

Review of the Study on Women's Empowerment in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands: A Sociological Perspective

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Abstract: *Women's empowerment is a vital tool for achieving gender equity in society. In this review process, an article has been assessed to determine its criteria for measuring women's empowerment in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands. The article primarily focuses on enhancing the political power of women who are members of PRI (Panchayati Raj Institutions), as they represent women voters and also represents the local government. While it is true that by empowering them, the entire society can benefit, it is important to note that the study primarily emphasizes one aspect of women's empowerment (political empowerment) while neglecting other aspects. However, the study does provide unique solutions to strengthen women's presence in the political arena of these islands.*

Keywords: Women's Empowerment, Political Power, Panchayati Raj Institutions, Andaman & Nicobar Islands

I. INTRODUCTION

Women's empowerment is currently a prominent topic, as women are often considered the most marginalized group, particularly in developing countries. While numerous studies and social policies have addressed their issues with great concern, there is limited exploration of this context in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands. One study titled 'Women Empowerment through Capacity Building Efforts for Elected Women Representatives of PRIs: A Study with Special Reference to Andaman and Nicobar Islands' by SS Sreekumar discusses approaches to achieving women's empowerment. However, it is important to note that there are other women's issues that exist in these islands, which have received less research attention (Halder and Jaishankar, 2014; Mehrotra et al, 2018). The study also addresses other sectors of empowerment within society as only part of its conceptual framework. Its main strength lies in the progression from general to specific aspects, a fundamental characteristic of a well-structured research paper. Before introducing women's empowerment, the study highlights the broader concept of empowerment for social development. It references the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), particularly the third goal related to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, while also encompassing a wider range of areas in the fifth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. Currently, the SDGs hold greater importance on global platforms compared to the MDGs (Loewe M, 2013). The author emphasizes that women are a commonly marginalized category in most societies and defines marginalized groups as those lacking social, economic, and religious power, regardless of their numerical strength, while non-deprived groups have access to political power. The author also highlights various dimensions of women's deprivation as a marginalized group. One commendable aspect of the research is that its conceptual framework acknowledges that all forms of deprivation exist within respective marginalized social groups, including facilities accessibility, underdeveloped communities, and political and other social groups. These facts illustrate a strong introduction of women as a crucially deprived section of society (Hargreaves, 2001), supported by references to human development reports. Furthermore, the study delves into the specific conditions of women in Asia, India, and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands respectively. The argument presented in the study regarding women's empowerment is based on achieving overall welfare, access, conscientization, participation, and control. To address these goals, the study properly defines social, economic, and political powers. However, it should be noted that the study does not adequately define political power before delving into its necessity.

This section presents a somewhat disjointed introduction of the concept of political empowerment, which is not ideal for a well-focused research orientation.

The study also discusses the contemporary provisions of women's empowerment within the decentralization form of the government system and highlights the existing flaws. To overcome these challenges, the study suggests capacity building for women. However, there are some blunders have made while introducing the study area, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The unit of location, the 10° channel, has been mistakenly written as 100° channel, and different systems of measurement (kilometers and fathoms) are used to describe the extension and depth of the channel, which could easily be identified by academic geographers or scholars. Apart from providing the historical background of the settlement and demographic orientation, the study also presents schemes that are not relevant to this context. It introduces the administrative system of the islands and the various acts enacted related to the Panchayat Raj system, which consists of three levels. It also highlights the provision for equitable access by reserving seats for women in the decentralized government. The study discusses different aspects of capacity building for Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) members in general, with specific focus on women candidates. This capacity building aims to develop participatory skills, leadership abilities, conflict resolution, record keeping, and an accountable attitude. However, the study's methodology for achieving its research outcomes is not clearly explained by the author. The sources of data regarding the outcomes of the capacity-building program are not properly stated, although the results highlight the ground issues faced by local administration and NGOs when initiating capacity-building programs. The solutions provided to the issues raised during the study are not systematically presented. A major drawback is that the study shifts its focus from the capacity building of women to the general bodies of PRI members, thereby deviating from the topic of women's empowerment through political capacity building for decentralized government. Lastly, the study concludes by emphasizing the need for civil society organizations in promoting women's empowerment. In conclusion, this study primarily focuses on the political empowerment of women, while neglecting other important aspects of women's empowerment such as their social, economic, and emotional well-being (Reshi & Sudha, 2022; Al-Qahtani et al, 2020; Moghadam & Senftova, 2005; Bhuyan, 2006). To fully understand the true essence of women's empowerment, these aspects must be collectively addressed.

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