

Women Empowerment in Rajasthan: A Socio-Political Perspective

Abstract

Women's empowerment is the process in which women elaborate and recreate what it is that they can be, do, and accomplish in a circumstance that they previously were denied. Empowerment can be defined in many ways, however, when talking about women's empowerment, empowerment means accepting and allowing women who are on the outside of the decision-making process into it. This puts a strong emphasis on participation in political structures and formal decision-making and, in the economic sphere, on the ability to obtain an income that enables participation in economic decision-making. Women's empowerment and achieving gender equality is essential for our society to ensure the sustainable development of the country. Economic empowerment increases women's agency, access to formal government programs, mobility outside the home, economic independence, and purchasing power. Political empowerment supports creating policies that would best support gender equality and agency for women in both the public and private spheres. Popular methods that have been suggested are to create affirmative action policies that have a quota for the number of women in policy making and parliament positions. Many of the barriers to women's empowerment and equity lie ingrained in cultural norms. Many women feel these pressures, while others have become accustomed to being treated inferior to men. Even if legislators, NGOs, etc. are aware of the benefits women's empowerment and participation can have, many are scared of disrupting the status of the women and continue to let societal norms get in the way of development.

The paper serves as a comprehensive study on the process of women empowerment as a socio-economic process. It produces the scenario of women empowerment in Rajasthan and attempts to encompass the various aspects of the process of women empowerment.

Keywords: Empowerment, Socio-Economic, Perspective, Gender Discrimination, Vistas, Potential, Existence, Economic Independence.

Introduction



The process of women empowerment is reaching higher horizons of success day by day all over in India, and especially in Rajasthan where the process has brought new hopes of existence to the woman who has ever been underrated because of her gender, and who has not been allowed to be a part of the main stream of the development of the nation.

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The introduction of the process of the women empowerment through the various women-development-oriented schemes and programmes, the woman of Rajasthan has started evaluating herself all positively believing that she is as important as man, and that she has all those rights and powers that man has. She knows that in order to enjoy such an existence she will have to play dual roles diving herself between her family obligations and work obligations, still she is ready to join the world through the process of women empowerment. Tall talks about the all round development of women are very common, but it cannot turn into reality until the contribution of the women to all the streams of socio-economic development is approved and until their role is constantly encouraged. The major concerns of the development of women include education, self dependence, nutrition, family welfare, employment and training, and their empowerment. The process of women can acclaim its success in Rajasthan when all the women irrespective of caste, religion, section, community become an integral part of the process and become beneficiaries. The reason is that Rajasthan is a backward state known for its heritage culture and long prevailing and deeply rooted traditions that approve the significance of man keeping the woman much lower than the man in terms of abilities, capabilities, decision making, and potential. The history of Rajasthan is the history of the economic and political dependence of woman on man. Ever since, the woman has been considered a child giving machine meant to be maintained with the satisfaction of her physical needs and protection within the walls of house where she is to be kept confined till the last breath of her life. The process of women empowerment is going to bring a revolutionary change in the existing status of woman of Rajasthan. Now she is no more confined to the status assigned to her previously. Politically speaking she is aware of her rights and powers, and she is not ready to tolerate the torture any more. She finds herself free to go to any court if somebody whether her husband, father or even brother infringes her rights. Socio-economically, she finds herself at liberty to join any sector for job and to work in any shift provided it ensures her financial independence.

Review of Literature

1. Editor, Jagran Post (2011) under the head Mission Poorna Shakti to ensure complete empowerment of women wrote his post reporting that the mission aims to increase the coordination between women of various government departments and ministries. The benefits of the mission would be made available to the 'gram' level workers through different centers. These Poorna Shakti Centers would get directions from the Tehsil at the 'gram' level and from the state and the Centre at the district level for their functioning. The mission also aims to increase awareness amongst women and support to them. The Poorna Shakti Centers would aspire to make every woman in the village able to recognise her health, education and legal rights. The gathering was attended by at least 8000 women of the village along with many other women from different government ministries and departments.
2. Syamala Devi Bhoganadam (2014) in the article Women Empowerment and Economic Development observes that women empowerment and economic development are closely related: in one direction, development alone can play a major role in driving down inequality between men and women; in the other direction, empowering women may benefit development. Development policies and programs tend not to view women as integral to the economic development process. This is reflected in the higher investments in women's reproductive rather than their productive roles, mainly in population programs. Yet women throughout the developing world engage in economically productive work and earn incomes. They work primarily in agriculture and in the informal sector and increasingly, in formal wage employment. Their earnings, however, are generally low. Since the 1950s, development agencies have responded to the need for poor women to earn incomes by making relatively small investments in income-generating projects. Often such projects fail because they are motivated by welfare and not development concerns, offering women temporary and part-time employment in traditionally feminine skills such as knitting and sewing that have limited markets. By contrast, over the past twenty years, some non-governmental organizations, such as the Self-Employed Women's Association in India, have been effective in improving women's economic status because they have started with the premise that women are fundamental to the process of development.
3. Mohak Rana (2014) in the article Schemes and Strategies for Women Empowerment in India observes that Women around the world share a common condition; they are not full and equal participants in public policy choices that affect their lives. Nowhere is the gap between de jure and de facto equality among men and women greater than in the area of decision making. The top decision making position remain largely male dominated spheres where women have little influence. For the true empowerment of women in the country she makes the following suggestions-
4. Proper awareness for laws should be there that is law should not be restricted to papers only but the implementation of law should be there so that every woman can be familiar with her rights. Significant steps should be taken to implement all the laws which are amended to facilitate detention, prevention and punishment of crimes against women.
5. Women education has to be made compulsory and women should be encouraged to become literate because without being educated women cannot have a access to her right.

6. Strict implementation of the schemes and policies for women empowerment should be done.
7. Awareness camps for women should be organized where they can become familiar with the framed schemes and policies and can take benefit of those schemes and policies.
8. Ratna Ghosh, Paromita Chakravarti & Mansi (2015) in their article Women's empowerment and education: Panchayats and women's Self-help Groups in India find that affirmative action does ensure that larger numbers of women enter politics but it does not ensure that the women participate in politics and function as elected representatives, because of lack of education. Empowerment needs to be seen as a holistic outcome of processes of critical education that enables women to lead autonomous lives and the freedom to act. Both affirmative action and education are necessary to empower women who have suffered discrimination and lack of power always.
9. Indian Express (October 3, 2016) under the head In rural Rajasthan, women's empowerment is also male dominated reports that the same father who would have dictated the marriage of his daughter at the age of 14 a decade ago, is now dictating the marriage of his daughter at 18.
10. eGov correspondent (July 26, 2018) under the head Bhamashah yojana empowering women in Rajasthan reports that To build a better society, empowerment of every woman is imperative because it means empowerment of the society, believes Rajasthan Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje. Conceptualised with this very aim, the Bhamashah Scheme envisaged by the State government in 2008, even before the Aadhaar programme was thought of, was launched, wherein, around 50 lakh women were enrolled and 29 lakh accounts were opened. At present, the primary objective of the scheme includes financial inclusion, women empowerment and effective service delivery. It is the first of its kind direct benefit transfer scheme in the country. The scheme is a family-based programme of financial inclusion, where each family is issued a 'Bhamashah Card'. The card is linked to a bank account that is in the name of the lady of the house who is the head of the family. The card leverages bio-metric identification and core banking. The card is used for transferring of all cash benefits directly to the bank accounts of the beneficiary and also for transfer of non-cash benefits of various government schemes. Thus, the scheme aims at making every woman empowered, capable and independent. "Thanks to Bhamashah scheme, I got my bank account opened along with Bhamashah card. Now, we get a message on our mobile phone as soon as our pension is credit. My children inform me about it and I go and collect it. Indeed life has really become so easy with Bhamashah," says Jamuna Devi, a beneficiary of this scheme.
11. M. Ameen Nisha & Dr. D. Vezhaventhan (2018) in their paper Political Empowerment and

- Participation of Women in India find that different causal factors such as; economic, religious, social and cultural factors contributed to women's poor political participation in the country. The political empowerment of women is a social process crucial to development and progress. The status of women is measured internationally by the participation of women in politics and their empowerment. Women remain seriously underrepresented in decision-making positions.
12. Vishal Krishna (2018) under the head Rajasthan has empowered women more than any other Indian state' - Mohandas Pai, referring to the interview of Mohandas Pai, reports that the govt of Rajasthan has disbursed more than Rs 18000 crore under the Bhamashah Yojana, which aims to empower women with direct money transfers. Not just an ace investor, but Mohandas Pai represents a strong voice in support of businesses and the startup ecosystem. With investments across media companies, among many others, he has remained a critic of governments and insists that more the startups, the better for the nation. He, in fact, opines that the state is ahead of Karnataka in many ways, especially when it comes to spending on information technology. He says Rajasthan needs to invest in existing talent, and promote its digital initiatives. In an interview with *YourStory* on how Rajasthan is shaping up in terms of investments, the investor says it scores on digital governance.

The above reviews reveal the scenario of women empowerment in India and in Rajasthan state of India where the process is being tremendously successful. The studies selected for review making reveal the various aspects of the process and its varied effects on the society at large.

Objectives of the Study

1. To develop an idea about the various ongoing social processes in the world
2. To concentrate on the processes that are working effectively in India
3. To arrive at the processes that are significant for Rajasthan and its people
4. To study the process of women empowerment and its impact on the women of Rajasthan
5. To spot the beneficiary women of Rajasthan as a result of the process
6. To find out the causes of the success of the process of women empowerment
7. To explore the dimensions of the process of women empowerment in Rajasthan
8. To trace the impact of the process on the women of the various sections of the society in Rajasthan
9. To be familiar with the responses and reactions of the society
10. To explore the impact of the process of women empowerment on the society at large

Hypothesis

1. Various socio-economic and political processes meant for the upliftment of the individual are going on in the world
2. Every process has some specific aim

3. Most of the ongoing processes are for the good of the people and society at large
4. Many of them are succumbing the people they are meant for
5. Rajasthan state of India is blessed with the processes like industrialization, Sanskritization and modernization
6. The process of women empowerment is proving itself to be a boon to the women of Rajasthan who have ever since been waiting for their self dependence
7. It has opened several vistas to the women
8. It instills a new confidence in the women associated with it

Research Methodology

The paper designed on the basis of the personal observation and perceptions as well as on the basis of the secondary data collected from the various available traditional and modern sources of literature, is chiefly a theoretical study aiming at producing the various dimensions of the process of women empowerment, and at interpreting the cause and effect relationship of the ongoing process of the women empowerment in Rajasthan. For the purpose of the study, the author first brooded over the theme of the women empowerment; applying the political approach, selected the topic for the study, that is, **Women Empowerment in Rajasthan: A Socio-Political Perspective**

Set the various objectives of the study; explored the sources of the secondary data and information on the theme and subject to be studied; selected a few Indian and foreign studies on the theme; formulated hypothesis; made personal observation of the status of the process in the Hanumangarh district of Rajasthan where he lives, and in the surrounding area where the women beneficiaries are confirming the success of the process; made discussion on the theme with the people found suitably informed to provide detailed information on the theme and topic; systematized the contents, and finally arrived at the findings and conclusions. All attempts were made to keep up and maintain the scientific spirit of the work through the rigid adoption of the scientific method and all its steps as prescribed and approved by the various eminent social scientists.

Findings

1. In Rajasthan the process of women empowerment witnesses a tremendous success
2. It allows the women of all the sections of the society in the state to prove their hidden potential in the various fields in order to be self depend
3. The development and empowerment of women is in the agenda of the state government
4. The CM 7- Point Women Empowerment Program is working successfully for the welfare and development of the women in the state
5. Through the Self Help Group Programs efforts are being made to empower the women who find themselves helpless
6. Through the Amrita Haat Programs, the products made by the women in the Self help groups, are sold

7. The Women Welfare Programs encompassing the various aspects of the women are providing help to the women of the various sections of the society
8. Through the self dependence scheme, attempts are being made to make the women self depend in various fields
9. Through the grants for the group marriages, the problem of marriage of the poor women is being solved
10. In order to ensure security and safety, at the district level the District Women Help Committees are working successfully
11. State Women Commission concerns the safeguard the interests of the women in the state
12. Gender Sensitiveness budgeting is gender discrimination is being checked
13. Through the Kishori Shakti Yagna, the adolescent girls are being encouraged to go ahead in the various fields without any hindrance
14. The Women Protection from the domestic violence Act 2005 ensures safety of the women at their homes
15. Now the evil of child marriage is almost checked in Rajasthan
16. Several scholarships are being provided to the girls in order to link them up with education and higher education
17. Bicycle and scooty schemes encourage the girls at schools, colleges and universities to attain higher goals in the field of education
18. Devnarayan yagna provides scholarships and scooties to the girls of the special backward class
19. Widow pensions are granted to the widows so that they no longer depend on other for their survival
20. The process of empowerment make the women of Rajasthan powerful enough to work successfully in the field of politics under various capacities, education and other fields

Conclusion & Suggestions

Women empowerment being one of the most influential social processes is going to encompass more and more women of India within it through opening several vistas of opportunities of self dependence to them in order to prove their multifaceted talent and potential. The process of women empowerment is particularly relevant in Rajasthan where the long aged tradition and the conservative society of the state did not allow the women to cross the threshold for several years. However, now the things are changed. The women of all the sections can be seen working successfully in the various fields. Politics, education, private sector jobs, medical etc. are some of the fields where the women of Rajasthan are working and proving their potential. The process has made them aware of their rights and existence which leads them to a life which knows no more dependence on the male members of the society.

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