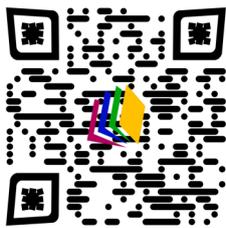


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Gender Inclusive Governance at the Grassroots in India: Inclusion through Exclusion

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ABSTRACT:

Inclusive governance rests on the involvement of different strata of society in the political and administrative processes. It not only ensures institutional efficiency and democratic spirit but also empower the underprivileged sections and enlist their contribution to the overall development of a society. Increasing numerical representation through reservation of seats for women in the Panchayati Raj Institutions was intended to pave way for inclusive governance and empower women at the grassroots. However, mere entry in local bodies is not suffice for inclusive governance and effective exercise of power by women as the disadvantaged across all social categories. Considering that inclusive governance is intended to give women a voice, access to decision making and capability for social transformation, inclusive governance could be ensured by excluding overbearing patriarchal presence and voice in existing political structures. The concept of All Women Panchayats is an off shoot of this line of thinking. Women long denied public spaces and public presence also are discomforted in the presence of males in local bodies. Left to themselves to discuss, debate and take decisions, women have been able to display leadership capabilities and also affecting change in their communities. Has this experiment really been able to bridge gender divide in the countryside and ensure inclusive governance is what this paper attempts to explore.

KEY WORDS: Exclusion, Inclusion, Gender, Empowerment, Representation, Reservation, Panchayat, Participation, Social Change, Women.

INTRODUCTION

The crux of discourse on inclusive growth and inclusive society is inclusive governance (IG). By involving people belonging to different social orders in the political and administrative processes, IG seeks to mainstream them to facilitate their contribution to the composite life of a society. This not only ensures institutional efficiency and democratic spirit but also fosters equity and empowerment of the underprivileged sections. The highlight of IG is political participation and