



## WOMEN PARTICIPATION AND DECENTRALISED POLITICS

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### Abstract

The position of women in politics was analyzed a number of years ago in the well-known United Nations study edited by Maurice Duverger. Men continued to believe that political activity was a masculine Prerogative. The old theory of female incapacity had been replaced by a 'functional' theory about the division of aptitudes, which is necessarily reflected in the division of labour. In its modernized form, this kind of functional theory recognizes the right of women to work outside the home and to participate in civic and political affairs, yet emphasizes their special concern with 'home policy' matters, i.e., motherhood and its problems, education and the family. Women's political activity becomes channeled into these areas rather than into political parties, trade unions and the life. The best way to judge the position of a nation is to find out the status of women. In reality the status of women is the measuring rod for assessing the standard of culture of any age. The social status of women is a country- represents the social spirit of the age.

**Key Words:** Women Empowerment, Functional Theory, Political Activity, Political Participation.

The present investigation is an attempt to see the role of women in present Panchayatraj in terms of effectiveness in decision making and attitudes of men towards women members and their emerging new identity.

### 1. Introduction

Recent years have witnessed a worldwide concern for women. The world community devoted the year of 1975 to women and, during the course of that year, further decided to have a world Decade to promote their cause: to fight against discrimination based on gender, denial of opportunities to participate in public life outside their homes, exploitation, illiteracy, inferior jobs and poor wages, and generally a lower status compared to that of men.

The Decade succeeded in creating awareness about these issues, both men and women. It also prompted governments to devise special policy measures and to initiate constitutional reforms to



improve to situation of women. These have brought about noticeable changes but still there is a far way to go, the situation is not the same in all the countries.

Politics is one field the evidence of increasing ‘participation by women is still not very impressive’ in most of countries in the region. This is so on two counts; the number of women politicians is relatively smaller compared to men, and the majority of women are believed to be indifferent to politics as is exhibited by their participation in politics is there, it is to be found mostly among the women from the urban elite groups. The women in rural, illiterate, and non-elite strata are mostly outside the pale of politics.

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Empowerment of women is essentially the process of upliftment of economic, social and political status of women, the traditionally underprivileged ones, in the society. It is the process of guarding them against all forms of violence. Women empowerment involves the building up of a society, a political environment, where in women can breathe without the fear of oppression, exploitation, apprehension, discrimination and the general feeling of persecution which goes with being a woman in a traditionally male dominated structure. Deepa Narayan in her edited book ‘Measuring Empowerment’ takes “ Empowerment as the expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence control and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives “

The Constitution of India is based on the principles of equality. It prohibits discrimination on the basis of religion, race, caste, sex and place of birth. 73rd Constitutional Amendment act in the year 1999 introducing not less than 33% reservation for women in the Panchayat Raj institutions in rural areas. Undoubtedly it is a landmark legislative step in the direction of empowerment of women. With the passing it is acknowledged that the local self-government is an effective method of governing as well as designing and implementing the developmental schemes at the grassroots level. In the rural areas to a three tier structure has been adopted.



Ideally speaking human beings is free and equal even when there exist a lot of differences among human beings, which is inevitable. Because absolute equality is impossible to achieve. Not only there exist differences among different social, racial, religious, linguistic groups, difference also exists between men and women. This difference appears to be artificial in nature as it is the creation of men in society. Women throughout the world have been heaped with innumerable injustices from time in memorial. Every society at one time or the other has treated women in an injustice manner.

Indian society is one of the most ancient civilizations of the world. At one point of time women treated equally in India. But however from the latter part of the Vedic period to the modern times, women have been treated unequally. This is more in case of the right to property. Women have been deprived of their right to property in substantial way and have been made more vulnerable to the wished of the male members of the society. Some efforts were made by the British Indian Government to provide justice to women by passing certain Acts before India independence. However, the constitution of independent India has made for the first time provisions giving equality to women; it is unfortunate that even after 50 years of the implementation of the constitution justice to women is still a far cry.

Present day scientifically advance countries are deeply concerned with their history of civilization. Since civilization makes a country devise its further programme of development, no country can exist without civilization in modern world. Now the question arises about the constituents of civilization. Though I am not going to the terminology and definition to scientifically define civilization and its essential elements like learned sociologists and political thinkers. Simple and comprehensive language of define civilization is one, by which we understand the social, political, economic and environmental inter-action of public including habitation, regular biological needs. Thus to improve any nation's civilization its population is the foremost important element. Science the population can be divided into two distinct categories according to biological structural differences from the very day of birth, country's civilization depends on both the categories (men and women).

Here we are confronted with another complicated question as to how women influence the civilizations. Though it seems to be little bit difficult question but it has numerous answers which vary from individual to individual. For a layman it is easy to determine that a woman has stretched



area of activities in here family. On the other hand an educationist or a philosopher will find the women a prominent figure in management of a family. As such we can conclude that women has lion's share in forming a good society because family is the basic element of society.

## 2. Political Participation of Women:

Political participation as the reality of ways in which people try to influence the political process. He has sought to identify the channels through which citizens attempt to influence the leaders as well as to isolate the kinds of citizens apt to use these channels on a regular basis. I have tried to see political participation as a process in which people try to affect the government by taking part in the voting behavior; by persuading others to vote; by becoming a member of any political campaign; by keeping oneself informed about politics or by discussing politics with friends, colleagues or any family member; by attending political meetings, political rallies or protest meetings; by joining public or street' demonstrations; by agitating to get public officials to correct political wrongs; by becoming an active member of an organization engaged in solving community problems; by giving money for a political cause; and by working with others in this city in trying to solve some of the problems,

The position of women in politics was analyzed a number of years ago in the well-known United Nations study edited by Maurice Duverger. The role played by women in politics, he notes, merely reflects and results from the secondary place to which they are assigned by the customs and attitudes of our society and which their education and training tend to make them accept as the natural order of things. The granting of votes to women involved a change in the male attitude to women, since it implied that women were intelligent enough to choose between political alternatives - but the shift was only a small one. Men continued to believe that political activity was a masculine prerogative. The old theory of female incapacity had been replaced by a 'functional' theory about the division of aptitudes, which is necessarily reflected in the division of labour. In its modernized form, this kind of functional theory recognizes the right of women to work outside the home and to participate in civic and political affairs, yet emphasizes their special concern with 'home policy' matters, i.e., motherhood and its problems, education and the family. Women's political activity becomes channeled into these areas rather than into political parties, trade unions and the life.

However, to draw a conclusion about the position of women is difficult and complicated problem. The available data is quite confusing because of its variation in its nature. It has happened



that in the same period and in the same province, diametrically opposite views about the worth, nature and importance of women have been expressed with equal zeal.

Dr. Kulwant Gill has written a book entitled “Hindu Women’s right to property in India” (1986) In this book he goes on to discuss the position of Hindu women from Vedic period to modern period. He takes the question of Hindu women’s right to property in different forms including women’s estate, Stridhan etc. He has analyzed beautifully the problems faced by women.<sup>1</sup>

O.P. Rihan has written 5 volumes entitled “Indian women through ages” (1995)<sup>2</sup>. The theme in these volumes deals with the socio-economic condition of Indian women attempt has been made to highlight the role of Indian women from ancient period to modern times and march towards progress in very sphere of life in present day Family” (2004). In this book he has emphasis on the role of women in the family.

Lina Gonsalves, has written a book entitled “Women and Human Rights” (2001)<sup>3</sup> This book describes the lack of attention give on the human rights of women and indicates a range of issues where equal rights for women are still denied.

H.C Upadhyay has written 2 volumes entitled “Status of women In India” (1991)<sup>4</sup>. In this book he says Indian Constitution guarantees equality of the sexes, there is much legislation concerning female employment, including equal pay provisions and maternity benefits and even legislation reforming Hindu law so that women have equal inheritance rights.

Sushila Agrawal has written a book entitled “Status of Women” (1988)<sup>5</sup> The constitutional provisions in India have been analyzed in the context of social reality and traditional value framework. Special provisions of Indian and criminal procedure codes for the protection of women who could be a victim of the offences in public and private life because of her sex have been examined. Property rights of women under Hindu law from Martu to present day bring out co-relationship between property rights and status of women.

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Leelamma Devasia and V.V. Devasia “ Women in India” Equality, Social Justice and Development” (1990)<sup>6</sup> Invisibility of women’s work, seclusion of women within the four walls of house, deprivation of women from land, and other property, lack of effective control over the products of their own labour consistently deny the equality and social justice to women in India. Equalizing educational opportunity would do much to make a man and a woman equal.

Vijay Kaushik and Bela Rani Sharma, “Women’s Rights and World Development” (1998)<sup>7</sup> There has been worldwide awakening about the rights of women. The United Nations has been doing commendable work in this direction. There is more and more awareness about improving the working conditions of women and for providing them proper place in political field. Political parties are keen to associate more and more women with their functioning. All these issues have been discussed in this book.

Paras Diwan, has written a book entitled “Dowry and protection to Married Women” (1990).<sup>8</sup> The book covers a wide spectrum, dowry prohibition laws with its relating to Stridhana, Mehr, and law of criminal misappropriation of married women’s property, as expounded by pratibha Rani, maintenance for neglected wives and discarded and divorced women under the benign provisions of the criminal law along with the Shah Bano exposition, and the Muslim women.

### 3. Conclusion:

The adoption of legislative approach to women empowerment through the reservation of seats in Panchayat Raj institutions and that too at a time when the government has shown a keen commitment to implement various employment and poverty eradication schemes at the very grassroots levels and increasing the role of local self-governments in the implementation of plans, is definitely a desirable and welcome move and should ideally prove to be effective. The study reveals a mixed reaction to women’s reservation policy. In a state with twenty-eight years of left rule the patriarchy has been challenged and women feel more comfortable in exercising their political rights. Women’s disapproval to this policy indicates their inability to change their mindset and to accept politics as a domain of both men and women.

<sup>6</sup> Leelamma Devasia and V.V. Devasia “Women in India” Equality, Social Justice and \*Development” (1990).

<sup>7</sup> Vijay Kaushik and Bela Rani Sharma, “Women’s Rights and World Development” (1998).

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Despite the fact that women's effective participation in the PRI institutions leaves much to be desired and also recognizing that women representatives are mostly either subservient to the militantly dominant male class or at best dummy surrogates planted to serve the vested interests of their masters, to conclude that women's reservation in the PRI and the subsequent enhanced political participation of women has not made a mark in terms of improving the grim scenario faced by women in general and poor and low caste women in particular, would be an exercise in fallacy. More so if we take into account the short period of time that has elapsed since reservation for women in PRI's was initiated and particularly when reservation for women at the state and union levels is still elusive. "Women's effectiveness at promoting women's rights once in public office, however, is dependent upon many other factors besides their numbers. Institutional changes are needed in civil society, the media, political parties, legislatures and the judicial system in order to support women's policy agendas and to make the transition from policy to practice".

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