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**SOCIAL WELFARE PROGRAMS FOR THE WOMEN
EMPOWERMENT IN POLITICS IN PURBA BARDHAMAN, WEST
BENGAL**

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ABSTRACT

Social welfare programs are introduced by the government to ensure social welfare of communities lacking security. Most vulnerable are the women in rural areas. These women lack essential resource access and participation allowance. For ensuring their political participation, government introduces social welfare schemes. Evidences are Kanyashree Prakalpa, Rupashree Prakalpa among others. Effectiveness of these schemes are somewhat high as all women lack civic engagement allowances. Although trainings are provided, women cannot be retained, as they lack knowledge and awareness on the latest trends which has been adopted for ensuring their political empowerment. Need is altering perceptions, gender based stereotypes, which challenge and oppose political participation, engagement and empowerment for women equally among all dimensions.

Key words: Social welfare, programs, women, empowerment, politics, Purba Bardhaman, West Bengal

1. INTRODUCTION

Women empowerment, through politics, refers to the process where women are allowed to participate actively in political decision-making. Performance in this field enhances their leadership, and governance. Political empowerment respects right to speech for women, shaping their contribution in laws, policies, and development priorities. These are the priorities, which directly affect their living standards within communities. When women are represented by political institutions like parliaments, panchayats, and local governing bodies, their advocacy skills are exposed. As a result of this, issues like education, health, social welfare, gender equality, and social justice are aimed for betterment.

Political participation enriches women's social status, confidence, and leadership skills. This enhancement is effective for breaking traditional gender barriers, challenging patriarchal norms. For enhancing this participation, policies have been devised in the form of reserving of seats for women, arranging voter awareness programs, and provision of leadership training programs. These policies have played a crucial role for increasing women's engagement into politics, from the foundation level. Here, an important point to note is that empowering women through politics is much beyond equality and asserts inclusiveness, transparency, and responsible governance. All of these contributes to the formation of sustainable democratic development.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Social welfare programs and initiatives have been initiated for supporting women's empowerment in the context of Purba Bardhaman, west Bengal. Wider context of West Bengal, in these programs, are correlations to political participation, socio-economic empowerment, and pathways to leadership.

2.1 Government Schemes

Government of west Bengal, for uplifting the status of women, introduced Lakshmir Bhandar Scheme. This scheme has emerged as a major state welfare program providing monthly cash transfers to women. With this cash, women have been able to ensure financial independence and dignity in their living standards. According to Dutta, (2022), this economic support has

assisted women to participate more confidently in community and civic life activities.

2.2 Kanyashree Prakalpa

Another of the programs is Kanyashree Prakalpa, which has been introduced for catering to scholarships for girls (adolescents). The scheme has been introduced for retaining these girls to stay in schools longer. The scheme is also beneficial for making the parents aware about the harmful impacts of early marriage. With its function, the scheme has emerged as a key foundation for empowering girls towards future civic and political engagement.

2.3 Rupashree Prakalpa

Government also provides allowance for one-time financial grant to the fathers, who intend to marry off their eligible girls. Sharukh (2024) argued that these grants and allowances reduces economic burdens on fathers, strengthening women's social empowerment.

2.4 Jaago & Other Women-Focused Welfare Initiatives

Governmental plans also include various one-time assistance and empowerment schemes like Jaago Project. This is a project, which provides assistance and supports to women across West Bengal. District social welfare services are also provided to women at the district level, these programs aim to support women who have experienced violence. Paschimbardhaman.gov.in (2025) states that target audience for these programs are elderly, and vulnerable groups who are eligible for these protective and welfare schemes but are not always directly tied to politics.

2.5 Local Empowerment Activities for women welfare in Purba Bardhaman, West Bengal

2.5.1 "Aparajita" Self-Defense Workshops

These workshops are the initiatives of Purba Bardhaman District Police. Through these workshops, girls and women gain experience in self-defense. Along with this, their confidence is boosted, ensuring safety among other social constructs. As per the arguments of

Digital desk (2024), these are important prerequisites for girls to be active in events directed towards public and political participation. ‘

2.5.2 SHG and Community Groups

Successful women’s self-help groups, known as “Gosthi”, in the district of Purba Bardhaman, assists women to assemble for economic activities. This is through the means of building leadership skills from the foundation. Upon investigation, Burdwanzp.org, (2014) argued that these groups often emerge as a stepping-stone for community leadership and local politics.

2.6 Structural platforms supporting women’s engagement

2.6.1 Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) Reservation

Across India, specifically West Bengal, one-third of Panchayat seats are reserved for women. This reservation is functional from policies which are crucial for enhancing women’s political participation from the foundation. According to the revelations of Dey and Das, (2020), this is applicable for national PRI framework, which is undertaken by government in Purba Bardhaman.

2.6.2 Voter Awareness and Participation Trends

Admin (2025) represented state data indicating narrow gender gaps in voter registration and turnout. The gaps suggest increase in political awareness and engagement among women in the context of West Bengal.

2.6.3 Urban Livelihood Mission (DAY-NULM)

The mission was designed with the hope of economic upliftment among women. Wb.gov.in (2025) is of the view that the mission also expanded to self-help group and capacity-building components for motivating and encouraging women to build self-organization skills, paving way for community leadership and political confidence.

2.7 How these welfare programs contribute to political empowerment?

Most schemes enlisted in government functions are directed towards economic and social empowerment programs. These programs indirectly strengthen women's capacity to participate in politics. This strengthening happens by increasing economic independence, raising awareness and confidence, supporting education and networks. All these happens with structural inclusion which can be achieved through reservation or quotas. Schemes like *Lakshmir Bhandar*, *Kanyashree*, etc. are effective for improving women's resource control. This control emerges as a strong ingredient for predicting greater civic engagement and leadership potential expressed women. To nourish this potential, women within the community groups are provided with self-defense training. Through this training, their confidence and leadership skills are built, paving way for individuality formation. Supporting education and networks is reflected through scholarship schemes and SHGs, which help women connect, learn, and participate in collective decision-making activities. These activities are often the basis for stepping into local governance. These women are included into the social activities through quotas. Reservations in Panchayati Raj institutions secures women's right to speech in terms of political governance. This governance is reinforced by social welfare support provided by the government for improving their readiness to lead others.

2.8 Local actions & civic resources for women in Purba Bardhaman

Women in Purba Bardhaman have the facility to call on the helpline number 1091 if they face any problem. Both in rural and urban areas, women are encouraged to participate in Women Protection Mechanisms & Awareness Programs conducted for them. Along with this, women are also motivated to be a part of skill, welfare, welfare section activities which support vulnerable women and families. As a result of this, their exclusion from social activities is reduced.

After reviewing these aspects, it can be summarized that in Purba Bardhaman and wider West Bengal, certain welfare schemes like *Lakshmir Bhandar*, *Kanyashree*, *Rupashree*, has been introduced by the government. Combined with local empowerment activities (self-defense workshops and SHGs), these schemes create a foundation for supporting women socio-economically. The aims are indirectly linked towards increasing political participation and leadership among women especially in the rural areas. Additionally, reservation of seats in the parties and education initiatives strengthen avenues for women's political empowerment pathways.

3. METHODOLOGY

Research philosophy for the paper is positivism, which helps in establishing real, scientific, objective and epistemological knowledge about the research topic. Applying deductive approach is justified for the paper as it deduces the essential key facts after the review of past literature. Although time for research is less, descriptive design is apt for describing the facts related to the programs and schemes related to welfare of women in the field of politics. The essential data, collected through secondary methods is effective in terms of including detailed descriptions on the facts and ideas related to the subject matter. Analysis of the collected data through case studies is also effective for enhancing preconceived notions on women's exposure to political field.

4. RESULTS

The segment covers some case studies projecting real world examples on social welfare programs ensuring women's empowerment in politics in Purba Bardhaman, West Bengal. These cases are the localized evidences on the treatment provided to women in the district as a part of exposure to the political field.

4.1 Case of Manteswar Block (Purba Bardhaman)

Research on Manteswar CD Block in Purba Bardhaman surveyed 250 women from diverse caste groups. The aim behind this survey was to measure the impact of welfare programs on women empowerment through political exposure. According to the findings of Samanta and Chakraborty, (2024), welfare schemes from the Government of West Bengal add positivity to the role in women's overall empowerment. These programs include social and economic autonomy among women. The finding also reflected high levels of awareness and scheme usage among women in the study area. Implications of these are that the women are having good outreach and are engaged with the programs. Interesting aspect is the use of Women Empowerment Index (WEI) which assesses economic, social, household, political, and psychological outcomes. Investigation of the benefits drawn from the schemes contributed to enhancement for empowered indicators. Broader platforms are provided for gauging political empowerment for women. This is assessed through political participation, which is considered as one of the important dimensions of empowerment. Here, linkages are done with socio-

economic benefits which are provided to women for building their confidence and capacity to engage in public activities.

Case of Women's Empowerment in Memari Municipality (Purba Bardhaman)

This is the case of urban context developed through the reference of Memari Town. Researchers conducted a case study on Memari Municipality of Purba Bardhaman district. The researches focused on strategies and features directed towards women's empowerment established in an urban setting. Bannerjee, S & Maity, A.K. (2020) detected that urbanisation and community involvement are important for women's empowerment amidst the social constructs. Gender roles and community participation is used for exploring the involvement of women in civic and community decision-making. These aspects are not purely political, but extends to structural opportunities and community strategies, which influence women's empowerment. These aspects pave the way for greater participation in local governance and political decision-making.

Evidence of Self-Help Groups & Public Decision-Making (West Bengal)

Academic evidence from West Bengal brings to the forefront women's Self-Help Groups (SHGs). These groups are supported by government and welfare schemes. From these schemes, the women achieve transformation from home maker to public decision-maker. Cheek and Corbett, (2024) were of the view that they are included within the forums, from where they operate. Self help groups helped women to become confident through discussions and achieving solutions for problems on food security, sanitization, water supply, among others. Discussions and communications provide confidence to these women to emerge as public decision makers. Emerging successful in these discussions, through collective approach, strengthens women's social legitimacy. With this success, women get encouragement for political engagement from the foundation at the grassroots. In case of SHGs, government provides funding and links welfare schemes to ensure political empowerment for women. This is because of building leadership skills, collective identity, and public sphere agency for their proper individual identity formation.

Survey on Muslim women in Purba Bardhaman

For ensuring empowerment for Muslim women, a political participation survey was

conducted in Purba Bardhaman at district-level. The survey covered Muslim women in Purba Bardhaman, noting their responses on the parameters of education, and economic empowerment. The levels were higher as compared to political empowerment. Survey responses, as highlighted by Samsujjaman and Mehaboob, (2020) measured persistent gaps underlying in the predictions of women empowerment through the field of politics. From the responses, it was also noted that political empowerment for these women are suppressed under the parameters of economic and educational empowerment. Therefore, it can be asserted that welfare programs contribute towards direct political engagement in terms of economic and social parameters. However, they do not prove to be effective without strategic interventions. Evidence can be cited of voting, office-holding, and public leadership, which need proper rational planning for achieving success.

After reviewing the cases, it can be inferred that Women Empowerment Index is a powerful tool for gauging empowerment to be received by women from the field of politics. This is the case of Manteswar Block welfare schemes introduced by government of Purba Bardhaman. Lessons are also to be taken from Memari Municipality which strives for community participation to increase civic engagement among women. This action reflects strategies for ensuring women empowerment in the urban areas. From SHG groups case, governmental support effectiveness is reflected. Trainings are conducted for building leadership skills which could enhance their empowerment through engagement into politics. Herein lays the correlation with political empowerment survey, which measures political engagement among women who really need support.

Reviewing the main points, it can be concluded that welfare programs like social welfare schemes increase confidence and resource utilization among women. Collective structures like SHGs strengthen public voice and leadership traits applicable to women, both in urban and rural areas for the sets of political contexts. Urban and rural case studies reflect variations in empowerment, in terms of political participation. This participation often requires additional supportive mechanisms for dealing with the issues faced by women.

5. CONCLUSION

After reviewing the aspects, it can be concluded that social welfare programs, if introduced with proper planning, by government, yields positive outcomes on social security for women. This security comes if women willingly participate in the programs. For this, civic

engagement actions and strategies can be related. Kanyashree Prakalpa, Rupashree Prakalpa are some of the schemes, which has financially supported the women both in rural and urban areas. More such schemes are needed, after conducting empowerment and participation surveys. These surveys could enhance awareness on the current alarming situations, including the challenges which rural women face. These welfare programs are needed to help them live their dreams of achieving empowerment through political activities engagement.

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