*THINK INDIA JOURNAL*

ISSN:0971-1260
Vol-22- Issue-14-December-2019

# Women Empowerment: Understanding Karnataka Local Self Government.

**Dr.Ramesh. M. N.**
Asst. Professor,
Department of Political Science, Rani Channamma University,
VidyaSangama, Belagavi.
Email: ramesh_mn77@yahoo.com,

**Abstract:**

The development process assume man and women to be theoretically equal and both making rational choice. In fact, Indian women have contributed significantly since the beginning of the civilization. The moral values and dedications towards the humanity from the old age till the present ear like Sita, Anushiya, Ahilya, Laxmibai, Mirabai, Razia Sultan, Sarojini Naidu, Indira Gandhi, Sonia Gandhi, Jayalalitha, Mayawathi, Kalpana Chawla, Kiran Bedi, & Medha Patkar amongst many others are remarkable. The history repeats revolutions through the dedicated efforts of great women in Indian freedom struggle and one has to be proud of it.

After independence in India, it was felt that women, as a class, are oppressed and subdued by the hegemony of social patriarchy. Gender discrimination is stubbornly cultural and this equality is very sharp within the rural households. Women have been viewed as a deprived section of the society requiring welfare measure. Women are saddled with multiple burdens. Hence, they need political empowerment. The government of India consequently passed a piece of progressive legislation in 1993 to enable the presence of a 'critical mass' of women in the decentralized decision making process.

In post independence decades, the government of India did take various initiatives to improve the status of women in India. The government initiative towards women empowerment can be characterized as "women in development", "Gender and Development" and finally "rights based development". The constitution 73rd Amendment Act as an enabling measure can be characterized as the facilitator of 'rights based approach' to women's empowerment the expectation was that this would redress some of the deprivations which face Asian women in general and Indian women in particular. In this regard the present paper attempt to study the Women empowerment through Political System and empirical methodology used to understand the issues and empowerment challenges in Indian Political System.

Key Words: Politics, empowerment, Gender, Panchayat Raj, Participation.


Copyright ⓒ 2019Authors

ISSN:0971-1260
Vol-22- Issue-14-December-2019

**Introduction:**

The paradox of Indian democracy is that enlightened middle class has shown indifferent attitude towards electoral process. In the era of globalization, he/she is so deeply involved to fulfill his/her unending quench for attaining material pleasure that he/she fails to realize his/her larger national responsibility. This raises the question that when the most educated and enlightened group will fail to fulfill their national obligation then how can we expect our political system to improve automatically.

A sizeable of the women contestants and PRI members were found to be dependent on their male family members who either provided immense support to their leadership roles or alone performed on their behalf in almost all spheres of grassroots politics. The issue of women's affiliation with political parties throws light on the fact that women leaders were largely dependent on their male family members. The affiliation of women to political parties was not based on any ideology but on merely socio-political contacts of their mentors or someone who were known to them. Besides, most of the women contestants in the PRI elections had no prior experience of political activities. A sizeable of them did not even participate in campaign for their own elections as their male family members took up the responsibility. In short, despite their ensured entry in the grassroots level power structure, they are found less vibrant to utilize the opportunities created by politico-legal vibrant to utilize the opportunities created by politico-legal arrangements i.e. reservation provisions for acquiring share in power structure at the micro-levels. But now the question arises that whether the 50 percent reservations in the panchayat enabled women to win more seats in the total seats has really helped the empowerment of women in Karnataka State. The answer to this question is a bit surpising. The fact of the matter is that it has actually empowered the male members of their families. It would be more appropriate to say that it was in reality "Empowering men though Women".

The present paper makes an attempt to find out the extent of empowerment of the Women of Karnataka through the Panchayat Raj Institution. Also seeks to identify the hurdles in the path of their empowerment, and to make possible suggestion for their effective empowerment in the Panchayati Raj Institutions.

Political participation is an essential ingredient of democracy. It is involvement of individuals or group of individuals in taking decisions or influencing decision making process. It promotes stability and order by giving every one the opportunity to express his/her own interest to secure greatest good of greatest numbers. Political participation results from changes in traditional structure, attitudes and behavioral patterns, by encouraging mass participation in the public affairs and Political Decisions. Participation benefits the participants as well as the larger community. It provides citizens a sense of dignity and value and facilitates broader political understanding. It is therefore a necessity to have equal participation of women who constitute almost half of the population in the democratic process.

Pandit Nehru had clearly visualized that a country can develop only when women have a full chance to play their part in public life: "when women move forward, the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves" are the words delivered by him about empowerment of women should have every right to be recognized as co-citizens of the country and secure a gender equal space in the horizon of politics.

 Copyright ⓒ 2019Authors

ISSN:0971-1260
Vol-22- Issue-14-December-2019

Recognizing the growing importance of political empowerment for women, the United Nations adopted Convention on the Political Rights of Women in 1952. Since 1975, four international conferences on women have been held under its auspices. But the global awareness concerning the issue came to the forefront during the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 when women's equal access and full participation in decision making was emphasized in the platform for Action as being one of the critical areas of concern. It unequivocally declared:

> "…….Women's equal participation in political life plays a Pivotal role in the general process of advancement of Women. Women's equal participation in decision making Is not only a demand for a simple justice or democracy but Can also be seen as a necessary condition of women's Interests to be taken into account". Accordingly, various Recommendations were issued to all national and international Governmental agencies for enchancing women's participation In political arena and decision making. It also affirmed that women Should have at least a 30% share of decision making position.

**Representation and Reserved Seats for Women in Panchayat Raj Institutions in Selected States of India-2004**

| State | Reservation for women in local Government Institutions (%) | Number of women Elected | Representation of women (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Karnataka | 33.3 | 37676 | 43.60 |
| Andrapradesh | 33.3 | 74019 | 33.04 |
| Assam | 33.3 | 8714 | 50.38 |
| Chhattisgarh | 33.3 | 42914 | 33.75 |
| Gujarat | 33.3 | 42653 | 49.30 |
| Kerala | 33.3 | 5535 | 57.24 |
| Tamilnadu | 33.3 | 28124 | 36.73 |
| Uttaranchal | 33.3 | 19293 | 37.85 |
| West Bengal | 33.3 | 20509 | 35.15 |

Women's participation before PRIs was very low in most of the states and the table shows that after Panchayat Raj Institutions it is increasing day by day. They are not only enjoying their one third quotas but in various places they are defeating male members also. They are actively participating in local matters.

**As Per The Records Of 2005 Indian Women Representation In Politics**

| Sl.No | | Total Seats | Women | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 01 | Lok Sabha | 545 | 43 | 08.03 |
| 02 | Rajya Sabha | 242 | 28 | 11.02 |

 Copyright ⓒ 2019Authors

ISSN:0971-1260
Vol-22- Issue-14-December-2019

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 03 | Vidhan-sabha of Karnataka | 224 | 06 | 02.68 |
| 04 | Zilla panchayat members in Karnataka | 1005 | 373 | 37.11 |
| 05 | Taluka Panchayat members in Karnataka | 3683 | 1519 | 41.24 |
| 06 | Gram Panchayat members in Karnataka | 88779 | 38147 | 42.96 |

With this table we can understand that the women are highly underrepresented in national politics. The success for women in Panchayat Raj institutions is due to reservation for women.

Democracy not only ensures adult franchise but also ensures participation in political process. The question is whether Indian democracy has truly ensured the participation of every segment of the population in electoral process. Unless the fruits of democratic success are not shared with deprived and poorer section of the population, the goal of democracy cannot be said to be realized. In Indian context, the worrying aspect is that pace of development is very slow

.

This appears paradoxical, because the women have been playing an important role in the economy for the past several generations. This is well reflected by the fact that the worker participation rate of women in the state is significantly higher as compared to other states of the country and also above than the national average. Moreover, it has been constantly increasing over the years. They had also played a historic role in the development of the economy. But these Panchayati Raj elections have nullified all their accomplishments and some of the findings why and how women are participating in Politics.

**Findings:**

1. Due to the quest for power, capable women activists in different organizations became rivals to each other. This left the field free for the incompetent women.
2. Earlier, the political parties did no interference in Panchayati Raj elections but in these it was the other way round. They openly supported their candidates by deploying themselves in the respective regions.
3. Money was offered to the rival candidates to persuade them to step down. It too proved damaging for women empowerment.
4. The male members of the family took the initiative in assisting the women in contesting these elections. They even canvassed for them in their own names. In the posters and banners, along with the women contestant, the photograph of their husbands, fathers and brothers could also be seen. Consequently males kept their dominance and women's independent identity got eclipsed.
5. Be that as it may, women representation has made a great leap in the state, thanks to the 50 percent reservations but, to be really empowered, many of obstacles will have to be removed.
6. The Karnataka Panchayati Raj elections 2011-12 clearly prove that women have still to go a long way for getting out of proxy syndrome.

 Copyright ⓒ 2019Authors

ISSN:0971-1260
Vol-22- Issue-14-December-2019

Political System which considered Political parties and electoral system essential for successful functioning of Democracy have declined over the years because of electoral system, and despite serious effort has failed to invent any device to check the entry of anti-social elements in entering into electoral process which questions its legitimacy and active participation of women in Political system.

**Suggestion and Conclusion:**

The illiterate women Panchayati Rajl representatives will have to be made literate through courses on functional literacy as a part of the Programme of continuing Education of the Computer Literacy Mission. The State Government should take concrete steps for promoting female education in the state. The State Government should come out with a blue print of training policy in which there should be provision for continuous training of women panchayati Raj representatives. Separate and special capacity-building programmes should also be organized for them. Their networking too should be ensured by forming their associations and federations at various levels. The NGO's and social organizations should come forward to take this responsibility of developing leadership qualities in them.

Since poverty and unemployment also reverts the rural women from participating in decision-making process at the grassroots level, their economic position also needs to be improved by providing them vocational training for undertaking various self-earning ventures. The employment generation programmes such as the SGSY should also be implemented for the formation of their Self Help Groups. These can lead to their economic empowerment.

Besides, a continuous communication is required to be maintained between the State Government and Panchayat Raj Institutions through media. Moreover, the National level Seminars and Workshops on the working of the Panchayats should also be organized. The issues of the participation and role of women as decision-makers should be highlighted in these. The old myths such as male superiority, hesitation of women to work in public life, economic dependence on men, etc., should be broken through sustained and systematic extension work by the teachers of the university, colleges and schools.

It may be safely concluded that mere enhancement of representation through the reservations for women in Panchayat Raj Institutions is not a sufficient condition for their effective empowerment. Unless and until it is supplemented by the measures which help in removing the socio-economic barriers inhabiting them, the women cannot be empowered in the true sense of the word.

**Reference:**

1. L.N.Sharma and Sushmita Sharma, "Womens Political participation: Propitiators and Impediments" Human rights edited by L.N.Sharnia, G.P.Ojha and N.M .Pathak, Research Publications, 1999.
2. Bisnuta Das, "Issue of Women's Reservation: A Theoretical Perspective" Third Concept, August 2002.

 Copyright ⓒ 2019Authors

ISSN:0971-1260
Vol-22- Issue-14-December-2019

3. A Thanikadi and M Sugirtha, "Imperatives of the Political Empowerment of Indian Women, Third Concept, April 2007.
4. Chattopadhyay, R. and E. Duflo (2001): "Women's Leadership and Policy Decisions: Evidence from a Nationwide Randomized Experiment in India", Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta and Department of Economics ,MIT, and NBER.
5. Desai, N. and U. Thakkar (2007): "Women and Political Participation in India";*Women in Indian Society*, New Delhi, National Book Trust.
6. Karat, B. (2005): *Survival and Emancipation: Notes from Indian Women's Struggles*, Three Essays Collective, Haryana.
7. Kishor, S. and K. Gupta (2004): "Women's Empowerment in India and Its States: Evidence from the NFHS", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XXXIX, No.7.

 Copyright ⓒ 2019Authors