CHAPTER - VI

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Preview:

The chapter mirrors the conclusions emerged from the findings obtained by the analysis of data are presented. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the implications derived from the present study and the suggestions for further research are also portrayed.

6.1 INTRODUCTION:

The inclusive democracy proposes that all citizens should have the same opportunity to *participate in political affairs* regardless of gender, race and other identities. Therefore the entry of women into political institutions is an *issue of equality*.

Gandhiji believed that women have to play a much meaningful role in politics, making it more accountable, transparent and corruption free. Suheela Kaushik (1993) lamented that even after the right to vote became a reality for all women, their representation parliament, political parties and decision making bodies remained low even after independence and after the Indian Constitution came into force in 1950.

The roots of women's participation in contemporary politics can be traced back to the nineteenth century with the beginning of the reform movement and even beyond it. The mythical history of India as handed down by the major epics the Ramayana and the Mahabharata and Indian history at large has given women a prominent role in public life. The nineteenth movement emerged as a result of conflict between the Indian bourgeoisies trying to wrest control from the British.

Women who were strong leaders in the Independence movement were Sarojini Naidu, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, Aruna Asaf Ali, and Basanti Devi. A strong supporter of women's rights, Sarojini Naidu worked with the Congress and the Muslim League. She was instrumental in the passage of a resolution to support women's franchise and became the first Indian woman to become the elected President of the Indian national Congress. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay participated in the Satyagraha movement of the 1930s.Aruna Asaf Ali's first major political involvement was in the Salt March at which she was arrested and prosecuted. She was active in the quit India movement, edited Inquilab magazine of the Congress and established the National Federation of Indian Women. She came to be known as the Grand Old Lady of the Independence Movement and heroine of the1942 movement. Basanti Devi took active part in anti-British activities and was arrested for picketing foreign goods shops, and in 1922 presided over the Bengal Provincial Congress committee. Several women were active in this period on causes other than the Independence movement including Prabhavati Mirza (a powerful trade unionist), Kamini Roy (a social reformist), and Aghorekamini Roy (stared a social welfare women's organization).

During 1910-20, several all-India women's organizations came into being. In 1917 the Women's Indian Association was founded by Malathi Patvardhan, Ammu Swaminathan, Annie Besant, Dorothy Jinarajadasa, Mrs. Dadabhoy and Mrs. Ambujamal. Described as the first truly feminist organization in India, it strongly supported the Home Rule Movement. In 1926, the All India Women's Conference was formed and became extremely active on the question of women's suffrage, labour issues, relief work and nationalist work.

Women's participation was noteworthy in the 1948-50 Telangana movement (a militant sharecropper's movement). Thousands of women were active in strikes and rallies. The movement itself paid unusual attention to women's issues such as wife beating. However, women leaders who did take the lead in the guerilla movement that followed felt isolated and had to fight to get in. In the second wave of this movement, however, women were far more active. (Sangeetha, 2000)

Historically many women have been active in the informal political sphere in terms of political mobilization and they have participated in large numbers in political demonstrations and agitations as well as in the activities of nationalist and political bodies and organizations. The political mobilization and participation has been impressive in the Indian National Movement particularly under Gandhiji's leadership when they participated actively in the cause against colonization for e.g. Civil Disobedience Movements and Salt Satyagraha. Political participation in India can be traced to the freedom struggle when women raised the issues of representation in politics. Sarojini Naidu and Margaret Cousins raised the question of right to vote for women as early as in 1917. At that time it was basically a demand for universal adult franchise and political participation. BY 1930 women had gained the Right to Vote, which initially benefited women from elite families..

The impediments faced by women entering politics can be classified as follows:

a) Familial Factors:

b) Literacy

c) Character Assassination

d) Lack of interaction

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e) Reservations

f) Multiple roles

g) Threats.

Women empowerment may mean equal status to women, opportunity and freedom to develop themselves. The focus of empowerment is equipping women to be economically independent, self-reliant, have a positive self-esteem to enable them to face any difficult situation and they should be able to participate in the process of decision-making. is 'power': it is power to 'access', 'control' and make 'informed choices'. To use an Indian expression, it is *shakti*, which is manifested through the use of a mix of power, effectiveness, capability, force and influence to challenge and transform the structures and institutions of patriarchal ideology and existing power relations. According to the Jakarta Declaration, "Empowerment of women is not only an equity consideration; it is also a necessary precondition for sustainable economic and social development. Involvement of women in the political arena and in decision-making roles is an important tool for empowerment as well as monitoring standards of political performance." (Kuldeep,2012).

During the past two decades, concepts like 'participation', 'community-based action', 'empowerment' and their varied interpretations have also been transforming the discourses, frameworks and practices of development (Chambers, 1997; Gujit and Shah, 1998; Cornwall, 2000; Parpart et al, 2000). In the context of globalization and resurgence of grassroots movements, conventional development strategies are giving way to more participatory approaches that are recognizing the involvement of those who have suffered

systematic and systemic inequalities and deprivations as 'partners' in development. The processes of genuine participation with their goals of social inclusion and societal transformation essentially aim at handing over the control of natural and shared resources to the marginalized people and empowering them with skills and confidence to have a say in decision-making over their circumstances (Chambers, 1997; Gujit and Shah, 1998). This paradigmatic shift towards participatory development appears to offer prospects of giving everyone who has a stake a voice and a choice. In reality, the legacy of a highly unequal and hierarchical society, the embedded notions of gender and power and the ideology of male superiority affects women's options to intervene in discussions or participate in any decision making process (Cornwall, 2000) (Vinod,2005)

The literature contains a whole range of vantage points for investigating women's empowerment, like, autonomy (Dyson & Moore 1983; Basu & Basu 1991; Jeejebhoy & Sathar 2001), agency and status (Gage 1995; Tzannatos, 1999), women's land rights (Quisumbing *et al*., 1999), domestic economic power (Mason, 1998), bargaining power (Beegle *et al*., 1998; Hoddinott & Haddad 1995; Quisumbing & de la Briere 2000), power (Agarwal, 1997; Beegle *et al*., 1998; Pulerwitz *et al*. 2000), patriarchy (Malhotra *et al*., 1995), gender equality (World Bank, 2001a & 2000b). Often there is no clear demarcation between operational meanings of these terms in terms of women's empowerment. Mason (1998) and Mason and Smith (2000) treat empowerment, autonomy, and gender stratification interchangeably (Tripati, 2002).

Participation of Women in Politics

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demonstrations and agitations as well as in the activities of nationalist and political bodies and organizations. The political mobilization and participation has been impressive in the Indian National Movement particularly under Gandhiji's leadership when they participated actively in the cause against colonization for e.g. Civil Disobedience Movements and Salt Satyagraha. Sarojini Naidu and Margaret Cousins raised the question of right to vote for women as early as in 1917. At that time it was basically a demand for universal adult franchise and political participation. BY 1930 women had gained the Right to Vote, which initially benefited women from elite families (Nair, 2012).

Reservation for Women in Local Bodies - Encouraging trends

In India numerous steps have been undertaken to provide constitutional safeguards and institutional framework for activities for women welfare. The development of women has been the central focus in development planning since Independence. There have been various shifts in policy approaches during the last 40 years from the concept of 'welfare' in the 70s to 'development' in the '80s, and now to 'empowerment' in the '90s and afterwards. Now the emphasis is on the inclusion of women in decision making and their participation at the policy formulation levels. The Government of *India has declared the year 2001 as year for the Empowerment of Women.*

There is growing momentum among governments and civil society to foster and ensure women's participation and leadership in the political arena, and specifically within local governance structures. Establishing quotas for women's representation at different levels of government has been a strategic tactic in achieving this goal in many countries.

In India, the Constitution (73rd Amendment Act), enacted in 1992, mandated the reservation of a minimum of one-third of seats for women (both as members and as chairpersons) within all of India's locally elected governance bodies commonly referred to as Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). The amendment also entrusted panchayats with the responsibility of furthering the agenda of economic development and social justice (Nanditha,2014).

The Constitution's 110th Amendment Bill 2009 provides reservation for women from 33 per cent to 50 per cent in PRIs. The Bill seeks to amend the Article 243D to enhance the quantum of reservation for women from one-third to one-half of the total seats in the panchayats. This, indeed, makes a historic beginning for the effective participation of women in the decision-making process at the grassroots level. In the elections to these local bodies, more than one million women were have been elected every five years. In 2006, 9,75,116 women were elected to Gram Panchayats; 58,094 women to Panchayats at Intermediate level; and 5779 women to Panchayats at the District level.7 It is but natural that a larger number of women have participated in these elections and this signifies a very encouraging trend for women's empowerment. Though it has taken time for women to translate their numerical strength into active participation in the rural and semi-urban areas, the results have been truly astounding.

Before reservation, the percentage of women in this area was merely 4.5 per cent, which after reservation has gone upto 40 per cent. As per the *Fifteenth Anniversary Charter on Panchayati Raj,* "Today more than 26 lakh representatives stand elected to the three levels of Panchayats. Of these, over 10 lakh are women. The last fifteen years of

Panchayati Raj, have thus succeeded in empowering marginalized groups who have gained political representation and valuable experience. Many of them have successfully taken on the challenge of governance and brought about enduring social change through their close links with the community.'' Women have prioritized issues of health; education and access to basic services and in some cases have been able to ensure a significant change in living conditions for the entire community. The efforts and work of several women representatives in Panchayats in Maharashtra, Gujarat and West Bengal have been widely acclaimed.(Rajya Sabha,2008).

Many scholars have justified the increased role of women in politics. Phillips (1993) suggests four fundamental justifications for expanding the role of women in the democratic process: democratic justice, maximization of resources, to represent the special interests of women and as role models. Including all these, Ross (2002) adds two more justifications or arguments: utility and symbolic arguments. Hence it can be argued that representation in decision making bodies is believed to be essential for women to protect the expansion of their rights and opportunities by enshrining them in laws and constitutions. So women are demanding special provisions to enable women to be elected or appointed to high level decision making positions, and promoting the idea that 30% of membership is necessary to provide a critical mass that would allow significant changes in policies and procedures. In such special provisions much attention has been given to one particular step the introduction of quotas for women in political bodies (Rai,2012)

Phillips (1995) was of the view that the basis of representation should be shifted from - politics of ideas to - politics of presence. She offers four key arguments for politics of presence which are: the significance of symbolic recognition, the requirement

to tackle those exclusions inherent in the party-packaging of political ideas, the need for a more strong support for disadvantaged groups and the importance of a politics of transformation in opening up a full range of policy options. This concept holds that political representative should display the characteristics such as gender, race etc., of members of underrepresented groups in order to counter the partiality against them. In this way electoral gender quotas are aligned with a politics of presence. But several other studies reveal that reservation itself cannot bring empowerment of women unless there is a positive change in the social structure and mind-set of the people (Anne, 1995)

Recent studies on women's participation in the PRIs have highlighted the following dimensions.

1. Women have responded overwhelmingly and participated with full enthusiasm in the elections and in the proceedings of the PRIs, thus exploding the myth that women were uninterested in politics and public life. There is a near-unanimous opinion amongst the women that they would have been unable to get into these bodies were it not for statutory representation.

2. While there is a great degree of variation across the different states in the country, nonetheless one generalization can be made — approximately about 40 per cent of the women who have got into these bodies come from marginalized sections and communities, though the positions of chairpersons tended to be occupied by women from the more well-to-do sections of rural society, like well-off middle peasant families.

3. The women representatives generally got the support of the families during the elections and also in the performance of their new political roles. Marginalized

sections like the scheduled castes and tribes saw the women from their groups as representatives of the interests of their group in the political arena, while the better-off sections saw the women from their own groups as helping to consolidate their positions.

4. The self-esteem of the women has gone up tremendously, and that is an observation that holds true across the board. The stepping of women into the public realm has long-term implications for gender relations in society and the family. There are already small but significant changes as men take over some roles within the family when women go to attend meetings.

5. While the presence of women in these institutions over the last eight to nine years has not transformed the power structure in the rural areas in any significant manner, and vested interests have tried to use the provision for women's reservation to consolidate their position, the overall experience has been positive. Thus women are engaging in power struggles that used to be dominated by men, sometimes as actors and at other times as pawns. However, participation in the public realm for women means that hitherto marginalized groups and communities are finding a legitimate space to articulate their interests and aspirations, and the women of these groups are getting politicized, although slowly. (Buch,1999).

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT - ANDHRA PRADESH :

The composition of Gram Panchayats in Andhra Pradesh is governed by the Andhra Pradesh Gram Panchayats Act, 1964 as amended time to time. Andhra Pradesh Mandal Praja Parishad, Zilla Praja Parishad and Zilla Abhivrudhi Sameeksha Mandal

Act, 1986 had a provision for reservation of minimum of two and a maximum of four seats for women in Gram Panchayats and some percentage in Mandal Praja Parishad and Zilla Praja Parishad. Some percentage of the posts of Chairperson of the Zilla Parishad were also reserved for women. As a result of the 73 rd Amendment a large number of women belonging to different castes and communities have been elected as members and chairpersons in the Panchayats. Although the Act has mandated one third reservation for women as members as well as chairpersons at different tiers of the Panchayats, in Andhra Pradesh, women have captured more than one third seats. The representation of women at this level has been 33.84 percent. In Andhra Pradesh, the visibility of women in decision making positions has been ensured by the protective discrimination measures. There are about 73513 women members at G.P. level, 4776 at MP level and 361 at ZP level. The post Amendment phase in Andhra Pradesh has proved beyond doubt that women in Panchayati Raj moved from peripheral to leadership role. However, a Ford Foundation-sponsored study in the District of Kurnool in Andhra Pradesh mentions that a large number ofelected members of the local bodies especially women are not actively participating in the meetings of the Panchayats(Ddevendra,1998).

Although women constitute nearly half the population, their representation in political bodies and decision-making structures is not commensurate with their numbers. The 73rd and 74th amendments of the Indian Constitution have provided for 33 per cent representation for women in local bodies which include Zilla Parishad, Mandal Parishad and village panchayat. Even when women are elected to local bodies there are instances where they are not allowed to exercise their official powers. Men exercise de facto control, in the name of the elected women, usually their wives. But political

representation has certainly become a first step for women to gain political power. There are also instances in local elections of 2000-02 when 6.2 percent of women were elected for unreserved seats at the Zilla Paridhad level, 10 percent for the posts of Chairpersons and 5 percent at the ward members level (State Election Commission, 2000-02).

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]

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]

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 atleast 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)**.**

LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT IN ANDHRA PRADESH :

The State of Andhra Pradesh was formed on First November 1956. In 1959, Andhra Pradesh implemented the three-tier Panchayat Raj System suggested by *Balvanth Rai Mehta Committee*. After Rajasthan, the credit of having implemented Panchayathi Raj system goes to Andhra Pradesh. Later, many states implemented this system. But the system of Panchayathi Raj is not the same in all the States. While some states implemented a three-tier system, some implemented a two-tier system and some others a single-tier system. Similarly the nomenclature of Panchayathi Raj Institutions is different in different states.

The three-tier local self – government system implemented in Andhra Pradesh in 1959 is: Village level :Gram Panchayat ;Block level: Panchayat Samithi and the District level :Zilla Parishad.

After 1986, modifications were made in the system is: Village level: Gram Panchayat; Mandal level: Mandal Praja Parishad and at the District level: Zilla Praja Parishad. This system was in vogue up to 1994. The present local self-government

System came into existence through the A.P. Panchayat Raj Act 1994. Now there are 1125 Mandal Parishads in the state (2001 census). This system also has three tiers. They are:Village level:Gram Panchayat; Mandal level:Mandal Parishad and at the District level: Zilla Parishad.

The researcher has made an attempt to review the research work coming under the purview of this research problem. However, to cut short and put the survey precisely, the salient features of outstanding research works conducted are illustrated chronologically as follows:

Pai ,1998   (*Pradhanis in New Panchayats*); Nirmala Buch, 2000 *(Women's Experience in New Panchayats: The Emerging Leadership of Rural Women*); Stephen F.Rajeshekeran N.2001, *(Sheep and lambs: an empirical study of women in local self Governance in Karnataka*); Nambiar,2001, (*Making the Gram Sabha Work*) ; E. Bryld 2001, *(Increasing Participation in Democratic Institutions Through Decentralization: Empowering Women and Scheduled Castes and Tribes Through Panchayat Raj in Rural India*); Vijayalakshmi,V and Chandrashekar B.K, 2002, ⸂*Authority, powerlessness and dependence*); Vasanthi Raman,2002, (*The Implementation of Quotas for Women: The Indian Experience*) ;Neema Kudva,2003,(*Engineering Elections: The Experiences of Women in* Panchayati Raj *in Karnataka*) ;Nahar, U.R. et al. 2003,(*Women and Panchayat Raj*); Jodhpur; Singh , 2004,(*Empowerment of women representatives in Panchayati Raj : a profile from Haryana*) ; Pragya Rai ,2005, (*Political Representation and Empowerment: Women in Local Government Institutions in Bihar, India*) ;Vinod P ; Kanchan Kumar and J.R.ceeli, 2005,(*Community Media and Women: Forging Subaltern Counter Publics)* ; Irma Clots-Figueras,2005, ⸂*Did Women Politicians Reduce the Educational Gender Gap?*

Evidence from the Indian Districts); Vissandjee, Bilkis; Apale, Alisha; Wieringa, Saskia; Abdool, Shelly; and Dupéré, Sophie, 2005, (*Empowerment Beyond Numbers: Substantiating Women's Political Participation*); Md. Mostafizur Rahma , 2006, (*Women, Participation and Empowerment in Local Government: Bangladesh Union Parishad Perspective*); Pippa Norris, 2006,(*The Impact of Electoral Reforms on women Representation*) ; Joti Sekhon, 2006, (*Engendering Grassroots Democracy: Research, Training, and Networking for Women in Local Self-Governance in India)* ; Niraja Gopal Jayal, 2006, (*Engendering Local Democracy: The impact of quotas for women in India's Panchayats*); Carole Spary, 2007, (*Female Political Leadership in India*). Diana Santillán, et al., 2007,(*Developing Indicators to assess women's empowerment in Vietnam*) ; India, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, New Delhi, 2008, (*Elected Women Representatives in Panchayat Raj Institutions*) ; Shashi Kaul and Shradha Sahni ,2009, (*A Study on the Participation of Women in Panchayati Raj Institution*) ; Irma Clots-Figueras, 2011,(*Women in Politics: Evidence from the Indian States*). Iyer, Lakshmi; Mani, Anandi; Mishra, Prachi; Topalova, Petia, 2012, (*The Power of Political Voice: Women's Political Representation and Crime in India*) ; Indira Nair, 2012,*(Need for Political Empowerment of Women in India*) ;Shirin M. Rai,2012, ⸤*The Politics of Access: Narratives of Women MPs in the Indian Parliament*) ; Li-Ju Chen,2013, (*Impact of female legislators on support for Honest Government*) ; Artatrana Gochhayat, 2013, (*Political Participation of Women in Gram Panchayat Elections in Odisha*) : *A Case Study of Hindol Block in Dhenkanal District*) ; Ejaz Ghani ,William R. Kerr and Stephen D. O'Connell, 2014, (*Political Reservations and Women's entrepreneurship in India); Kuldeep Fadia ,2014, (*Women's Empowerment through Political Participation in India*);

Babu Dhan Tripura ,2014, (*Indigenous Women's Participation in Politics: A Case Study of Gandacharre Sub Zonal of Tripura, North-East India*.

Myriad research has already been done in this field. Desai and Thakkar (2001) tried to explain the history of women's major issues and actions since the 19th century. They tried to focus on the complex nature of work contributed by women, their educational status, their contribution in the organized and unorganized sectors, their political participation, and legal status, their position in the family and outside world. While R. Mishra (1998) argues that husbands and family members influence the women representatives in taking decisions in Orissa, R.Arun(1997) in a case study of Madhya Pradesh found that in most cases women representatives are housewives, first time entrants into politics and most of them are illiterate or educated up to primary level. G.Palanithuri(1997) in his case study of Tamil Nadu reported that women were not reported or invited to the meetings in male headed Gram Panchayat. Husbands of the members used to accompany them (women) when they come to attend the meetings. S.Pai (2001) in her field notes in Meerut District found that Pradhanis in Panchayats were illiterate and only able to put their signatures on official papers. The women representatives contest for election due to family pressure and also the decision of their community and not because of their own interest. S.Panda (1996) in her study of Village Panchayats in Orissa found that women entered into politics due to mandatory provision of reservation or pressure from their family members or pressure from their village community. Manikyamba (1990) in her study of Andhra Pradesh found that socio-economic background in general and political background in particular are important determinants of shaping the nature and level of participation of women members in

political institutions and her study concludes that the participation of poor women members is mostly found insignificant. Dr. Sing (2004) presents the findings of an empirical study of the elected women representatives of the PRIs of Haryana for exploring the extent of their empowerment as a result of the implementation of 73rd Amendment Act. Dr.Bharti(2011) explains that before 73rd Amendment came into force, Government of Orissa had adopted some of the important provisions such as reservation of seats for women, SCs, STs in its existing Panchayati Raj Acts. Kaul and Sahni(2009) tries to explore the extent of political participation of women elected representatives in Panchayats and the problems faced by them in two districts of Jammu and Kathua. Patnaik (2005) finds out the participation of elected representatives belonging to weaker sections in the functioning of four gram panchayats in Orissa's Dhenkanal district, in order to observe the extent to which numerical representation has been successful in the actual exercise of power by these sections.

6.2 MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY :

The major findings from this small piece of investigation are recorded as follows:

1) A great majority of the sample (63%) selected for the present investigation belonged to other castes.

2) An overwhelming majority (74.5%) of the sample were illiterates.

3) A great majority of the sample (39.72%) confessed they are house wives and another (31.90%) were daily labourers.

4) More than half of the sample (57.6%) confessed that their husbands were daily labourers.

5) A large majority of the sample (84.5%) were affirmative with regard to reduction in age.

6) A large majority of the sample (77.9%) were aware of the fact that elections are conducted for every five years.

7) A good majority of the sample (39.2%) opined family as the main source of information; followed by another simple majority (24.6%) from their neighbourers.

8) A good majority of the sample (61.8%) were affirmative in respect to women holding political positions in local bodies efficiently.

9) A good majority of the sample (34.2%) confirmed that the mode of participation in local elections was as a member of a political party; followed by (33.1%) as a voter.

10) With regard to importance of women participation in local politics:

   a) Local politics is more accessible than State politics was agreed and strongly agreed by almost an equal number of respondents (30.36%) and (30.06%).

   b) A good majority of the sample (24.39%) strongly disagreed and another (23.92%) disagreed that local politics are less competitive.

   c) A good majority of the sample (32.07%) and another (31.90%) agreed and strongly agreed to the statement that local Government Politics is less intimidated.

d) Women tend to gain more political experience in local politics was agreed by a good majority of the sample (31.59%), followed by (30.85%) sample strongly agreed.

11) As per the consequences of low women's political participation in local politics, it was found that:

a) Low women's political participation at local level is not good governance was the statement strongly agreed by a good majority of the sample (32.52%) and another equal number of respondents (32.05%) agreed to it.

b) Low women's political participation lead to low representation at decision making level was another statement strongly agreed and agreed by a good majority of the sample (32.51%) and (32.36%).

c) Low women's political participation and representation is a form of discrimination was disagreed and strongly disagreed (29.14%) and (28.83%).

12) With respect to the factors hindering women's participation in local politics, the statistical information revealed that:

a) A good majority f the sample (28.53%) and (28.22%) either opted strongly agreed and agreed to political violence hinders women's participation in local politics.

b) A good majority of the sample (31.90%) and (31.29%) preferred strongly agreed and agreed that low level of education hinders women's participation in local bodies.

c) As per the socio-cultural beliefs hindering women's participation in local bodies, a good number of respondents (27.84%) and (26.32%) and have chosen strongly agreed and agreed.

d) A good majority of the sample (28.52%) and (27.92%) have disagreed and strongly disagreed to the statement that reproductive role hinders political participation of women in local bodies.

e) Almost an equal number of respondents (24.29%) and (23.92%) either strongly agreed or agreed to the statement that high rate of poverty among women hinders their political participation.

13) Factors that motivate women to participate freely and frankly in local bodies are summed up as follows:

a) Economic independence was the statement agreed and strongly agreed by a good majority of the sample (30.84%) and (31.13%).

b) A good majority of the sample (32.98%) strongly agreed and another (32.67%) agreed that family encouragement is the prime factor.

c) A good majority of the sample (32.05%) and (31.46%) either strongly agreed or agreed that communication skills are very important.

d) As per transparency is concerned, a good majority of the sample (23.92%) and (23.31%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

e) Women's participation is related to their member's support, which was strongly agreed by (31.90%) and agreed by another (31.44%).

14) As per reasons for contesting elections are concerned, it was found that:

a) A good majority of the sample (30.52%) agreed and another (30.06%) strongly agreed to the statement that one of the reasons for contesting elections is to capture power.

b) Another reason to help the society was expressed by a good majority of the sample (28.83%) who strongly agreed and another (27.93%) agreed.

c) Pressure from family members was the statement strongly agreed and agreed by a good majority of the sample (31.75%) and (31.60%).

d) Pressure from the party, was strongly agreed and agreed by a good majority of the sample (32.05%) and (31.75%).

e) Non-availability of women candidates was the statement strongly agreed and agreed by a good majority of the sample (29.60%) and (28.99%).

15) Problems faced by women representatives can be summed up as follows:

a) One of the problems encountered by women representatives was the abusive language employed by the other members or the community, which was agreed by a good majority of the sample (31.13%) and strongly agreed by (30.82%).

b) Lack of support from male members was strongly agreed and agreed by a good majority of the sample (32.67%) and 32.36%).

c) As per lack of support from female members, a good majority of the sample disagreed and strongly disagreed (32.67%) and (32.35%).

d) Self-motives of the members was another statement which was agreed and strongly agreed (31.28%) and (30.98%).

e) Unnecessary influence of other members (inside and outside) was also one of the problems faced by women representatives, which was strongly disagreed and disagreed (28.06%) and (27.94%).

16) With regard to overcome constraints in local politics, it was demonstrated that:

a) A good majority of the sample (28.06%) and (27.77%) agreed and strongly agreed by avoiding the situation.

b) As per building confidence to overcome constraints, a good majority of the sample (32.05%) and (31.92%) agreed and strongly agreed.

c) A good majority of the sample (32.36%) and (32.07%) either strongly agreed or agreed to the fact by motivating other members they can overcome constraints.

d) By regularly attending meetings, a good majority of the sample (31.60%) and (31.14%) either strongly agreed or agreed.

e) Participating in discussions can overcome constraints was agreed and strongly agreed (328.83%) and (28.52%).

17) The change in attitude and practice of the respondents it was found that:

a) The respondents developed positive attitude was the statement strongly agreed and agreed by a good majority of the sample (32.83%) and (32.67%).

b) Change in attitude with regard to children's marriage an equal number of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed (24.23%) and (23.93%).

c) With regard to dowry system, a good majority of the sample (31.74%) agreed and (31.60%) strongly agreed,

d) Contesting again to the post was the change that can be strongly agreed and agreed by an equal number of respondents (31.74%) and (31.60%).

e) With reference to contesting for higher post or level was agreed (31.60%) and strongly agreed (31.28%) by a good majority of the sample.

18) Aspects to perform better as an elected representative especially in local bodies, it was mirrored that:

a) Literacy was the aspect agreed and strongly agreed (32.05%) and (31.80%) by a good majority of the sample.

b) Ability to speak was another statement strongly agreed and agreed (31.60%) and (31.27%) by a good majority of the sample.

c) With regard to self-confidence, a good majority of the sample (32.83%) strongly agreed and another (32.51%) agreed.

d) No male domination was the statement strongly agreed and agreed by a good majority of the sample (31.90%) and (31.44%).

19) With regard to measures that encourage more participation of women at local bodies, it was found that:

a) Almost an equal number of respondents (31.90%) and (31.75%) either agreed or strongly agreed that Government should implement policies effectively.

b) As per organization of orientation programmes by women organizations a good majority of the sample (28.68%) and (2.84%) both agreed and strongly agreed.

c) The statement that religious leaders should encourage women to represent local bodies, almost half of the sample (25.92%) and (25.62%) either opted agreed and strongly agreed.

d) Women themselves should participate was the statement agreed by (32.52%) and another (32.36%) strongly agreed.

6.3 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Before drawing a curtain on this study it is appropriate to say that this investigation has showed a set of consistent findings and gleaned much from *Empowerment of women through Local Bodies* and its contribution towards in enhancement of quality for improving electoral politics and sustainability is outlined. The hypotheses set forth are examined, discussed and presented as follows:

1. There is no significant difference in the opinion of women with regard to their participation in local politics.

The present study amply demonstrated that political participation of women lethargically at a low level at local politics is not good governance which was strongly agreed by a good majority of the sample (32.52%) and another equal number of respondents (32.05%) agreed to it. In the same manner, low women's political participation lead to low representation at decision making level was another statement strongly agreed and agreed by a good majority of the sample (32.51%) and

(32.36%).Finally, political participation and representation of women is a form of discrimination was disagreed and strongly disagreed (29.14%) and (28.83%).

Several studies demonstrate that men and women differ in their political and policy preferences (Edlund and Pande, 2002; Miller, 2008). Furthermore, as voters are typically unable to enforce full policy commitment by their legislator, implemented policies often reflect policy-makers' preferences (Besley and Coate, 1997; Pande, 2003). Political under-representation of women, thus, potentially biases policy-making away from female policy interests. These arguments provide important motivations for gender-based affirmative action policies.

Evidence on the functioning of existing systems of political reservation can help us gauge the relevance of these concerns and shed some light on the potential impact of introducing political reservation in Indian legislatures. (Lori Beaman, 2012).

Thus, the *first hypothesis* that there is no significant difference in the opinion of women with regard to their participation in local politics is *rejected*.

2. ***There is no significant difference in the perceptions of women with reference to factors that motivate them to participate in local bodies.***

For centuries women in India and elsewhere have been excluded from their rightful role in political and economic spheres of activity, depriving them of occupying bodies. It creates a sense of political awareness and motivation among women to participate actively in politics.

The study explicitly revealed the factors that motivate women to participate freely and frankly in local bodies, such as Economic independence was agreed and strongly

agreed by a good majority of the sample (30.84%) and (31.13%); a good majority of the sample (32.98%) strongly agreed and another (32.67%) agreed that family encouragement is the prime factor; another good majority of the sample (32.05%) and (31.46%) either strongly agreed or agreed that communication skills are very important. As per transparency is concerned, a good majority of the sample (23.92%) and (23.31%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed and women's participation is related to their member's support, which was strongly agreed by (31.90%) and agreed by another (31.44%).

Thus, the *second hypothesis* which was stated as that there is significant difference in the perceptions of women with reference to factors that motivate them to participate is *rejected.*

3. *There is no significant difference in the perceptions of women with regard to problems faced by elected representatives.*

The marginalization of women in electoral politics is deeply embedded in the party system and the imbalanced gender power relations in the main political dispensations in India. They continue to be discriminated against not only in terms of seat allotments to contest elections but also within the rank and file of major political parties.

The reasons for women being on the fringes are varied but the focal factor that excludes them from the process is the patriarchal and male-dominant party competition structure that continues to exist in the Indian subcontinent. This not only dissuades females from electoral politics but also acts as a barrier in their quest to share political power (Rai, 2014).

The results of the present study abundantly mirrored the perceptions of women with regard to their problems as elected representatives. One of the problems encountered by women representatives was the abusive language employed by the other members or the community, which was agreed by a good majority of the sample (31.13%) and strongly agreed by (30.82%). This was followed by lack of support from male members was strongly agreed and agreed by a good majority of the sample (32.67%) and 32.36%).As per lack of support from female members, a good majority of the sample disagreed and strongly disagreed (32.67%) and (32.35%).Self-motives of the members was another statement which was agreed and strongly agreed (31.28%) and (30.98%).Unnecessary influence of other members (inside and outside) was also one of the problems faced by women representatives, which was strongly disagreed and disagreed (28.06%) and (27.94%).

Therefore, the third hypothesis was also **rejected.**

4. *There is no significant difference in the perceptions of women representative with reference to the change in their attitudes and practices.*

In independent India the question of women's limited representation or rather token representation came up for consideration at the national and state levels from time to time. The Constitution after guaranteeing equality to women in all spheres left their political representation to their own willingness, opportunity and support while providing for reservations for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in Parliament and state legislatures (in their lower houses). As far as the panchayats are concerned, since the Constitution only provided in the Directive Principles, the further question of representation was left to state legislatures.

While initiatives were taken for developing national consensus for guaranteeing a fixed representation for weaker sections of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in panchayats which was then reflected in a number or proportionate seats for them in the various states legislation, women's representation continued to be only token even in the legal stipulations developed in the first four decades of independence.

The present study has documented that women representative have given to a change in their attitudes as well as practices in local bodies. It is manifested that the respondents developed positive attitude was the statement strongly agreed and agreed by a good majority of the sample (32.83%) and (32.67%).Change in attitude with regard to children's marriage an equal number of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed (24.23%) and (23.93%).

With regard to dowry system, a good majority of the sample (31.74%) agreed and (31.60%) strongly agreed, whereas, contesting again to the post was the change that can be strongly agreed and agreed by an equal number of respondents (31.74%) and (31.60%). With reference to contesting for higher post or level was agreed (31.60%) and strongly agreed (31.28%) by a good majority of the sample.

Hence, the hypothesis formulated is **rejected.**

5. *There is no significant difference in the perceptions of women elected representative with regard to their performance.*

Although the Constitution of India removed gender inequalities among caste and gender, discrimination continues to be a widespread barrier to women's political participation. A 2012 study of 3,000 Indian women found the barriers in participation, specifically in running for political office, in the form of illiteracy, work burdens within

the household and discriminatory attitudes towards women as leaders. Discriminatory attitudes manifest in the limitations presented to Indian women including low access to information and resources. Women rely on receiving information from family or village members, typically men. Women also lack leadership experience due to the fact they are burdened with household duties. The burden of household duties is a significant reason why many Indian women do not participate. Unlike men, there are fewer opportunities for women to get involved in organizations to gain leadership skills. There is little public space for them as men have dominated the political arena for many years in India.

It is evident from this little research that literacy was the major aspect agreed and strongly agreed (32.05%) and (31.80%) by a good majority of the sample. Ability to speak was another statement strongly agreed and agreed (31.60%) and (31.27%) by a good majority of the sample.

With regard to self-confidence, a good majority of the sample (32.83%) strongly agreed and another (32.51%) agreed. Surprisingly, no male domination was the statement strongly agreed and agreed by a good majority of the sample (31.90%) and (31.44%). Empowerment has multidimensional focus and its success depends on environmental forces in a given society. For that, a healthy environment is a must for women's empowerment at the grass root level. Women's representation in elected office, especially in Medak District is slowly advancing. Different scholars have justified the increased role of women in politics. For example, Phillips (1993) suggests four fundamental justifications for expanding the role of women in the democratic process: democratic justice, maximization of resources, to represent the special interests of women and as role models.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the hypothesis framed was rejected totally.

6.4 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings of the present study are of practical as well as theoretical importance to women as well as men representatives, political parties, women organizations and policy makers.

This study has demonstrated that most of the ***women in local bodies*** feel inferior to male members of family/Panchayats. This attitude needs to change to make women as part and parcel of the family as well as Panchayats. They should retain their confidence levels. There is another major problem with the women representatives. Women hailing from SC and ST categories may find it difficult to mix with representatives of general categories. To cope with this problem, it is necessary to inculcate confidence among them and to bring attitudinal changes through training in the psyche of the upper classes. Stern action should be taken against such persons who instigate communal feelings.

Women lack interest in local politics on account of the lukewarm attitude to local bodies by the Union and State governments. They must generate enthusiasm within themselves by making a goal and attach themselves to the altar with a spirit of dedication and reverence. The women participants must be mutually able to communicate in order to be able to exchange ideas. They should be given proper training in the working of the politico-administrative institutions. It is also suggested that local bodies prepare publicity material in local languages. Audio-visual and print media can contribute significantly by the dissemination of information on women related issues and prospects.

Including women in local governments is an essential step towards creating gender equal governments 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. Through their active involvement in community work and women's groups, local women politicians are well aware of issues faced by women in their communities. Due to this and the necessity to create a voter base to run in elections, women politicians can be active advocates of women's issues among their colleagues in the local government and of mainstreaming gender perspectives in policies.

Substantial gender disparities in education continue to exist. Achieving gender equity in education is important not only because of its intrinsic value but also because it has important implications for development prospects. In fact, as several studies show, increases in women's educational attainment levels can help reduce poverty, improve health outcomes and increase women's participation in the labour market, and therefore contribute to economic growth.

Democratic history and practice quite clearly demonstrate that even democratic institutions, based as they are on the principle of one-person one-vote, are blind to cultural or gender difference and as such do not spontaneously provide any guarantee that woman's interests, or indeed those of other marginalized or excluded groups, will find effective representation. ***Men who are representing*** should be sober enough to give room to women so that they can exhibit their talents in turn this will lead to women empowerment. In a way, politics of presence can be effectuated through safeguarded quotas. Men should be able to extend their helping hand to their counter-parts in local administration.

The role played by ***political parties*** is relevant as parties tend to act as gatekeepers to women's entry into politics. At present political parties are not performing their function of political education, political socialization and political recruitment effectively. Parties need to be revitalized and other supplementary programs for political education of the cadre as will, as the masses need to be undertaken. Political education of the electors will reduce the number of proxies. Responsible electors will reduce the role of money and muscle power and other parochial loyalties, which largely determine the effective merit. Massive efforts for comprehensive political education and gender sensitization are necessary. Training camps for political workers may be organized by professional training institutes or even universities. This will establish hitherto missing linkages between formal education of political science and political education of citizens.

Women's organizations can contribute to the formal political process and the electoral process by developing a feminist critique of political ideologies of various political parties, the constitution of a party, their organizational structure, process of organizational elections, women's representation in the organization, policies and programs of a party, its election manifestoes and its position about the issues like globalization, liberalization, population, environment, labor, agriculture and the like.. Even the highest policy matters have a direct bearing on local politics, though they may not directly fall under the sphere of competence of urban local bodies. An integrated perspective which can relate highest policy matters to ground realities is a crucial factor which does not figure in the discourse pertaining to local elections. Women's organizations should be encouraged to contribute to the discourse by analyzing the implications of all these policies, programs, processes and structures for broader gender

justice and egalitarian gender relations. Women's organizations should be encouraged to offer theoretical inputs in addition to collaborating with party activists in various activities like workshops, leadership development camps, study circles or actual agitations pertaining to women's issues.

Policy-makers and international donors should exercise caution in adopting and supporting the implementation of quick fixes to increase women's political representation, such as gender quotas. In countries with high levels of gender inequality, such as India, quotas alone are likely to have limited effects. Instead, these should be integrated into a larger set of interventions aimed at diminishing gender gaps in employment, assets and decision making. Political Science Departments and Women's Studies Departments should undertake an ongoing massive training campaign for increasing the functional efficacy of elected women. Governments should allocate special funds for this.

6.5 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH :

The present study is not much comprehensive and exhaustive due to the limitations of a doctoral work. There are some limitations in its scope and design. Thus, it is suggested that further investigations may be focused on the following issues:

1. A similar study can be conducted with *a larger sample* to have in-depth knowledge of women empowerment through their representation local bodies.

2. There is a need to explore the *qualitative engendering power* especially at the grass root levels in India.

3. A comparative study can be taken up on the *empowerment of women* at the Central, State and local level representation.

4. A study can be taken on the perceptions of *public representatives* on the political reservations, especially for women representatives in local bodies.

5. Another area for investigation would be on the role of *women organizations* sensitizing women to participate on large scale in local politics.

6. A study may also be undertaken on the perceptions of *local bureaucracy* on women representation in local bodies.

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