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POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN URBAN LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN KARNATAKA: A STUDY

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Abstract: Women's political participation plays vital role in establishing the status of women in any particular country. Women are honored as an epitome of sacrifice and power in India. But when it comes to entrusting power into their hands. There is a hesitation from the male counterparts, as it poses a serious concern of overpowering their strengths and abilities. A Woman has excelled in all fields but her presence in politics makes the majority apprehensive. The reasons for this outlook can be contributed to the dominance of women in the area which is by and large become the Man's territory. The development of any nation only depends on the status of women in the society. Fifty percent of the world's population comprises of women. In this male dominated society, women have forever suffered. It is necessary that to make the women of our country strong socially, economically, psychologically and politically and we need to tell the men of our country about their wrongdoings. The position of women stays the same everywhere. In a country like India, on one hand the goddess is a woman and on the other hand she is ill-treated, oppressed, suppressed, and exploited by the males of our society.

Index Terms - Empowerment of Women, Political Participation, Urban Governance, Equality.

I. INTRODUCTION

“Woman is the companion of man, gifted with equal mental capacities. She has the right to participate in the minutest details in the activities of man, and she has an equal right of freedom and liberty with him”. - **Mahatma Gandhi.**

Local government existed in India in Ancient times, in its present structure and functioning it owes its existence to the British rule in India. In the late 17th century of British rule the system of urban local government first gained attention in India with the established of East India company government, prefaced the establishment of urban Local governments in India. There is long history of Local self-government in India, after careful study of evaluation of the system of Local government in India observed that, the local government institutions have always been existed in India, in one form or Another.

Politics involves representation, policy, power and position with Government as its area. Political participation refers to the participation of individuals in the political process. It ensures that individuals are able to take part in deciding the common goals of the society and the best ways of achieving it. Political participation means not merely exercising the right to vote, but also power sharing, decision making, policy making at all levels of governance of the State. Political participation refers to actual participation in these voluntary activities by which the members of the society share in selection of rules and formulation of public policy directly or indirectly.

I. Historical Perspective of Urban Local Bodies:

In ancient India, including Karnataka, despite a centralized administration under a King, there was some opportunity for local governance. This is evident from the epigraph inscriptions found across many places in Karnataka which acknowledge right to elect representatives to the assembly or Council. System similar to Panchayat Raj existed in India during Vedic period and has a History of over thousands of years. Systems similar to Grama Panchayat existed in the History with different names in different Timeline. They were called *Grama Sabha Uru, Vokkalu, Gramakaryalaya, Panchayti Kate etc.* They were headed by *Urasamastaru, Oora mukhyasthanu, Zameendars, Jahagirdars etc.* Guidelines i.e., Constitution was compiled by the heads and were called with different names like *Samaya, Sthiti, Maryade, Vyavaste, Achara vyavase.* Panchamutts (Not Matha), *Agrahara Brahmapuri, Brahmeswara Kri* were the names of the areas where Brahmins resided and was headed by *Mahajanaru, Oorodeya, Aiyyanavaru.* Assemblies in Towns existed with names like *Barabaluthi, Ayagara, Pura, Hittu, Nadu, Mhanadu, Nadagounda pergade Nadasabhe, Mandala, Nadu, Mahanadu, Nadagounda pergade, Nadasabhe, Mandala, Nadu Panchayati, Nyaya samiti etc.* *Gaunda Prabhu, Nadashyanabogha, Nadagounda, Gouda, Heggade* were the chief person of such bodies. *Nagara Mahajana, pattana shetty, pattanaswamy, Pattanavergade, Gowda Pattan swamy* were the partiiarchs of large Urban areas namely, *Nagar, Nakara, Halaru, Nagra samooha, Nakarasamooth, Mahanagara, Bananjupattana etc.* Residential Tax was called *Manevana* and other Taxes were called *Jakati. Shanuboga, Senabhovaru* was the people who collected the Tax.

Urban local bodies in Karnataka are segregated into multiple categories like city corporations, city Municipalities, Town Municipalities and Town Panchayats based on their population. They are governed according 1964 Act for Municipalities (for city or town Municipalities and Pattana/Town panchayats) and 1976 Act for Municipal corporation (for corporations). The Government of Karnatak has set the guidelines for municipalities according to the 74th Amendment for the constitution of India. Accordingly, at present there are 10 city corporations, 59 City Municipal councils, 116 Town Municipal Councils and 97 Town/Pattan Panchayats in Karnataka. Government has created Notified Area committees (Four NACs in number) to provide municipal services for specified areas like industrial areas. The main sources of income for the municipalities are; Revenue collection from buildings and lands, Water supply billing, Licensing for the Infrastructure building and Trade, Taxing on the advertisement, Duty on certain transfer of property.

I. Women Empowerment through Urban Local Governance:

Women Empowerment is a multidimensional active process which enables women to realize their full identity and powers in every aspects of life such as social, political, economic and basically in decision making institutions. In the context of India, basically after the Indian independence various developments have taken place in the field of participatory politics of women.

Very recently the Constitution (One Hundred and Sixth Amendment) Act, popularly known as the Women's Reservation Bill, 2023 (*Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam*), was introduced in Loksabha on 19 September 2023 during the special session of Parliament. This legislation seeks to allocate 33 percent of the seats in the directly elected Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies for women. The Rajya Sabha passed the bill unanimously with 214 votes in favor and none against, on 21 September 2023. President Murmu signed the bill on 28 September 2023, and the gazette notification was also published the same day, which made it clear that the reservation will come into force soon after the first delimitation (frozen until 2026).

The truth is that empowerment should entail a power to participate in the decision making process in all spheres of society, with no separation of the public and private and in all social, economic, political and cultural processes. The capacity and capabilities of women mostly remain unrecognized and their contributions remain unnoticed. . In present India, although local government is a subject of the state government, the 73rd and 74th Constitutional amendments make it obligatory for the state governments to organize local bodies, to hold regular elections to them and to give them appropriate finances. After the 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution of India, one-third of the wards were to be reserved for women candidates and in the recent amendment fifty percent of wards would be reserved for women candidates. Apart from the reservation of women candidates, some other wards were reserved for candidates from socially backward sections.

II. Women Political Participation:

The term 'political participation' has a very wide meaning. It is not only related to 'Right to Vote', but simultaneously relates to participation in: decision-making process, political activism, political consciousness, etc. Women in [India](#) participate in voting, run for public offices and political parties at lower levels more than men. Political activism and voting are the strongest areas of women's political participation. To combat gender inequality in politics, the [Indian Government](#) has instituted [reservations](#) for seats in local governments.

Women turnout during India's parliamentary general elections was 65.63%, compared to 67.09% turnout for men. India ranks 20th from the bottom in terms of representation of women in Parliament. Women have held the posts of president and prime minister in India, as well as chief ministers of various states. Indian voters have elected women to numerous state legislative assemblies and national parliament for many decades.

The participation of women and their involvement in electoral process is an important marker of the maturity of democracy in any country. It can be defined as equality and freedom with which women share political power with men. Despite various provisions in the constitution, women in the Indian subcontinent continue to be under-represented in the legislatures, both at the national and the state levels. The number of female representatives in legislative bodies in the Centre and in most of the states of India is below 20%, reflecting a pan Indian gender exclusion from electoral participation and quality representation.

The Indian female participants in the electoral politics are mainly less because of political party competition, as national political parties and the regional political parties in the states discriminate not only in terms of seat allotments, but also in the party rank and file and chain of command. This is a major contributor to the party competition structure in the Indian politics that is ruled by inherent male dominance and a patriarchal mindset that excludes women from the electoral process.

III. Women in Urban Bodies:

Women's leadership in urban bodies and effective participation is increasingly on the development agenda of governments, bilateral and multilateral agencies, and nongovernmental organizations, including women's rights groups. Evidence from programmes and research demonstrates the important role women play as key actors and decision-makers in the development process across a wide range of sectors. In the political arena in particular, there is growing momentum among governments to foster and ensure women's participation and leadership in governance structures. Establishing quotas for women's representation at different levels of governance has been a strategic tactic in achieving this goal in many countries.

In India the urban local government functions in towns and cities through municipal institutions which include municipal corporations, committees, councils, municipal town and notified area committee. It somewhere serves as a reservoir of talents for local and national leadership. It was only during 1980's that the Central government had taken momentous decisions in setting up the Ministry of Urban Development, appointing National Commission on Urbanization and introducing Nagarpalika Bill in 1989 and 1991 in the country.

Conclusion:

There is a range of factors that hinder women's access to political participation in India. Despite the legal constitutional provisions, women are still at the subordinate position and women in the country occupy low status in the society. The involvement of women in policy formulation and decision making processes has been insignificant. Political participation which is the manifestation of democracy allows for diversity of opinion and participation of both men and women cannot thrive by excluding the women folk that constitute half of the world's population. Without equal participation of women to political process, the hope for democracy and democratization is unrealizable. Therefore the democratic process is able to grow and develop effectively only when women can understand benefits equally with their counter parts. The active participation of women on par with men at all levels of decision-making is essential to the achievement of equality, sustainable development, democracy and gendered governance.

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