



EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AS AN ANTI-CORRUPTION STRATEGY

Dr. Devanand R

Assistant Professor of English
Govt. First Grade College
Koratagere-572129.(INDIA)

Abstract

Of late, women empowerment has taken the centre stage in Indian political topography. Government schemes have played pivotal role in considerably empowering the weaker sex. Apparently women empowerment and corruption are not related. But they can be productively interlinked through proper academic endeavours. Sociology of Corruption has since then become an important academic interest for social scientists. Corruption in India does not seem to die down in the near future. Innumerable steps have been taken to tackle this issue however half-heartedly and deliberately. This paper tries to explore how empowerment of women, whether educational or political or economic, can lead to lessen the instances of corruption. However the study of the concrete practices of corruption is not an easy achievement for the fieldworker of anthropology who is exposed to continuous interactions with local informants during participant observation. The scholar does not intend to problematize the issue.

Keywords: Empowerment, Corruption, Gender, Dominance, Legitimacy.

Gunnar Myrdal in his Asian Drama identified the problem of corruption as a serious bottleneck for the development of Asian regions. He took years together to study the acute problems of poverty in these regions. Sociology of Corruption has since then become an important academic interest for social scientists. Since corruption is a form of crime, it has to be treated more seriously and sensitively. However we need to differentiate systemic and individual corruption; moral and legal corruption; rumours and realities of corruption. Sociology of corruption focuses on social problem of the issue rather than individual issues. Since young adults are socialized into corrupt system; they tend to adopt norms and value corruption. Proliferation of corruption scandals in complex political system including judicial and legislative domain has become increasingly difficult to discern.

Corruption includes nepotism, favouritism, bribery, sexual servitude, extortion or any other form of illegal exchange of certain favours. There is a popular belief currently in circulation, that women are not as corrupt as men which may not be true. Recent surveys of aid donors have cited statistical evidence that countries with larger numbers of women in politics and in the workforce have lower levels of corruption. This finding can be explained by the fact that there are more women in politics and the workforce in liberal democracies than in other forms of regimes. The potential role of women in fighting corruption can be linked to their level of empowerment. The myth of women's incorruptibility is not, however, indisputable. It is grounded in essentialist notions of women's higher moral nature and an assumed tendency to bring this to bear on public life. The gendered nature of access to politics and public life opens chances for corruption. In addition, corruption can be experienced quite differently by women and men, which has repercussions for anti-corruption strategies. An analysis from gendered perspective of corruption is in fact a valuable entry-point to the examination of the gendered nature of accountability failures,

and of gender-specific gaps in current attempts to promote good governance. Then the presumption that the women empowerment lessens the practices of Corruption in society is a temporal and relative axiom that needs to be extensively surveyed and intensively studied.

The problem of Corruption is studied by various disciplines including Anthropology. Anthropology accounts of gift-exchange processes, reciprocity, redistribution, informal economic transactions, moral economy, nepotism, cronyism and fraudulent social networks are some of the topics in which the discipline was the pioneer rather than the latecomer. For example, the anthropological debate stemming out of the famous essay by Marcel Mauss on the gift built the foundation of social theories of reciprocity and gift exchange. However the study of the concrete practices of corruption is not an easy achievement for the fieldworker of anthropology who is exposed to continuous interactions with local informants during participant observation. The scholar is not expected to problematize the issue. Corruption is conceived as an outcome of widespread interpenetration of the economic and political sphere, which reduces competition and increase privileges, the creation of powerful elites and cliques.

Judgments about legitimacy are part of the larger frameworks of normative conceptions that people produce in all known social structures. Norms do not come from above, nor do they arise in most cases, one would argue, from some evolutionary process that selects for efficiency. Instead, they are enacted, reproduced and/or changed in the course of each group's normal activity. Norms may be in part a reflex of changes in practical realities, as when increasing women's participation in the workforce makes sexist conceptions appear quaint and out-dated. Yet they have some life of their own, and can predate and influence as well as being a consequence of social change. Norms may not be easy to manipulate. However they are subtly manipulated by the dominant groups.

Failure of previous anti-corruption strategies leads to the promotion of women in the public sector as a potential anti-corruption remedy. This nascent idea is premised on presumptions that women are more ethical than men. However, failure of previous anti-corruption strategies begs legitimate questions: would women prove less corrupt when exposed to environments characterised by corrupt opportunities and networks? Would women maintain high ethical standards in the public realm when social obligations require certain acts of corruption? This article uses primary data from Ghana to address these questions. The article concludes that women may not prove less corrupt in the public sector if corrupt opportunities and networks are not restrained. Also, the very gender system, which is used to justify women's proclivity to less corrupt behaviour and subsequent integration into the public sector, could itself be the source of corruption as women attempt to fulfil their gender roles.

In the last five decades, the concept of women empowerment has undergone a sea change from welfare oriented approach to equity approach. It has been understood as the process by which the powerless gain greater control over the circumstances of their lives. Various workshops have addressed the issues like "Proxy Women" who after being elected to Panchayat bodies were merely puppets in the hands of their husbands, relatives and other male Panchayat members; and emphasized on training programme for their capacity building. The 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution of India provided opportunity to women to take part in active politics. The year 2001 was declared as the year of women's empowerment for enhancing their status. Steps were taken to encourage them to participate in public affairs. To achieve the goal, the government introduced different programmes, identified strategies, established different institutions and made various legal provisions. In spite of all these efforts and actions, women in India still lag behind the men. According to 2001 Census, female literacy rate in the country was 54.2 per cent as against 75.9 per cent in case of males.

Although literacy rates for both the sexes were witnessing increasing trend over the years from 1951 to 2001 the gap between them were also simultaneously increasing till 1981 and since then it has started declining but the progress has not been as much as was expected. The situation has been much worse in the rural and remote areas of the country. In spite of women going for higher education they are facing exclusion from their male counterparts and are alienated in various positions in governance. The incidence like early marriage, female feticides and infanticide, dowry, bride burning, rape, molestation, kidnapping... etc are very frequent.

Gender Inequality interferes with women's ability to advance at all levels of politics and decision making, thereby obstructing their access to political participation. Corruption also disrupts efforts to combat different forms of violations. One striking example is trafficking in women. Corruption tampers with justice systems and makes it difficult to struggle against trafficking and enables traffickers to go unpunished.

Corruption in public service delivery affects women disproportionately more than men due to the higher vulnerability for women living in poverty and being responsible for the care of children and elderly. Women in some phases of life also have greater needs for health services, especially in their reproductive years. They require access to health care before and during pregnancy and after delivery. In these situations women may be subjected to corruption, for example in the form of bribery, by health service providers at different stages of their health care needs. Sexual extortion is the worst form of corruption. This one grey area where women need to be empowered. Corrupt law enforcement systems erode the protection and advancement of women's rights under the law. Often violated social, political and economic issues include marriage and divorce, allegations of adultery and rape, child custody, human trafficking, inheritance, property rights, and financial independence. Corrupt judiciaries reinforce existing discriminatory practices by failing to protect the broader human rights of women and girls. Women are in many ways subjected to the same forms of corruption as men, although often –due to gendered power relations, discrimination and vulnerability –to a greater extent. But there are also forms of corruption that are gender specific. This includes for example the use of sex as an informal currency in bribery that is far more challenging and disgusting.

Reference

1. Myrdal, Gunnar (2008): "Asian Drama- An inquiry into the Poverty of Nations" , Kalyani Publishers, Bengaluru.
2. Anand, S. and A. Sen (1995): "Gender Inequality in Human Development: Theories and Measurement", in Fukuda Parr and A.K. Shiv Kumar (eds.) Readings in Human Development, OUP, New Delhi.
3. Kishor, S. and K. Gupta (2004): "Women's Empowerment in India and Its States: Evidence from the NFHS", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. XXXIX, No.7.
4. Shields, Lourene E. (1995): "Women's Experiences of the Meaning of Empowerment", Qualitative Health Research, Vol.5, No.1.
5. www.sida.se/contentassets/3a820dbd152f4fca98bacde8a8101e15/gender-and-corruption.pdf
6. [<https://mpr.ub.uni-muenchen.de/24740/>]
7. Bakshi P M, (2018): "The Constitution of India", Universal Publishers, Chennai.