

Does Expanding Frontiers of Civil Society Extend Women Development?

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Abstract: Civil society has significantly emerged as the third sector providing employment opportunities and transacting welfare and development to women. The post liberalization era in the expansion of civil society has been accompanied by the ambit of neoliberal governance through foreign funding as well as neoliberal stipulations largely framing the agenda and activities of civil society organizations with prominent accent on women development in India. However, a critical appraisal of the existing literature on the role of civil society reveals that there is a manifesting hiatus between the claims versus outcomes of the performances of NGOs with regard to women development. Social scientists tend to argue that civil society even though has been less effective in engendering gender equality in economic, familial and community endeavours while on the contrary both the nation state and the transnational organizations have tended to assign higher emphasis and greater space for civil society in gender development and women empowerment. Against the backdrop of scepticism portrayed by social science literature, this study with a neo functionalist approach embarks into the analysis of the opportunities and outcomes generated by civil society organizations and the extent to which it facilitate employment generation and development of urban women in Kolkata.

Key words: Civil society, Women development, Empowerment of Women, Human Resource Development.

Introduction

Indian civil society is largely characterised by the presence of religious and traditional structures which gave it a distinct character when compared to the surfacing of the civil society organizations across the globe. The religious and reform activities along with political concerns, the national movements, the women's movement, the labour disputes together contributed to the emergence of civil society in India during colonial period.

'Post liberalization boom' manifesting in the proliferation of NGOs as 5, 51, 837 during 1981-1990 against 11, 22,782 during 1991 to 2000 (Central Statistical Organization of India) perhaps provided fillip to the expansion of the scale and scope of civil society in contemporary India. With the advent of neo liberalism, India witnessed the rolling back of the state whereby a larger liability was imparted to civil society in terms of empowering and determining the welfare of the people. Such responsibility taken up by the civil society not only resulted in but also was determined by the proliferation of NGOs in the country (Harris, 2001). During the 1970s and 1980s the NGOs in India started being associated with the state as collaborators to bring about development followed by the increasing foreign funding from donor agencies through the government post the structural reforms of which thus saw the scaling up of activities of the NGOs in India. After the 1970s, the State showed failure on its part and the civil society organizations catering to women's issues started organizing themselves which has been described as the first wave of feminism in India. The second wave started in the mid 1980s with feminist groups challenging the legal boundaries of women's rights and entitlements and recognizing that women have diverse social experience while the third wave of feminism considered the new social movements along with identity politics and issues of women's reservation (Vadivalu, 2006). Consequently, the civil society organizations have been identified as having potentiality to contribute to development activities encouraging research on assessing the performance and development outcomes of such organizations (Rakodi, 2012).

Correspondingly, the expansion of citizenship rights with the dawn of the twenty first century offered momentum to the functioning of civil society with legitimization by the nation state arbitrated by the political associations whereby the developmental agenda of neo liberal state experienced a shifted from welfare oriented to empowerment oriented approach where the civil society now assumed a greater responsibility (Sharma, 2008). In May 2007, the approval of the National Policy on the Voluntary Sector created opportunities for the civil society organizations crafting greater space and institutionalization of civil society as the third sector for employment and development

in India. (Asian Development Bank, 2009) In terms of the changing role of the civil society organizations, the recent trend has been to emphasize more upon ‘governance and development’ (Tandon, 2013) not just by themselves but also as an extension of government activities sometimes playing a major role in bringing up issues of the women, thereby influencing the state activities in the direction of welfare and development of the marginalized even in circumstances where state failed to do so (Pharr, 2000).

Due to the various changes within the Indian society in terms of precision whereby the people have greater access to information with an increase in the compass of democracy, India still has to attend to issues and concerns within the country which invariably has an impact on the changing scenario of civil society organizations. The changing trend in the growth of civil society organizations has been resulting from various changes in the socio-economic political changes within the country.

Theoretical Framework

Jeffery Alexander’s neo functionalist approach to civil society portrays it as a sphere facilitating inclusion, solidarity and integration. Elucidating a binary discourse of civil society at the levels of motives, social relations and sustainable institutions Alexander (1998) opines that each level manifests a set of democratic and undemocratic codes which acts as foundations on which the functioning of civil society rely. The democratic codes manifest the means of solidarity and integration while the undemocratic codes manifest the antipathies.

Alexander intend activism, autonomy, rationality, reasonableness, calm, self control, realistic and sane as democratic codes of the actors at the level of social motives, in terms of the counter democratic code he puts forward passivity, dependence, irrationality, hysteria, excitable, passionate, unrealistic and mad. He advocates that the characteristics of democratic social relationships as open, trusting, critical, honourable, conscience, truthful, straightforward, deliberative and friendly while secretive, suspicious, deferential, self interested, greed, deceitful, calculating, conspirational and rivalry as counter-democratic codes. For the sustainability of institutions he puts forward rule, regulated, legal, equality, inclusive, impersonal, contractual,

social groups and official as democratic codes while arbitrary, power, hierarchy, exclusive, personal, ascriptive loyalty, fractions and personality as counter democratic codes. In the light of Alexander’s theory the proposed research, taking a neo functionalist approach has taken civil society organizations in terms of social motives, social relationships and institutions as being catering to activism, inclusiveness and as promoting friendship and development of the marginalized.

Considering a functional approach to assess the workings of civil society in contrast to an organizational approach, Laine (2014) opines that civil society till the present day has witnessed a varying range of conceptual contestations from being associated with a sphere of associations of ‘ensuring civility’ and social order and contributing to activities of state to getting itself separated from state with the ushering of modernity and acting as a watchdog to the state, to working for the state in facilitating its activities. There was a turn in the history of conceptualization of civil society which marked the division between political and civil society. While Marx portrayed civil society as ‘individual egotism’ Gramsci saw in it a scope for freedom (Laine, 2014). Thus with the turn of modernity, civil society was not just seen as associated with public sphere but was also seen as a sphere of association. Considering the postmodern conditions, civil society witnessed the transformation to a ‘global civil society’ with neoliberal ties across the globe whereby there was a call for development and change in terms of working with the grassroots and formation of self help groups.

Civil Society as a Space of Association

The conceptualization of civil society started being reconsidered only in the twenty first century when there occurred an urgent call for setting aside democratic from non democratic civil societies. In this respect, Rudolph (2000) ventures through the relationship between civil society and democracy across Indian states and attempts to critically investigate the space of civil society as a sphere of freedom by categorizing associations and providing criteria for a better grasp of civil societies in terms of three criteria which demonstrates a variety of shades in the relationship between civil society and associations as being whether politically active or inactive,

voluntary or involuntary and hierarchical or egalitarian bringing in the concepts of choice or ascription and a sense of 'intentional association' making a way adhering to both the criteria of choice and of ascription in terms of the membership.

Elliott (2006) brings out the associational aspect of civil society which for her is a space for the unheard voices. Elliott (2006) in writing about civil society includes voluntary groups which for her responds to local needs which itself is a challenge for the State. She is describing civil society as a sector of associations, as a 'network of social life, arena of community meetings, clubs, churches, sabhas, samajs, social movements and community action groups. It is both a collection of organizations and relatively protected space' such definition does not imply that the civil society organization as against state yet stimulates the solidarity which the state possibly could not bring about drawing from Putnam's concept of 'generalised trust' that develops within associations facilitating people's participation, sense of unity and effective outcome of the steps taken. Such an implication holds true for the civil society organizations which facilitate participation of individuals with diverse background. However it is also important to consider the non harmonious character of it which essentially is influenced by the diversities even within these institutions. The development thinkers in this light chooses to challenge the omnibus definition of civil society to call it as the third sector for it bears a normative, structural and a functional meaning (Viterna et al. 2015). This, for the classifiers equip the empirical researcher to grasp the power play, resource and influence within the civil societies.

Berglund (2009) hints at the misrepresentation of the term civil society in the Indian context as a result of which certain elite groups have been able to successfully continue to hold power positions without probe. The author draws from the classical, contemporary and current debates and confronts it with a liberal perspective. Yet such a conceptualization of civil society (as how the liberals perceive), is even more problematic as civil society is again portrayed as a sphere separate from of state. Chandhoke (2012) in similar lights critically describes the rationale for the sphere of civil society for being considered as a site of inclusion and association by citing the role of

political movements' and 'social engagements' as determining the activities of civil society in India. Tracing the development of the civil society in the Indian context to cite instances of democratic and non-democratic instances of civil society activism, Chandhoke (2012) brings out the importance of considering every term along with the normative baggage it carries with it, as delimiting meaning to concepts may have different connotations and political implications which comes with it.

Objectives and Research Questions

Mahajan (1999) in her concluding article on the debate between Beteille and Mahajan regarding civil society and state summarises the journey of the concept of civil society and opines that till 19th Century civil society was a form of 'political community' where individual rights were important, during the twentieth century the concept experienced a change and notions of participation along with 'self management' came up while in tyrannous regime civil society and state became antagonists. The changing role of civil society thus has an impact on the activities it initiates. In this backdrop the research puts forward its first objective as to examine the changing scale and scope of civil society in contributing to development of urban women.

Considering various factors as determining and impeding women development, the second objective of the study has been to analyse the impact of interventions made by civil society in human resource development and employment generation for urban women. Citing the instance of various factors and space being one of it as directly proportional to social structures, cities have been identified as spaces determining and reinforcing gender relations and urban structures limiting women's participation in the public sphere (Spain, 2014) and thereby determining their development and employment. The data collected from the field reveals that one of the organizations sampled is of Muslim affiliation and operating in a Muslim dominated ward of the city. While the ghettoization of Muslims in Kolkata is not only determined by socio-economic conditions of a group but also by virtue of their community identity, spatial ghettoization of the minority communities in the city of Kolkata has not only limited their scopes and opportunities but has also characterized the community with a

sense of ‘stigma.’ (Chatterjee, 2015) In this backdrop, it is also important to take into consideration the women’s perceptions and experiences as having a distinct character (Hasan and Menon, 2004). Considering ghettoization of the Muslims as an instance whereby it is usually considered as a safe place for women; contrarily negotiates with the women’s engagement with larger public sphere (Khan, 2007) thereby curbing their opportunities to take up work outside. In this backdrop, the second objective gains significance.

Considering the literature on the space of civil society as a podium addressing the interests of heterogeneous groupings and serving as an inclusive platform for less privileged groups within any society and the state and market as patriarchal sphere, the research thus will engage in investigating the lived experiences of the women of the minority communities engaged in civil society activities, the extent to which they participation in various activities of the organization along with the nature and scope of such participation considering the third objective as to ascertain the extent of inclusion of women as leaders and employees of civil society organizations.

Looking at the brief history of Catholicism manifesting trend of service and hospitality particularly to the sick and the poor (Ferris, 2005: 313) the research considers the last objective to enquire into the social background of women who are directly or indirectly gaining access to develop through civil society.

Subsequent to the objectives, the research also addresses the following research questions:

1. How the expansion of civil societies is functional in empowering urban women?
2. To what extent civil society organizations can be instrumental in socio-economic upliftment of women?
3. Which social category of women is benefitted from the services and opportunities rendered by civil society organizations?

Methodology and Locale of the Study

Case studies of Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) registered civil society organizations were documented by conducting

In Depth Interviews (IDI) and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with the help of interview schedules for the heads and women employees of the organizations and FGD guides for the women beneficiaries of the organization. Three organizations were chosen whereby a Muslim organization was selected from Muslim dominated ward in the city of Kolkata while the Christian organizations were chosen from among wards having majority Christian population from among the total Christian population of the city.

Multi-stage stratified random sampling design has been used in the study. In the first stage, samples of FCRA civil society organizations in Kolkata were procured from among all the civil society organizations of the city. In the next stage, sampling of women employees and women beneficiaries from each selected organizations were selected for In-Depth Interview (IDI) and Focus Group Discussion (FGD).

Description and comparisons of lived experiences of women beneficiaries and women employees across different religious communities were done for analysing the qualitative data from open-ended questions in the interview schedules. The qualitative data obtained from IDIs and FGDs were considered as complementary explanations to the findings and for getting insights into women’s perceptions. The locale of the study has been selected as Kolkata as with the coming of Islam and Christianity in the eighteenth century, the city witnessed newer form of openness with doctrines emphasizing on egalitarianism and witnessing a spur of civil society organizations aiming at welfare of the commons. Gradually, the ‘Western Liberal’ education gave way to reasoning and thinking in newer terms, this along with what Basu (2012) calls ‘spiritual humanism’ and technology made a fertile ground for the civil society to emerged in then Bengal more profoundly than any other state in India. The emphasis on Bengal’s social reforms along with its commercial reform was developed first during the 1800s (Pradip Sinha, 1967). This along with the role of the religious movements: Bhakti and the Shakta sects drawing from justice and non materialism have a role to play in determining Bengal’s syncretistic nature giving it a distinct character compared to the other states of the country.

Civil Society Facilitating Development

“The language of civil society—although often sociologically underdeveloped—has been the predominant way in which claims to personhood and self-determination have been grounded in appeals to social integration” (Calhoun, 1993 in Dekker, Hooghe and Buijs ed., 2003).

According to Saberwal, ‘civil society’ is characterized by four qualities. Firstly, it a space of ‘decisions’ and ‘choices’ based on two essentially important determinants reason and knowledge. The possession of knowledge will invariably include the access to it by the members of the civil society as well as a scope to critically reflect upon such knowledge. There should be adequate space and skill for reasoning grounded in the happenings and the reality. Secondly, the space of civil society should reflect a network of open ended relationships without exclusions on any grounds. The purposes of the civil society should reflect diversity and inclusion. Thirdly the space should be free from coercion and fourthly, situated between primary groupings and public space, these spaces should be serving as a protected zone from the authoritarian spaces of both the primary grouping and the state. Considering these characteristics and looking into the origin of civil society as a space itself being a product of the growth of democratic politics in Europe, associates the space with that of freedom of the individual who maintains a friendly relationship with the public. The article identifies the process with three distinct events within the Indian society: The configuration of the republican Constitution, the Gandhian philosophy challenging the cons of religious thoughts and contributing to the social services, the initiation of democratic politics and increased segmentation within the Indian society.

In the international context, the works of Habermas and Gramsci had outlined the literature on civil society as facilitating public participation while in India, the role of ‘political movements’ and ‘social engagements’ were the only considered aspects of civil society and that people coming together are contributing to democracy and the processes of state which also reduces the citizens merely to recipients of social goods. Such understanding brings out the importance of considering every term along with normative baggage it carries with

it, as delimiting meaning to concepts may have different connotations and political implications which comes with it (Chandhoke, 2012). Thus the development of civil society in the Indian context shows a history of both democratic and non democratic instances of civil society activism.

Civil Society vs. Women Empowerment

Women to a large extent, marginalised from State institutions on one hand and male dominated organizations on the other, finds it easier to get involved with civil society in general and faith based organizations and community groupings or women’s activist groups in particular (Howell and Mulligan, 2005). Consequently, such involvement of women and their role as beneficiaries of the civil society organizations have been considered with respect to their representation, leadership, employment, human resource development and self employment in the lights of the field data.

a. Women Representation

Research on civil society and gender apprehension has considered issues of civil society to a large extent considering the aspect of it as a space of patriarchal values (Howell, 2005, Fraser, 1990) not apprehending other aspects of participation, the membership conditions or the power politics of the civil society itself by sociologists working on NGOs in India (Bhaviskar, 2001). Considering the limited approaches to the study of civil society organizations in Indian context, terms it as ‘politically tame’ bonded by politically acceptable. This is also true with regard to the idea of the state as a provider and the citizens as consumers arguing after Gramsci (1891-1973) that civil society is a space for the reproduction of the dominant groups can be considered to be atypical of Indian scenario (Chandhoke, 2012). However contrarily, the usherance of neo-liberalism statistical figure shows more women representation in the civil society organizations as majority of the funding in India are directed to organizations working with women beneficiaries (Jalali, 2008, Sharma, 2008). The World Bank too takes up the combination of women and empowerment as its target to achieve its growth not only targeting the women beneficiaries but also the women who are selected to implement these. (Sharma, 2008) The organizations chosen for the study were also

found to be representing women to a large extent and being organizations from the minority communities, representing minority women in particular.

b. Women Leadership

Tadros (2010) notes that although ‘women are often the majority of paid workers in third sector organizations’ around the world, ‘in most cases they do not occupy leading positions’ in either secular or faith-based civil society organisations.

One of the Christian organizations, initiated in 1986 and has come a long way working with visually challenged individuals in general and women in particular, the students of the organization who were now benefitting from the vocational training organized by the organization were part of the focus group discussion and were found to be lacking a voice, they were unable to come up with life changing stories as a result of their association with the vocational training which is a woman empowerment initiative by the organization. They didn’t narrate any life changing incidents however they agreed that women should be empowered. They didn’t raise any issues related to them raising their voice or contributing to any decisions at home, however they agreed to be contributing to basic financial requirements of their home sometimes and feeling ‘satisfied’ with their work. They couldn’t narrate any incident related to change in the attitude of the neighbours or the community however the only thing that they narrated was their liking for the work and that they felt happy to be engaged in the training; they admitted that they felt at home within the organization premises as they were a part of the organization since childhood. The organization in this instance served as a nurturing environment for the women with special needs, however less the amount that they earn is, the organization played the role of a support system for them not just in terms of economy but also on social and psychological grounds. The organization in this instance thus is said to be representing and empowering women in the intervention programs however without leadership; leading to ‘empowerment lite’ which indicates that even when there are initiatives to empower women, there were no attempt to do away with the already existing inequalities within the structures

that hinder absolute empowerment (Cornwall, 2007) and enable them to take up leadership positions. In the similar light, the head of one of the Muslim organizations narrated:

‘...the girls even though are getting educated and considering skill development programmes to advance in their career, lack leadership abilities and are unable to contribute to community development as a whole. Even when there are Muslim women councillors at ward level, they are only titular leaders leading to lopsided development whereby the women even though are pursuing higher education, are unable to contribute to the development of Muslim community as a whole.’

c. Women Employment

The journey of the term civil society has advanced from being ‘civilized society’ to groups working for the facilitation of social cause, advocating human rights and advancing democratic agendas. Considering Alexander’s work which manifests a binary discourse of civil society, there exists solidarity within civil society organizations in spite of having its own power politics within (Singh, 2012). The minority civil society organizations have thus been seen as a sphere of facilitating employment.

Five teachers of a Christian organization were involved in teaching the children of the school run by a Christian organization. They considered and agreed upon the fact that along with education and vocational training, support to enhance one’s qualities are important for a person to be considered as empowered. The values within a family and freedom to exercise their choice are more important for a woman to be empowered rather than her educational qualification. The importance of a mother’s empowerment is very important they explained, referring to their interaction with the families of the underprivileged children of the school. The school was mostly attended by under-privileged children from the grassroots and trafficked children even across the borders of the country. The teachers spoke from their experiences of interacting with the families of these children explaining the strain which the families undergo to bring up the children and thereby it was not just the empowerment of the women which was important but the empowerment of men being even more important.

Considering the stories of their own empowerment, they were of the opinion that empowerment for them was social, cultural, economic and political decision-making on their part. They were all satisfied with their teaching job and were very happy to be guiding the under-privileged children. They have pursued the career as a passion and were previously associated with other educational institutions. They considered themselves much more efficient in guiding children from all strata of society and are thankful to the head for the opportunity. They consider their experience and ability to interact and guide the children from the under privileged background as a unique quality which they developed only after joining the organization whereby they experienced a change within themselves as not just becoming aware of the society around but also experiencing a change within themselves both at the level of humanity and as a teacher. This for them was also another shade of their empowerment after being employed by the organization.

d. Human Resource Development

Shah (2014) critically evaluates the role of civil society as having the potentiality for social transformation. Considering Partha Chatterjee's view on civil society as a domain for the hegemony of urban middle class different from what he terms as political society which for him consists of rural population and urban poor who mobilize under informal patrons in power. Consequently, he fails to consider the activities of civil society extending to the marginalized sections of the society furthering requirements of the Acts and Plans of the government. By dividing civil society activity into four broad categories, the author associates each category as having the capability of carrying out social transformation and working in favour of public interest. Considering charitable organizations, developmental NGOs, rights based activism and engaging with state and market activities, the civil society organizations are potential transformative source if characterized by professionalism, democratic decision making within, transparency and accountability in extended services and aim at people's empowerment and participatory democracy.

Interviewing a Co-ordinator of an intervention programme run by a Muslim organization shows more than 80 percent of the

beneficiaries of the skill development program are women. The intervention activities include computer training program, spoken English classes, garment designing classes and nursing training whereby the candidates are taught first hand nursing in terms of practical training for the candidates. They took up initiatives to contact nursing homes around the Khidderpore area for absorbing them in the nursing homes and hospitals that were in need of qualified nurses yet were not getting well trained nurses. The venture started by sending the candidates as home nurses who initially were not comfortable in working without the purdah however there were special counselling for them to adhere to the dress code of the nursing home requirements and to carry on wearing the purdah after the working hours. This initiative led to increase in absorption of the trained nurses by the nursing homes. Two lines of thoughts can be drawn from this, firstly the employment of the girls were given more importance rather than their attire- a significant part of the identity within the Indian context.

In terms of garment designing, women organized themselves and took initiatives to put boards outside their homes advertising for tailoring. The festive season earned them customers the most however they also had stable income throughout the year. The organization also runs few other intervention programs like conducting computer courses for the under privileged girls and boys and training courses for operating sewing machine where hundred percent of the beneficiaries are women.

e. Self Employment

The employment of Muslims has been associated with concerns of squat in their absorption in government jobs and a depreciated employment situation (self employment) in the neoliberal context mostly among women (Basant, 2012). This along with little skills of negotiation of workers has confined them to lower incomes this along with the government discriminating in terms of infrastructural facility further deepens the concerns. In comparing 'perceived fairness scores' in terms of socio economic status, employment opportunities, education and polity, Singh et al.'s (2009) findings states Hindus stating the opportunities as most fair with regard to employment opportunities, education and social factors while Christian had reported moderately

and Muslims reported scores lowest particularly in terms of employment opportunities. The case study of a Christian minority organization which has initiated vocational training to absorb visually challenged girls in sewing, making paper bags; making macrom bags and beads work from the year 2010 onwards can be cited as an important initiative to empower women in self employment. Along with this they are also trained to be skilled businesswomen and are trained to sell the goods in the market. In addition to this the vocational training program is advertised to include more and more women candidate in general and minority women in particular. Some of the notable examples of successful self employed women beneficiaries are Kajal and Swarupa (name changed) whose works are now sent to Singapore as per the demands of the customers. Considering the organization's role in facilitating self employment of women beneficiaries adds credits to the minority organization in the context where Political scenario and resultant institutional structures have been seen as confining and determining human interactions within a society.

Conducting study in the urban space of Chennai, Harriss (2007) attempts to consider the concept of 'new politics' which has emerged post liberalization. As a part of several outcomes of liberalization, India has also seen the rolling back of the state whereby a larger responsibility has been bestowed on civil society in terms of empowering and determining the welfare of the commons. Such responsibility taken up by the civil society not only resulted in but also was determined by the flowering of NGOs in each corner of the city. This even though facilitated participation on the part of the urban poor, denied empowerment in its true sense. The upper caste and middle class occupying powerful positions within such organizations created new forms of power relation which manifested the characteristics of inertia whereby the participants continued to be disempowered.

Civil Society vs. Gender Concerns

Banon (2006) argues the relationship between women and civil society from 19th and 20th Century onwards when women incorporated themselves into associations however the present scenario does not empower the women. She proposes that women

to a large extent is marginalised from State institutions and male dominated organizations and finds it easier to get involved with the faith based organizations and community groupings or women's activist groups. Thus she considers civil society as a space for emancipation for women and proposes to take up enquiry on gendered spaces and how is it different in terms of the spaces of civil society occupied by the men.

During the 1970s and 1980s the NGOs in India started being associated with the state as partners to bring about development followed by the increasing foreign funding from donor agencies through the government post the structural reforms of 1990s which thus saw the scaling up of activities of the NGOs in India. A swing from welfaristic work to reform and empowerment related work in the 1990s saw the emergence of newer forms of civil societies considering different development models and sensitive approaches towards the minorities, the environment and other marginalized groups. Seventh Five-Year plan [1985-1990] documented this and there was a new role of government sanctioning funds for service activities. In May 2007, the approval of the National Policy on the Voluntary Sector created opportunity for the civil society organizations to increase its scope further. (Asian Development Bank, 2009) However the politics associated with Gender Action Plan of the World Bank whereby statistics showing improvement in women's economic participation will denote economic success and therefore allow the World Bank to continue its business (Sharma, 2008). As the head of a Muslim organization narrated:

'...the development is quantitative development in terms of the increase in schools for girls or increase in the number of intervention activities or development of newer religious worship places but not a qualitative development whereby the Muslim women will have a voice or leadership skill to bring about great changes in society.'

Thus the World Bank takes up the combination of women and empowerment as its target to achieve its growth. Women's empowerment programs do not only target the women beneficiaries but also the women who are selected to implement these (Sharma, 2008). This trend is evident in the statistical figure showing majority

of the funding in India being diverted to organizations working with women beneficiaries (Jalali, 2008, Sharma, 2008) not considering the intersectional identities of women on one hand and not scrutinizing the genuineness of the benefits shared by the women on the other. This brings to forefront the advantageous role of the state whereby the decision to facilitate or limit foreign funding rests with the state not only based on the dominant ideology but also the target group in concern (Jalali, 2008). One of the organizations had poultry farming, gardening and computer training courses which is now affected due to lack of funding. The current government has diluted many funding opportunities in spite of their repeated applications.

Critical Appraisal

For Sharma (2008), empowerment in the neo liberal context targets 'improper and deficient subjects' to include them in the institutions of civil society and market, the World Bank takes up the combination of women and empowerment as its target to achieve its growth. Women's empowerment programmes do not only target the women beneficiaries but also the women who are selected to implement these. Correspondingly, Lindsay and Wuthnow (2010) argue that organizations within the same institutional setting tend to be comparable. Uncertainty, jeopardy, and wider restraint lead to uniform organizational configuration and background thereby not giving scope to groups with varying identities and their pragmatic needs.

The enabling provisions for women to take part in activities and participate in the civil society organizations thus cannot be equated with step taken forward to meet gender needs and achievement of development goals. Thus, civil society should be conceived not just as a space of addressing issues of inequality, poverty and democracy only by confining themselves to the normative definitions of it and making provisions for the participation of the vulnerable population but to consider the historical and political context of the usage of the term (Howell and Pearce, 2001) to extend itself for true women development.

As government found civil society as a viable option to reach out to the commons, foreign funding is facilitated more to organizations working on women related issues in comparison to other issues. This not only brings into forefront the hype to include women related issues

and women more on the part of the organizations but also question the genuineness of such inclusion and their fulfilment of gender needs.

As the growth of civil society organizations and the scaling up of their activities largely rely on international funding based on certain directives especially of gender mainstreaming, these organizations have tended to prioritize women empowerment issues as their projected agenda consequent to which the scope of funding enhanced leading to the expansion of civil society that has not been adequately percolated to reach the development benefits to the targeted women without adequately translating development aspirations or women empowerment. Consequently, the agenda of women empowerment seem to have promoted the development of civil society while the expansion of civil society seem to have failed in achieving women development per say.

Thus, in the development dialectics civil society gained out of women empowerment in which the international drive for women empowerment expanded civil society whereas the expansion of civil society has not adequately contributed to women development as purported in India. These empirical evidences counteract Jeffery Alexander's theorization that civil society is functional in terms of promoting inclusion and contributing to development from a gender perspective due to the palliative approach of civil society's flagship bear the rubric of gender mainstreaming perhaps to mainstream the scope of their fund raising from international agencies without rendering transformative gender justice.

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