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“WOMEN AND POLITICAL AWARENESS THROUGH LOCAL SELF GOVERNMENT A CRITICAL EVALUATION”

RAJENDRA. S AND RAGHAVENDRA. GUDAGUNTI

Dept. of Sociology GUG
Dept. of Sociology Govt. first grade College Shorapur Dist. Yadagir

Abstract:

This research paper focused on the women and political awareness through the local self government, when we study the India history, has very low position in medieval, India Gradually in modern India women got education and they have become independent Indian government, has made the 73rd and 74th amendments in 1993 to the India constitution these amendments provided for reservation of 33.33% of elected seats for women in local self government bodies. In Karnataka the act was passed in the year 1993 according to this act three tier Panchayat Raj system consisting of Zilla Panchayat, Taluka Panchayat and Gram Panchayat has been established in the year 1994 and 1995 in these bodied women took participation in political process by participation of the women in future they would have become empowerment in India.

KEYWORDS:

Political awareness, constitutional amendments, women reservation, local self bodies & women representation Panchayat Raj.

INTRODUCTION

At the dawn of the Indian history women possessed a high social status and some of them were widely reputed for their learning. But the social, economic and political changes of later years levered their position and gradually denied them their right to education too. The social code for women, their early marriage and seclusion restricted their life by the end of the eighteenth century. But the Indian renaissance in the following period increasingly touched all aspects and problems of national life, position of women not exempted, till finally under the inspiring leadership of Mahatma Gandhiji, it assumed the form of political struggle and social reforms in which women joined freely and shared equally with men the burdens and the honors. Later, the Constitution of India provided women equality of status and greater opportunities, so as to give them their earlier pristine glory.

Women in India constitute more than 2\3 of the country population. If women achieve an equal share of political power, many things besides politics will have changed profoundly. As women constitute half of the Indian population, they should get adequate representation in decision making. This is possible only when they are empowered in real sense. Low representation of women is a global issue. Low representation of women in Indian parliament can be increased with the reservation of seats for women.

The 73rd and 74th Amendments (1993) to the Indian Constitution have served as a major breakthrough towards ensuring women's equal access and increased participation in political power structures. These Amendments provided for reservation of 33.33 per cent of elected seats for women at different levels of local governance in both rural and urban areas. However, the number of women representatives in both houses of parliament though steadily increasing continues to be very low. They represent only 8.2 per cent of the total Members in Parliament in 2005. The number of women in the Central

Council of Ministers continues to remain extremely low, and there has been a decline in this proportion between 2002 and 2005. There is need for affirmative action to ensure that women's concerns gain political prominence and a fairly representative number of women are in position not only at grass root level, but also at the state and national levels.

The Constitution 73rd Amendment Act (1992), provided certainty, continuity and strength to the PRI's for the welfare of the weaker sections through Decentralization. Uniform three-tier system of the village, block and district levels, direct elections to all seats at all levels, indirect elections to chairpersons at intermediate and apex levels. Reservation on rotational basis for SC's ST's in proportion to their population, both for membership as well as Chairpersonships of the PRI's. Not less than one third of the seats and offices reserved for women. Free and fair elections, for five year term with the State Election Commission to hold elections. In Karnataka an act was passed in the year 1993 and according to this acts three-tier Panchayati Raj system consisting of Zilla Panchayats (ZP), Taluk Panchayats (TP) and Gram Panchayats (GP) has been established in the year 1994 and 1995. There is Government as well as state government of almost all the states, in the form of various committee reports, apart from government publications; number of scholars have written books on Panchayati raj and development of weaker sections nationally and also internationally.

The Committee on Status of Women in India (CSWI), 1974 surveyed the political plights of Indian women. The committee concluded that because of unequal socio-political status women were acquiring a feature of minority group. The committee recommended two specific measures for improving women's participation in politics: establishment of All Women's Panchayat at Gram Panchayat level as an integral part of PRIs and as one transitional step. Its members were to be directly elected by women only and its Chairperson and Secretary would be ex-officio member of succeeding PR tiers. Those all women's Panchayat would have authority and resources of their own for the management and administration of welfare and development programmes for women and children.

In accordance with the 73rd and 74th amendments of the Indian Constitution, the Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) has been mandated to ensure social justice and economic development. Lack of space for women's participation in political bodies has not only resulted in their presence in meager numbers in the decision making bodies but also in the neglect of their issues and experiences in policy making. The local self-governments known as the Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRI's) are under the control of the State Governments administered at the grass root level. In the rural areas a three-tier structure (a) Village Panchayats (b) Taluk Panchayats (c) Zilla Panchayat has been adopted.

Women in the Political Process in India:

Women in India entered the political process in the early decades of the present century, through their massive participation in the national struggle for freedom under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhiji was able to reach out to women and draw them into the vertex of the freedom movement. Though Gandhi could not fully abandon gender bias and in some way perpetuated the traditional image of the Indian women, he did manage to appeal to women to join the movement. Women played a very important role in the Civil Disobedience Movement, the Salt Satyagraha and the Quit India Movement of 1942. Together, with their participation in movement against the colonial rule, the educated women were simultaneously struggling to get the right to vote and right to get elected. Generally, it is maintained that the women participating in the struggle, especially, those who were in key positions were from the elite class. Not much has been written about thousands of infamous women, who were poor and had rural background, but who in their own humble way had participated in the national freedom struggle. Some women leaders were very articulate in their ideas and their awareness of the situation was prevalent. For example, in 1917, even before women in England got the right to vote, Sarojini Naidu had petitioned to the British Parliament the Indian women's demand for equal voting rights with men.

Gandhiji brought an absolutely new dimension into the debate on women's problem. He began from the basic issue that subjugation of and exploitation of women was the product of “men's teaching and women's acceptance of them,” and thereby broke away from the reform tradition by preaching the philosophy not only of absolute equality of rights between the sexes, but the pragmatic necessity of enrolling women's support to transform the nationalist struggle for the transfer of power from the British to India through social revolution. There is little doubt that it was the willing and spontaneous participation of women in the Civil Disobedience Movement rather than the radical ideas of sexual equality that finally tilted the balance in favour of political equality between the sexes within the Congress party and later in the Constituent Assembly.

The Constitution of free India saluted the massive participation of women in the freedom struggle by equal rights to enter into politics irrespective of gender and other factors. It is now nearly 49 years since the Constitution was adopted in 1950. Despite the opportunity of equal access to the political process guaranteed by law, the presence of Indian women in politics is still scarce. Their representation has never

gone beyond 9 per cent in Parliament, 10 per cent in state assemblies and 15 per cent in the Council of Ministers. Even though India had a Prime Minister like Indira Gandhi- the longest surviving women Prime Minister- Women have not been able to find space in the representative and decision-making bodies. Women's movements for empowerment:

Women's movements in India have been struggling for women's political empowerment for nearly for nearly five to six decades, yet women have only managed to get their demands for quota/reservation in Parliament and state legislatures included in election manifestoes of the political parties in 1991, 1996 and 1998 general elections. The parties despite their promises have displayed their gender bias in giving tickets to women to fight elections. The Congress (I) has not been able even to put 15 per cent women candidates, although the party has the record of putting up comparatively the highest number of women candidates. A major research forwarded by all political parties is that the chances of women candidates winning are very thin compared to male candidates. However, the election reports display that the percentage of women winning in relation to their total candidates is much higher than male.

April 23, 1993 was a red letter day for Indian women, when the 73rd Constitutional Amendment gave statutory status to Panchayats and provided 33 per cent reservation of seats to women at every tier of the grassroots political institutions. The elections have revealed that the number of women in Gram panchayats is increasing steadily. The granting of reservation to women at grassroot-level institution inspired women to make a similar demand with regard to Lok Sabha and state legislatures. Women activists and academics have been intensifying their demands in this regard, but it is being met with a constant protest by the males, as displayed in 1996 and 1998 by male members cutting across party lines. A Hierarchical Social Order:

An important shift is being noted in the last couple of years from representatives to governance. The centre for women's development studies, New Delhi, organized a meeting on gender, democracy and governance in September 1997, in which Rajni Kothari opined in his paper that from focus on representation to focus on governance was an important transition. Why this emerging interest in governance? Because representation without participation in governance will only underscore the existing order. All feminists agree that gender represents a system of power relation. In Indian history, however, it can only be defined as an instrument to maintain a hierarchical social order designed to perpetuate in equality and diversity of a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-cultural population, said Vina Majumdar.

Caste is an important factor in Indian politics. Social scientists have been grappling with the phenomenon of caste for a long time, but only few have appreciated that the major instrument for maintaining the hierarchy even more than diversity is the subordination of women. Srinivasan's theory of Sanskritisation with increasing subordination/control on women believed to be applicable only to upwardly mobile. The studies by the Centre for women's Development Studies, New Delhi, find it equally manifest believed to be more generous in recognizing women's right.

WOMEN'S STRANGLE IN INDIAN POLITICAL:

Women by and large have demonstrated their stake in democracy, especially when they threw out Indira Gandhi's government which was first major attack on democracy since Independence. With the resurgence of women's movement since the 1970s, it advocates that “transformational politics” have increasingly recognized the potential of the movement to deepen democracy in India. Most analysis, however, continues to harness the fear that women's large scale entry into power structures will only result in cooperation, instead of changing the undemocratic and corruptive elements in these structures. Vina Majumdar suspects that these fears are based on the continued undemocratic view of power and a narrow understanding of politics.

Majumdar writes about 'social engineering' as democracy in India was radical departure from the inherited social system. At present, social engineering has become politically incorrect and nation states are being asked to reduce their interventionist roles. In the kind of democracy India has this weakening and extremely negative impact on the quality of governance or the management of power.

CONCLUSION:

The study identifies that the women and political awareness through the local self government for the empowerment of women Indian government has made 73rd and 74th constitution amendments to the Indian constitution according to this act in Karnataka three tier Panchayat Raj system introduced in 1994 and 1995 in these local self bodies. Women took participation in have amount this amendments also provided 33.33% reservation to the women in the political system in India if property women's used it in their political life offcourse they could become empower in emerging India.

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