CHAPTER-I
INTRODUCTION

The issue of women’s political empowerment actually came to the forefront of the global debate at “United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women held at Beijing in 1995. Women’s equal access to, and full participation in decision-making was emphasized in various platform was one of the critical areas of concern. It unequivocally declared, that “Women’s equal participation in politics plays a pivotal role in the general process of the advancement of women. Women’s equal participation is not only a demand for simple justice or democracy, but also be seen as a necessary condition for women’s interests to be taken into account”\(^1\).

The past three decades have witnessed a steadily increasing awareness of the need to empower women through measures to increase social, economic and political equity, and broader access to fundamental human rights, improvements in nutrition, basic health and education. Along with awareness of the subordinate status of women has come the concept of gender as an overarching socio-cultural variable, seen in relation to other factors, such as race, class, age and ethnicity. Gender is not synonymous with women, nor is it a zero-sum game, implying loss for men; rather, it refers to both women and men, and to their status, relative to each other. Gender equality refers to that stage of human social development at

\(^1\) United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women held at Beijing, New York, 1995, p.2.
which “the rights, responsibilities and opportunities of individuals will not be determined by the fact of being born male or female,” in other words, a stage when both men and women realize their full potential.

The concern for women’s political equality in India first emerged as a political issue during the national movement in which women were active participants. As early in 1917, Indian women raised the issue of representation in politics, which at that time meant a demand for universal adult franchise. Women had the right to vote provided based on wifehood, property and education. The Government of India Act 1935, has provided voting rights to all women over 21 if they fulfil the conditions of property and education. Post–independence, women continued to play a less significant role in conventional political activities such as environmental movement, anti-alcohol agitation, peace movement and even revolutionary activities, which equally affect power relationships as they have the capacity to influence the State. Yet, politics proved to be very inhospitable terrain for women and continues to be the male bastion into which the entry of women is severely restricted. Women continue to remain invisible and marginalized in decision-making bodies. It was only with setting up of the Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI, September, 1971) the demand for greater representation of women in Indian political institutions got momentum. The CSWI report “Towards Equality” (1974) has revealed that political parties have tend to see the women voters and citizens as appendages of the males.” It also

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3 Maya Majumdar, Encyclopaedia of Gender Equality through Women Empowerment, Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI) September, India, 1971, p.297.
refers to the ‘tokenism’ involved in having a few women in the legislature and executive, who are unable to act as spokespersons for women’s rights on the account of their dependent and minority status. Recognizing the ‘tokenism’ inherent in association of women representatives through election, co-option or nomination in local bodies, the report suggests a more meaningful association of women in the structure of local administration. The report recommended the establishment of Statutory Women’s Panchayats at village level; reservation of seats in municipalities; constitution of permanent committees in municipalities to initiate and supervise programmes for women’s welfare and development; and the political parties should adopt a definite policy regarding the percentage of women candidates. It was however, not unanimous with in favour of reservation and hence did not recommend quotas. The question of reservation of seats was left to the National Perspective Plan for Women. It recognized the political participation of women and suggested that a 30 percent quota for women to be introduced at all levels of elective bodies. To encourage grass root participation in politics women’s organisations too favoured introduction of reservation; initially at Panchayati (village Council) level.

Women since pre-independence and post independence, irrespective of caste, creed, religion and education have been exploited in many forms and were denied rights on the basis of feminity and inferiority. While there has been a revolution of sorts at different intervals and some recognition has been provided, which is not at all acceptable given the current status of women and their
representation at different forums, is minimal, the governments, both state and national have been formulating various policies and legislations to eradicate gender discrimination and facilitate equal opportunity to women. This study is focused on the representation of women in political circles as it is necessary to have women leaders at the helm of affairs to present their problems and challenges with respect to equality. The research is aimed at studying the role of women in politics, their participation, rate of participation, challenges they face to achieve equal participation in politics, etc.

1.1 Importance of Women Empowerment

Empowerment of women appears to be a much publicized clichéd concept in the 21st Century. Though, this much discussed and debated by media, politicians and academicians, yet women are nowhere near to being full and equal participants in public policy choices that affect their lives. Amartya Sen makes a compelling case for the notion that societies need to see women less as passive recipients of help, and more as dynamic promoters of social transformation, a view strongly buttressed by a body of evidence suggesting that the education, employment and ownership rights of women have a powerful influence on their ability to control their environment and contribute to economic development.

The lack of adequate political participation in decision-making has far-reaching consequences. It deprives women from their rights and responsibilities as citizens and expresses their viewpoints and perspectives in Governance. There was a widespread perception that with the improvements in social indicators,
education and growing number of women in the various employment sectors, women would automatically gain space in the decision-making bodies. However, this doesn't appear to be happening and there is a growing opinion that an affirmative action to increase the number of women in representative bodies is required (Sushma Sahay, 1998)\(^4\). Many attempts have been made to trace the political empowerment of women in India with the impetus provided by the international developments, statutes, etc., and parliamentary initiatives.

### 1.2 Women empowerment through political participation

Political participation derives from the freedom to speak out, assemble and associate; the ability to take part in the conduct of public affairs; and the opportunity to register as a candidate, to campaign, to be elected and to hold office at all levels of government. Under international standards, men and women have an equal right to participate fully in all aspects of the political process. In practice, however, it is often harder for women to exercise this right. In post-conflict countries there are frequently extra barriers to women’s participation, and special care is required to ensure their rights are respected in this regard. Political participation extends beyond parties, however. Women can also become involved in certain aspects of the electoral process through independent action—particularly at the local level—and by joining civil society organizations. Some women in post-conflict countries have gained political experience by participating in non-elected transitional assemblies. Women’s networks, trade unions, non-

governmental organizations, and the media can all provide avenues for women’s political participation. (United Nations, 2010)\textsuperscript{5}

In many countries the rights of women are enshrined in law, and there are no formal legal barriers to women’s political participation in election processes. In practice, however, there are often formidable obstacles to women’s active participation in politics. The hurdles to be overcome can be particularly daunting for women considering running for office, and may be overwhelming for women in post-conflict countries.

Politics has traditionally been a male domain that many women have found unwelcoming or even hostile. Societies in which traditional or patriarchal values remain strong may frown on women entering politics. In addition to dealing with unfavourable cultural predilections, women are often more likely than men to face practical barriers to entering politics, including a paucity of financial resources, lower levels of education, less access to information, greater family responsibilities, and a deprivation of rights that has left them with fewer opportunities to acquire political experience. With the exception of the close relatives of male politicians, women generally lack the political networks necessary for electoral success.

The Inter-Parliamentary Symposium on the Participation of Women in the Political and Parliamentary Decision-making Process held in Geneva (1989), stated that: The political space belongs to all citizens; politics is everyone’s

business and affects the lives of each of us. There is no doubt that the more women are associated, in numbers corresponding to their percentage of the population, in the political decision-making process, in parties, in elected bodies in Governments and in international bodies, the more they can be associated with this process as protagonists and the more they can change the modalities and outcomes of politics. Only then will be the concept of democracy find concrete and tangible expression. Indeed, the democracy and the participation of women go hand in hand and promote each other mutually.

This has been the underlying refrain of all the subsequent international conferences on gender issues and categorically stated in all Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action. To ensure women’s equal access and full participation in power structures and in decision-making; governments have to set the targets and the measures to be taken for substantially increasing the number of women representation through positive action. To protect and promote the equal rights to women and to engage them in political activities and to provide freedom of association, including membership in political parties and trade unions, etc., political parties need to reform their structures and procedures by removing all barriers that directly or indirectly discriminate against the participation of women in politics.

1.3 International Perception of Women’s Political Participation

Political participation of women is beset with problems even internationally. Except in countries like Finland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark,
the percentage of women parliamentarians to the total membership of the Parliament is quite low. Only 24 women have been elected internationally, as heads of state or government in the last century. On the voting front, it had taken almost an effort of a century for women to get the right to vote and to be elected. New Zealand was the first country to give women the right to vote in 1893 and Finland was the first country to give the right to stand for elections to women in 1906. In the Convention on the Political Rights of women, Article-1 of the Convention on the Political Rights of Women states “Women shall be entitled to vote in all elections on equal terms with men, without any discrimination”. The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979), has declared that “States shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right: (a) to vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies; (b) to participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government; and (c) to participate in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country”.

In promoting representation of women in decision-making bodies, the Scandinavian countries are pioneers. The strength of the social democratic parties, development of an extended welfare state, the educational system and massive

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7 Kumar, A. “Human Rights and Sustainable Development” Sarup and Sons, India, 2006, p.86.
induction of women into the workforce are stated as reasons. Percentages of women in Scandinavian Parliaments today are Sweden-42% (1998), Denmark-38% (2001), Norway-36%, Finland-37% (1999). According to a study conducted in 1993 by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), out of 35,884 parliamentarians, there were only 3,626 women legislators constituting 10.10 percent. Another study conducted by Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) on October, 30, 2003, revealed that out of a total of 42,012 parliamentarians in the world, only 6,133 represent women. In terms of percentage, women constitute only 15.1 per cent in today’s national parliaments in the World. In spite of women’s movement and growing international awareness on the women’s issues, there is only a marginal increase in the percentage of women parliamentarians in the last decade.

1.4 Changing social paradigms

Though the above figures are not praiseworthy, it is still heartening to see that there is political will emerging to have more women in public life. Traditionally, Nordic countries have the highest number of women in Parliament. In Sweden women alone now account for 45.3 per cent of parliamentarians in the Swedish Riksdagen. Even some of the Arab countries are also steadily moving towards gender equality in politics. For instance in Morocco, women now account

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for 10.8 percent of the lower house: a 10 percentage leap\textsuperscript{11}. This progress has come about after the introduction of a quota in Parliament reserving 30 seats for women. In Bahrain for the first time women were able to vote and contest elections. In Djibouti, a new law stipulates that every party has to present at least 10 of candidates of both sexes. The result was that in the 2003 elections seven women were elected to Parliament accounting for more than 10 per cent of the newly elected parliamentarians. In Jordan electoral law was amended to reserve six seats for women in the Lower House of the Majlis. Recently, Indonesia has passed a Bill stipulating that at least 30 per cent of parliamentary candidates must be women. Although the changes may appear to be modes, the increasing presence of women in parliaments of the world is a heartening trend for their empowerment.\textsuperscript{12}

Even though women have played important and path-breaking roles in shaping the destiny of mankind, their roles in enriching public life has not been sufficiently acknowledged. Since, mostly the women are denied access to public offices it was felt that it is imperative to involve them now directly in the decision-making process. The movement for right to information which has played a significant role in deepening democracy has witnessed large scale participation of ordinary women in its fold. It is in fact appropriately said that right of women to participate in public life is part of the larger catalogue of human


rights. In a much more pronounced manner a former Chairman of the National Human Rights Commission has said that the denial of empowerment is a denial of human right..

It is worth mentioning that Agenda 21 which deals with the Environment and Development Agenda of United Nations contains a full chapter on the Global Action for women towards sustainable and equitable development. Herein one of the objectives given is to increase the proportion of women decision-makers, planners, etc. in the environment and development fields and to consider developing and issuing by the year 2000 a strategy necessary to eliminate constitutional, legal, administrative, cultural, behavioural, social and economic obstacles to women’s full participation in sustainable development and in public life. Thus, globally, it is being recognized that women need to be actively associated for sustainable development and the only means to achieve it is to have more women in decision-making bodies. The government policies, therefore, must be not only pro-nature and pro-poor but also have to be pro-women to achieve sustainable growth and development.

1.5 Status of women in India

The constitution of the Republic of India ensures equality of women and men in every sphere of life and activity. The fundamental rights of the Indian constitution has clearly delineated stating, “The state shall not discriminate

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against any citizen on grounds only of religion, caste, sex, colour, place of birth or any of them”. Women in India have been given equality of opportunity in all matters relating to education, employment and legal status and they can aspire to grace the highest office of the state. However, this is truly not indicative of the existing position of women in general in the country, yet. Though, legally and constitutionally, all women have equal access to and right to venture in every walk of life, a vast majority of them are still illiterate and uneducated\textsuperscript{14}.

1.6 Representation of Women in Legislatures

Political representation was initially based on the premise that it deals primarily with individuals, regardless of sex; and equal opportunities should be granted for power and influence in society. It was believed that though very few women were actually joining politics, given time the overall change in terms of education and employment opportunities would necessarily percolate into the political sphere too and their representation would increase. However, the representation of women in the Lok Sabha has not crossed 10 per cent. In the First Lok Sabha there were only 22 women constituting 4.4 per cent of the House which has increased two fold to 45 in the 14\textsuperscript{th} Lok Sabha. Similarly in the case of Rajya Sabha the percentage of women members has never crossed 12 percent. These facts inevitably lead us to conclude that there is need for positive action in favour of women.

Given the low representation of women in politics, there has been a consistent demand for more meaningful methods to increase their representation in decision-making bodies. In pursuance of this notion of empowerment of women, the 73rd Amendment Act and the 74th Amendment Act reserved seats for women at the grassroot level bodies, namely the panchayats and municipalities with the hope that these measures will set the trend to provide women their legitimate place in public life. After these amendments, Article 243 D and 243T of the Constitution provide that not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by the direct election in the local bodies (Panchayats and Municipalities) would be reserved for women and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in the local bodies. This indeed makes a beginning for the effective participation of women in the decision making process at the grassroot level. It is a fact that in the elections to these local bodies one million women have been elected every five years. This portrays a very encouraging trend for women’s empowerment.

As far as the participation of women in the electoral politics is concerned, the statistics shows that very few women are actually participating in the elections. For example, in the Sixth General Elections out of the total contestants of 2,439, only 70 candidates were women and in the 14th Elections, out of the total

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numbers of contestants of 59,435 only 355 were women.\textsuperscript{18} Though the number of women participating in the elections may be increasing gradually they continue to constitute a very small percentage of the total number of contestants. Another surprising fact is that out of the total number of women who actually contest the elections, the percentage of women who finally make it to the Lok Sabha is very less. In fact, over the years the percentage of women who have found their way to the legislature has reduced. In the Sixth General Election 27 percent of the women contestants won the elections and by the fourteenth General Election less than 13 percent have actually made it to the House.\textsuperscript{19}

1.7 Constitutional rights of women in India

The country got freedom in 1947 and the framers of the constitution including the main architect Dr. B.R. Ambedkar realized the unequal social position of women and assured equal rights for women. The greatest honour was given to women after independence ensuring the equality principle in the constitution. Prior to independence women were most neglected and subjected section of the society. The dreams and aspirations of the national leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru were embodied in the Preamble to the Constitution of India viz., to promote social, political and economic and ethical values and to provide social justice, economic and political liberty of individuals and general welfare. The Fundamental Rights enshrined in Articles 14, 15 and 16 guarantee the principle of

equality before law, equality of sexes and equal opportunity in all walks of life including public employment. Article 15 prohibits discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any one of them.\textsuperscript{20} Article 39(a), states that the state shall direct its policy towards securing equality to men and women the right to an adequate means of livelihood, and 39(d) enjoins the state to direct its policy towards securing equal pay for equal work for both men and women.\textsuperscript{21} Article 51A imposes certain fundamental duties on every citizen of India. Article 51A(c) provides that it shall be the duty of every citizen of India to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women. Thus, a woman can aspire to the highest office of the state and is free to choose any form of education and training in order to pursue a career of her choice. Articles 325 and 326 introduce adult franchise without distinction of sex. Women have also right to vote, right to contest in elections. Government of India has provided certain reservations exclusively for women in political field.

1.8 Achievement of Indian Women in Post-Independence Period

The growing importance of dynamic leaders and the emergence of new patterns of leadership have resulted in typical characteristics of modern political systems. The phenomenon of leadership has been assuming more and more significance in political field specifically in developing countries. Thus, the study


of leadership, especially women leadership in political system with all its ramifications calls for greater attention.

In Independent India, women have held important political and administrative positions. For instance, Indira Gandhi guided the destiny of the country as Prime Minister for more than 15 years. Women have also served as governors, chief ministers, ministers in Union and state governments, presiding officers of legislative bodies, judges of the high court’s and secretaries to the Government of India. Election of Prathiba Patil to the office of Indian Presidency is the most remarkable achievement in the annals of women’s political empowerment. While Vijayalakshmi Pundit was India’s Ambassador to the Soviet Union and first women President of the U.N. General Assembly, Hansa Mehta and Sareefa Hamid AM were on several UN Commissions, and more recently Najma Heptullah was President of the Council of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Yet despite the fact that Indian women have held important positions both at the national and international levels what we see in that women’s participation in the political arena and in the decision-making bodies is not in proportion to their population.\(^\text{22}\)

1.9 Need for focus towards rural development

The pace of change in the entire Indian political system has increased since independence. The introduction of adult franchise, the steps taken for universal

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education, the national adult education programme through National Extension Service, land reforms, democratic decentralization and other programmes of rural reconstruction have created new awakening among the masses. The new forces of socio-economic change unleashed by the implementation of several programmes of planned social change in rural areas gave a blow to the traditional social structure and thereby generated new values and visions.\textsuperscript{23}

After 1947, India also inherited numerous socio-economic problems. Nearly 80 percent of the population of the country lives in the country-side and most of the problems are related to the rural society; most significant among these were the problems of acute poverty, mass illiteracy, insufficient and backward agriculture and lack of techno-industrial growth, presence of innumerable social inequalities and low level of political awareness and political participation. Therefore, by accepting the principle of social justice and egalitarianism, India attained the status of a welfare state. However, it was also realized by policy makers and national leaders that the fruits of independence were to reach the common man. In the process, the development of rural society assumes greater importance. Hence the introduction of numerous programmes of rural development were initiated and thereby to divert socio-economic resources towards this end. In this context the role of rural leadership assumes greater importance.

1.10 Rural Leadership

The Panchayati Raj System introduced in 1959 had made a tremendous impact on villages in India as it brought about a new political awakening among the rural masses. The rural masses for the first time realized that democracy has traveled down to the village level and they have an opportunity to participate actively in the process of socio-economic development. It may be inferred that with the introduction of Panchayati Raj System, the rural leadership has come to occupy an important place in the Indian political system.\(^{24}\)

The Panchayati Raj soon became popular and gained roots in the countryside. Apart from this, the decision of the government to involve the Panchayati Raj Institutions actively in the planning and implementation of state sponsored anti-poverty programmes gave a new role to the local bodies for increasing their sphere of influence. The socio-economic development of any rural community depends to a great extent on the quality of leadership. Panchayati Raj leadership which aims at the development of rural community through its active involvement clear the ‘gap between the bureaucracy and the masses; thereby filling a vast organizational gap. Further, the Panchayati Raj leadership mediates the interaction between tradition and modernity and plays an educative role through broadening and deepening the participatory processes by accelerating the pace of modernization. This sort of communication and interaction would positively facilitate in strengthening the administrative accountability and

responsiveness in the sphere of socio-economic development, particularly in rural areas.

In view of significance of rural leadership, it becomes imperative to examine the nature of emerging rural leadership over time. As can be made out from the above, the role of local leadership has a great responsibility in translating various policy measures into a pulsating reality. Arguably, there is a view that rural leadership, by and large, emerges from the dominant sections of society.

1.11 Women in rural politics

Leadership among rural women is a recent phenomenon. Though history reveals few cases where rural leadership among women was seen long ago, it has no continuity. In India, after the introduction of Panchayati Raj Institutions in 1959, the concept of women leadership has emerged. Real seeds of women leadership where sowed in the year 1993 by the enactment of 73rd Constitutional Amendment. This Amendment has facilitated to reserve certain seats at grass-root level to SCs, STs, BCs and Women. The reservation of few seats exclusively for women has paved the way for the emergence of women leadership in rural areas. This sort of constitutional guarantee has assured women to step into politics and thus women leadership has picked up its roots at the grass-root level of democracy.

1.12 Review of Literature

Panchayati Raj System has been attracting scholars throughout the nation since its evolutionary stage. Lots of literature have come out dealing with various
aspects of Panchayati Raj which has been very useful in providing a thorough understanding of the entire range of issues related to Panchayati Raj Institutions. However, some of these studies did attempt to delineate the impact of Panchayati Raj System in the emergence of Women in Andhra Pradesh, especially in Medak District.

Studies available on women in the political process in the country are critically limited to (a) the role of women in the freedom struggle, and (b) studies on women in the electoral processes as voters, candidates and members of the legislature. Apart from this there have been some superficial examinations of the role of women in public life and studies on women’s organization that were set up in the early years of twentieth century.

Books

**Shoma A. Chaterji, (1993)**\(^{25}\). The author feels that women should not be presented purely from the news-value point of view just because, suddenly, they seem to have become hot copy. It is essential to study women because they have not been studied in their visible and invisible contributions to the historical, sociological, economic revolution and evolution to the Indian race. This book presents seven dimensions of the Indian woman to make the study as intensive as possible. It is just one step forward to further understand what the Indian woman is all about. It is one step further from those who have earlier laid the foundation of women’s studies in India.

The author lays no claim to being a scholar in women’s studies. When one is an ardent and sincere student of women’s studies, one learns a great deal as one goes along. At times, one wishes to share those experiences with those who are interested in the women’s movement. It is not a separate movement any longer. It is a mainstream movement that is deeply integrated with all other sociological movements like environment, health, education, media, and so on.

**Goutham Bhattacharya (2013)**

In this book the author discussing women are changing the governance in India. They are being elected to local councils in an unprecedented numbers as a result of amendments to the constitution that mandate the reservation of seats for women in local governments. In India, the new system; the Panchayati Raj Institution System (PRI), the women through PRI have entered into politics who are now governing, be it in one village, or a larger area such as 100 villages or a district. This process of restructuring the national political and administrative system started as recently as January 1994. The percentages of women at various levels of political activity have shifted dramatically as a result of the constitutional change, from 4-5% before to 25-40% after. But the difference is also qualitative, because these women are bringing their experience in the governance of civic society. In this way they are making the state sensitive to the issues of poverty, inequality and gender injustice.

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Ganeshmurthy V.S. (2008)  The extent of empowerment of women in a nation is largely determined by three factors, viz., economic-social and political identity. The Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-07) called for a three pronged strategy of social empowerment, economic empowerment and providing gender justice to create an enabling environment of positive, economic and social policies for women and eliminating all forms of discrimination against them and thus advance gender equality goals.

The Government of India has initiated various schemes spread across a broader spectrum such as women’s need for shelter, security, safety, legal, justice, information, maternal health, food, nutrition etc. as well as their need for economic sustenance through skill development, education, and access to credit and marketing.

For a holistic empowerment of women to happen, social, economic and political aspects impacting women must converge effectively. The multiple roles of women and the meagre ability to access resources and available assets are areas of concern. It is important to emphasize that women require adequate security and protection to be self-reliant.

Rameshwari Pandya (2007)  Gender equality is a constituent as well as an instrument of development. No country can be deemed developed if half of its population is severely disadvantaged in terms of basic needs, livelihood options,

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access to knowledge, and political voice. Gender equality is an instrument of development because without it national goals will be difficult to achieve as, for example, poverty alleviation, population planning, family welfare and environmental sustainability.

Over the years, efforts have been made to empower women socially, economically and politically. However, due to lack of synergy and coordination, the outcomes are not satisfactory. It is imperative that an integrated policy and strategy be formulated that addresses economic, social and political empowerment of women along with the requisite programmes and schemes. Though the Constitutional commitments to women have been translated through the planning process, legislation, policies and programmes over the last six decades yet the economic status of women reflects less than satisfactory achievement in almost all important human development indicators.


The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone has the right to take part in the government of his/her country. The United Nations Economic and Social Council endorsed a target of 30 per cent women at all levels of decision-making by 1995. In spite of this, globally women constitute only ten per cent of legislative bodies and even less in parliamentary positions.

In India, the post-independence period has seen many positive steps to improve the socio-economic status of women. Women themselves have become

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keenly aware of their rights and are spearheading movements across the country against all sorts of social evils. This consciousness is largely due to an increase in women’s literacy although they have miles and miles to go. The most significant landmark in the journey is the historic 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendments. These Constitution Amendment Acts reserved one-third seats for women in the Panchayati Raj and Municipal bodies.

Seema P. Salgaonkar (2006) There is growing consciousness to recognize women’s autonomy, and their capacity to act as full citizens. They have to be looked as change agents and important contributors to the national development. Their role in social, political and economic context has to be understood in right earnest. The forces operating in the society which ghettoized women needs to be recognized and refuted, and not camouflaged. The author studied the role played by women in political arena in Goa and observed that there are inter-regional as well as intra-regional variations in the position and role of women. Various factors such as class, caste, religious affiliations, cultural milieu, the existing patriarchal practices and their diverse histories play crucial role in determining the position of women in a given region. It is therefore necessary to have specific studies on women in different regions in order to build up an adequate theoretical basis. Such an attempt would also assist in developing strategies for combating the forces operating against participation of women in socio-economic development. Though patriarchy has to be deconstructed, it

should not be viewed as a ghost that cannot be fought back. Much depends on the forces operating against patriarchy in a given society. These forces include education, legal safeguards, development of scientific outlook, enlightenment of men, and awareness of their own potentials and capacities by women. It looks at women as freedom fighters, voters, leaders and activists. It also studies the role played by the state to promote the well-being of women in Goa.

Ambedkar S.N. & Shailaja Nagendra (2005)³¹ Women’s equal participation in decision-making is not only a demand for simple justice or democracy but can also be seen as a necessary condition for women’s interests to be taken into account. Without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women perspective at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved.

Despite the widespread movement towards democratization in most countries, women are largely underrepresented at most levels of government, especially in ministerial and other executive bodies, and have made little progress in attaining political power in legislative bodies or in achieving the target of 30 percent women in positions at decision-making levels. The book tries to analyze the perceptions and orientations of the women leaders manning the decentralized democracies on various issues pertaining to the new Panchayati Raj system in rural India.

In this book the authors reviewed the role, Panchayati Raj Institutions play in democratizing the decision-making process at the local level and in mobilizing the people for social and economic development. Based on an intensive research on the functioning of the Panchayati Raj Institutions in the state of Haryana, it is revealed that the electoral process has brought new leadership to the forefront; the social and economic background of the elected representatives, the way they function and the role they play; the motivations that prompt them for action or no action and the reforms still needed to make the system work in accordance with letter and spirit of the Constitution of India. Although the study is confined to the state of Haryana, its conclusions have larger and systemic relevance. It reveals that Constitutional amendments and follow up state laws did make some differences, particularly with respect to the representation of the marginalized people. But as far as the working of the institutions is concerned, there is much to be desired. It finds a nexus between law, social milieu, economic structure, and host of other factors that go to make a society.

Women are embracing the concept of empowerment because of their situations- disempowerment and unmet needs. As women have increasingly discovered their commonalities through improved means of communication and through international conferences, such as the 1995 NGO

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Conference in Beijing, they have attempted to understand the global and local political, economic, and cultural forces that shape these situations. While there are many factors that play a role in gender-based stratification, an examination of international development during the past half-century provides insight into some of these factors. The changes in the world since the end of World War-II have been profound. In the Third World, particularly, many of these changes-positive and negative-have occurred under the rubric of development. In India especially, special provisions have been made in the Constitution for the empowerment of women by reservation of jobs in the administration, legislatures and local bodies, like the municipal corporations and the panchayats.

**Mastern Vali, Mohd, (2002)** The book presents a deep and interesting analysis on the role of Indian Women in Politics at different levels, past and present. It provides a cursory but penetrating account on the role of women in Indian National Movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. The book portrays the political ideas and contribution of prominent women political leaders including Sarojini Naidu, Indira Gandhi, Sucheta Kripalani and others. It also offers a stimulating and interesting analysis on the participation of women in the electoral politics right from the first General Election to the latest.

**Kalpana Roy’s (1999)** study of political Profile of Women in Andhra Pradesh revealed that women are not inclined to become members of political

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parties. A majority of those who are members are not active members and a negligible number of members are on executives of the parties at different levels. Women are not attracted towards voluntary organizations or service organizations. The study further reveals that women are not ready to take larger role in politics but are more interested in election canvassing.

In the electoral process, the percentage of people participated have remained nearly constant (50-55%) through all the general elections for the last 20 years. Many studies have pointed out the low participation of women in elections both as voters as well as candidates. These studies have pointed out that (1) women are not independent voters; (2) majority of them are illiterate; (3) majority of them make their choice on the basis of suggestions from male members of the family – husband and sons; (4) women lack information and political awareness; and (5) women are not political conscious.

The top decision-making positions remain largely male dominated spheres where women have little influence. Women’s exclusion from power in the public arena is in sharp contrast to their ability to make crucial decisions relating to the survival of their families. The lack of women’s participation in political decision-making has important consequences. It deprives women of important rights and responsibilities as citizens and excludes their perspectives and interests from policy-making and decision-making. Their voices are missing from key decisions on national budgets and setting of government priorities.
Veena Poonacha’s (1997) study observed that paradoxically, the 1990s also saw the enactment of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments aimed at the progressive devolution of political powers to local communities. Through these enactments, more than one million women for the first time in history enjoyed political power within local communities. And yet, despite the success of these experiments the women’s movement has not been able to muster enough support to ensure that passage of the 81st or the 84th amendments through which women could gain the right to representation in the state legislature and the parliament.

Susheela Kaushik’s (1995) study of Panchayati Raj in Action: Challenges to Women’s Role focuses on the experiences of women in the election process, the hardships and obstacles they undergo and kind of support in terms of remedial measures to overcome in the light of the provisions of the Panchayat Acts. Women observed that the 73rd constitution amendment had guaranteed representation of women in the elections at all the three tiers of PRIs through the provisions of one-third reservation. It was also found that the elections in some of the states like Karnataka, Orissa and West Bengal had witnessed appreciable number of women turn out as voters as well as candidates not merely for the reserved constituencies but even for the general constituencies; women had stood with great confidence. In several states, the percentage of women who contested

36 Veena Poonacha, Women’s Studies in Indian Universities: The Changing Parameters of Struggle, Research Centre for Women’s Studies, S.N.D.T Women’s University, Mumbai, 1997.
PRI elections exceeded the reserved quota and the participation of women went beyond expectations. The study further observed that the women in all women panchayats and elected women had proved that they withstood all that was required for functioning the PRIs on sound lines and expected of them by the rural people, though neither the reservation for women not presence in Panchayats has made an immediate impact by way of sensitization or attitudinal changes. However, the panchayats have not become any more sensitive to problems related to village women.

Ram Chander and Lakshmi’s (1993)\textsuperscript{38} study on women and politics in Andhra Pradesh revealed that the representation of women in the council of ministers in Andhra Pradesh is very low right from 1956 to 1990. In various ministries, the representation of women varied from one to two. The latter is the highest ever represented in the history of Andhra Pradesh cabinet. The induction of women into the cabinet, which is abysmally lower in consonance with their recruitment and participation. Besides it should be stressed that the portfolios allotted to women ministers were relatively unimportant and insignificant. More often the women ministers were entrusted with departments like Women and Child Welfare, Social Welfare, Information and Broadcasting, Tourism and Education.

Manikyamba, P. (1989) made a study of 18 women presidents of Mandal Praja Parishads out of whom 38.9 and 22.2 per cent came from Reddy and Kapu castes; 66.7 per cent of the Mandal Presidents came from well-to-do families and 33.3 per cent belonged to middle class families. The study revealed that only 27.8 percent of the presiding officers conducted the proceedings of the MPPs by themselves. The study revealed that at the gram panchayat level the principle of reservation is applied only in respect of women’s membership but not to the offices of Sarpanch. This creates a big lacuna in the context of ensuring representation to women in the middle level bodies namely Mandal Praja Parishads because under the existing system, it is only those women who could successfully contest along with others for the positions of Sarpanch that would become members of Mandal Praja Parishads. Thus, as the position stands, the Mandal Praja Parishads suffer from under representation of women in them. The study further observed that given the limited opportunities for a access to political position and many lakshamanrekhas, women of rural India have not come forward to as some political roles until recently as women’s participation in politics has been regarded highly objectionable. Hence, the possibility of having a good number of women with previous experiences gets highly limited.

At the Zilla Praja Parishad level, the study revealed that most of the women who are active at the level are non-vocal. They say that it is easy to get benefits through personal discussions outside Zilla Praja Parishad. Hence, they prefer to

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hold such discussions with the concerned political and executive heads and secure their support. Very few of them participate in discussions at the Zilla Praja Parishad level. A majority of the active members represent the interest of their constituencies in writing.

Despite the provision of nomination or cooption, women did not play an effective role in the PRIs. The system of nomination or cooption meant sheer patronage of the dominant political or social groups and the women who got nominated had practically no information on panchayats or any experience in working for women and children. Women’s representation on these bodies came to be symbolized by “tokenism” and not by a meaningful association.

Raja Lakshmi’s (1985) study of the political behavior of women in Tamil Nadu reveals that women’s participation has been at low ebb. The obvious reason for such a state of affairs is largely due to the prevailing constraints – psychological, cultural, social and male dominance in the political field. Nevertheless, the fact remains that in spite of constraints a few political women in the state have come up in their own way by their hard work and sincere participation in many political activities.

Geeta Chaturvedi (1985) The study is a pioneering empirical analysis of the socio-economic background and attitudes of women administrators of India. The author focussed on the senior bureaucrats holding important administrative

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positions in different departments of the Government of Rajasthan and the senior-level administrators heading educational institutions in the State. Besides providing a comparative perspective of these two distinct categories of women administrators, Dr. Chaturvedi has perceptively analyzed the attitudes and orientations of women administrators towards various dimensions of political modernization, variegated facets of social change and diverse aspects of economic development in India.

Articles

Wandana Sonalkar (1999)\textsuperscript{42} in her study of \textit{An Agenda for Gender Politics} discussed the political context in which the bill emerged in the first place: the earlier (73\textsuperscript{rd} and 74\textsuperscript{th}) Constitutional Amendments which made it mandatory to reserve at least one-third of the seats for women in local elected bodies had been introduced as a move towards decentralization of power. This was the broader perspective within which women actually living and working in villages, towns and cities were given the opportunity to act as political representatives on the local level. Women’s organizations have welcomed this as a potentially-empowering provision and have worked to give support to women elected in this set-up. The entry of women into local political bodies have at times been manipulated by male dominated political parties and in some situations the elected women have been neutralized or even sexually humiliated. She further mentioned that the logic of decentralization of power does not apply to the issue of

\textsuperscript{42} Wandana Sonalkar, \textit{An Agenda for Gender Politics}, Economic and Political Weekly, January 9, 1999.
reservation for women in the national and state level elected bodies. This demand
has been taken up with enthusiasm by the left political parties or the women
within them and later on by the autonomous women’s organizations.

Jayalakshmi’s (1997) case study of *Empowerment of Women in Panchayats: Experiences of Andhra Pradesh* revealed that all women panchayats in Nalgonda district of Andhra Pradesh have six members. The Sarpanch (backward class), UpaSarpanch (Dominant caste representative) and the other members (two belonging to the scheduled castes and the rest are from the backward castes). They are in the age group between 35-50 years. They are married and the family size varies between six to nine members. On the whole, the study revealed that the:

1. Panchayats have given ample opportunities to various social groups to represent their interests by which political alienation of certain groups can be fairly reduced, if not marginalizing the role of the dominant sections totally. Reservation in panchayats ensures entry for all sections and thus visualized as the harbinger of equality and social justice.

2. Panchayats enable public participation in both policy and implementing level and can accelerate the effectiveness of both sectoral and poverty alleviation programmes and thus they can act as spearhead for development.

3. Panchayats have carved out sufficient democratic space in the existing system for the rural poor to play a continuous role in developmental

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activities and thus promote sustainable development through collective action and initiative thus paving the way for a honest political process, also promoting grass-roots level leadership.

**Sweta Mishra’s (1995)** study on *Women and 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act* examined the probable role of women in the context of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act. The author has observed that the reservation of seats for women in the Panchayati Raj Institutions will provide them with an opportunity to ventilate their grievances and to take active part in the formal political arena which deals with social and economic problems. It is concluded that, “the election to the PRIs has brought rural women to the fore. They have shown remarkable maturity to closely align themselves with the main stream… They may have played a dummy role in comparison to their male counterparts in the present elections but it is believed that this situation would not continue for a longer period. The training programmes, awareness campaigns, political education will surely help to create awareness among women”.

### 1.13 Significance and Importance of the study

The Review of Literature on the subject reveals that much work on women representatives’ role in panchayati raj institutions has not been done to an extent as such which can ascertain the equal participation of women in politics. It is appropriate now to take up such studies in the light of reservations that are made for women in urban and rural local bodies through the 73rd Constitutional

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Amendment Act. The earlier situation of women hiding themselves from participating in politics, feeling shy to come forward in public meetings, facing the situation in public has gone out due to increase in awareness among them. Several governmental programmes at gross root level have been contributing towards involvement of women in the formulation and implementation of developmental programmes, thereby contributing to increased awareness, administrative as well as political, among women. Participation of women in politics has led to development of leadership qualities among women representatives which raised certain pertinent questions related to women representatives, such as how the concept of women representatives in rural local bodies has emerged? How far the women representation in rural areas has successfully brought positive results? What type of problems are being faced by the women leaders in rural local bodies? Whether there is any resentment by men against the reservations of women in politics? If so what type of issues have been emerging in rural areas these have to be noted?

As the literature available on women representatives reveals that few studies have been undertaken related to the women participation in our State Legislative Assemblies, Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. But, particularly the role of women representatives at grass root level rural institutions such as village Panchayat, Mandal Parishad and Zilla Parishad has not been much analysed. Since, Medak district, being a backward district of Telangana region is apt to undertake a study to analyse the role dynamics of women representatives at grass
root level rural institutions. Hence, the present study entitled “Role of Women Representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions: A study of Medak District” has been undertaken to comprehensively analyse the role of women representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions of Medak District. The present study has undertaken with the following objectives.

1.14 Objectives of the study

- To study and analyse the Panchayati Raj system and participation of women in the wake of Constitutional Amendment (Seventy-Three) Act;

- To study the socio-economic and political profile of the women in Medak District;

- To analyse the nature and extent of political linkage of women leaders in Panchayati Raj System;

- To ascertain the perceptions of people on the role of women representative in Panchayati Raj Institutions and also on rural development.

1.15 Hypothesis

- The 73rd CAA has resulted in empowerment of women with increased political participation at the grassroots level;

- Increasing women participation in PRI has improved the functioning of the local bodies;

- Despite reservations for women, male dominations to an extent has prevented women from entering politics.
1.16 Methodology

The present study is essentially an investigation to describe and analyse the operational dynamics of women representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions. For the purpose of this study, Medak district in Andhra Pradesh is selected. The required data is collected from primary and secondary sources. To collect the primary data, a structured questionnaire administered to 500 rural people in ten selected mandals out of 46 mandals in Medak district, to ascertain their perceptions on the women leadership. Ten Mandals were identified on the advise of the officials and the number of women elected representatives elected in the Mandal. Stratified random sampling technique was adopted while administering the questionnaire. On the other hand an interview schedule was also adopted to ascertain the views of Ward Members, Sarpanches, members of MPTCs, MPPs, ZPTCs and Zilla Parishad President, on their problems and prospects. For this purpose one hundred and twenty (120) elected representatives (20 male and 100 female) have been interviewed with a structured interview schedule. The secondary data is collected from sources like library, published books on research area. Articles published in Journals, Central and state government records, various commissions reports, unpublished documents etc. Also referred to information from Government files, brochures, and records available in different offices. Above all, the field observations, experience and knowledge is added to strengthen the study.
1.17 Sampling Size

The study selected total 500 respondents as a research sample. The sample includes Sarpanches, MPTCs, MPPs and ZPTCs and ZPP are respectively, this study is covered during period 2006 to 2011. As the research progressed, the selection of sample size is limited and only those respondents who have been elected or were assuming office during the years 2006 to 2011 because the sample size would have more knowhow about their roles and responsibilities, challenges, and other socio-political issues which they had to overcome to achieve the position.

1.18 Limitations of the study

The limitations of the study are that it did not take into account any interacting variables which influence functioning of Panchayati Raj Institutions and the political leadership at grass-root level. Due to paucity of time and financial resources, the study is confined to 10 mandals in the district to administer the questionnaire and interview schedule.

1.19 Organization of the study

The present study has been divided into the following chapters.

Chapter-1- Introduction: This chapter explores the issues and problems related to gender equality and the relation between the gender disparities and the political representation of women while tracing the history of events and efforts taken by various nations and institutions for the empowerment of women in particular in
the field of politics across the world and as well as in India. Importance of women leadership vis-a-vis the state of affairs in political scenario has been thoroughly discussed focusing on the women representation in local bodies. The chapter explains significance, objectives, hypothesis and limitations of the study.

**Chapter-2: Women Representation in Panchayati Raj Institutions: Problems and Challenges:** This chapter has exclusively examined the role of women in politics while highlighting various schools of thoughts on women in political institutions in India. It analyses the problems and challenges encountered by the women representatives in general and panchayati Raj Institutions in particular. The chapter also comprehensively analyzed women’s participation in local bodies.

**Chapter-3: Women in Politics – An Overview:** This chapter explains the evolution of panchayat system in India while narrating the importance of leadership at panchayat level. It also throws light on various historical changes that catalyzed the women’s political empowerment. It provided an overview on women leadership that has been emerging in India particularly at rural grassroot institutions.

**Chapter-4: Women Representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions in Medak District:** This chapter focuses on women leadership scenario in Medak district while presenting the relevant history and demography of Medak district. The significance of grass-root level women leadership and their role in rural development has been analysed. It also focused on the role of women in NGOs,
Institutions, and agencies that are striving to achieve rural development. The chapter examined locally prevailing negative and positive factors that are coming on the way to participate women in local politics.

Chapter-5: People’s Perceptions on the Women Representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions – A Study: The chapter is based on empirical data. People’s perceptions on the role of women representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions have been analysed in this chapter. Some of the important case studies are also explained in this chapter.

Chapter-6: Conclusions and Projections: The chapter highlights the findings of the study and suggests ways and means to strengthen the role of women representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions for effective functioning to achieve integrated rural development.