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मध्य भारती

मानविकी एवं समाजविज्ञान की द्विभाषी शोध-पत्रिका

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Women Empowerment and Political Participation Through Grassroots Politics : Challenges and Opportunities

Afreen Khan

Introduction

Empowerment has become a fashionable and buzz word. It essentially means decentralization of authority and power. It aims at getting participation of deprived sections of people in decision-making process, in other words giving voice to voiceless. Activists want government to empower poor people including women by legislative measures and welfare programs. Empowerment is the process by which the disempowered or powerless people can change their circumstances and begin to have control over their lives. It results in a change in the balance of power, in the living conditions and in the relationships. Unless capacity is built in these sections in reality the power is used by others rather than the section for which they are meant (Kapur 2001).

Empowerment is a multidimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives. It is a process that fosters power (that is the capacity to implement) in people for use in their own lives, their own communities and in their own society by acting on issues that they describe as important. Above all, empowerment is a result of participation in decision-making (Sambalaxmi 2016, 4).

The question of women's political participation is now on the international agenda, and permeating many regional and national plans of action. Much hope has been invested in the United Nations and it has consistently been the engine for keeping the gender issues on the global agenda. The United Nations adopted the Convention on the Political Rights of Women (CPRW) in 1952. Since 1975 four international conferences on women have been held under its auspices. All the conferences have emphasized women's political empowerment as a key concern. The issue of women's political empowerment, while attracting considerable attention earlier, actually came to the forefront of the global debate for women's rights at the time of the Fourth World Conference on women's rights held at Beijing in 1995.

Women empowerment may mean equal status to women, opportunity and freedom to develop herself. The focus of empowerment is equipping women to be