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THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN LOCAL SELF GOVERNMENT IN KARNATAKA

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ABSTRACT:

The term 'political participation' has a very wide meaning. It is not only related to 'right to vote', but simultaneously relates to participation in: decision making process, political activism, political consciousness, etc. Women in India participate in voting, run for public offices and political parties at lower levels more than men. Political activism and voting are the strongest areas of women's political participation. Women are sexually abused. Child marriage, domestic violence and low literacy rates have lowered Indian women's economic opportunities and

contributed to sexual violence in India. A 2011 study found, "24% of Indian men have committed sexual violence at some point in their lives, 20% have forced their partners to have sex with them...38% of men admitting they had physically abused their partners. Panchayats have been the backbone of grassroots democracy in the Indian villages since its beginning. Gandhi had aptly favoured the panchayati raj and his dream got translated with the passage of the constitution (73rd amendment) act, 1992 (or simply the panchayati raj act), which introduced the three-tier panchayat raj system to ensure people's participation in rural reconstruction in general and that of women in particular. It came into force with effect from April 24, 1993.

KEYWORDS: Women participation, Challenges to women, Women in local self-government.

INTRODUCTION:

The term 'political participation' has a very wide meaning. It is not only related to 'Right to Vote', but simultaneously relates to participation in: decision making process, political activism, political consciousness, etc. Women in India participate in voting, run for public offices and political parties at lower levels more than men. Political activism and

voting are the strongest areas of women's political participation. To combat gender inequality in politics, the Indian Government has instituted reservations for seats in local governments. Women turnout during India's 2014 parliamentary general elections was 65.63%, compared to 67.09% turnout for men. India ranks 20th from the bottom in terms of representation of women in Parliament. The Constitution of India attempts to remove gender inequalities by banning discrimination based on sex and class, prohibiting human trafficking and forced labor, and

reserving elected positions for women.

The Government of India directed state and local governments to promote equality by class and gender including equal pay and free legal aid, humane working conditions and maternity relief, rights to work and education, and raising the standard of living.^[3] Women were substantially involved in the Indian independence movement in the early 20th century and advocated for independence from Britain. Independence brought gender equality in the form of constitutional rights, but

historically women's political participation has remained low.

WOMEN PARTICIPATION

The movement for women's suffrage began in the early 1900s in response to a national movement for suffrage, even though vast majority of neither men nor women had a right to vote the British colonial rule before 1947. After Indian independence from Britain, the Indian Constitution in 1950 officially granted women and men suffrage. Prior to universal suffrage, provincial legislatures had granted women the right to vote. Madras was the first to grant women's suffrage in 1921, but only to those men and women who owned land property according to British administration's records. The rights granted in response to the movement towards suffrage were limited to qualifications of literacy and property ownership, including property ownership of husbands. This excluded vast majority of Indian women and men from voting, because they were poor. This changed in 1950 when universal suffrage was granted to all adult Indian citizens.

In 1950, universal suffrage granted voting rights to all women. This is enshrined in Article 326 in our constitution. India is a parliamentary system with two houses: Lok Sabha (lower house) and Rajya Sabha (upper house). Rates of participation among women in 1962 were 46.63% for Lok Sabha elections and rose to a high in 1984 of 58.60%. Male turnout during that same period was 63.31% in 1962 and 68.18% in 1984. The gap between men and women voters has narrowed over time with a difference of 16.7% in 1962 to 4.4% in 2009.

Increased participation is occurring in both rich and poor states in India. The sex ratio of voters has improved from 715 female voters for every 1,000 male voters in the 1960s to 883 female voters in the 2000s. The Election Commission of India (ECI) has sought to increase voter turnout by cleaning up electoral rolls and removing missing or deceased members. Voter outreach has included door-to-door voter registration, and in 2014 elections, voters will be issued a photo id with polling station information to increase voter turnout. Increased voter turnout in India is also partially due to the women voters. ECI has sought to encourage voter registration among women and participation through education and outreach on college and university campuses. Growing participation has also been attributed to increased security at polling station.

CHALLENGES TO WOMEN

Women are sexually abused. Child marriage, domestic violence and low literacy rates have lowered Indian women's economic opportunities and contributed to sexual violence in India. A 2011 study found, "24% of Indian men have committed sexual violence at some point in their lives, 20% have forced their partners to have sex with them...38% of men admitting they had physically abused their partners. Widespread sexual violence is attributed to the fact that violence within marriage is not against the law, and sexual violence goes largely unpunished.

Although the Constitution of India removed gender inequalities among caste and gender, discrimination continues to be a widespread barrier to women's political participation. A 2012 study of 3,000 Indian women found the barriers in participation, specifically in running for political office, in the form of illiteracy, work burdens within the household, and discriminatory attitudes towards women as leaders. Discriminatory attitudes manifest in the limitations presented to Indian women including low access to information and resources. Women rely on receiving information from family or village members, typically men. Women also lack leadership experience due to the fact they are burdened with household duties. The burden of household duties is a significant reason why many Indian women do not participate.

India has one of the largest illiterate populations. In January 2014, the United Nations reported 287 million adults in India are illiterate. Literacy among Indian women is 53.7%, which is much lower than literacy among men reported at 75.3%. Illiteracy limits the ability of women to understand the political system and issues. Problems with exploitation, such as women being left off of voters lists, have been reported as illiteracy limits the ability of women to ensure their political rights are exercised. Martha C. Nussbaum concerning political participation stated, "Because literacy is connected in general

with the ability to move outside the home and to stand on one's own outside of it, it is also connected to the ability of women to meet and collaborate with other women.

The Government of India has addressed the issue of empowerment by consolidating all programmes for women under the National Mission of Empowerment of Women (NMEW). The mission of NMEW is to "enhance economic empowerment of girls and women through skill development, micro credit, vocational training and entrepreneurship." In 2001, the Government of India passed the National Policy for the Empowerment of Women. The policy focuses on "the advancement, development, and empowerment of women." Specifically, the policy focuses on ending gender inequality and violence against women.

WOMEN IN LOCAL SELF GOVERNMENT

Panchayats have been the backbone of grassroots democracy in the Indian villages since its beginning. Gandhi had aptly favoured the panchayata raj and his dream got translated with the passage of the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992 (or simply the Panchayata Raj Act), which introduced the three-tier Panchayata Raj system to ensure people's participation in rural reconstruction in general and that of women in particular. It came into force with effect from April 24, 1993.

PROVISIONS FOR WOMEN IN THE ACT

The Act provides for the reservation of not less than one-third of the total number of seats for women (including the number of seats reserved for the SCs and STs). Further not less than one-third of the total number of offices of chairpersons in the Panchayats at each level shall be reserved for women. This would be rotated among different Panchayats at each level.

- Participation in election: The Act provides for the reservation of not less than one-third of the total number of seats for women. It is an attempt to ensure greater participation of women in election process directly and indirectly. It would be the nursery of creating women politicians for national politics. Even the participation of common women citizens in various activities such as attending Gram Sabha meeting, etc. has reportedly increased (68-78 percent)
- Participation in rural development: Women are actively participating in rural development as per their capacity right from labourers to policy-makers.
- Participation in decision-making: The participation of women as elected as well as non-elected members are rising due to reservation for women. It acts as pull factor for women to participate in meeting. They give their suggestions for various works and problems faced by them.
- Agent of social revolution: Women are acting as an agent of change in the society and raising voice against injustice and atrocities.
- Reducing corruption and violence: Due to women representatives nexus of officers and male elected representatives are breaking, which has a direct impact on reducing corruption. The role of local muscle power has substantially reduced due to active participation and awareness of women about their rights and power.

PROBLEM FACED BY THE WOMEN IN LOCAL POLITICAL SYSTEM

- ❖ Political intervention in the functioning of Panchayats.
- ❖ Women act as proxies for men.
- ❖ Husband's intervention of elected woman in her functioning.
- ❖ Lack of political awareness among the women in rural areas.
- ❖ Negative public opinion regarding women's leadership capacity.
- ❖ Illiteracy or low standard of education among the women in rural areas is a stumbling bloc.
- ❖ Lack of training courses especially for women representatives.
- ❖ Dominance of elected male members of the Panchayat.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- ❖ To know the empowerment of women in the field of socio-political life

- ❖ The condition of women in contemporary India
- ❖ The men nature towards the women
- ❖ Socio-cultural status of women
- ❖ To know the political power enjoyed by the women through
- ❖ To identify the powers and functions of women in the grassroots politics

HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

- ❖ How women is best utilizing the article amendment 73 of Indian constitution
- ❖ Does the 73 amendment provided the equal status to women in politics
- ❖ Would it be the weapon for them to come out of the discrimination they faced since the ancient period?

METHODOLOGY

The Gram panchayat women member will be taken as respondent to identify their role in the political development as well as in socio-economic development of the India as general, particularly the Gulbarga district. The 500 hundred Gram panchayat women members will be taken for the study as sample size, the information will be collected through the structured questionnaires, the survey method will be adopted for the present study, the collected data will be scrutinized with new technology of statistical methods will be adopted. The study will be limited to the Kalaburagi district.

CONCLUSION

Political parties intervene in the election and functioning of Panchayats, creates hostile environment for the women contestants and women representatives. The government should take a strict action in such an intervention of political parties and elections should be conducted free and fair. With the establishment of PRIs in our country a woman gets an opportunity to prove her worth as a good administrator, decision-maker or a good leader. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 is a milestone in this regard. It provides women a chance to come forward

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