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POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTION

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ABSTRACT

No doubt that the 73rd Constitution Amendment has powered the Panchayati Raj Institution as constitutional bodies. The Local Self-Governing Institutions (LSGI) is in essence created through the process of devolution. If sufficient powers are developed, the grassroots democratic institutions would get strength to become effective instrumentalities of socio-economic change. Following the enactment of 73rd Constitution Amendment in India is striving for strengthening people's participation in decentralized governance through the Panchayati Raj Institution. However, it has always been problem as to how this concept can be practiced effectively in such a way that people could be closely associated in the decision-making process at grassroots level. The local body being an instrument of local democracy those women participated effectively in the decision-making process. It was seen that all the political parties are represented in the local bodies. But the predominant political culture, which is masculine, is reflected in the political parties as women were put up as candidates only in the reserved seats. The women's wing of political parties does not play decisive role.

In a country of India's size and diversity planning can only work through a multi-level framework-particularly when Panchayati Raj Institution appears to be steadily moving in the direction of becoming a genuine third tier of federalism and governance, and implementation AL unit-a fact attested to by numerous demands. Effective panchayats would also require effective district and block level administration, hence one should promote reforms at all levels. These reforms would of course need political support both at the federal and state level.

KEY WORDS: Panchayati Raj Institution, Political Organizations, Economic System, Policy-Making, Political Interference, Transformation, Decision-Making Processes, Political Empowerment, Power and Functions.

INTRODUCTION

The lack of equal opportunities for women and men in the main development affecting the gender-specific division since the transformation of our society from an editorship and planned economy to a democratic market economy. Because the social position of women spans across a range of areas, the analytical framework of gender-specific division should include cross-cultural and interdisciplinary aspects. Due to the significant role tradition plays in the gendered division, a historical point of view is also vital.

Past and present tendencies possible future solutions. Because of the active role tradition and the socialization process play in shaping attitudes of gender, identifying problems and offering solutions, it is necessary to take an historical point of view, apply an interdisciplinary approach (consider social, economic, culture, geographical and psychological elements).

Every society possesses a system to maintain the social order. Social control, becomes functional when a conflicting situation arise due to are individual's/group of individual's non-conformity with the associated processes, "social order and social control" regularize the political organizations or institutions. Among the simple societies, where separate political authority existed, it was closely bound up with kinship, religion and other institution. Hence, in the studies of social change, political organization cannot be left untouched. While writing the preface of African political systems, Redcliffe-Brown said that "political organization is concerned with the maintenance or establishment of social order within a territorial framework by the organized exercise of coercive authority through the use or possibility of use of force.

The most important social and cultural conditions required for more extensive participation in policy-making are the following:

- ♦ A more democratic division of labour within the family;
- ♦ Higher employment rates;
- ♦ Improved education and qualification measures;
- ♦ Social assistance to help reconcile women's various tasks;
- ♦ The transformation of cultural traditions that stand in the way of achieving equality between men and women.

Going back to history, it is notable that the first ever reference in a document of constitutional significance to village panchayats as local self-government institution was made in the report of Royal Commission on Decentralization in

1909. Though the tradition of Panch Parmeshwar has been in existence since time in to Minto-Morky Refrom of 1909, which led to the enlargement of the elective process in the local self-government structure of India.

A dedicated bend of federation of working panchayat women who are newly entering local political structures to ensure that they have the necessary

training and resources to fully participate in local affairs. It is hoped that this federation would be prepared to work in partnership with India's women leaders as they create their vision and plans for a new future for their communities and plans for a new future for their communities and for their state.

In order to participate in the Panchayati Raj Institution and in society at large, the women must first step forth from the enshrouding conditions that characterize her life. Her successful participation in the panchayats is unquestionable linked to a process by which society begins to break down the walks of tradition and custom that limit women's mobility and restrain their action as key plays in society.

TRANSITIONAL PERIOD

Changes in the political and economic system are taking place simultaneously. This has made it necessary to introduce these countries to political simultaneously. This has made it necessary to introduce to political and economic requirements radically different from their former ones. And these radical changes are taking place under unfavorable internal condition. The tension, both overt and under the surface, which has been accumulating for decades now combines with catharsis of the political change-over.

This transformation fundamentally rearranged the political, economic and family conditions, the human relations behind them and through these the position of individuals, in particular the possibilities and opportunities for women. It is difficult to estimate the effects of the transformation partly due to the complexity, verity and inextricability of the interrelations, and partly due to the often contradictory and limited information available.

The only thing that can be stated with absolute certainty is that these radical changes deeply affect the situation of women, their role in public life and in the family. They make the social and individual roles of gender practiced in the past useless, which creates uncertainty and make people feel defense-less. Depending on their social position and personality, individuals cope with this shock differently. The extent and the speed with which they

adapt themselves to the new conditions are different, as are their coping strategies. Through the balance of rearrangement, the separation between winners and losers is not located primarily along lines of gender; rather, several markedly obvious consequences affect women in a different manner.

The most important elements of the transformation are:

- The adoption of the rules, which has taken place in very short and historically un paralleled period time.
- The democratization of society.
- The most important characteristics is competition. Women are it fact at a disadvantage because of their different social roles and levels of training. This weakens their position and increases their discrimination in the labour market.
- The pre-condition for democracy is ensuring equal opportunities for both gender and developing the institutional system necessary to achieve this.
- The transformation of relations from public contact.

THE POSITION OF WOMEN IN POLITICAL DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

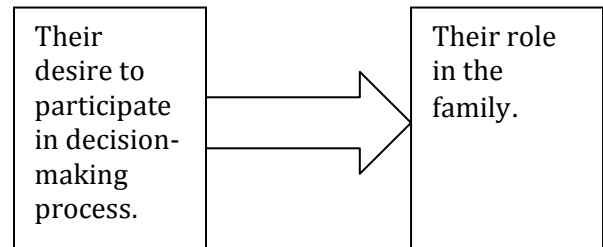
The precondition of the assertion of democracy is to ensure equal opportunities for both gender and develop the instructional system required to achieve this one of the phenomena, which is the process of pluralization and domocractization, appears paradox at first glance, namely that women are being pushed in to the background in political decision-making processes.

Women’s involvement in policy-making occurs through various institutions: through political parties and through organization such as trade unions and women’s movements. Following the comprehensive political change, women were pushed in to the background in every form of political representation as well as in the surrounding region.

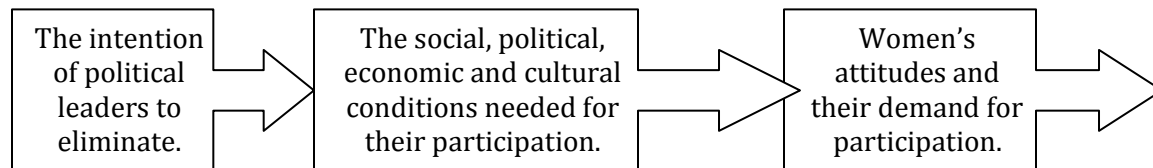
Participation in the various parties, protectionist organization and women’s interest groups, in particular in their governing bodies, is of decisive importance from the point of

groups, in particular in their governing bodies, is of decisive importance from the point of view of moving women, in part because it implies a period of preparation in which the methods of obtaining power and practicing it can be learned. Moreover, it is also important because they are the channels leading to the highest spheres of political decision-making, to parliament and the government. In this respect an important role is also played by the various professional organizations and association who lobby their causes. Because they are not centrally organized, female society is locked out-from this formal and informal network leading to power, which aggravates both their incoming to power and successfully practicing it.

In the process of government transition, women have in which is a symptom of their underprivileged position in society. An explanation for this handicap can be found in history, more concretely in the traditional practice of the division of work between the two genders. Within this context, and given the lack of social aid, a contradiction results between women’s social roles, namely between.



This contradiction prevents the women from participating on equal footing with men in political decision-making processes. Aside from general causes for the inferior position of women in society, insufficient participation by women in political power can be explained by the factors determining political participation at all, which are;



Political empowerment and consequent decision-making roles of women ensures harmony in society and paves the way for

undisturbed economic and social progress, and more vitally the women is able to view herself not just as a wife or mother but as a vital factor in solving social

issues. Her self-esteem is much higher a crucial factor in the development of equality. There is no doubt that women have traveled a long way in an uphill journey towards progress. However, they still have miles to go to achieve complete gender equality with social justice. More laws cannot ensure social transformation.

Women are ensured juridical equality. However, genuine equality men and women have not been attained despite the existence of constitutional, legal and regulatory provisions. In equality continue to exist in practice in political, economic and culture life and within the family. There is a contradiction between de jure and de jure facto position of women. In the new democracy, the women's issued have been pushed in to the background. Never has there been such silence surrounding women's issues as since after the change of regime.

OBJECTIVE

1. Women's empowerment is one of the major objectives of the third generation of panchayats.
2. To know about how far and to what extent, the rural women participate in different spheres of activities ranging from decision-making to exercising their rights.
3. To explore the awareness, interest, and involvement of women in Gram Panchayat elections.
4. To know the leadership qualities of women.
5. To assess the perception of women about the panchayat system in general and their role in particular.
6. To find out the factors which overtly or covertly tend to promote or prevent women members from performing their roles.

As such 73rd CA Act provides reservation of one third of the seats for women in the PRIS. The participation of women in PRIS is considered essential not only for ensuring their political participation in the democratic process but also for realizing the development goals of women. Participation of women in PRIS involves women as:

- ◆ As members of mahila mandals and their association with voluntary organisations;
- ◆ Candidates;
- ◆ Elected members of the PRIS taking part in decision-making, planning implementation and evaluation;
- ◆ Member of political parties;
- ◆ Voters.

SUPPORT WITH THE COMMUNITY

- ↳ Day cares programmes are made available so that children can be cared for while the women at work.

- ↳ Local training programmes and workshops are created to empower women which treat gender issues and build their confidence as well as analyze the particulars of panchayat operation.
- ↳ Local training programmes and workshop are developed to enlighten men, by building their cooperative skills and treat gender issues.
- ↳ Women's organization is created strengthened so that women can exchange information and discuss ways to address their common problem.
- ↳ Women who have already served a term as panchayat leaders act as her mentors.

SUPPORT WITHIN THE FAMILY

- ✧ Her husband and family accept the fact that she will be interacting with other men and help her to overcome her shyness and reservation about doing so.
- ✧ Her husband and family assist her household chores and family responsibilities, so that she has more time to engage in critical takes as a panchayats.
- ✧ Her husband and family understand the importance of her mobility and allow her to determine her own movement outside the home.

SUPPORT SOCIETY AT LARGE

- ❖ Government, NGOs and civil society institutions establish training brochures, satellite programmes, trips deal of government and other special programmes to facilitate her.
- ❖ Government NGOs and civil society institutions support her work by setting out funds for the panchayts and making them easily accessible to women members.
- ❖ Media create a supportive environment for women members by letting societies know about their accomplishments and by influencing public opinion in support of women's reservation and rights.

POWER AND FUNCTIONS

Different Panchayts Raj Acts across the reveals that each of the state has accorded a specific status to the institution of gram sabha in terms of power and functions. A synthesis of various powers and functions assigned in different states in Panchayati Raj system reveals the following broad areas of power and functions.

1. Consider and scrutinize the existing schemes and all kinds of activities of panchayat;
2. Consider last audit note and replies made there to;

3. Consider proposals for fresh taxation or for enhancement of existing taxes;
4. Consider the budget prepared by the gram panchayat and the future development programmes and the plans for the gram sabha area;
5. Discuss report on the administration of the preceding year;
6. Examine annual statement of accounts and audit report;
7. Maintain a complete register for all development works undertaken by gram panchayat or by any other government department;
8. Mobilise voluntary labour and contributions in kind and cash for the community
9. Welfare programmes;
10. Promote unity and harmony among all sections of society;
11. Render assistance in the implementation of development scheme and rendering services in villages;
12. Review programme of work for the year or any new programme;
13. Scrutinise the complex works and all kinds of activities of the gram panchayat;
14. Seek clarifications from the mukhia and members of the gram panchayat
15. Seek clarifications from sarpanch and panches of the gram panchayat to clarify the panchayat activity, income expenditure scheme and other matters and sarpanch of the gram panchayat shall be responsible for it;
16. Select schemes, beneficiaries and locations;
17. Undertake programme for all adult education, family welfare within the village.

Types of Interference face by Women Functionaries in Panchayats:-

The most important issue raised by women panchayat represent of government official and other influential persons in their-jurisdiction. The types of influence that the participants identified as problems are:

- Interference of MLAs in the panchayat administration;
- No respect for women from administration;
- Political interference (from other sources);
- Pressures of contractors for getting work;
- Problem of “Pradhan Pati”;
- Proper support from government official(is not forthcoming)
- Secretary is not accountable to gram panchayat;
- Social forestry not entrusted to panchayat;

- There is no official/ formal relationship between self-help groups (SHGs) and panchayats.

Implementation:-

The pillars of the 73rd and 74th Amendments on which the “institutions of self-government” were to be created and assured of certainty, continuity and strength support by the key statutory instruments:

1. State Election Commission.
2. State Finance Commission.
 - a) Constitution of district planning committees to harmonies and consolidate are plans for economic development and social justice, which are mandated to prepared by village panchayat;
 - b) Devolution of functions, powers and resources such as to enable these elected bodies to function as an institution of self-government;
 - c) Time bound and regular elections to panchayats and nagarpalikas.

CONCLUSION

Changing attitudes and beliefs is at the very heart of democratic functioning. This implies a culture of dialogue consultation and consensus building. These values and processes need to be nurtured through sustained capacity enhancement interventions. Intensive documentation of these interventions is necessary first step. Sharing of innovations and experiments and best practices is an important part of this effort.

Local governance can be made more transparent and accountable to local community only if civil society assertions are coherent and persistent. The interface between strong civil society and effective local governance can be secured more organically if capacity building interventions are properly designed and implemented. The challenges facing effective development for effective local self-governance bulk of this capacity focuses on promoting participation are cultural, systematic, institutional and human. Thus, inclusion of the marginalized is a primary challenge of capacity enhancement interventions.

The Panchayat should be given the power to from organisations like neighborhood groups to stimulate and direct people’s participation in administration and development. Concrete efforts should also be made to reduce government interference in the day-today functioning of local self- government bodies and the process of their dissolution needs to be made more politics proof. Such measures will go long way in establishing the panchayats as village republics. The Panchayati Raj System has provided opportunities for wider political recruitment to all sections of the society; which

should lead to achieve the goals of social justice and economic development in the years come.

Women have to positions in the local bodies, as a provision has been made in the constitution. The attitude of society towards women has started changing. But, in the process of empowering women, hurdles continue to remain. Steps are being taken by women of their own accord to overcome hurdles. It is a long drawn process. A structure which has been created over centuries to work against the interests of women cannot be dismantled within a short span of four or five years. It can be changed only by creating a women's movement for which this provision of one third reservation of seats for women will help. To fight against the designs of the structure, an organized movement of the masses is an imperative. In order to make women achieve results in their positions an array of interventions are necessary.

Women need orientation, sensitization, capacity building, and information and counseling continuously through organisations. The ongoing experiments and experiences suggest that periodical training, orientation and sensitization make women leaders perform their assigned role in a better way when women leaders respond to socio-political challenges; they are to be supported by organizations and institutions which work for their empowerment. Where ever such interventions are available the achievements of women leaders are substantial and impressive. The government will respond to the needs of these women leaders only when they are supported by organisations well-known for their credential and are to be reckoned with as a force.

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