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representation of women in politics.

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INTRODUCTION :

Political participation has a broader connotation. It includes not only those political activities that go by the name of political participation in the western democracies but also some new modes of participation which have not been institutionalized but have some bearing on the political process. Protest activists directed against the existing regime or activities aimed at subverting or over throwing the system it may be cited as examples. Define political participation in a broader context, Myron Weiner says: "the concept of political participation refers to any voluntary action, episodic or

continuous, employing legitimate or illegitimate methods intended in influencing the choice of public policies, the administration of public affairs or choice of political leaders". In today's changed global context, women constitute an important segment of political life. Thus an analysis of the role of women in politics throws light on a complex problem of political participation. Of all these aspects of relationship between women and politics, it is women's political participation that has received the most sustained attention from political scientists (Guhil. Sampa, 1996) Reservation for a particular group specially women entitled to preferential treatment on the basis of their political backwardness, that is scheduled castes and scheduled tribes

those accorded special treatment because of temporary or situational disadvantage. The term refers specially to those backward groups. As per the constitutional provisions government gives rights to the State governments to formulate affirmative policies for women. They need reservation due to political unawareness and their inability to stand in competition effectively with male counterparts on the basis of their merits was unable to access political participation. (Shing S. N., 1996) After studying the conditions of women's participation in politics the government planned to reserve a particular number of seats in politics, especially for women in terms of positive discrimination. Reservation policy precisely aims to eradicate disparities which are

WOMEN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN INDIA: AN OVERVIEW

Mr. Lakshmikant Sidramappa¹ and Prof. P. B. Rathod²

¹Research Scholar, Dept. of Women's Studies, Gulbarga University, Kalaburagi, Karnataka.

² Research Guide, Dept. of Women's Studies, Gulbarga University, Kalaburagi, Karnataka.

ABSTRACT:

Women equal participation in various political activities prominently in decision making process is not only their demand for their political rights or for the success of democracy, but an essential pre-condition for women's interest and progress to be taken into consideration. Raising political awareness among women an essential factor and this could be achieved through political participation, as women are equivalent to men intellectually and mentally and they can participate in any political activity. Therefore opportunities should be made available for the same. The study deals with

present in social, economic and political fields due to forceful societal discrimination in the past history. The concept of reservation is to envisage policies for eradicating historic injustice and inequalities. Reservation is basically for the people who are suffering inequalities, either inherited or artificially cheated and disparity based on social and economic and political conditions. Appropriate percentage of reservation for depressed classes. (Ramswamy B. , 2006)

The responsibility of government is to remove contradiction or otherwise those individuals or communities who suffer from political inequality would destroy the structure of political democracy. The government is committed to build up a politically just and an elegant social order. Therefore the constitution promulgated to recognize women as the marginalized social groups needing special protection. A number of provisions were specifically incorporated with a view to abolish various forms of discrimination and political exclusion emerging from male dominating culture and to alleviate the peripheral position of women. (Mishra R. G. , 1990).

The Indian Scenario

India is predominantly a patriarchal country with more than 50 % of the population constituting women. The argument for the inclusion of women in politics is to enable this half of the population to participate in the decision-making process of the country. As rightly stated by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that, "everyone has the right to take part in the Government of his/her country. The empowerment and autonomy of women and the improvement of women's social, economic and political status is essential for the achievement of both transparent and accountable government and administration and sustainable development in all areas of life. The power relations that prevent women from leading fulfilling lives operate at many levels of society, from the most personal to the highly public. Achieving the goal of equal participation of women and men in decision making will provide a balance that more accurately reflects the composition of society and is needed in order to strengthen democracy and promote its proper functioning. Equality in political decision-making performs a leverage function without which it is highly unlikely that a real integration of the equality dimension in government policy-making is feasible. In this respect, women's equal participation in political life plays a pivotal role in the general process of the advancement of women. Women's equal participation in decision making is not only a demand for simple justice or democracy but can also be seen as a necessary condition for women's interests to be taken into account. Without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perspective at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved". Fourth Conference held at Beijing 1995 in Article 181.

Historically, women in India (especially in the rural areas) are limited to the household chores. The decision-making power in the private- sphere i.e., at the domestic level rests mostly with the male patriarch (father, husband or son), and women therefore remain submissive to their decisions. The need for including women in the decision making arose especially after the 1995 Beijing conference. During the conference proceedings it was discussed that in order to achieve complete equality, development and peace in the world active participation of women with incorporation of women's perspective in all levels of decision-making is mandatory. Various countries all over the world had started taking measure to include women in the political sphere by granting them quotas.

Likewise, India being one of the largest federal democracies in the world operates at the various levels of governance in federation with the state and the local levels of decision-making institutions. In order to include women in the decision-making process, the constitution of India adopted 73rd and 74th Amendment in the year 1993 and 1994 respectively, which has 33% reservation of the total number of seats for women in the local governing institutions consisting of villages, blocks and districts at the rural, municipalities and corporations at the urban areas. The states in India have opted for different percentages of reserved seats for women at the grassroots levels right from village panchayat to the municipal level in the towns and cities, since the constitution has granted the right to the states to determine a percentage of seats to be reserved at its discretion. Different states have therefore reserved different percentages of seats at the local levels of governance i.e., panchayat as well as municipal levels.

Many states have granted 33 % reservation of seats while some have reserved 50 percent of seats at both levels of local governing institutions. The seats to be reserved for women are not predetermined by the constitutions rather it is done through lots randomly which are drawn just before the election dates are fixed by the respective state governments to decide the list of wards. The wards reserved for women keep rotating at every election to ensure its widespread effect across the various wards of the state. According to Shirin Rai the system is often been criticized for its negative impact continuity for women representatives.

As far as reserving seats for women at the higher level of decision making body like State Assembly and Parliament is concerned, since the early 1990s the Women's Reservation Bill has been discussed repeatedly with various reformulations, but has not been adopted by parliament's lower house (the Lok Sabha or 'House of the People'). Two initial bills, tabled in 1996 and 1998, respectively, aimed at reforming the Constitution to introduce the system of reserved seats for the parliament but expired at the end of the respective parliament sessions. In 1999 a third bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha but was unsuccessful.

Another attempt was made by tabling the Constitution Bill of 2008 with the purpose of reserving at least one-third of the total number of seats in the Lok Sabha and in the state legislative assemblies for women, and reserving not less than one-third of seats for women within the seats reserved for scheduled castes and tribes. Under this bill, widely known as the Women's Reservation Bill, reserved seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in the state or union territory, as determined by law. The reservation of seats for women shall cease to exist or expire after 15 years of the commencement of the proposed Amendment Act. The bill was approved by the Rajya Sabha (Upper House) on 9 March 2010. However, in order for it to enter into force, it must also be approved by a two-thirds majority in the Lok Sabha, which seems to be a long distance dream so far.

73rd and 74th Amendment to the constitution:

Parts IX and IX-A were added to the Constitution by the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992 and the Constitution (74th Amendment) Act, 1992 popularly known as the Panchayati Raj and Nagarpalika Constitution Amendment Acts. These Amendments provide Constitutional sanction to democracy at the grass root level by asserting in the Constitution two new parts relating to Panchayats and Urban local bodies. The Panchayat Raj Bills were introduced in the Lok Sabha for the first time by the Rajiv Gandhi Government in 1989, but it failed to get the support of the requisite majority in the Rajya Sabha. Apart the old bills and according to them there was a direct encroachment on their autonomy through the measure. The Bills were referred to the selected committee and after certain modifications they were introduced in the Lok Sabha and finally passed on 23rd December 1992.

The Panchayat Raj and Nagarpalika Constitution Amendment Act provide Constitutional guarantee to basic and essential features of the self-governing democratic institutions in rural and urban areas, including regular elections to Panchayats. Reservation of seats to Schedule Castes, Scheduled Tribes and women and devolution of financial and administrative powers.

Although these institutions were established by the states but they were not functioning well. There were no regular elections and they were virtually in most of the cases superseded. These amendments were aimed at revitalizing the Panchayat Raj Institutions and giving them a new life. No longer will the elections to Panchayat 50 Institutions and their functioning depend on the whims of the state Governments. The Act makes to obligatory for the states to hold elections regularly except those with a population of less than 20 lakhs to establish a three tier Panchayat system at the village level, intermediate level and district levels.

The passing of the Panchayati Raj and Nagarpalika Constitution Amendment is in accordance with the directives envisaged in Article-40 of the Constitution which enjoins the state to take steps to organize village Panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self Government.

This mandate of the Constitution has now been implemented though belatedly, by passing the two Constitutional amendments in 1992. This would help to realize the objectives of Gram Swaraj, the

idea cherished by Mahatma Gandhi. It will go a long way in ensuring democratic functioning of the grass root democratic institutions.

It is, however, to be noted that the Constitution, elections, devolution of powers and authority relating to these institutions have been completely felt within the preview of the states. On 24th March 1993, the Panchayati Raj Act came into force with the enactment of new legislation and ratification of the Act by more than 50 percent of the States and Union Territories. (Das B.D, 2004).

INDIAN WOMEN: ISSUES AND CONCERNS

A Committee on the status of Women in India prepared a report titled "Towards Equality" in the year 1974. This report states that even after 27 years of independence, women were not only performing the traditional roles but were also categorized under illiteracy, poor health, marginalized unemployment, violence and had no role to play in the decision making process in any spheres of life. This report turned out to be an eye opener even to those women who initiated this report.

These women's organization started supporting the very cause of reservation in the participation of women in decision making process, who was initially opposing this idea. The basic urge for this change of idea is to enter the political process and the functioning of the state to deal with their issues in an improvised manner (Reference). Such thoughts helped women to focus on their empowerment, thereby led to a movement towards development centric from welfare centric. In spite of these collective efforts of governmental and non -governmental organizations, the census of 1991 shows high female infanticide, poor access to education, lack of nutrition and basic health care, adverse sex ratio and poor political representation etc., thus indicates the lower status of women.

CONCLUSION:

In the constitution the principal of gender equality is mentioned in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Duties and Directive Principles. The Constitution not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favor of women for neutralizing cumulative social, economic, education and political disadvantages faced by women. The government has aimed at women's advancement within the framework of democratic polity by formulating development policies, plans and programme. India has also rectified various international conventions and human rights instruments committing to secure equal rights of women. Political backwardness in the society is due to poor political participation of women existing in the society. Special provisions for women should be given. Women in the society should be given special provisions to bring them in the main stream of national development. Reservation for women in politics is basically for the development of political activities and bring women equal with those who are ahead of them.

Women in our society are politically empowered in terms of historical participation in freedom movements and one of the political activities like voting. Their active participation in politics is highly underrepresented and it becomes essential to make significant changes to increase women's underrepresentation in politics. Government has recognized that the status of women in any country is measured on the basis of their political representation. In recent time's women political participation in politics and involvement in decision making process has received serious attention. Political participation will make women liberate to recognize their problems and 67 requirements in the community. It ensures women liberty, struggle for political rights, accountability, political commitment, political awareness for the government structure.

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Mr. Lakshmikant Sidramappa

Research Scholar, Dept. of Women's Studies, Gulbarga University, Kalaburagi , Karnataka .