Chapter II

Empowerment of Marginalized Groups:
A Theoretical Construct

The idea of empowerment in its current usage is new, yet it is frequently used in recent discourses on development. It may be invoked in virtually any context: in speaking about human rights, about basic needs, about economic security, about capacity building, about skill formation or about the conditions of a dignified social existence. This idea is also used in the context of the upliftment of the marginalized, unorganized and other disadvantaged sections of society. After all, oppressed groups such as unorganized workers, poor peasants, tribal people, dalits and women are all engaged in a struggle for power and judge the development process for their own experiences. Thus empowerment represents the hopes and dreams of the marginalized groups for a social environment free of inequalities disfavouring them in different spheres of life. The deprived people and their organisations at grassroots level are striving relentlessly to realize their dreams and hopes for a better future and empowered life. This study seeks to relate the dynamism of dalit organizations with the empowerment of dalits and develop a theoretical framework to analyse their dialectical interaction.

Empowerment refers to creating capacities in the individuals or groups to participate actively in their own welfare. Theoretically, empowerment should be a process that helps people to gain control over their lives through raising awareness, taking action and working in order to exercise greater control. As Jo Rowlands says, ‘it is about the individuals being able to maximize utility and use the opportunities available to them without or despite
constraints of structure and state\textsuperscript{4}. According to Gutierrez, ‘it is the process of increasing personal, interpersonal or political power so that individuals, families and communities can take action to improve their situation’\textsuperscript{5}. Thus empowerment refers to building capabilities among individuals and groups through which they become self-reliant and organized.

According to Beteille, empowerment is related to certain context in Indian society. In a nutshell, that context is the contradiction between a hierarchical social order and a democratic political system\textsuperscript{6}. Implicit in the idea of empowerment is certain theory of social change, in particular of change from a hierarchical to an egalitarian type of society\textsuperscript{7} or in a slightly different language, from an aristocratic to a democratic type of it\textsuperscript{8}. Thus empowerment presupposes social change through the rearrangement of power. Among the different means suggested to achieve this goal, empowerment through the expansion of the civic, political and social rights of citizenship is important. It is a way of seeking empowerment within the democratic political process. Another way, as in our country, is by providing as extensively as possible, quotas on the basis of community, caste and gender\textsuperscript{9}. If we analyse empowerment of the weaker sections in the light of the above mentioned ways, we find that the government and civil society have often made earnest efforts in guaranteeing these rights to them. However, they continue to remain disempowered and one of the main hurdles in their empowerment is the traditional social ethos which restricts their involvement in public decision-making process.

2.1 Evolution of the Concept of Empowerment

The empowerment of the marginalized groups and other weaker sections of society assume vital significance in the context of a paradigm shift in the development strategy of the state. Though the usage of the terms like
social development, human development and empowerment are of recent origin, other related operational concepts like emancipation, development, social upliftment etc. were used for several decades to signify the measures adopted in the eradication of social inequalities.

Though the concept of emancipation was widely used during the colonial struggle against imperialism, it owes its origin to the Enlightenment. By the turn of the nineteenth century it was associated with a view of progress as a movement towards freedom and equality. Development in its classical understanding is equated with growth in the gross national product or in per capita income. The goal of development programmes in India was ‘growth with stability’ in fifties. Industrialization and its related areas of growth constituted the thrust areas of development in the early sixties. In the early seventies, the development discourse in India incorporated the principle ‘development with social justice’ which emphasized the integration of marginalized groups into the mainstream society. Later new concepts like social/human development were used recognizing human person as the central subject of study. Significantly this perspective has visualized economic development as the means to human development whereby empowerment of the people (women, the young adults, poor and other marginalized groups) has been visualized as the surest strategy to contribute to economic growth and thereby to social development.10 The development practices in India have been reoriented once again since the mid eighties to associate the notion of empowerment with development. During the eighties and nineties empowerment as a strategy is placed in the spectrum of state sponsored development processes.

It was in the context of globalization and structural adjustment programmes of capitalist economy that the term empowerment has emerged. This concept was an important objective at the World Summit for Social Development
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Manoranjan Mohanty analyses the text and context of the emergence of this concept in the vocabulary of contemporary development discourse to show that this concept is a part of globalization and structural adjustment programmes of western capitalism, and provides only an institutionalized mode of giving power to the marginalized sections of society. Thus it is observed that this is a concept promoted by the forces of new economic reforms as a top-down institutional development initiative and applied to the emancipation of marginalized groups. Consequently empowerment implies an external formal institutional agency granting power to the marginalized groups. It implies formal rather than substantive power and it involves an external upper level agency to grant power rather than people below seizing it in the course of struggle. In this context, it is reiterated that the empowerment of weaker sections depends more on the initiatives from below through the grassroots mobilization of organisations and political struggle of the masses.

2.2 The Centrality of the Idea of Power

Though empowerment is conceived in its different dimensions such as socio-economic, political and cultural, the centrality of the political realm as the core idea of empowerment should be analysed. The centrality of the notion of empowerment is located in the dynamics of the legitimate sharing, distribution and redistribution of power. Thus empowerment is explained as sharing the benefits of power with certain underprivileged sections of society who are alienated from the decision-making process. Many scholars think of empowerment as participation in decision-making in vital issues relating to the disempowered subjects. Decision-making is a central instance where and when power is used, including the power to influence the behaviour and choices of
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others. Thus empowerment though linked to social, economic and cultural dimensions, is essentially a political strategy and process. According to Max Weber, power is the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his will despite resistance, regardless of the bases on which this probability rests. For Hans Morgenthau, for instance, power is man’s control over the minds and actions of other men. Smelser points out that power guarantees freedom to one party and denies it to the other and it represents social capacity to make binding decisions that have major consequences over the direction in which a society moves. All these definitions suggest that power is the capacity to control or influence others. Power is essentially connected with authority. According to Max Weber, if power is explained as one’s capacity to control others, it converts into authority, when this capacity to control is legitimized. Hence authority is legitimate domination. Power or authority possesses the dual nature of coercion as well as benevolence. Power may be exercised as a means to exert coercion or domination over others. Simultaneously it may be used as a source of blessing for its beneficiaries. Lord Acton has said that power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Thus concentration and excessive use of power is disempowering and a disabling concept in a democratic polity while decentralization and distribution of power is empowering.

Michel Foucault uses a different model of power. For Foucault, power is not a finite entity that can be located; power is relational, not a substance, and is something which exists only in its exercise. He sees power as a ‘mode of action upon actions.’ His is a notion of power as productive; as intimately bound up with knowledge. Power is inherent in all social action. The omnipresence of power is central to Foucault. Power is everywhere, not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere.
2.3 Kinds of Power Resources

While analyzing Weber’s definition of power, as mentioned above, it is noticed that it presupposes the possession of varied forms of resources which act as power bases or as factors of power production. These bases can be summarized in terms of six categories of resources (assets) (see Table 2.1) that can be accumulated and utilized to achieve objectives.

Table 2.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No</th>
<th>Power resources</th>
<th>Processes</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Economic resources</td>
<td>Control over land, labour or capital as well as goods and services produced therefrom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Social resources</td>
<td>Social status or standing based on social roles or on meeting socially valued criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Political resources</td>
<td>These are primarily a consequence of the incumbency of authority roles that entitle people to claim that they are speaking in the name of the state and can employ whatever resources state institutions possess to enforce decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Informational resources</td>
<td>Knowledge can be productive and beneficial in its own right; more important as a power resource will be knowledge that is productive or beneficial for others. Such knowledge will be desired by others, giving rise to the adage ‘knowledge is power’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Moral resources</td>
<td>Legitimacy accorded to decision-makers, their roles, the decision they take, or the system of governance that leads people to defer to or accept other’s decisions as right and proper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Physical resources</td>
<td>These create the physical force that people may be willing and able to exert against others to compel their cooperation or compliance. This is referred to as ‘coercion’ if it is done with a claim of legitimacy or as ‘violence’ if it is not accepted as legitimate.</td>
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</table>

2.4 Marginalized Groups and Power Resources

The empowerment of marginalized groups, through the acquisition of varied bases of power is a challenging task. They are denied access to the power resources and their struggles have been against the structures of domination as manifested in the protest struggles of downtrodden castes. Empowerment, for them, coincides with emancipation from structures of domination. It implies a process of redistribution of power within and between families/societies and a process aiming at social equality, which can be achieved only by disempowering some structures, systems and institutions\(^1\). Empowerment, however, is not simply a mechanical process of sharing, distribution or redistribution of power. Rather, it involves far wider changes in social and economic institutional arrangements, political ideologies, traditional practices and even in the mindset of the marginalized people through conscientization. Historical evidence shows that such changes are possible only through sustained grassroots mobilization, social movements, selfless interventions of civil societies (NGO’s, people’s cooperatives and progressive institutions) and well articulated attractive policy formulations and their execution with a political commitment for the redressal of power imbalances at the grassroots\(^1\).

2.5 Types of Empowerment

Empowerment is multi-dimensional in the sense that it occurs within social, economic, political and cultural spheres. These dimensions do not necessarily move together at the same pace or even in the same direction. Two studies can look at the same phenomenon, yet come up with different conclusions depending on the dimensions of empowerment they measure\(^2\). Empowerment also occurs at various levels such as individual, group and community. (See Figure 2.1)
2.5.1. Social Empowerment

The focus of social empowerment is on building up social capabilities, social status and opportunities among individuals, classes and communities who are denied access to these vital components of social life. The origin of marginalization in Indian context is deeply rooted in the social structure of Indian society where discrimination based on caste, class and gender is largely prevalent from time immemorial. Deep-rooted ideas of purity and pollution governed the social standings of different castes and sexes; men and women were deemed to be of unequal moral worth as were the different ‘varnas’; and the social hierarchy was underpinned by a legal order in which privileges and disabilities were carefully modulated according to caste and gender. Social empowerment is aimed at social change from a hierarchical to a democratic type of society where the equal rights of all individuals are recognized. It is about the transformation of the existing social structure by providing better education, healthcare system, employment opportunities, social security measures etc to those people who are deprived of these benefits.

2.5.2. Economic Empowerment

It is the process by which better economic growth and access to economic resources are generated and enhanced. An economically backward society lacks all those dynamic qualities that support and sustain economic
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growth. This is very much true with regard to the plight of disadvantaged sections of society who are kept away from the ownership of economic resources. Though society, social groups, NGOs etc can play a major role in economic development, there is no doubt about the key role of the state as the most effective and suitable agency of sustained economic development. It acts as the biggest agency which manages and mobilizes resources including infrastructural and others for promoting and sustaining growth in the economic sphere. However, even the state-sponsored, supported and supervised process of development has made only a slight dent in the dense structure of inequality, exploitation and oppression that have played havoc with the lives of marginalized people for centuries. This situation calls for empowerment of the weaker sections sought within the framework of democratic process, as a remedy for them to get their due share in public economic resources. It is in this context that Max Weber’s suggestion that the poor, who constitute a majority, can use their own resource, their number, to influence political and legislative decisions for radically changing socio-economic conditions in their favour, merits consideration. In the democratic process, political mobilization of the poor and deprived, acts as a powerful weapon, to influence political decisions which determine the modes of distribution of wealth.

2.5.3. Political Empowerment

Political Empowerment is the process of equipping the people with political resources and enabling them to actively participate in the shaping and sharing of power. It increases the potential of the people to effectively control or influence the decision-making process of the state. In fact, the core of the idea of empowerment itself is its political dimension which highlights the concept of power. In this sense, empowerment conceived as a process which endows individuals, groups and communities with power. They acquire the
capacity to make free choices and transform them into desired actions or outcomes. It enables them to influence the course of their lives and the decisions that affect them. As far as the empowerment of the marginalized groups is concerned, their political mobilization has been counted as the most effective way to solve their socio-economic, educational or other backwardness. They should become politically organized as to exercise their franchise for the empowerment of the community. It is a part of the endeavour of the state to empower them that reservation of seats in Parliament and state Legislatures as well as in local bodies is assured. The decentralization of power to Panchayat Raj Institutions by the 73rd and 74th amendments of the Indian constitution is counted as an attempt to politically empower people at the grassroots level especially the weaker sections.

2.5.4. Cultural Empowerment

Culture may be described as the organic whole of ideas, beliefs, values and goals which condition the thinking and acting of a community or people. Understood thus, culture finds conceptual expression in ethics, philosophy and law: symbolic expression in art, literature, myth and cult. It is the normative consciousness of a community inherited from the past and transmitted, with or without modification to coming generations. Cultural empowerment is a process which strives to protect and reconstruct the cultural identity of the people. Viewed from a subaltern perspective, cultural empowerment of dalits is a challenging task. Compared to the dominant culture which is governed by economic and political elites, the subaltern culture is a counter-cultural movement and a protest culture. It represents the antagonism of dalits against the dominant class structures and their struggle to assert equality and human dignity. Empowerment of the marginalized groups entails sincere pursuits for perspective cognition and analysis of the composite processes of new identity
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formation, concretization of these groups for the demolition of the structure of the subordination imposed on them and finally the sharing of power with this powerless lot\textsuperscript{27}.

The scheme below (see Table 2.2) summarises some of the main changes usually sought through the application of empowerment strategies, with some corresponding impact indicators. It is explained in terms of the different dimensions of empowerment such as social, economic, political and cultural realms with its general objectives and indicators therein.

### Table 2.2
Possible General Objectives of an Empowerment Strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Socially</td>
<td>- greater equality of opportunities</td>
<td>greater choice of jobs/occupations shifts in division of labour/tasks. higher level of education family use more health facilities better habitat conditions representation on prestigious committees shift in intermarriages recognition by outsiders visits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- access/use of services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- higher social status</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economically</td>
<td>- better economic condition</td>
<td>higher income own/control more assets use of credit benefits from economic programmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- better access to economic inputs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politically</td>
<td>- more effective power</td>
<td>vote actively occupy political/elective posts intervene authorities (claims, protests) intervene in markets (conditions) intervene in allocation of resources participate as citizen in governance get shifts in policies/programmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culturally</td>
<td>- identity more accepted</td>
<td>voice/view sought in community music, language recognised</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Frits Wils, op.cit., p.13
2.6 Empowerment of the Weaker Sections–Different Theories

2.6.1. Gandhian Approach

Gandhiji maintained an alternative approach towards the empowerment of the weaker sections. In fact, it was a theory of liberation and not development. He was an apostle of the theory of ‘swaraj’ or self-sustained self-development of the poor masses for their liberation from poverty. The liberation that sought the real freedom from socio-economic bondages was more appropriate than empowerment that only laid down a de jure arrangement to grant powers to the powerless sections of the society. Liberation connotes a much wider horizon. In this sense, empowerment in the real perspective can only be realized after the goals of liberation have been achieved to a level that could generate de facto participation of weaker sections in the political processes of the institutions at the grassroots. He proposed only a limited role for state in bringing about social changes. Instead of state becoming a centralized coercive authority, it should devolve its powers at the grassroots level as a welfare social institution. The development in this approach tends to grow from below. The last man is the first to benefit. Gandhiji called this approach ‘antyodaya’. He favoured a development process which tends to start ‘from bottom to the top’, rather than ‘from the top to the bottom’. Together with this approach, as an ardent advocate of ‘Truth’ and ‘Non-violence’, he experimented with the method of satyagraha, as a philosophy of life and politics against oppression, exploitation and injustice. Based on the principle of ‘sarvodaya’, i.e., ‘welfare of an individual together with welfare of all men’, he strived to empower the weaker sections by making them self-reliant and independent. Thus empowerment for Gandhi was the total liberation of a human being, embodying both external liberation, namely
from colonialism and internal liberation, namely from greed, violence, oppression and discrimination.

2.6.2. Ambedkarite Approach

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the ‘Messiah’ of millions of downtrodden castes in India, waged a heroic and relentless struggle against casteist structures of this country. Compared to Gandhi, Ambedkar often maintained an uncompromising and rigorous stand against this social evil. As Radhakrishnan comments, ‘Ambedkar was uncompromising and he was impatient about the slow progress in the dismantling of untouchability. His demand for separate electorate, separate area for the depressed classes were all parts of his programme, whereas Gandhi was trying to play the role of an integrator who believed that any more class division of Indian society was harmful to the health of the nation’. Ambedkar viewed the empowerment of the marginalized groups in terms of their political mobilization and counted political power as the best tool to solve the varied types of deprivations suffered by them in the social, economic and educational fields. It is like a master key for all social development, by which the doors of all other developments can be opened. Ambedkar’s life and his struggles clearly show that the political emancipation of the downtrodden castes constituted the great mission and dream of this leader. Thus the legacy of Ambedkar helps to empower the untouchable castes of this country to stand united with conviction and courage against social inequality and casteism. His famous dictum ‘to educate, agitate and organize’ always reminds his castemen to become the torch bearers of his legacy.
2.6.3. Marxian Approach

The Marxists approached the question of empowerment of the lower strata of society, in terms of class analysis and not as a caste based social concern. For them, caste is a phenomenon belonging to the super structure of feudal society. Marxist analysis focuses primarily on the polarity and antagonistic conflict between the basic classes of society, such as slave-owners versus slaves, landlords versus serfs, capitalists versus workers\(^{31}\). Thus it holds that the economic system determines the class structure and whenever there is a change in the means of production, distribution and exchange, there is a corresponding change in the relations of the different governing and governed classes too. Thus the struggle for power is centred around the conflict between two antagonistic classes. This enables Marxist analysis to sharply explore the class contradictions and the structures of exploitation. It offers a perspective for class struggles leading finally to a classless society\(^{32}\). Marx viewed state as an instrument of exploitation and wanted it to wither away. The communist society, as envisaged by Karl Marx, was a stateless, classless socialist society based on the principles of equality, fraternity and freedom.

2.7 Social Movements, NGOs, Civil Society and the Empowerment of Marginalized Groups

As agents of grassroots mobilization and collective action, social movements, NGOs and civil society play a vital role in bringing about changes in the plight and living conditions of marginalized groups. In contrast to the government-sponsored top-down development programmes, these agencies sustain themselves on initiatives from below at the grassroots level. It is a democratic way of seeking empowerment relying on the strengths of the politics of struggle, rather than an external patronizing
agency supporting another inferior group. Thus it is important to study the role of these agencies in uplifting the weaker sections.

2.7.1 Role of social movements

Social movements play a crucial role in the empowerment of marginalized groups. Empowerment is a continuous process and this process should be generated from within society itself and be sustained through a process of continuous mobilization of the marginalized groups of the society. This process must be generated from the inbuilt urge for freedom and collective action against domination. Social movements, as agents of grassroots sustained mobilization, play a crucial role in the creation of new social identity and empowerment of marginalized groups. Through collective mobilization and a reorientation for change, they try to bring about reforms in the existing living conditions of the people. As M.S.A Rao observes ‘a social movement essentially involves sustained collective mobilization through either informal or formal organization. A social movement is generally oriented towards bringing about change, either partial or total in the existing system of relationships, values and norms, although there are efforts, which are oriented towards resisting change and maintaining status quo.

The potential of social movements in empowering the weaker sections of society is often questioned. They are sometimes branded as routinised organizations, ineffective in challenging the oppressive structures. Besides, the militant organizations among them, though attempting to intervene in tackling social problems instantly and aggressively, are often short-lived without the strength to survive for a longer period. In spite of these drawbacks, social movements have great potential to act as the agents of empowerment. In fact, they have a long
history of struggles against the oppressive structures of domination and these struggles have brought about changes in the existing social order, to some extent. Moreover, they have acted as the vital agents of mobilization and change for marginalized communities who have been greatly divided on different grounds such as caste/class, religion, party politics etc.

2.7.2 Role of Non-Government Organizations (NGOs)

Non-government organizations play a vital role in modern society as far as social, economic and political development are concerned. It is usually claimed that NGOs are effective in mobilizing marginalized groups, that they are participatory in their approach, flexible, bring sustainability in the societal development programmes and their development initiatives are cost efficient\(^3\). This observation is made in the context of the ineffectiveness of the governmental projects and programmes for the weaker sections which are not often producing positive results due to bureaucratic delay, corruption, inefficiency etc. Moreover, in the present scenario of economic reforms and globalization, state itself is withdrawing from many welfare activities. As an alternative empowerment strategy, NGO activism has acquired momentum in the current development discourses. Many international funding agencies and governments have no hesitation to support NGOs in different parts of the globe. Together with the state, they act as the agents of social development and social change. They educate the community on many social evils and irrational practices. Moreover, as agents of mobilization at the grassroots level, they strengthen the political empowerment of weaker sections.

At the same time, several NGOs have been severely criticized for the way they function. They do not really reach out to the poor and being voluntary organizations, there are constraints in making them accountable
to the people. The interests of NGOs are increasingly becoming commercialized today. In fact they are functioning with the financial support of governments and other agencies. Consequently vested interests creep into the main objectives and sabotage the welfare measures. Further the success of NGO projects are subjective and non-sustainable as it depends on charismatic leadership assisted by a team of dedicated and talented group of workforce. The projects may collapse when such leadership changes or disappears. In spite of these limitations, nobody can deny the increasing role of NGOs in empowering the weaker sections of society. They have emerged as the equal partners of development along with the state in different parts of the world.

2.7.3 Role of Civil Society

The concept of civil society is an endeavour which strengthens the grassroots mobilization and empowerment of marginalized groups. It is described as the capacity of self-organization on the part of a political community or the capacity of a society to organize itself without being organized by the state. It consists of the multitude of private non-profit sector including voluntary organizations, NGOs, local community groups, social services agencies, self-help groups etc found in different parts of the globe. As Manoranjan Mohanty states, ‘civil society has come to refer to those organized groups who pursue their demands in the pluralist democratic process’.

It is the space where individual members of society voluntarily come together, in formal or informal gatherings, groups, associations or organizations to participate in public life.

The evolution and growth of civil society is attributed to the reduction of the role of state in the welfare and development of the people. At the same time, a variety of groups and associations have emerged
outside the control of state and market, to provide citizens opportunities in different facets of social life. Civil society has a major economic and social presence in terms of employment opportunities offered and provision of social services. There is an argument that the state in the third world has become inefficient, corrupt and bureaucratic and therefore civil society should assume the task of development.\(^\text{38}\)

Thus the strengthening of civil society creates ‘social capital’ that helps to sustain democratic process, socio-economic development and other aspects of citizenship. A strong civil society can thus be associated with a high level of citizen empowerment and a weak civil society with a less empowered citizenry.\(^\text{39}\) As far as the empowerment of the marginalized sections are concerned, interface with the civil society is a powerful means to achieve the goal. Simultaneously, it is also reminded that though the role of the state has been criticized in bringing up the weaker sections of society, its pivotal role cannot be underestimated as the legitimate agency entrusted with the task of carrying out the multifarious phases of developmental programmes for them. As an institution entitled to protect public interests, the state has a special responsibility to look into the problems of the lowest strata of society and to chalk out welfare measures for them by checking vested interests.

2.8 Integration of the Theoretical Framework

Empowerment of the marginalized groups is analysed by lacing together the relevant theoretical formulations in the field of the study. It is true that this concept has become rather a buzzword used in different contexts and perspectives of development discourses. As Beteille comments, by and large, the scholarly discussion of empowerment has been context-driven rather than theory-driven.\(^\text{40}\) Hence due attention has been
given in tracing the different theoretical perspectives of this concept and integrating them with the core emphasis of the study. Though empowerment theories have dwelled elaborately on social, economic and cultural perspectives, it is its political dimension with the emphasis on political power as the means to mobilize the marginalized groups that is emphasized here. This approach has been validated by the theoretical formulations of Max Weber, Michel Foucault, Andre Beteille, Norman Uphoff, Frits Wils, Jo Rowlands, Debal K. Singha Roy, Manoranj Mohanty and Deepa Narayan. Moreover, as this concept has been developed in the context of globalization and free market economy, its usage often tended to emphasize the top-down, formal institutional arrangement in bringing up the weaker sections of society. However, the empowerment of subaltern sections has relied more on initiatives from below, that is, the grassroots mobilization and collective action carried out through social movements, NGOs, civil society and other different measures of democratic political processes. It is more a task to be accomplished through the interventions and struggles of the people at large. It calls for the need to interpret and theorize empowerment in tune with the pulses of changing times and changing demands of democratic polity. Besides, a comparative study of the Gandhian, Ambedkarite and Marxian approaches of empowerment has been worthwhile in exploring different solutions to address the marginalizations of weaker sections. Thus the theoretical framework and the focus of the study merge in the study and analysis of empowerment of the marginalized groups.
Notes and References


