

PANCHAYAT RAJ INSTITUTIONS AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT THROUGH POLITICAL PARTICIPTION IN TELANGANA STATE

Author's Name: Marka Kiran

Affiliation: Research Scholar, Department of Public Administration & HRM, Kakatiya University, Warangal, Telangana, India

E-Mail: vangamallesh44@gmail.com

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Abstract

The Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1993 has been considered as a Magna Carta in the set of experiences of Panchayati Raj framework in India. It prepared for the new example of administration at the grass roots level. The eventual fate of PR framework relies on the nature of its chosen agents. The situation with PR pioneers can be used to figure out their situation in the progressive system of country society. The Statutory reservation of seats for women in Panchayati Raj bodies has given an open door to their proper association in the turn of events and political cycles at the grass root level consequently expanding the political cooperation of women's and further empowering them to impact the dynamic cycle in the nearby states. Along these lines, this sort of political support isn't that thing for which such an extremely long time over decade's women's had been battling. Indeed, even presently it is apparent that women's are not liberated from the chains of man controlled society. Participation of women in the political field and in various decision-making bodies is an important tool for empowerment. The participation of women at all levels of governance structures is the highest need of this hour for women's actual empowerment. Women's political empowerment, usually viewed as political involvement in government or elections which is essential to give women a voice in the policies that affect their lives. Political participation of women in India has been neglected even since independence. Political system and decision making process in seen clearly in the changes incorporated in the Panchayati Raj Institution. The objective of bringing improvement in the socio-economic condition of women could be successful only by taking suitable initiatives and measures for empowering them. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment in 1992 gave them not less than one-third reservations in the PRIs at all the levels.

Keywords: Empowerment, Political Participation, 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, Panchayati Raj Institutions, Reservations, Women's Representation.

INTRODUCTION

True democracy is a system which in Abraham Lincoln's words, is a government of the people, by the people and for the people. While most of the democracies have given a system which has government elected by all the sections of societies, it is debatable whether the government comprises of all the diverse sections and importantly whether the government works for all the people of the democracy. In this context, the problem of low participation of women is of special concern for democracies and without changing that true democracy can never be achieved. Women's participation in decision-making is essential for women's interests to be incorporated into governance. It has been widely experienced that governance structures which do not provide for adequate participation of women, often suffer from state interventions which are neither

inclusive nor democratic. Including women, especially in local governments are an essential step towards creating gender equal opportunities and gender sensitive policies. Since women have different needs and perspectives on social and political issues, it is important to involve women in governments to incorporate all of the societal viewpoints in policy and decision-making processes. Women are actively involved in household and community work and hence well aware of real issues faced by common people. This gives them insight and perspective which can be instrumental in sustainable overall development. The presence of women in local governments serves as an encouragement for other women to enter diverse professions and leads to breaking stereotypes of women's roles in society and public space. People had gained confidence in women as good public administrators and local government representatives after seeing women making a positive difference in other people's life. The society acknowledges the sincerity and commitment of women to their duties and their resistance to criminalization of politics. The measurement of women political participation is essential to identify the need of policy intervention to improve the same. India had understood the need to record gender statistics on political participation since its independence. The process of capturing women participation at the local level is an evolving area and efforts are being done to improve the present infrastructure.

The advancement of India is conceivable just when individuals living in the towns become politically cognizant. This progress is bound up with the advancement in Indian towns. Assuming the advancement of the Indian towns is taken forward, and then there won't be hindrances for India to be a solid country. Panchayat raj establishment is one of those methods through which India can go on by making the towns politically cognizant which is additionally associated with the progress of Indian towns. Gandhi firmly accepted that these town panchayats ought to have a necessary impact in the Indian government, philosophically, organizationally and practically the panchayat raj framework comprises the most critical financial and politico-regulatory peculiarities. The panchayat raj foundation is considered as an incredible embodiment of decentralization at the grass-pull levels for development. Though they cleared a way for the women's to partake effectively in every one of the circles like instruction, work, and governmental issues long back, the embodiment of their battle appeared reality simply because of the detailing of panchayats and distributing women's 33.3% reservation. There is no question that the panchayats were fruitful in the diffusing the strengthening of the women's to the grass root level yet, the inquiry to be addressed is that how viable is this interest, are the women's up-and-comers dealing with any issues in breaking the blockades set by the way of life, religion and society which are restricting their dynamic support in direction, is this sort of cooperation a help to the hopeful women's up-and-comers or is only a one more form of the segregation.

After attaining independence, various measures were initiated and are still in operation for improving the socio-economic status and empowerment of women in India. The Directive Principles of State Policy enshrined in the constitution has the special bearing on the status and empowerment of women. The constitution guarantees equal rights and opportunities of socio-economic development and betterment of living through providing freedom of speech, personal liberty to participate in all kinds of welfare, social political and economic activities to all Indian citizens so as to establish an egalitarian and prosperous society. The political equality through the institution of adult franchise, equality in matters relating employment and appointment with any public office, and to prohibit discrimination practices on account of religion, sex, dissent and place

of birth for providing certain opportunities are some of the additional constitutional provisions and measures for providing equal chances of bringing improvements in the socio-economic status of both men and women.

Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) are seen as answer for every one of the issues of rustic turn of events and is connected to strengthening of the underestimated part of society, particularly women's. The cooperation of women's delegates including individuals from more vulnerable areas seems to have expanded significantly throughout the long term chiefly because of governmental policy regarding minorities in society. Different examinations show that women's chiefs are less bad, can give more open merchandise of equivalent quality at successful cost and consider women's' inclinations to work on generally administration.

POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

Women's political empowerment, usually viewed as political involvement in government or elections which is essential to give women a voice in the policies that affect their lives. Economic, social and political empowerments of women are jointly reinforcing. Economic empowerment implies that women have the power to make their own decisions and leading to prosperity for families and the society in which they live in. Social empowerment often liberates women from exploitation and mistreatment that curb women from reaching their potential at the fullest. Economic empowerment can provide women to be empowered politically. Political empowerment allows women to take control of the policies that will benefit their economic standing. Social empowerment further strengthens women to participate economically and politically, which in turn reinforces women's standing in society. To be fully empowered, women have to take power for themselves. Women's business associations are one such example of women to empower themselves. By networking and communicating to build better businesses, women gain economic empowerment.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND RESERVATION SYSTEM

The constitutionally mandated reservations in Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) brought in through 73rd amendment have ensured women in general and from the marginalized groups in particular to participate in decentralization process and thereby village and community development. Over and above several region specific Acts enacted by the state governments, the 73rd amendment to Constitution enacted in 1993 is a major strengthening pillar to decentralized process, which recognizes the need for uplifting rural women along with other socially, economically and politically weaker sections of the society by making them part of administration and development. Government of India has been trying to achieve empowerment of women through various programs and constitutional safeguards. Economic empowerment has been targeted or recognized through women component plan, financial assistance to self-help groups, establishment of women operated banks, colleges and universities specifically established for women, social empowerment being cherished through free education to girls up to certain levels, housing schemes, access to services, etc. Political empowerment is assured through reservation of seats for contesting elections at different levels, earmarking of funds under reserved category, etc. In PRIs, the provision of seats has been increased from 33% to 50% for women. Although the experiences in grass root politics over the past two decades do not give us rosy pictures, there are credible incidences of change in rural areas thanks to women's empowerment. These incidences

may be a few, but a beginning seems to have been made. In the caste and class ridden society that prevailed for long in India, women's empowerment is emerging in different fields as a result of induced process or affirmative action.

EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN THROUGH CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMME

Lack of awareness is a key weakness that stands as stumbling block in the development path at panchayat level. In addition, the power and authority of upper caste communities also restrict the SC/ST women elected representatives to perform their roles and responsibilities at panchayat level. In some parts of India, SC/ST representatives are denied to enter the panchayat office and when they win the election, they are denied to take charge of the office or sit in their seat. The voice of SC/ST women is not fully represented in the political ground. The achievement of gender equity and equality is one of the major challenges in Indian society. The empowerment of SC and ST women has emerged as an important aspect of the ongoing socio-economic and political transformation in India. Efforts have been made to empower the GP women representatives through imparting training. Capacity building programmes are felt necessary as most of the SC/ST women elected representatives are found to be illiterate and have only primary school level education. Although social inequalities are fading under the provisions made under the Constitution of India and the public policies aimed at inclusive development, the capacity building programmes can help members, particularly women belonging to SC, ST and Other Backward Castes (OBC) to fight against the disadvantages and enable them to participate in the local government process with confidence.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Political participation of women in India has been neglected even since independence. Though our country has adopted democratic system of government and the women constitute 48.9 per cent of population of the country, but their political participation is very low. Due to various constraints, they could not occupy the positions of power and assume leadership roles. Women's participation has been increasing rapidly but it is not satisfactory. They are also denying opportunities to participate in the administration, even in the making of decisions that affect their life and welfare. Though Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi had believed that women had a positive role to play in the reconstruction of society and the recognition of their equality was an essential step to bring about social justice. This added to the massive participation by the women in the freedom movement and had a direct impact on the political and social elite, including women. After independence, when the constitution was adopted women like Smt. Sarojini Naidu, Hansa Mehta, Renuka Roy, Durgabai Desmukh etc. took part in the constitution-making. In our Constitution there is guarantee of equality and dignity of the individual and it claimed the fundamental rights of women to political and legal equality and guaranteed non-discrimination in employment and office under the states. Our Constitution had provided many channels for the development and progress of the women. The preambles of the Constitution, the chapters of Fundamental Rights, Directive Principles of the State Policies etc., are the specific objectives of this purpose. These constitutional provisions are meant to empower 48.9 per cent women population in India. Many government and non-government agencies are working for the development of women but in practice we find a wide gap between the stated social objectives and achievements, between the legal framework and empirical realities, between the symbolism and actuality. And this is the reason that after these constitutional safeguards and legal frameworks, the participation is still very low. Political

participation rates are an indicator of governmental legitimacy, citizens' support for a democratic form of government, and the sense of collective responsibility and civic duty that are associated with consolidated, strengthening the capacity of local officials and streamlining and rationalizing administrative functions. Political participation is essential for any representative/leader of the people. Democracy implies equality for all human beings, men and women. Equal treatment to women in political life, to be meaningful and effective should start from the grassroots level. Political journey is not smooth for women GP members in a patriarchal and caste-ridden society.

WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN PANCHAYAT BEFORE 73RD AMENDMENT ACT

Andhra Pradesh Mandal Praja Parishad, Zilla Praja Parishad and Zilla Abhivrudhi Sameeksha Mandal Act, 1986 had a provision of reservation of maximum of four seats for women in Gram Panchayat and some percentage in Mandal Praja Parishad and Zilla Praja Parishad. Some percentage of the posts of chairperson of the ZP were also reserved for women. Himachal Pradesh Panchayat Act also had a provision of 25 per cent reservation for women. The Karnataka Zilla Parishad Taluka Panchayat Samiti, Mandal Panchayat Act 1983 had a provision of reservation of 25 per cent of seats for women at ZP and Mandal Panchayat levels. One seat each in Mandal Panchayat and Zilla Panchayat was also reserved for SC/ST women. Kerala Panchayat Act had provided 30 per cent reservation to women in Panchayats. Madhya Pradesh Panchayati Raj Adhiniyam 1990 provided 30 per cent reservation for women at village level. 10 percent each in Janpad Panchayat and ZP levels. Among them at least one seat was reserved for SC/ST women. The Maharashtra Panchayat Act had made a provision of 30 per cent reservation for women. Orissa Panchayat Samiti Act 1991 reserved not less than one-third seats for women including SC/ST women. Besides, either chairperson or vice chairperson will be women. West Bengal Panchayat Act also has a provision of not less than one-third seats for women at different tiers of the Panchayat. The Panchayat Acts of the rest of the states had provided berth for women either through co-option or nomination.

RESERVATION POLICY PROVIDING A SPACE FOR POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT OF TELANGANA STATE

The course of reservation is moving in the correct heading. Since booking for women's in legislative issues is another peculiarity, new examination a couple of additional years is expected to survey the progress of women's strengthening process. There is as yet quite far to go. Women's strengthening should be fundamentally be felt by women's themselves. The certainty that they can challenge political race without reservation could be one of the pointers. Their certainty level is at present extremely low. The help delivered by reservation to women's strengthening, along these lines, ought not to be disregarded. Reservation gives SCs, STs, BCs, and women are an edge over broad contender to get chosen. Thusly, they lean toward the continuation of reservation despite the fact that greater part of Gram Panchayat individuals are likewise for continuation of reservation to women's, the reasons are unique. Enormous quantities of GP women's individuals are financially poor and socially denied. They have scarcely any opportunity to straightforwardly put themselves out there. They fear talking anything in a presence of town older folks. Furthermore, a larger part of women's individuals are day to day breadwinners. Their essential concern is to procure bread for family and have no chance to enjoy governmental issues. It is a direct result of this sort of environment pervasive in town local area that women's individuals from GPs have a solid dread that without reservation, their possibilities getting chosen are remote and distressing. The ZP women's individuals are almost certainly better positioned as far as schooling relatively. They

appear to have long political experience and are controlled by the party higher ups. Hence, they had the viewpoints as directed by the ideological group they have a place with. No ideological group disfavors reservation. Besides, ZP women's individuals have an inclination that the party chiefs approach them provided that they are in power. As needs be, their perspectives they would rather not lose their ZP participation. They are envious of holding their socio-political status and position. Reservation gives them an edge over broad contender to get chosen. Consequently, they incline toward the continuation of reservation.

CONCLUSION

PRIs can be the initial step for political strengthening of women's as the certainty and comprehension of commonwealth can permit them to partake in decisions to state councils and Parliament making ready from 'Panchayat to Parliament'. It is the main start of an excursion towards strengthening. The excursion of women's authority in nearby administration isn't really lengthy. Women's are still in the learning stage. The facts confirm that no one but women's would be able successfully voice their repressed sentiments, prerequisite and viewpoint being developed cycles. In this manner arrangement of women's is vital to voice necessities and thoughts of this small portion of society being developed. Women's in India have gained a lot of head way in the previous 100 years; they possess the most noteworthy workplaces and position. At least we are in front of America in that regard where to date there has been no women's president. Be that as it may, there still a need for a legitimate answer for the numerous issues. The reservations at the nearby level and Women's cooperation in Panchayati Raj foundations are insufficient for the Women Empowerment. The participation of women, especially those belonging to weaker sections, in GPs has increased after the implementation of 73rd constitutional amendment. The participation of women representatives including members from weaker sections appears to have increased substantially over the years mainly on account of affirmative action. But, the political journey is not smooth for women in a patriarchal and caste-ridden society on account of which they face a lot of problems in the village panchayat.

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