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HOW AND WHY WE NEED WOMEN IN POLITICS-THE VOICE OF THE FUTURE

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Abstract: Political representation was initially based on the premise that it deals primarily with individuals. It was believed that through very few women were actually joining politics at a given time; overall improvement in terms of education and employment would necessarily percolate into the political sphere too and their representation would commensurately increase. The trends elsewhere encouraged women as a whole that there is a slow and steady change have been witnessed. However, this paper has conducted over 90 random interviews on the contemporary issues and women need in politics and also including the emerging old age homes and drug menace, many of which were published in Kannada to draw the attention of the public and to have a social vigilance

KEY WORDS: Representation, Democracy, Local Politics, Political Party, Political Interest, Awareness, Male Chauvinism and Social Barriers.

Introduction:

It is noticed and examined that there is a growing difference in the sex ratio in India. Though it was almost equal for the last couple of decades it was tilting against the female in the recent past. According to the recent release the urban trend is very disturbing where in 2011 there were 929 women for 1000 men. Where as in 2022 it rose to 985. Interestingly, the rural trend figured 949 in 2011 and 1037 for 1000 men in 2022. The figures shown in here are a major concern not only for the present condition but also for the future. The urban society in India today have become a big laboratory for all kinds of experiments, especially on the issues related to women. According to the National Family Health Survey, 2020-21 the Indian families are becoming less likely to use abortions to ensure the birth of sons rather than daughters. Government efforts to curb sex selection and ban parental sex tests and social changes have made a difference in the last decade and thus normalizing the sex ratio.

The trends elsewhere encouraged women as a whole that there are a slow and steady changes have been witnessed. Thanks to the government initiation and action to curb the menace of sex determination these days. There are a few fundamental questions ought to be raised saying why have we as a society changed our perspective on women today? While appreciating the new phase of social perspective on women let us also make a case for as to why we need women and how we need them today.

This study chose to focus on the collegegoing and the future citizens of India in general and Dakshin Kannada in particular. As it is known, due to international level education institutions there are students from different states and countries. Being an educational hub, Dakshin Kannada has created a niche for itself over the years. The institution builders in Dakshin Kannada seem to have thought that the future of it depends upon imparting

the best education to build a nation. While the institutions begun the duties for which they were built the students also began to change their destination towards Dakshin Kannada instead travelling abroad for the quality education. Thanks to such efforts which resulted in representative student number in Dakshin Kannada. The students whom we randomly chose to respond to our few selected questions enlightened us as to what is there in their mind and how they wish to be in the days ahead. Though our study stretched for two years we could use their expertise in getting the following.

Methodology-

It was primarily a raw thinking that post covid life everywhere has reduced the spirit of taking challenges in life. Having seen the life getting back to normal situations existed couple of years ago we thought we meet the students and ask few questions instantly and record their responses. The questions did not have any structured format but highlighted the issues ranging from health to education. However, there were issues related to law and order, college management system, transport, restaurants, peer group and engaging in public activities. Few responded and few did not and said have no time to chat.

The study was conducted around 08 colleges with the help of Student Representatives who were selected to be so on the basis of representative elections as against the elections. With 20 respondents from each college including the representatives the study stretched for two years. On their permission a social media group was created with the name REP AND YOU and through which every day a question was posted for their response. There were all kinds of questions including their future plans and future of this nation and their duty towards it.

There was an assurance from the Admn that the identity of the students and opinions will be kept only for the purpose of the study and will be closed once the purpose is served. 08 colleges with 10 boys and 10 girls each assisted this study throughout and the writer expresses gratitude to them. All the 160 were the Bachelor Degree students including few foreign students. With the series of questions raised and posted the Representation of women was picked up for this write up as the students themselves were representatives in nature. There were 08-fold questions concerning women were asked and sufficient time was given to respond to them. It was all open-ended questions as the author wanted them to write at least a sentence.

Women in India are not a homogenous group as they are socially and economically divided. There are women of different religions, caste, class, region and language. Though for years they have not come together to fight against their second-rate citizen status there has been here and there few movements to assert their existence as equal to their counterparts. The post independent Indian experiment in inclusive approach and actions towards women have strengthened the social base of Indian society as well as Indian democracy. Their contribution in making democracy if not politically but otherwise is not to be marginalized. It is believed and understood that democracy will have no meaning unless the women become part of it. Though there have been legislations to recognize and share power amongst women the efforts have not been appreciable.

In the name of rights as guaranteed by the Indian Constitution women have been surviving excluding few incidents where the rights are being totally denied. Instead of inclusiveness women are still being marginalized. Though respondents were young boys and girls they said they watch women both at their home and outside how women have been treated in society in general and in the context of democracy in particular.

Younger generation felt the need for practicing democracy at all level to make women safe and integrated at all levels. This society needs them as they practice democracy better than their counterparts. The response from the young and very bright minds have stressed on the fact that that Indian democracy has the future only if women have equal status at all level.

Women and representation

On the issue of women and representation, the respondents came out with the expression that there is no preference given to them despite their number as well as hard work. The presence of women where ever possible can be achieved provided there are enough opportunities created. The initiation in India to accommodate women in power centers have been upheld widely. Indian experiment in post independent India though appreciable much should have been done to upgrade the representation at all levels. There are two levels where representation of women is expected and recognized. First at the level of politics. Second, at the level of nonpolitical sectors. The representation at the nonpolitical level is being achieved according to the potentiality of women and their interest in it. The political representation has not been a natural act but granted to women to make the system representative. The political representation in India has been a debatable issue to the extent that if it is the number or value on which representation has to be rested. As far as number is concerned as discussed in the beginning of this writing, women must get the political representation proportionate to their population strength. Value denotes the commitment of this society and political system to accommodate all those who are termed as marginalized for ages.

However, political representation exhibits the fact that power in democracy must not concentrate in one or the other group but must be shared across all socio-political identities. Though looks ideal to believe and practice, political representation is possible only through political commitment. The younger generation is not fully with political process, but are capable of understanding the significance of politics when explained. They are happy that the politics is conducted the way it is at present and expressed it needs to be reformed much more.

Women and democracy

Since ages the societal life has been carried on by an un written agreement where the social roles were shared between men and women. Ages have passed and the shared roles have remained the same. Women have been accorded a second position and men have taken the lead. Our respondents were asked to respond on what do they understand on democracy. It was very surprising that with the new teaching materials available in syllabus on constitution of India they said it is a value than mere practice. The response of this kind has not surprised this author but also made to appreciate the way younger generation is going. They did not see democracy and attached it to only politics. They said women are more democratic than men. While they characterized women, they also made a remark that men do not like women emerging as their competitors. Out of 160 respondents only 13 have not properly responded. Their response was not against the democracy but they did not understand the significance of it.

For them the democracy is must as it suits India better than any system. It is in democracy the Indianness can survive. They said they are being taught in this form where they see a great future for women in democracy. Violence women can take back seat in democracy hence they vote for democracy.

This response by them is very interesting as the young minds have asked for the share in democracy which they think it is their right. It is this make everyone feel that the journey of India will be meaningful and empowering in the days to come. Women have better opportunities to represent in democracy hence they supported democracy as a good model in politics.

Women and local politics

Decentralized politics has brought remarkable changes in India, especially in terms of the outlook of the Indian politics. Reservation of seats for women in local bodies have not only helped the marginalized to get in to politics but also changed the nature of Indian politics. The inclusive approach to redefine the representation helped the disadvantaged and marginalized to make way for policy making. The long-standing debate on demand for sharing power was fulfilled from 1992 onwards in India.

It is not that younger generation welcomed the great beginning of representation at the grass root level as it did not bring the expected change in social scenario. They are of the opinion that instead of reservation the downtrodden as well as the marginalized must be provided with the education to make them economically independent. While appreciating the token gesture towards women they insisted for the genuine action to treat women equally where ever they are represented.

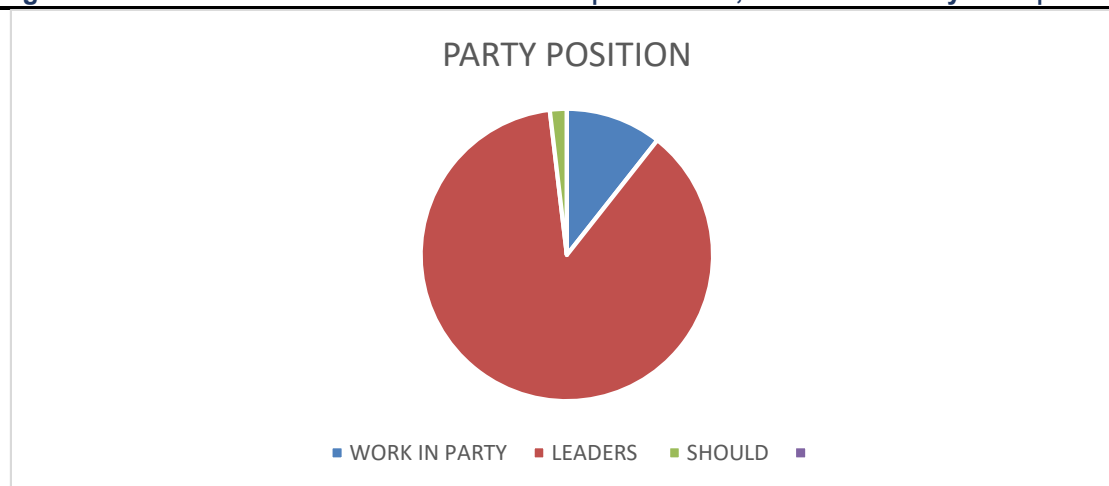
However, the presence of women at the local bodies signified the fact that there are women once unheard are making their way to politics whether consciously or otherwise. The silent, shy and absolutely nonpolitical women have become political and making their voice heard. This is the major outcome of the local politics today in India. Given the opportunity in and significance of the politics the younger generation, especially the college going students have refused to take part in local politics. On explaining some of highly qualified younger leaders and their achievements in the context of transparency the new batch of young students restricted their comments saying they appreciate but do not intend to take part in local politics.

Women and political party

Political parties of both national and regional level have not come out with a clear agenda as to what they think and what they offer to women within the party. There are identified programs for women announced periodically especially during elections. Though there has been a debate on the internal democracy within the party it has not been converted in to action. Women have been the biggest supporters of political parties both during elections and after. The interesting fact is that women of different socio-economic background have appeared differently both in action and figures. Those political parties have extended populist schemes have been supported by the rural poor women. The urban women have been the supporters of such political parties who have sensitized the elections on one or the other issues.

Political parties in India enjoy the maximum power for that each one of them is a potential ruler in one or the other day. The political process is designed in such a way that the party heads remind us the lost glory of Kings and Queens. The outlook, power and followers in total make them an exclusive person above the ordinary mass. The party head indeed enjoys the support of large people natural or manufactured, where ever and whenever they [he or she] appear in public.

Younger generation have been watching this directly and through media as how the leaders have been cheered when they appear in public. The number of women leaders are not encouraging as there are very few as against their strength. Women too have the same potentiality to address the issues concerning India but they cannot as they are already engaged with their social responsibilities. It is socially assigned to them to manage their family affairs instead of appearing in public. Those who have appeared and have made name have been economically sound and have had sufficient support to take care of the responsibilities which a normal women have in India. Thus, there is a close relationship between the economic status of women and political participation as well as reaching to the powerful position. The students remember that those who have made names in India were economically affluent and successfully reached the commanding position. Women must utilize the existing opportunities and emerge as leaders, if need be, may float a political party to fight the existing attitude towards women.

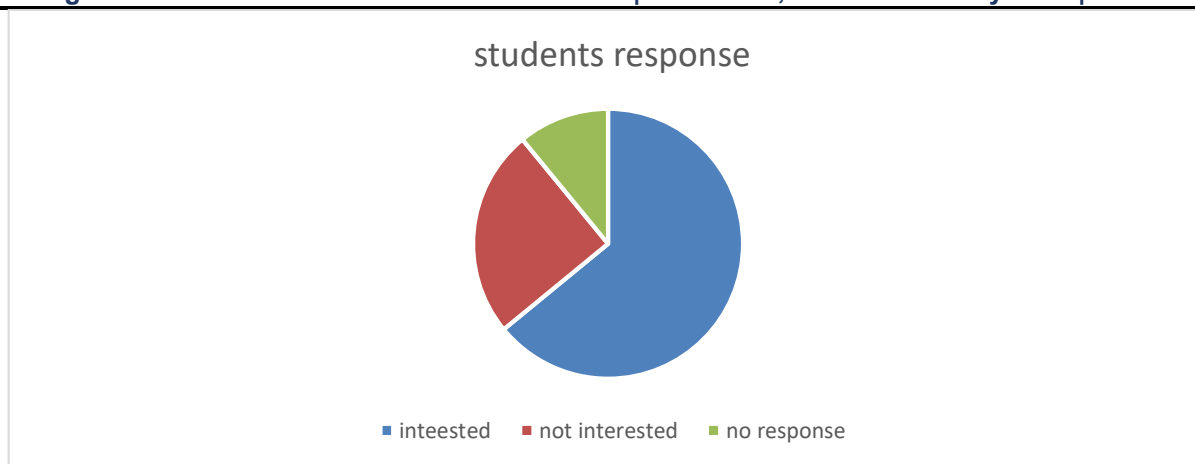


Political interest

Given the trends in India there were few sectors which the younger ones do not prefer to opt for, one among them is politics. They seem to have least interest in politics as it is full of confusions. Younger generations have hardly attempted to know the political leaders who have made name and brought significant changes in India. They have seen the political leaders on silver screen where for the purpose of entertainment the politicians are projected and characterized to attract the minds. Cinemas have become their great teachers and learn from it very easily including different languages. It is understood that they are not in the race as it is for older people. The understanding of the political arena amongst students is very less and have misunderstood the fact that politics is for the seniors.

While pursuing the carrier the students gave least importance to politics saying it is not their choice. Few representatives themselves said they were selected as they scored highest marks in the class. This may be due to the education they receive at the early stage. On the other hand, the politics today also has failed to attract the students and make them think towards the public life. However, of late students have got in to a trend where the Hero worship is absolutely common. The charisma of a national leader today has changed the mind and actions of students these days and are slowly reconsidering their perspectives on politics. Very interestingly girls have expressed their feelings that politics matters in their life if not now at least in the future. There is a growing interest to know on the incidents happening around and connecting them one to another.

It is surprising that students are showing interest in politics these days. Though they do not specify their role or part in politics, they are not averse of it. The student politics of 80s and 90s are making their come back to campuses slowly as there is increasing interest in politics amongst students. Political parties are making use of them as the basis for their activities, especially during elections. Party based student politics are present on campuses these days. Women students have emerged as the public speakers in many colleges and they have been backed by their counter parts.



Awareness level

With the new technology and available facilities or access to information no one can say he or she is denied of information. Thanks to corona for making use of alternative mode of learning and teaching. Computers and mobile phones were utilized to the maximum to carry on the college activities including cultural programs. This helped every student to have a smart phone where group chatting was initiated. Information of all kinds percolated amongst students faster ever before. Learning process got enlarged where study materials were posted by teachers regularly. This trend continued even after the corona menace and students increasingly depend upon their smart phones today. The details of the class, admission, examination fee, examination time table and results are available on their palm. While its use is increasing day by day the mobile phones have also served them otherwise. Information related to few incidents get circulated and social disturbances have taken place.

As it is said above, awareness about public life amongst students is increasing day by day. The gender difference is slowly disappearing on campuses as the students form a group irrespective of their sexual identity. The advantage amongst students are they are easily connected to each other due to various social media groups of which they are a part. Instead of teachers the social media groups educate students better. Most interesting part is that the respondents of this study were not for gender discrimination of any sort. Boys have appreciated the way girls are doing in studies and welcome them in politics to do better. Many boys expressed their feeling that their counter parts will do better in politics than boys. With women in primary positions the corruption can be wiped out as women hardly encourage the practices of corruption. There is a trust on women in the society as they can lead the society better than men.

AWARENESS SCALE. RIGHT-150 WRONG- 10 REFUSED TO ANSWER -0

Male chauvinism

Through the centuries it is being taught that there are two different sex available and recently there is also mention of third which gets the tag as transgender. This socialization process from childhood is cultivated continuously to project one sex superior to another. It is a common scene where men get first recognition followed by women. Historically it has been built in the minds and even in the absence of men their shade remains in several social activities. There are significant places where the presence of men is preferred against women. Though few changes have taken place the shadow of men remains. The male dominated practices and places have remained in the society unchanged for centuries. Place one and place two are a stereo typed practice which takes place continuously.

Young students are aware of it and said that feeling is still in practice. Even in places where the physical absence of men is seen the mind operates as if it is a male dominated society. Agreeing with fact that it is a male dominated society the students were asked if we live in male dominated society. Besides being good to their counter parts the male students have agreed with the fact that it is a male dominated society. It is this society which extends or shares the resources available to women in almost every sphere of actions. Year after years, this feeling of male being superior to women will continue as it is our culture, said students. The male chauvinistic behavior is projected as the culture hence, perhaps will remain in society for years.

The younger generation is under the impression that there are certain social practices which needs to be protected and have to be continued. The sign of their thinking and their conception of future looks to be traditional hence the stereo type behavior of men and women will continue. When asked if there are male dominated practices in society all of them expressed saying yes. Though the girls are active and looks more serious than boys have agreed that they live in a male dominated society.

Response-It is male dominate society-160

Social barriers

The perspectives on women in society are more real than what women are. There are several social construction theories on women, especially on who is more capable either male or female in taking up risks. One knows for sure at least in Indian society that women undertake or women are to do multiple work simultaneously. All her multitasking from dawn to dusk is unpaid and her service at home goes unheard and unnoticed. There are certain concepts which are absolutely created for men than women. Concepts like rest, relax, break, holiday etc. these concepts do not get applied to women as they do not have them in life. Their energy is mostly spent in the domestic service which is considered as her duty to family if she is not working outside. In case of those women working outside for money she is expected to do both domestic service and external work.

However, there are inbuilt social barriers which are considered as part of the social practices hence, women are not supposed to act like men. The social barriers are different from one group of women to another as the group consciousness is invariably derived from either caste or religion to which they belonged to. From the level of thinking to the practicing of her daily course of activities there are barriers constructed and faithfully remained in society for ages.

The students who supported us were asked if there are social barriers and if somention them. They responded saying that they cannot do which their counterparts do in colleges. Boys said they cannot move freely as they do; cannot scream like boys do; they cannot speak like boys do; and they have social restriction with a warning what to do and don't. they are girls, that's it! said boys. On the other hand girls have also expressed saying the college maintains separate place in canteen, separate sports and games for girls and boys, separate place in library and separate place in class. We are told that we are different from them in every aspect of college practices. Though the college rules do not speak on them there are restricted behavior in each one of them. This brings us to a conclusion that there are unwritten social rules which are practiced faithfully than the written rules.

Almost all girls numbering 80 have said there are social barriers for them to observe in their life both inside and outside family. Few boys mentioned that there are barriers but they are part of the culture and responded as if they are the protectors of girls. Few of them out of 80 have said girls must get an opportunity to be like boys as there must not be any discrimination which are socially designed. 26 boys said discriminatory practices are there and they should be wiped out from society.

Conclusion

The above responses to few questions were not only responses but also their mind and the way they are shaping their thinking pattern. This study was primarily focused in the eve of continuous elections conducted for state and center as well as the elections at the college level. Each one of them have responded as if they are more experienced in politics and greater experience. Though the focus was on how they want women in the society, they took the author to the different world of their understanding. The new generation is socially well informed and are showing interest in the things which their elders neglected. With the new young lot emerging vibrant, the political process may find a democratic society based on democratized practices. However, the number may be small who constituted this study, it matters in a big way as they promise to be a good citizens of this country.

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