to them. The Oxford English Dictionary (1998) on the other hand, explains empowerment as: "giving (someone) the authority or power to do something". Power, in turn, is given for a purpose: to enable action.

3.1 women empowerment

"When women are empowered, all of society benefits"
(UN Deputy Secretary General Asha Rose Migiro)

Kamala Bhasin (1992)⁴ asks the question why do women need to be empowered? They need to be empowered, she believes, because women will lead us in our search for violence and war. Women have led the peace and ecology movements in many parts of the world. She believes that sustainable development has to be woman centered. She does not say this because she is a woman or a feminist. Historically and even today women take care of the basic needs of society like food, fodder, fuel, shelter, nurturing. They are also more in tune with nature. As child-bearers, they have had to be more in tune with their own nature. They have also been creating and nurturing. She does not say that, it is because of women's socialization for centuries, and because of their pre-occupation with sustenance, nurturing and nursing. Empowerment of women, means many things to do, Bhasin (1992).

According to Hall (1992)⁵, the empowered women share the following characteristics:

- Empowered women define their attitudes, values, and behavior in relation to their own real interest. They have autonomy because they claim their freedom from existing male-hierarchies, whether they live in traditional societies or modern, industrial societies. Empowered women maintain equal-mindedness, rather than act out roles that merely confront and challenge male dominance. Empowered women do not aim at being superior to men. They respond as equals and cooperate in order to work toward the common good.
- Empowered women use their talents to live fulfilling lives. They have not only survived the harshness of their own subjugation, but they have also transcended their subjugation, thus moving themselves through survival to fulfillment. Empowered women maintain their strength in the presence of pressures of family, religion, and work, and they contribute toward the empowerment of all women.
- Empowered women may continue to meet their family responsibilities and participate in religion. They choose to do so in ways that strengthen rather than debilitate them, however, which is also advantageous for others. Empowered women do not retreat from these traditional responsibilities, but they forge their own ways of doing things.
- Empowered women define their values and formulate their beliefs themselves. They do not derive their sense of being from male authorities, and they do not live vicariously through men. Empowered women strengthen themselves through other women's support and sustain their own moral visions. Their actions flow from their own distinctive ideals.
- Empowered women can be found in all social groups and all societies. However, the optimal conditions for empowered women are both individual and social, and there are more empowered women in modern societies, because the collective actions of women are more viable and more palpable in those settings.

Women's empowerment has five components. women's sense of self-worth; their right to have and to determine choices; their right to have access to opportunities and resources; their right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; and their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally.

3.2 psychological empowerment

The psychological empowerment of the masses is of paramount importance in enhancing national development⁶. Attainment of economic or social empowerment in any community, state or nation depends strongly on the extent to which the masses are psychologically empowered. The masses are the kingpin (the most important person in a group or undertaking), hence the need to give them the necessary motivation so as to see the government as 'our' government and not 'their' government. The components of psychological

empowerment are Self-Worth/ Self-perception, Assertiveness, Self-esteem/ Self Confidence and to become involved in decision making process in one's community⁷.

3.3 political empowerment

Components of Political empowerment are political participation in elections and government, to give women a voice in the policies that affect their lives, women leadership and exercising political rights

3.4 social empowerment

It includes the process of accessing opportunities and resources in order to make personal choices, having some control over our environment and greater personal choice.

IV. "KRANTIJIYOTI" PROJECT

"KRANTIJIYOTI" is a Project for Empowerment of Elected Women Representatives of Panchayat Raj Institution of Government of Maharashtra. It is a training programme for elected women representative. This Initiative was undertaken by State Election Commission of Maharashtra to build capacities of elected women representatives (EWSRs) on pilot basis first. Main aim was that these empowered women representatives would become role models and instill confidence in aspiring women candidates in ensuing elections. YASHADA (an apex training institute of Government of Maharashtra) and RSCD has jointly organized TOT workshops under Rajiv Gandhi Panchayat Sashaktikaran Abhiyan (RGPSA).

4.1 objectives

1. Active participation of women in governance of local self-bodies. (Political Empowerment)
2. Sensitivity towards rural social issues like female infanticide, illiteracy, gender discrimination, social evils (social empowerment)
3. Self-esteem and personality development. (Psychological empowerment)

V. DETAILS OF PRIERS IN MAHARASHTRA

Panchayat Tier	Total Elected Representatives	Men Elected Representative	Women Elected Representative
Zilla Parishad (34)	1955	977	978
Panchayat Samiti (351)	3910	1955	1955
Gram Panchayat (28906)	190691	92022	98669

VI. DOCUMENT ANALYSIS APPROACH

Document analysis approach used here not merely to summarise or to give description of what happened in the implementation of this project but it is the analysis of the motivation, Intent and purpose of documents which were produced within a particular historical context and the implementation status of the project.

6.1 documents produced under the project

- ▶ The Resource Kit of KrantiJyoti comprised of :
 - ✓ Training Manual for Trainers
 - ✓ Reference Material on Panchayati Raj
 - ✓ Compilation of Government Resolutions and circulars
 - ✓ A book of songs to be used during the training
 - ✓ The biography of Savitribai Phule to be read in a series at village level
 - ✓ A set of 3 posters
 - ✓ The preamble of the Constitution of India

6.2 document details

Concept and inspiration: State Election Commission, Maharashtra

Publisher: Yashvantrao Chavan Development Administration Academy (YASHADA), Pune

Editor: Resource and support centre for development (RSCD, Mumbai)

Year of Publication: 2014

- The focus areas of Krantijyoti project were as under :



VII. MAJOR ISSUES FACED BY EWRs IN PRIS AND SOCIETY

Major issues faced by EWRs in PRIs and Society at large are Patriarchal Set up, Low Self-confidence and self esteem, Lack of Assertiveness, Domestic Responsibilities, mind-set of the Spouse/ family/ fellow colleagues, Domestic Violence, Sexual Harassment, Lack of Education & Awareness, Fear of dominant persons and anti-social elements and Financial Implications (TA reimbursements, Missing out Wages due to trainings)⁸. Studies in different states of the country have confirmed that notwithstanding the provisions of affirmative action and reservation for men and women of the Scheduled Castes, their political standing has not reached a level where they can be said to be able to function relatively independently, as compared to being proxies or taking instructions from dominant individuals of the villages (Baviskar and Mathew eds., 2009)⁹

In the implementation stage Government has tried to resolve some of the above mentioned issues but still there are many areas which has scope for improvement for better outcome.

VIII. DOCUMENTS UNDER ANALYSIS

1. Process story of KRANTIYOTI project:

This document speaks about aim, objective and background of the project. It gives the USP of the project. Also it gives the course content. It also speaks about the Convergence for good governance. It also throws light upon how the Learner center approach used at the time of training.

2. Reference Material on Panchayat Raj:

This document speaks about the functioning of Panchayat raj institution, Constitutional amendment, its implementation, Responsibilities of Gp, Members, Sarpanch Information about few acts, tips for personality development, and some inspiration stories of woman elected representative

3. Training Manual for Trainers:

This gives the detail steps and explains the actual process of training sessions. it is a 3 day training programme. It contains poems, songs, stories and games. It also gives emphasis upon use of various training methods. It highlights the importance of Group work and group discussion

4. Savitrichi Gatha: The biography of Savitribai Phule to be read in a series at village level

5. A set of 3 posters giving the gist of functioning of elected representatives.

6. The preamble of the Constitution of India: provided many safeguards for the social, economic, and political development of women trying to provide them with in the society.

IX. EXPECTED IMPACT/ RESULT

Since its inception in 2010 -11 as a pilot project; Krantijyoti project is now implemented in all parts of Maharashtra. Today nearly about 40000 EWRs have undergone Krantijyoti training all over Maharashtra. It is expected that these empowered women, will emerge as leaders and become role models for future electoral candidates. This will also fulfill the constitutional objective of conducting elections in a fair and free environment. The project will help in solving many social issues in the rural areas. The active and effective participation of the women representatives in the decision making process will also improve tremendously.

Training helps develop new ideas and beliefs. In its first stage, State Election Commission, Maharashtra has along with the Zilla Parishad organised a three day nonresidential training programme in 10 districts, for the empowerment of women representatives in the Local Self Government. Improving the decision

making abilities of the newly elected women members, making them socially and politically empowered and creating strong personalities is expected from the training programme. After being elected the women representatives should bring forth on the agenda issues like water, health, education, food security and employment, in the development of the villages. Women should be able to better understand the causes of problems in the rural areas and also find solutions for them.

It is also now expected that after the 6 years of its inception government should have done the impact assessment but no such document/study/report is available as on date. But the interviews and success stories gives the positive feedback of social and political empowerment but much scope remains for psychological empowerment.

X. EVALUATION/CONCLUSION

- ▶ The document analysis approach to study the Krantijyoti project throws lights upon various challenges before us/ government:
- 1. Dimensions of **Psychological Empowerment** have been given very little emphasis in the entire 3 days training programme. Psychological empowerment is a multi-faceted construct reflecting the different dimensions of being psychologically enabled, and is conceived of as a positive integrate of perceptions of personal control, a proactive approach to life, and a critical understanding of the socio-political environment, which is rooted firmly in a social action framework that includes community change, capacity building, and collectivity.
- 2. Assertive training and inputs on understanding of self and self- perception is necessary to cover the aspect of the psychological empowerment.
- 3. Developing the ability to access and influence decision making processes on various levels (household, community, national, global) in order to ensure the proper representation of one's interests.
- 4. Gender sensitization training is required
- 5. Developing the ability to trust in one's personal abilities in order to act with confidence.
- 6. Continuous hand holding and follow up after a training programme is essential
- 7. For **political empowerment** changing the mind set of male counterpart is equally important but this area i.e training of male counterpart is totally neglected
- 8. For the better understanding of **social issues** ERWs should be given exposure to various best practices in the nearby areas, Group discussions in the presence of expert on social issues for better understanding etc.

XI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Unlike other government project, Krantijyoti project is a very good and unique initiative. More Emphasis on Psychological empowerment is must. Immediate feedback after the training programme and its analysis should be done without fail. Evaluation on the field i.e. to check learning, change in behaviour and result (actual performance) should be evaluated. Handholding and follow up programme needs to be strengthened.

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