

CHAPTER - III

ENGENDERING POWER

Preview:

This chapter throws light on the concept of engendering; dimensions of empowerment. It also dealt heavily on women empowerment in India; constitutional provisions; engendering of five year plans; provision of quotas or reservations in India as well as in some of the developing countries of the world. The last part of the chapter was devoted to women representation in local bodies.

3.0 INTRODUCTION :

*Indian society is deeply **gendered** in that women have fewer opportunities to participate in public life. The gender division of labour that exists lays a disproportionate burden on women to fulfill the tasks of social reproduction. The care and nurturance of children, the sick and the old, household maintenance and provision for basic needs form a major part of women's work burden, especially in the case of rural women. Women are not perceived as 'public' persons in the same way as men, nor are their associational activities seen as being for the common 'public' good. Women's community participation continues to be perceived as 'outside' the planning and development process (Chatterji, 2010)¹*

The link between democracy and development is increasingly being emphasized by influential scholars (Sen, 1999) and development institutions (World Bank, 2005). In particular enhancing the participation of women within democracies is seen as central to improving governance (Ban, 2007).²

In the words of Rai (2011) ‘the participation of women and their engagement in electoral process is an important marker of the maturity and efficacy of democracy in any country. It can be defined not only in terms of the equality and freedom with which they share political power with men, but also in terms of the liberty and space provided for women in the democratic frame work of electoral politics.’³

The main framework for this study is based on UNESCO’s (2009) *engendering power* which aims to ensure that women and men benefit equally from participation in political party processes. Mainstreaming consists in bringing what can be seen as marginal into the core and main decision making process of an organization (UNESCO, 2003). Kabeer (1999) conceptualizes empowerment through choice making in terms of resources, agency and achievements, while Unterhalter (2011) identifies four facets of empowerment namely cognitive, sociological, political and economic. Education is critical because it promotes gender equality and empowers women, and it is the key to addressing gender-based inequalities and exclusion (UNESCO, 2011).⁴

The UN outlines gender mainstreaming as “...a strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated.” (United Nations,1997). Empowerment is viewed from the standpoint of Kabeer (1999:437) who holds that it is a process by which those who have been denied the ability to make choice acquire such ability. It is thus a choice from disempowerment to empowerment and an expansion in the people’s ability to make strategic life choices (Ponge, 2013)⁵

The United Nations Development Programme's 1997 Human Development Report states, "A creative commitment to gender equality will strengthen every area of action to reduce poverty—because women can bring new energy, new insights, and a new basis for organization. *If development is not engendered, it is endangered*". (Chandler et al, 1997) ⁶

The absence of women from structures of governance inevitably means that national, regional, and local priorities are typically defined without meaningful input from women, whose life experience gives them a different awareness of the community's needs, concerns, and interests from that of men (Saadi, 2005). In 2004, women represented 16% of parliamentarians worldwide, compared with 9% in 1987. Without representation at the parliamentary level, it is difficult for women to influence policy (World Bank, 2000). A World Bank investigation (Tara Chandler et al; UNDP,1997) found that "that gender inequality tends to slow economic progress and make the rise from poverty more difficult"(Koroma,2014) ⁷

Further, the global average of women in parliaments as of November 2013 stood at 21.3%, a slight increase over the numbers in the immediately preceding two years (20.3% and 19.5%). The IPU is an international organization of parliaments and works for the establishment of representative democracies. Countries are ranked by the IPU based on percentage of women in the lower house of parliament. The top three countries in the 2013 analysis were Rwanda, Andorra and Cuba. India fared poorly even when compared with her immediate neighbours. Here, Nepal, ranked at 24, led the pack, followed by China (55) and Pakistan (66).

3.1 ENGENDERING - INDIAN PERSPECTIVES :

The Constitution of India promulgated in 1952 promised, “to secure to all its citizens justice, social, economic and political” and “equality of status and of opportunity” (Basu 1998:21). Despite the constitutional promulgation, women in the Indian subcontinent continue to be grossly under-represented in the legislatures, both at the national and the state levels (Rai, 2011).⁸

India’s founding father Mahatma Gandhi had conceived of India’s independence with village as the base of the whole structure. He visualized that “Independence must begin at the bottom. Thus every village will be a republic or panchayat having full powers. In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever widening, never ascending circles.” (Harijan: 1946).

There was legislation for rural local bodies at the village, district and sub-district levels in colonial India. The new Constitution of independent India did not include rural local bodies as an essential part of the federal structure. However, Article 40 as a directive principle of state policy stated the *state shall take steps to organize village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self government.*

The history of independent India includes phases of interest in creation of strong rural local self-government institutions alternatively with their decline and dormancy. In the first decade of independence, India embarked upon a Community Development programme for community participation in development and also initiated steps for constitution and expansion of village panchayats. In 1957 a study team reviewed the working of community development projects and in that context

specifically the success in receiving community participation. It found that the rural local bodies had not been fully involved in community development and the nominated advisory bodies formed at local levels could not ensure people's participation. Report of this, Balwantrai Mehta study team (GOI: 1957 b) which is credited with giving a blue print of the structure of rural local bodies at three levels, namely, the district, block and village became the basis for renewed efforts at revitalization of democratic rural local self government. Initiatives were taken for legislation, constitution of rural local bodies and endowing them with powers and responsibilities and resources.

However, this was followed by a phase of their neglect and decline. In 1977-78 another Committee on Panchayati Raj Institutions known as Ashok Mehta committee (GOI: 1978) again studied the subject and gave fresh recommendations. There was again a revival of efforts at revitalization of these institutions at least in some states. The decade of 1980s witnessed fresh effort for a comprehensive look at the whole question, including their composition and representation, functions, resources and constitutional guarantee for their existence and functions. In December 1992 a historic step was taken with the 73rd amendment to the Constitution to revitalize rural local government in the country, culminating the of an effort initiated in 1989 - when the 64th and 65th constitution amendment bills were presented in the Parliament for constitutionally mandating local self government in rural as well as in urban areas.(Buch,2002) ⁹

Women have a poor 11% representation in India's Lok Sabha and 10.6% in the Rajya Sabha, making India 108th among 188 countries covered in the annual analysis on statistics of women members of parliament (MPs) conducted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).(Kably,2013) ¹⁰

Gender inequalities undermine development—so improving gender equality has to be part of any sustainable strategy for development. Inequalities in rights, resources, and political voice generally disadvantage women, but they also disadvantage the rest of society and impede development. Measures that increase women’s voice in politics and policymaking can have far-reaching implications for gender equality—because they enhance women’s ability to act on their own behalf. And by fostering greater participation, transparency, and availability of information, increasing women’s voice in politics and public life can improve the impact of policies and programs, reduce corruption, and strengthen governance. In all countries—developed and developing—there is considerable scope for increasing female participation and voice in politics and policymaking locally and nationally. (World Bank, 2001) ¹¹

The electoral participation of women in India is a much discussed issue with a wide range of opinions and differing views. On the one hand, some theorists argue that the electoral process in India is fraught with male patriarchy and dominance that act as impediments to women participation. The lack of political voice and poor representation of women in Parliament is a result of exclusions on gender basis (Agarwal 2006). On the other hand, there are theorists who dispute this argument and feel that the increased participation of women in electoral competition in the 1990s as voters and sharing of political power at the grass-root level reveal that electoral politics in India is no more gender exclusive but is quite inclusive. They feel that due to the strength and determination of women’s movements in different parts of India, as well as government-regulated quotas, female presence in the political arena is increasing, particularly in terms of voting patterns and decision-making power, as

well as in access to positions in public office (Lock 1998; Vyasulu and Vyasulu 1999; Ahern et al 2000; Banerjee 2003) (Rai,2011)¹²

One of the most remarkable experiments in building inclusive democratic institutions has been the attempt to improve the representation of women in local government in India. The 73rd amendment to the Indian constitution, passed in 1992, mandated that no less than a third of the total number of seats in village governments (panchayats), and no less than a third of the office of Chairperson of the panchayat should be reserved for women. The aim of this was to ensure that women would have a voice in local government and, ultimately, help facilitate the formation of a more gender equal society. There has been a lot of speculation, and some anecdotal evidence, on how well this policy has worked. These can be classified into four broad categories - “pessimistic” and “optimistic”.

Pessimistic: 1) That women who stand for elections in reserved constituencies would be tokens of powerful interests in the village. Poorly educated, elderly women from impoverished, easily manipulated, families would be picked by elites to run (e.g. Ramesh and Ali, 2001 [10]), 2) A variant of 1) saying that the women would instead be poorly educated but picked from the same wealthy, powerful families as the existing political elite and would, therefore, serve the interest of the elite. Optimistic: 3) Effective, educated women would choose to run for elections, and would serve to represent the interests and preferences of women. 4) That women, because they are newcomers to the political process, would be more enthusiastic and less corrupt and therefore more effective than entrenched male politicians. They would therefore generally improve the quality of governance (Beseley, 2004)¹³

The demand for greater representation of women in political institutions in India was not taken up in a systematic way until the setting up of the Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI) which published its report in 1976. Before this the focus of the growing women's movement had been on improving women's socio-economic position. The CSWI report suggested that women's representation in political institutions, especially at the grass-roots level, needed to be increased through a policy of reservation of seats for women.⁵ In 1988, the National Perspective Plan for Women suggested that a 30 per cent quota for women be introduced at all levels of elective bodies. Women's groups insisted that reservation be restricted to the panchayat (village council) level to encourage grass-roots participation in politics. The consensus around this demand resulted in the adoption of the 73rd and 74th amendments to the Indian Constitution in 1993.

3.2 ENGENDERING - POLITICAL RESERVATIONS :

In 1995, the question of quotas was raised again, but this time the focus was women in parliament. Initially, most political parties agreed to this proposition. But soon doubts surfaced. When the bill addressing this issue was introduced in the Eleventh Parliament in 1997, several parties and groups raised objections. The objections focused around two main issues: first, the issue of overlapping quotas for women in general and those for women of the lower castes; second, the issue of elitism. Most women's groups felt that the caste issue was a divisive one for women. Also, many felt uneasy about giving special privileges to elite women by ensuring seats for them in the parliament, while they had previously supported quotas for women at the grass-roots level of the panchayats. To date, the amendment has not been passed by parliament. However, the current government of the Hindu nationalist

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has committed itself to introducing another quota bill for women in parliament (Rai, 2002) ¹⁴

Reservations in India are an attempt to increase women's participation based on the recognition of strong gender roles, which imply that women hold a different underrepresented perspective, and that once elected women will take different action than men will, aiding both to reform politics and to improve the position of women. Political reservations for women offer prospects of diversity and other governance dividends (Page, 2007; Swamy et al., 2001).(Afridi,2014) ¹⁵

According to Philips, women can be said to share at least one common interest: that is that they need improved access to every sphere (Philips, 1991: 73). This argument has led to the emergence of sex quotas in order to bring women into national legislature (Bertha,2005).

Quotas for women entail that women must constitute a certain number or percentage of the members of a body, whether it is a candidate list, a parliamentary assembly, a committee or a government. Quotas aim at increasing women's representation in publicly elected or appointed institutions such as governments, parliaments and local councils. Gender quotas draw legitimacy from women's underrepresentation due to exclusionary practices of the political parties and the political institutions at large. Quotas place the burden of candidate selection basically on those who control the selection process, first and foremost the political parties. Quotas force those who nominate and select to start recruiting women and give them chance which they otherwise would not get.

Types of Quotas :

a) Candidate quota:

It specifies the minimum percentage of candidates for election that must be women, and apply to political parties' lists of candidates for election. It could be done in following manners: Legal candidate quotas are laid down in the Constitution, in electoral laws or in political party laws. Such quotas as are enacted in legislation, force all political parties to nominate/select the required percentage of women. Voluntary party quotas are adopted voluntarily by political parties, and are most common in centre-left-leaning parties, while liberal and conservative parties generally tend to be reluctant about or strongly opposed to adopting quotas.

b) Reserved quota:

It sets aside a certain number of seats for women among representatives in a legislature, specified either in the Constitution or by legislation. One might argue that reserved seats should not be counted among electoral quotas. However, reserved seats today come in many different types, some excluding, others including, the election of women, rather than appointment, to fill these seats. In Uganda 56 seats, one elected in each district by a special electorate, are reserved for women. In Rwanda, 30 per cent of the seats, elected by a special procedure, are reserved for women according to the Constitution. In Tanzania 20 per cent of the seats are reserved for women and allocated to the political parties in proportion to the number of parliamentary seats won in an election. Reserved seats can also be filled by appointment, as in Kenya and some Arab states. Previous notions of having reserved seats for only one or for very few women, representing a vague and all-embracing category of women, are no longer considered sufficient. Today, quota systems aim at ensuring that women constitute at least a 'critical minority' of 30 or 40 per cent or aim for 'gender balance'

as demanded in various international treaties and conventions. Quotas may be seen as a temporary measure, that is to say, until the barriers for women's entry into politics are removed. Most quotas aim at increasing women's representation because the problem to be addressed is usually the under-representation of women. This is particularly relevant since women constitute more than 50 per cent of the population in most countries, but worldwide they hold less than 16 per cent of the parliamentary seats. Gender-neutral quotas Quota systems may, however, be constructed as gender-neutral also. In this case, the requirement may be, for example, that neither gender should occupy more than 60 per cent or less than 40 per cent of the positions on a party list or in a decision-making body. While quotas for women set a maximum for men's representation, gender-neutral quotas construct a maximum limit for both sexes. Gender neutral quota rules are sometimes used as a strategic choice in order to refute the arguments of opponents of quotas that they are discriminatory against men.(Rajya Sabha,2008).¹⁷

As economic development and other factors that strengthen women's economic status are likely to contribute to greater political influence only in the long term, more active measures are needed to enhance women's ability to participate in politics and policymaking in the short and medium terms. One approach that has increased female representation in local and national governments is political "reservation"—reserving political positions for women in political parties or in local and national assemblies. More than 30 countries have some form of political reservation, with the form varying by country (UNIFEM 1998). In some countries a prescribed number or proportion of seats is reserved for women. A third of local assembly (Panchayat Raj) seats in India are reserved for women (Sen 2000).¹⁸

In some countries political parties mandate that women make up some minimum proportion of their candidates for the elected assembly. In Argentina the minority gender must account for at least a third of candidates on national election lists (Jones 1996). As with other forms of affirmative action, political reservation is controversial—even among some women’s organizations (Sen 2000). While many women’s groups support reservation, at least as an interim measure, others worry about the stigma associated with being elected to a reserved position. Other critics argue that reservation may limit women’s advancement. They say that by mandating minimum levels of representation, quotas create a psychological ceiling, making it difficult for women to reach the majority status in government that they make up in most electorates. But even these critics acknowledge that reservation has substantially increased female representation in electoral bodies over the past decade (World Bank, 2001).¹⁹

Quotas for women entail that women must constitute a certain number or percentage of the members of a body, whether it is a candidate list, a parliamentary assembly, a committee or a government. Quotas aim at increasing women’s representation in publicly elected or appointed institutions such as governments, parliaments and local councils. Gender quotas draw legitimacy from the discourse of exclusion, according to which the main reasons for women’s under-representation are the exclusionary practices of the political parties and the political institutions at large. Quotas place the burden of candidate recruitment not on the individual woman, but on those who control the recruitment process, first and foremost the political parties. (Dahlerup, 2005)²⁰

Various arguments have been put forward for and against the introduction of quotas as a means to increase the political presence of women.

The pros and cons are listed below.

Pros

- Quotas for women do not discriminate, but compensate for actual barriers that prevent women from their fair share of the political seats.
- Quotas imply that there are several women together in a committee or assembly, thus minimizing the stress often experienced by the token women.
- Women have the right as citizens to equal representation.
- Women's experience is needed in political life.
- Men cannot represent the interest of women. Only many women can represent the diversity of women.
- Election is about representation, not educational qualifications.
- Women are just as qualified as men, but women's qualifications are downgraded and minimized in a male-dominated political system.
- Quotas do not discriminate against individual men. Rather quota rules limit the tendency of political parties to nominate only men. For the voters, the opportunities are expanded, since it now becomes possible to vote for women candidates.
- Introducing quotas may cause conflicts, but only temporarily.
- Several internationally recognized conventions on gender equality have set targets for women's political representation; including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) which 179 countries are now party to, as well as the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action.
- How can it be justified that men occupy more than 80 percent of the parliamentary seats in the world?

Cons

- Quotas are against the principle of equal opportunity for all, since women are given preference.
- Political representation should be a choice between ideas and party platforms, not between social categories.
- Quotas are undemocratic, because voters should be able to decide who is elected.
- Quotas imply that politicians are elected because of their gender, not because of their qualifications, and that better-qualified candidates are pushed aside.
- Many women do not want to get elected just because they are women.
- Introducing quotas creates significant conflicts within the party organization.
- Quotas for women will be followed by demands for quotas for other groups, which will result in a politics of sheer group-interest representation.

In India, women elected on the basis of quotas have been labeled '*proxy women*', because they could be placed in the local council as stand-ins for their husbands, who might even participate in the meetings in their place. In other parts of the world as well, women in politics, especially those elected through quotas, might be seen as 'token women'. Research on 'quota' women has revealed many cases of purely symbolic representation of women, especially if the women elected have no power base in a constituency of their own, or in the parties or in strong movements outside the political institutions. However, there are also many success stories of women who felt totally isolated and powerless in the beginning but eventually gained confidence and influence. It seems to be crucial for the effectiveness of women politicians that capacity-building programmes are offered by women's movements or by international organizations. (Dahlerup,2005) ²¹

The 73rd constitutional amendment of 1993 gave constitutional status to the local governance system (known as the 'panchayat system') and reserved 33% of the seats there for women. Put very simply, the panchayat system in India is a form of rural decentralized governance in which the rural populaces elect their own political representatives. Although this system was practised in certain Indian states before 1993, the 73rd constitutional amendment made it mandatory practice across the entire country. Some of the basic features of the constitutional amendment provided for are shown below: The panchayat system in India

- A three-tier panchayat system shall be constituted in every state, comprising panchayats at the village, intermediate and district levels. However, states with populations not exceeding 20 lakh could dispense with the intermediate level, and have a two-tier system.
- Elections to the panchayats at every level shall be filled by direct election from territorial constituencies in the panchayat area.
- The Panchayats will enjoy a five-year term; if dissolved earlier, fresh elections will be completed within six months of the date of dissolution.
- The Gram Sabha (village assembly) will consist of all persons registered on the electoral rolls. While the composition of the Gram Sabha is uniform, its powers and functions may vary, as provided for by the state legislature.
- In the directly elected seats of members in all panchayats, there will be reservation of seats for Scheduled Caste-Scheduled Tribes (SC/ST) in proportion to their total population in a panchayat area, and one-third of these seats will be reserved for women belonging to these groups.

- Of the seats to be filled by direct election in every panchayat, there will be not less than one-third reservation of seats in panchayats for women, including the seats reserved for SC-ST women. Such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a panchayat.

Interestingly, the idea of women's political representation was largely the result of the recommendations carried in 'Towards Equality', the report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India made in 1975, as well as the 'National Perspective Plan 1988-2000', which had proposed women's quotas in local bodies. (Chatterjee ,2010) ²²

In simple parlance, quotas are a double-edged sword. On the one hand, they oblige men to think about including women in decision-making, since men must create spaces for women. On the other hand, since it is men who are opening up these spaces, they will seek out women who they will be able to manage—women who will more easily accept the hegemony of men.

3.3 ENGENDERING - FIVE YEAR PLANS :

In the early years of planning, it was assumed that women would automatically benefit from the overall measures for national development.

The **First Plan (1951-1956)** focused on women's role in the family and in the community and emphasized the need for adequate welfare services. A social welfare department was set up to look after women and child welfare.

The **Second Plan (1956-1961)** retained the welfare approach to women's issues, taking cognisance of the plight of women workers on account of the social prejudices, and the need to provide and implement maternity benefits, protection from injurious work, crèches, and equal pay for equal work policies.

The **Third Plan (1961-1966)** envisaged female education as a major strategy of welfare. Under 'social welfare' the emphasis was on the provision of rural welfare services and condensed educational courses. Health services were geared to maternal and child welfare and also health education, nutrition and family planning.

The **Fourth Plan(1969-1974)** emphasized women's education and the promotion of women's welfare within the family, bringing down the birth rate, and increasing expenditure on family planning.

The **Fifth Plan (1974-1978)** marked the beginning of a shift from the welfare approach to the development approach with the scope of social welfare expanding to cope with the problems of the family and the role of women – integrating welfare with developmental services. In 1975, the CSWI brought out its report making several recommendations to secure social justice for women, remove obstacles for their advancement and provide opportunities for them to realize their full potential. International Women's Year and Women's Decade provided a thrust to the changes in policy towards women's issues.

Sixth Plan (1980-1985) included a chapter on women and development and attributed the low status of women to the lack of income-generating opportunities. Indian women were seen as active partners in development rather than passive subjects for welfare. Employment was the critical goal and bringing in data on women's position in the occupational classification of India's labour and other such information was a big leap forward. The plan focused on extending assistance to help women overcome poverty, highlighted the need to improve women's accessibility to assets and recommended that women receive joint titles to land and property. Special

institutions for women were set up during this time – one was the National Committee on Women under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister.

The **Seventh Plan (1985-1990)** acknowledged the important role of women in agriculture and allied sectors and the gap between social reality and its perception by society at large. The strategy was to organize women around socio-economic activities, with the twin objectives of making their projects economically viable and adding to their social strength for the overall enhancement of their status by bringing them into the mainstream of national development. However, in identifying concrete strategies, there was a tendency to slide back into women specific-sectors.

The **Eighth Plan (1992-1997)** was to shift emphasis from women's development to women's empowerment, to 'ensure that the benefits of development from different sectors do not bypass women and special programmes are implemented to complement the general programmes.' It reiterated the formation and strengthening of grassroots organizations to articulate local women's needs and play an important role in decentralized planning and implementation. It emphasized the convergence and integration of services offered by health, education, employment and welfare programmes at the grassroots level. A policy was adopted to earmark specific percentage of allocations and numbers for women in all anti-poverty schemes in rural and urban areas. But in Volume I of the Eighth Plan Document, women were only mentioned in the context of the need for population control, and in Part II of the same, they are not mentioned at all except in the context of women specific programs.

In the **Ninth Plan (1997-2002)**, a new process was tried out. In 1996, the Planning Commission, the UN system, civil society organizations and the Government of India came together in a process to engender the policy and planning process. UNIFEM created a think tank to bring the concerns and experiences of

women, from a gender perspective, to the Ninth Five-Year Plan. An effort was made to get women from all parts of India in different walks of life to participate. The concept of Women's Component Plan to identify and ensure the flow of benefits to women in every development sector was initiated and became a mandate.

The same civil society initiative was taken forward in the **Tenth Plan (2002-2007)**: the focus for women was on the creation of self-help groups and the Plan suggested strategies, policies and programs for the empowerment of women.

During the preparation of the Eleventh Plan, the Planning Commission constituted an additional Working Group of Feminist Economists (WGFE) in addition to the usual process of consultations.(Public Policy,2010) ²³

3.4 ENGENDERING : INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

As far as mechanisms of representation, sponsored by the state, are concerned, it is now fairly well established that it is only in countries where there are quotas enabling women's representation that the presence of women in institutions of local governance exceeds 15 per cent. However, there is no uniformity of design or practice as far as quotas are concerned. The variety of quota arrangements, and their comparative weaknesses and strengths, are briefly listed below:

☐ **In India**, one-third of all seats in the institutions of local governance – in the rural areas, the panchayats at three levels, from the village to the district and, in the urban areas, the municipal councils and corporations – are reserved for women, as are one-third of the positions of Chairperson at every level. In rural areas alone, this provision has had a truly revolutionary impact, as it brings approximately one million women into the panchayats at any point of time. However, the provision for the rotation (between constituencies) of the reserved seats means that these change from one

election to the next. This generally works to the detriment of women and their opportunity to craft a political career as – even if they have performed effectively in their first term – they are unable to reap the benefits of these achievements in the next election, when they are generally nudged aside by men who are eager to corner these positions.

A third (and not very dissimilar to the Ugandan model) type of quota prevails in **Bangladesh**, where the Union Parishad (the institution of rural local government) encompasses nine wards, in each of which the electorate elects a 'general' (usually male) representative. In each Union Parishad, three additional seats are provided, covering three wards each, and these are reserved for women, which has increased women's representation in these bodies to approximately 20 per cent. The area for which a woman representative is responsible is thus three times the area which a man represents. The budgetary support for men and women – which comes entirely from the central government's Annual Development Plan – does not take into account this difference in the area for which male and female representatives have responsibility. Most importantly, reforms regarding one-third representation for women at the two higher levels – the sub-district and the district – have not been implemented.

In **Pakistan**, too, there are quotas, leading to the representation of a fair number of women – e.g., 16 per cent in the North West Frontier Province – but these women are (a) nominated rather than elected and (b) essentially token representatives. Further, there is a wide variation in the extent of reservation, from 50 per cent at the Union (village) level, to five and ten seats respectively (approximately 15 per cent) at the Tehsil and district levels. This only serves to reemphasize the point that it is

misleading to judge the matter by just looking at the percentages of women representatives in local bodies.

In **Namibia**, proportional representation with quotas (both formal and informal) for women is used in national and local elections, while the simple plurality system is used for the regional elections to the upper house of the national parliament. The election results show an interesting contrast: the proportion of women elected at the local level was 32 per cent in 1992, going up to 41 per cent in 1998. At the national level, with formal quotas being used by SWAPO (the chief political party), the numbers of women in parliament went up from 8 per cent in 1989 to 29 per cent in 2003. By contrast, in the regional elections to the national parliament's upper house, with no quotas and a simple plurality electoral system, the percentage of elected women in 1992 was 3 per cent going up to a mere 4 per cent in 1998.

In **Uganda**, the Local Government Act of 1997 also reserves 30 per cent of seats in the local councils for women. However, this is not a proportion of the existing seats, but rather an additional number of seats, over and above the existing number. New wards are created for women by clubbing together two or three existing wards, and this space is reserved exclusively for competition among women. Not only this, the elections to the women's seats are held a fortnight after the general elections to the local councils, and it was observed in the 1998 elections, that election fatigue actually resulted in an extremely low voter turnout which could not be improved despite repeating the electoral process. The chief objection to the Ugandan system of quotas is obviously that it compartmentalizes the election to local councils and accords women an inferior and add on position both in the structuring of the councils, as well as in the sequencing of the election process.(Jayal,2005)

The efforts deployed in ensuring equitable representation for women in decision-making bodies implicitly assume that this would be an adequate mechanism to guarantee their participation in these institutions. Since, moreover, representation can be enhanced through legal and institutional means, such efforts have been mainly concerned with quotas and the design of electoral systems (Jayal, 2005) ²⁴

3.5 ENGENDERING - LOCAL BODIES

Like many countries, India maintains a national democratic constitution, boasting inclusive and equitable access to political participation. At the same time, the sheer size and demographic breakdown of India begets significant challenges in political organizing, resulting in a civil code that is varied by region and strongly shaped by religious and cultural distinctions. In order to close the gaps between national and local governance, local political participation has been facilitated via the 1992 Panchayati Raj system. Particularly attentive to social organizing and development in rural India, panchayats are one means of decentralizing national governance. A form of grassroots democracy intended to bridge national and local interests and needs, the Panchayati Raj is a means of leveling the playing field for democratic political participation (Vyasulu & Vyasulu, 1999; World Bank, 2003).

In support of decentralization and in order to facilitate Indian women's entry into the political sphere, in 1993 a thirty percent reservation for women was introduced in the panchayat system (Arora, 1999; Kanango, 1996). It was expected that facilitating women's admission to one-third of positions in governing bodies would enable women to reach a critical threshold in the pursuit of changes in gender equity and thus, women's empowerment (UNIFEM, 2003). However, along with other marginalized citizens, the entry of Indian women into the realm of politics does not go unchallenged. The underrepresentation of women in politics is both descriptive

(i.e., the number of women in political institutions is not reflective of the number of women in society) and substantive (i.e., the unique perspectives of women must be heard in political institutions to ensure that women's needs, demands and interests are incorporated into political agendas) (Tremblay & Pelletier, 2000). When the reservation system was implemented, political parties were not necessarily inclined to support female candidates and the chances of being elected while not being a party member, or related to one, were slim. Moreover, the gap between constitutionally-instituted rights and the conditions which enable women to recognize and embrace those rights often remains fragmented by the absence of politically-reinforced responses to women's daily needs and interests.

Without a more substantive conceptualization of female-male relations, both inside and outside of the public domain, filling quota prescriptions risks contributing to routes of women's empowerment with outcomes observed by Nussbaum (2003) wherein we see the emergence of a new social underclass. Similarly Banerjee (2003), Reid (2003), Jacquette (1997) and Lama (2001) document strategies for women's empowerment which have necessitated the erasure of "femininity" within politics, the persistence of proxy ruling and populist elections, and the regard for female leaders as goddesses imbued with a particular religious authority or vision. Moreover, the application of a gender lens to world politics reveals that today, when women do occupy political offices, they are often assigned to ministries dealing with the perceived "soft" issues of politics such as health and education, both of which are often shrouded under the "hard" political areas of defence, finance and international trade, all of which are currently dominated by men (Peterson & Runyan, 1993). The masculinization of certain domains in politics is frequently blamed for the marginalization of issues (such as comprehensive health care and education) which,

when absent, are most apt to present women with destabilizing life conditions (Tremblay & Pelletier, 2000). While the strength and determination of women's movements in India remains strong, the devolution of substantial political leverage is a complex and long process (Chaudhuri & Heller, 2002). This is likewise experienced by some women in rural Gujarat (Vissandjee, 2005) ²⁵

India, the largest democracy of the world and an emerging power of the 21st century is going to complete its 64 years of independence but the ideals of democracy especially for the women are yet far from being realized. Women in our country are still struggling hard for equal participation in every sphere including the politics. India got its first woman Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi about four decades back in 1966 and its first President, Pratibha Devi Singh Patil in 2007. In this respect, we are at least ahead of America, where till date, there has been no woman President or Prime Minister in its long history of political democracy. In India, many women have held berths in the Union Council of Ministers and also held important positions of Governors and Chief Ministers in the States. The notable women Chief Ministers who have led their governments successfully include Sucheta Kriplani and Mayavati (UP), Nandini Satyapathi (Orissa), Sashikala Kakodhar (Goa), Saida Anvara Thaimur (Assam), Janki Ram Chandran and J. Jayalalitha (Tamilnadu), Rajinder Kaur Bhattal (Punjab), Rabri Devi (Bihar), Sushma Swaraj and Sheila Dikshit (Delhi), Uma Bharti (Madhya Pradesh), Vasundhra Raje Schindhia (Rajasthan) and Mamta Banerjee (West Bengal). The women Governors include Sarojini Naidu (UP), Padmja Naidu (West Bengal), Vijay Laxmi Pandit (Maharashtra), Sharadha Mukerjee and Kumud Ben Joshi (Andhra Pradesh), Jyoti Vanketchaylam and Ram Dulari Sinha (Kerla), Sarla Grewal (Madhya Pradesh), Chandrawati, Rajendra Kumari Vajpei and Rajni Rai (Pondicheri), Sheila Kaul, B.S. Rama Devi, Prabha Rao and Urmila Singh (Himachal

Pradesh), Justice M. Fatima Bibi (Tamil Nadu) and Pratibha Patil (Rajasthan).¹ Not only this, the leadership of some of the national and state political parties like the Congress, Bahujan Samajwadi Party, AIADMK and Trinamul Congress is in the hands of women like Sonia Gandhi, Mayavati, Jaya Lalitha and Mamta Banerjee respectively. The above scenario clearly shows that our society has never been hesitant to accept women leaders and politicians as the centre of power. But, this is not the tale of the Common Indian women. In fact, the last about six decades have been a story of missed opportunities for women in political arena. (Jharta,2011) ²⁶

3.6 SUMMARY :

The main framework for this study is based on UNESCO's (2009) *engendering power* which aims to ensure that women and men benefit equally from participation in political party processes. Mainstreaming consists in bringing what can be seen as marginal into the core and main decision making process of an organization (UNESCO, 2003).

The absence of women from structures of governance inevitably means that national, regional, and local priorities are typically defined without meaningful input from women, whose life experience gives them a different awareness of the community's needs, concerns, and interests from that of men (Saadi, 2005). In 2004, women represented 16% of parliamentarians worldwide, compared with 9% in 1987. Without representation at the parliamentary level, it is difficult for women to influence policy (World Bank, 2000). A World Bank investigation (Tara Chandler et al; UNDP,1997) found that "that gender inequality tends to slow economic progress and make the rise from poverty more difficult".

India's founding father Mahatma Gandhi had conceived of India's independence with village as the base of the whole structure. *Gender inequalities undermine development*—so improving gender equality has to be part of any sustainable strategy for development. Inequalities in rights, resources, and political voice generally disadvantage women, but they also disadvantage the rest of society and impede development. Measures that increase women's voice in politics and policymaking can have far-reaching implications for gender equality—because they enhance women's ability to act on their own behalf. And by fostering greater participation, transparency, and availability of information, increasing women's voice in politics and public life can improve the impact of policies and programs, reduce corruption, and strengthen governance. In all countries—developed and developing—there is considerable scope for increasing female participation and voice in politics and policymaking locally and nationally.

The demand for greater representation of women in political institutions in India was not taken up in a systematic way until the setting up of the Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI) which published its report in 1976. Before this the focus of the growing women's movement had been on improving women's socio-economic position. The CSWI report suggested that women's representation in political institutions, especially at the grass-roots level, needed to be increased through a policy of reservation of seats for women.⁵ In 1988, the National Perspective Plan for Women suggested that a 30 per cent quota for women be introduced at all levels of elective bodies. Women's groups insisted that reservation be restricted to the panchayat (village council) level to encourage grass-roots participation in politics. The consensus around this demand resulted in the adoption of the 73rd and 74th amendments to the Indian Constitution in 1993.

Reservations in India are an attempt to increase women's participation based on the recognition of strong gender roles, which imply that women hold a different underrepresented perspective, and that once elected women will take different action than men will, aiding both to reform politics and to improve the position of women. Political reservations for women offer prospects of diversity and other governance dividends (Page, 2007; Swamy et al., 2001).(Afridi,2014).

In simple parlance, quotas are a double-edged sword. On the one hand, they oblige men to think about including women in decision-making, since men must create spaces for women. On the other hand, since it is men who are opening up these spaces, they will seek out women who they will be able to manage—women who will more easily accept the hegemony of men.

India, the largest democracy of the world and an emerging power of the 21st century is going to complete nearly 64 years of independence but the ideals of democracy especially for the women are yet far from being realized. Women in our country are still struggling hard for equal participation in every sphere including the politics. All these obstacles are to overcome through this study.

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