

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN INDIA**SMT . VIJAYALAKSHMI.N¹**Assistant Professor of Sociology
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Tumkur Dist, Karnataka state,**Dr. YOGANARASIMHACHARI. K.²**Assistant Professor of Sociology
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Mandya, Karnataka state,**ABSTRACT**

The Union Cabinet has approved the much- delayed Women's Reservation Bill providing 33 per cent reservation to women in Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies. The Bill is likely to come in this session of Parliament. A delegation of Joint Parliament Committee on Women Empowerment had met President Pratibha Devisingh Patil and urged her to direct the Government to hold the discussion on the Bill on 8th March in Parliament to mark the International Women's Day centenary celebrations. India has seen a consistent struggle for a constitutional amendment to reserve one third of seats for women in parliament and state legislatures. The fourteenth Lok Sabha has also completed its tenure without adopting the historical constitutional amendment.

The Common Minimum Programme of United Progressive Alliance government has also promised enactment of legislation to reserve one third of seats to women. The mockery over women's reservation has once again started. It is rather surprising that in the parliamentary history of India women's reservation bill is the only bill that failed to become an act despite a clear parliamentary majority for it. The flimsy reasons given by the successive governments reveal the lack of political will. The successive governments have been arguing that this bill could not be enacted due to lack of political consensus.

Democracy is the most representative form of political organization the human civilization has heralded so far. There is no meaning of democracy when women who constitute nearly half of the population, have only eight percent representation. Due representation for women shall deepen the democratic process. Second, several studies have revealed that women in general are more responsive to issues of human development. I. Imparting Education and Bringing Political Awareness II. Critical analysis of women's Reservation Bill III. Empowering leadership , qualities- inactive participation and strengthening IV. Decision making qualities and political socialization. V. Suggestions and Conclusions.

women who have entered politics might have used their family background at the beginning. But during the course of their political career they have emerged as political leaders on their own. Indira Gandhi was a shining example of such a trend. Her critics also accept that she was a leader with great political skills. In fact there are women political leaders who have grown in their political career without any influential family background. Uma Bharati, Mamata Banerjee are examples of such a trend. Therefore it is wrong to oppose women's reservations on the ground that it will lead to deedhi, beebhi, bethi syndrome.

I. Introduction :-

Democracy implies equality for all human persons, men and women. As against this basic notion of democracy what is normally seen is that women are excluded from different walks of life,

more visibly in Politics. The U.N. observes that women constitute "world's largest excluded category". For the attainment of true democratic spirit shall be ensured better political participation. "In the struggle for gender justice", Usha Narayanan argues, "political participation constitutes the first and foremost step in that direction.

Equal treatment to women in political life, to be meaningful and effective should start from the grassroots level. To provide training and practice in the process of decision-making, the rural democratic institutions are the ideal structures to begin with. One of the aims of the 73(1)d Constitutional Amendment Act is to accomplish this purpose. "The question of political empowerment of women in rural India has assumed considerable significance recently because of The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act. The amendment provides reservation of seats and posts of chairperson for women in all grassroots level democratic institutions in the countryside known as panchayats. This is a historic step of far reaching implications and significant repercussions on the political process in rural India."

"As long as women of India", declared Mahatma Gandhi in 1925, "do not take part in public life, there can be no salvation for the country". He further declared, "As long as women do not come to public life and purify. we are not likely to attain swaraj". "Ever if we did", he added, "it would have no use for that kind of swaraj to which women have not made their full contribution."

II. Imparting Education and Bringing Political Awareness :-

Power is basically neither good nor bad. A democrat needs power and a dictator also needs power. What is important is the use or misuse of power. Because of the blatant misuse of power, the word politics has got a bad odour. Political Education, therefore, has remained a neglected area in social sciences and not much work has been done not only in India but also abroad.

Political education, therefore, means knowledge about the political system, skills for the maintenance and growth of the political system, and necessary attitudes and values to bring spirit in the political system. The objective of political education can, therefore, be stated as the training of individuals to be intelligent, effective and responsible citizens through imparting of knowledge, building up of skills and cultivation of values.¹ All these three elements are significant and have to be developed together, each conditioning the other. Mere knowledge does not serve the objective of political education which requires effective participation based on appropriate skills. Similarly, unreflective or ill informed participation is equally undesirable; and neither knowledge nor participation will lead to the desired social changes unless they are both governed by a proper value system.

Every political system operates in a given society which has its own political culture, distinct from that of other countries. The political system, for its maintenance and growth, requires certain knowledge, skills and values on the part of the people. The process of political education gives knowledge, tries to create skills and inculcate values congenial for the working of the political system. As the society consists of divergent groups, the dissatisfied section in society can be given political education for the overthrow of the political system. If this attempt gets necessary support by the people, there is a change in the government and in the political system.

AIMS & OBJECTS

- a. To diffuse political education, awareness and useful knowledge in the general public.
 - b. To enable the common man to participate in public, private and political institutions.
 - c. To impart education and training to the parliamentarians, political and welfare workers.
 - d. To bring about national integrity and non-prejudice among the people.
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- e. To highlight the importance and vitality of the democracy, good governance, peace, human rights and freedom.
- f. To set up libraries and reading rooms for the general public in the country.
- g. To seek, receive, impart, study, monitor, research and collect the latest and modern information, technologies and ideas through any media, regardless of frontiers, for the knowledge-seekers.
- h. The Academy shall run on non-political and non-commercial basis.
- i. The Promoters / Office bearers and Members shall not be paid-employees of the Academy and shall also not be paid in any manner.
- j. To secure, receive, accept and manage funds, donations, grants, endowments and any other moveable property or properties from lawful sources within the country and to utilize them for promoting and achieving the Aims and Objects of the Academy.

III. Critical analysis of women's Reservation Bill :-

The real test of democracy is the creation of equality of opportunity for the hitherto deprived sections of society. It requires both a favourable social atmosphere and an individual attitude. Individual attitude and social atmosphere is a sort of reversible equation: one influences the other, in both directions. In practical terms it means that efforts have to be made at various levels of society simultaneously. Every attempt, in every direction, is bound to affect adversely some vested interests. So, one has to be prepared for a long drawn out struggle on all the fronts. Democracy in kitchen and bedroom goes hand in hand with democracy in Parliament and Panchayat. It has to become a way of life; it has to be adopted in literary vocabulary and in political discourse alike. In the context of the present discussion it amounts to shedding of all mental reservations against reservation of seats for women in the Parliament and in Assemblies.

The idea of making a legal provision for reserving seats for women in the Parliament and State Assemblies came into being during Rajeev Gandhi's tenure as the Prime Minister of India when the Panchayati Raj Act, 1992 (73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment) came into effect granting not less than 33% reservation to women in the Panchayati Raj Institutions or local bodies. Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda made the actual promise for reservation of seats for women in Parliament and State Assemblies in 1996. I.K. Gujral proposed the present form and shape of the Bill during his term as the Prime Minister of India.

The Bill in its Current form envisages reserving 181 seats in the Parliament for women. In practical terms its efforts would be that 181 male members of Parliament would not be able to contest elections if the Bill is passed. Also, there is to be a rotation of seats, i.e., a male member of Parliament cannot represent the same constituency for more than two consecutive terms. Her relies the rub. This argument may hold water when it is discussed in classroom sessions but it cannot be taken as the sole basis to discard Women's Reservation Bill altogether. Securing 33% reservation for women in opening the doors of opportunity for political empowerment to almost 50% of our population.

It will not only serve the cause of democracy as the Panchayati Raj Institutions are doing at the grassroots level but will also go a long way in ensuring political equality through active participation of woman from both urban and rural areas. Also, if social equality through political empowerment is to be achieved the, Bill should include clauses which guarantee quota within quota to women belonging to scheduled tribes, scheduled castes, other backward castes, and minority communities so that a level playing field is provided for as well.

It is also argued that the Bill in its present form would end up ensuring seats in Parliament for the female relatives of those who are already in power. To counter this situation, provisions can be added in the Bill, which provides for no reservation to women who have close relatives in active politics (An acceptable definition of 'close relatives' can easily be arrived at.) These women can contest from general seats. There had been suggestions in the past in the form of alternatives to the Bill. One is to amend the Representation of People's Act 1951, to compel political parties to nominate women for one-third of their seats or lose recognition. This, according to Rajindar Sachar, former Chief Justice of Delhi, is flawed, as it would violate the Constitution of India, which guarantees its citizens the right to form association under Article 19(1)(c) as a fundamental right. Another alternative is to increase the number of seats in the Lok Sabha, which is currently based on the figures of the census of India, 1971, when the population of India was 54 crores. The numbers of seats were limited to 530 till further amendments. Now the Delimitation Commission has been asked to take the 2001 census as the basis for delimiting constituencies. According to 2001 census, the population of India has risen to 102 crores, therefore the number of seats are bound to increase before the next general elections. This should be reason enough to pave the way for the safe passage of the Women's Reservation Bill.

IV. Empowering leadership qualities in active participation :-

In India, women constitute a major socio-cultural and economically oppressed group and an equitable social order can never be established unless the equal rights for both women and the men are recognized in society. With this vision, Parivartan has been successfully undertaking holistic actions for women's empowerment, which has led to development of a women federation model. Parivartan works intensively with women on its belief in the philosophy that sustainable development remains incomplete without active participation of the women.

A). Women Empowerment Process

The intervention was initiated by Parivartan 9 years back i.e. in 2003-04 in Mandangad block of Ratnagiri district with only 16 women headed Gram Panchayats (GPs). Mandangad being the block facing acute water scarcity, 'Water' was chosen as the key issue to start with. "The direction and opportunities of Village Development - Problems and Remedies" was the basic theme of the initiative and facilitating the women leadership in bringing about fair village development was the main strategy.

B). Strategies Adopted -

- > Providing uninterrupted knowledge inputs through trainings & workshops.
- > Building confidence & facilitating experience sharing through Women Leadership Development Workshops.
- > Building rapport with Gramsabha.
- > Disseminating schemes' benefits to weaker sections in village.
- > Strengthening active support structures like women Self-Help Groups, Women Development Committees.
- > Mobilizing women Gramsabha and General Gramsabha.
- > Formation of block level women federations those are active over the issues in governance.

C). Strengthening Women Leadership & Promoting Good Governance

Social sciences have approved that women contribute a major share in the process of social reforms. Parivartan too experienced this ever since its early years. The opportunity to participate in local self-governance is not only a step towards women empowerment, but actually an opportunity to restructure the nationwide systems of governance.

Since last 5 years THP, Delhi and Parivartan's interventions form a reliable source of knowledge, information, skills and absolute energy to the women in governance. Along with Panchayat Raj trainings, leadership development workshops, village level actions & hand holding support remained our major thrust area. Starting with a small village level supports structures like SHGs, women leaders have made journey up to a well-structured block level federations.

The next big chapter was trainings & workshops to suffice the women leaders' needs of knowledge, information & skills in order to maneuver the process of effective governance at village level. Trainings & workshops on Panchayat Raj & Women Leadership Development Workshops supplied first dose of leadership skills to the newly joined EWRs. Workshops on organizational skills & federation functioning were arranged at block levels to bring about efficient activities of federation. These trainings were especially helpful for regulating the systems of the block level federations. And the last and most important component of the chain was the issue & advocacy based workshops. Through these workshops the women leaders strategically planned and coordinated their issue based actions to promote good governance at village level. The TOT has helped them emerge as a confident and well informed trainer on the village governance and development.

A desperate need for an association was felt, which would boost their confidence, give encouragement, facilitate sharing among women representatives and give them collective strength to have a greater demanding and negotiating power. After the establishment of federations, which have given them considerable encouragement and provided a platform to unite, their conditions have improved considerably. Political participation in the local bodies has transformed the lives of the women in terms of empowerment, self-confidence, political awareness and affirmation of identity.

The federation at every block acted as a key media to support women leaders to propel the village level actions. Thus, federation meetings played pivotal role in issue identification, strategic planning, spotting training needs and finally co-ordination & monitoring the actual action and its follow up.

D). Federation - Platform for Strengthening Women Leadership for Good Governance.

Being able to achieve participation, support & acceptance by key components in the village, especially by women citizen, these women leaders have set new standards of leadership in terms of open access to all over the available resources & decision making.

Devolution of women leaders' learning & experience to the next cadre of emerging women leadership is largely being projected by the federation. Besides, an enabling & conducive atmosphere for women leaders is being created in villages. Federation is making a committed journey to achieve the broader objectives of strengthening women leadership for a social justice.

With the formation of village level federation, the issues are being identified and addressed in a much effective & organized manner. Accelerated & simplified chain of action oriented information dissemination is the major output of federation. Along with acting as pressure groups for good governance, federation has also imparted sense of responsibility that reflects by the significant participation in Gramsabha and women Gramsabha. Federation leaders, with members have been marked to conduct various issue based campaigns like, right base approach for women to access various resources, electricity, regular & transparent PDS, reliable health services, quality education, sanitation & potable water supply, addiction free village & lastly for ensuring the smooth functioning of all these pro-people governance & administration.

E). Intervention strength

The intervention strength has reached the number of 149 women sarpanchs & women headed GPs & 16 GPs having women deputy sarpanch. 352 women GP member formed an inevitable part of the initiative. This was even strengthened further with the participation of 154 block level federation members & 288 village level federation members from the four blocks. Currently 184 SHGs are offering space to shape up (SHG members 2660) women confidence and perspective regarding village governance. It has also served as a platform for 552 SHG leaders to enhance their leadership abilities. The total reach out of THP-Parivatan's initiative exceeded over 2660 total number of women in 165 villages.

The federation activities are ultimately taking roots in all the blocks leading to strengthened women leadership. This has enhanced the level and quality of women participation in the entire development processes at village level.

F). Transformations Observed -

- > Participation of women citizen in Panchayat governance
- > Making the Panchayat more accessible to women and weaker sections
- > Prioritization of development needs
- > Stressing the basic needs like water, health & sanitation, education, livelihood
- > Imparting a cultured image to Panchayat
- > Making the bureaucracy more responsive & responsible
- > Making the village governance transparent & accountable to people
- > Assuring corruption free governance
- > Equal & justified opportunity to every village component
- > Changing gender equations at household and village level
- > Making the women organized, aware & active on decision making
- > Devolution of women leaders' learning & experience to the next cadre of emerging women leadership

In today's era of modernization women have made their presence felt in almost every field and Politics is no exception. Although India is known for its male chauvinist societies since ages, the ice is now gradually breaking. Indian politics is now defined and governed by majority of women politicians. The current parliament has seen the highest number of female candidates in its history. All the major parties have strong 'women wings' which has a huge impact on large number of women voters and also allures women to join the political parties. On the grass root level women seats are reserved in Panchayats and they actively participate in the decision making. World's respectable magazines like Forbes have put some of the Indian Political women in their list of more powerful women.

After Indira Gandhi's demise there was no big woman name in the Indian Political arena for almost a decade. But today this picture has changed and Indian women have come out of their 'sari-dhoti' image and entrap the Political world by their power and hard work. Sonia Gandhi is the live example of the same and she is now an inspiration for millions of Indian women. It is by her sheer hard work and dedication that she has not only learnt the Hindi language but manages the Congress party to perfection that today she is the epitome of Indian Politics. Smt. Mamta Banerjee is the next big name; she has managed to break the jinx of Communist Party in Bengal who has ruled there for more than half the century. She is the Railway minister of India and is working hard to improve the image of Indian railway. Smt. Mayawati who is the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh and president of the Bahujan Samaj Party is the most influential name in the Indian Politics. Smt. Sushma Swaraj is another very big name in the Indian Politics and she influentially holds the key position in Bhartiya Janta Party.

Indian Women are no more restricted to 'chauka-chuhla' image but are actively handling big portfolios in the Indian cabinet. Smt. Ambika Soni-Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Kumari Selja is holding two departments namely Minister of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation and Minister of Tourism, Smt. Krishna Tirath- Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Smt. D.Purandeswari- Minister of State in the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Smt. Panabaka Lakshmi- Minister of State in the Ministry of Textiles are some examples of women successfully managing important positions.

Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil is the first women President of India and is actively working for the upliftment of Indian women. The year 2009 witnessed the History written moments when Smt. Mira Kumar became the first Indian women to hold the office of the Lok Sabha Speaker. She is an ex-IFS officer and hails from the Bhojpuri land clearly indicating the women power in politics.

Apart from the above mentioned names, there are also many key leaders who redefined the local state politics. Leaders like Smt. Vasundhara Raje Scindia, Smt. Shruti Chaudhari, Smt. Meneka Gandhi worked hard and broke the family barriers and come into active politics and made their mark. Smt. J Jayalalitha, Smt. Uma Bharti, Smt. Renuka Chaudhary and Smt. Brinda Karat hold key positions in their Political Parties and actively taking them higher and since the last decade they remain key players in forming the collation government at center. The chief minister of Delhi, Smt. Sheela Dixit who won the post three consecutive times is solely responsible for the face change of Delhi.

The power of politics has influenced women from various fields. Many successful actresses of Hindi film industry have attracted towards political arena and are now members of Parliament. Hemamalini, Jaya Bachchan, Jayaprada are well known faces of the Indian Parliament. Politics is now attracting women from all shares and they are actively participating in it.

The youth has seen it as a career option and the trends are changing day by day. Many young politicians have evolved and have won by huge margins. Smt. Kiran Chaudhary, Ms. Agatha Sangma, Harsimrat Kaur Badal, Supriya Sule and Priya Dutt, are the upcoming faces of the Indian politics. Indirect involvement of women in politics is also increasing pace. Faces like Priyanka Gandhi become visible only during election times and leave a deep impression on voters.

Indian Panchayat system has the reservations for women and it has become a great platform for the welfare of women and making the poor and village women's to come forward and share their views for the betterment of Indian villages. Mass involvement of female workers in college and university elections is also proving a boon for the large political structure.

Challenges:- Despite the improving participation of women in Indian Politics, there are some bigger challenges which still need to be worked upon. The pity state of women still lays unnoticed in many areas and it has been often seen that the male candidates uses them as mere puppets and the reservations in Panchayats are sometimes become camouflage and the women remain just the face and power is enjoyed by their counterparts. The number of seats in current parliament is just 10%, this has to be increased to a significant level. 'Women Reservation Bill' is pending since ages and no discussion takes place for the same. It has been often seen that the women with some glamorous background are given backdoor entries whereas a large number of women spend their lives struggling to get to the deserving seat.

Lastly, it can be said that the image and involvement of women in Indian Politics has increased by many folds and some of them have successfully reached the top posts but a lot more has to be done in order to increase their presence, works towards the betterment of the women society and taking India parallel to the world's developed countries.

V. Empowering Leadership ,Qualities- inactive Participation and Strengthening :-

From the local to the global level, women's leadership and political participation are restricted. Women are underrepresented as voters, as well as in leading positions, whether in elected office, the civil service, the private sector or academia. This occurs despite their proven abilities as leaders and agents of change, and their right to participate equally in democratic governance. Women face several obstacles to participating in political life. Structural barriers through discriminatory laws and institutions still limit women's options to run for office. Capacity gaps mean women are less likely than men to have the education, contacts and resources needed to become effective leaders. Women's programmes on leadership and participation are guided by a history of international commitments to women's representation.

Towards these ends, we provide training for women political candidates to help build their capacities, and offer voter and civic education and sensitization campaigns on gender equality. We back gender equality advocates in calling on political parties, governments and others to do their part in empowering women. Other initiatives encourage young men and women to engage in advocacy around making gender equality measures central to public policymaking.

Mobilizing and Strengthening the Leadership capacity of young women enabling them to meaningfully participate in civic, political, and democratic process and to play their role as active citizen by imparting training to them on "Democracy, Active Citizenship, and Political Leadership". The trained girls through community workshops and Peer Education Skills replicate their learning and inspiration to other young women for promoting their active participation in democratic, civil, and political processes.

- Consultations with political activists, civil society activists, young women, and media on drawing recommendations for creating spaces for young women in political institutes, and ensuring meaningful participation of women in the decision making bodies of political institutes.
 - Advocacy with political parties for creating friendly spaces for young women in their structure, and meaningful involvement of women in the decision making bodies of political parties.

Sensitizing media to play active role in creating acceptability in the society towards meaningful participation of women in the democratic and political processes, and to highlight the importance of women participation is sustaining and strengthening democracy.

VI. Decisions making qualities and political socialization :-

The notion of political culture seeks to retain the psychological subtleties of the earlier national character studies while giving appropriate attention to the distinctive features of the political sphere and to the intervening stages of personality development between childhood and induction into adult political life. This is achieved by conceiving of two stages of socialization; the first is the induction into the general culture, while the second is the more particular, and usually more explicit, socialization to political life. In some forms of analysis it is useful to distinguish an additional stage, political recruitment to special roles within the political process. These stages are not necessarily sequential; explicit political socialization can occur at a very early point, when the individual is still being socialized into his general culture.

In shaping the political culture the political socialization process operates in terms of various socializing agents. Some of these agents, such as the family, tend to be prominent at the early phases of the socialization process, and thus their influences are most closely related to personality characteristics fundamental to the political culture. Other socializing agents, such as the mass media and political parties, tend to become critical at later stages and thus are primarily involved in influencing the more cognitive aspects of the political culture.

In all political cultures, concepts about power and authority have deep psychological dimensions because of the fundamental role of parental authority in the early socialization process. The skills that children develop in coping with family authority tend to provide a lasting basis for adult styles in dealing with authority. Thus, in some cultures it is widely assumed that authority can best be constrained by stressing issues of justice and fairness in a spirit of friendly informality, while in others the style is that of winning favor by displaying complete and abject submission.

This function of political cultures is related to but goes beyond the need of providing integration to the system and a spirit of collective identity. It involves the degree to which the inherent drama of power and decision is either accentuated or muted. Essentially, the affective dimension of the political culture is determined by the ways in which people are legitimately permitted to realize psychic satisfaction from active participation in politics.

The coherence and stability of political cultures are constantly threatened by the fact that people may turn to political action for intensely private and psychologically personal reasons, and thus seek satisfactions which are completely unrelated to the social or collective functions of politics. Such people may have little interest in the public goals or purposes of the movements they support, since their satisfaction comes mainly from the spirit of involvement and the drama of participation.

VII. Summary and Conclusions :-

Further, there are several women's organisations shouting for reservation, but they have always been disunited. At one point of time, the Government was willing to consider a 15-20% reservation but these women's organisations shouted it down.

During Mr. HD Deve Gowda's regime, the women's reservation bill almost sneaked through in the Lok Sabha. However, in the last minute, because of the objections raised by Uma Bharati, Lalu Prasad Yadav and Mulayam Singh Yadav, who demanded quota within quota, it got derailed. Since then successive governments have tried to bring in the bill but in vain. The SP and RJD are the two vocal parties, which insist on quota within quota knowing full well that it is not going to be accepted.

- The DMK, AIDMK, Telugu Desam, Trinamool Congress, Biju Janata Dal, National Conference, etc., claim they are in favour of reservation. If the Congress and BJP are sincere, they could push the bill together as they have the numbers.
- During the five years of Mr. Vajpayee's rule, various attempts were made to bring a consensus, but to no avail. The Congress then blamed the BJP for not being sincere. Today, the Congress has come up with a new formula but the BJP is not very keen.

➤ **The Role of Panchayati Raj in Women Political Empowerment**

- Article 243 D of the Constitution provides that not less than one-third of the total number of seats in every Panchayat shall be reserved for women including Chairpersons in every Panchayats and such seat may be allotted by rotation to different Constituencies/ Panchayats at each level.
 - The 73rd Constitutional Amendment provided for the increased participation of women in the political institutions at the village, taluka and district level. This has enabled several women, who had never been in power and even those illiterate, to enter politics.
 - There are 27,82,293 elected representatives in Panchayats out of which 10,42,282 are women which constitute to 37.46 %. In states like Kerala, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Madhya Pradesh, the number of women elected in panchayats is quite high.
 - To further facilitate the process of women's empowerment in the Panchayats, which is, of course, related to greater empowerment of the Panchayats themselves, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj is implementing a scheme of Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Yojana. The Ministry has also initiated the Panchayat Mahila Shakti Abhiyan.
- Karnataka tops the country in the representation of the women in the Panchayati Raj institutions with women winning 43.7 per cent of the seats in gram panchayats, 40.2 per cent in taluk panchayats and 36.4 per cent in zilla panchayats.
- Bringing women into politics through the Panchayat Raj Institutions system (PRI) was an act of positive discrimination. Crucially, PRI has helped to change women's perceptions of themselves. Women have gained a sense of empowerment by asserting control over resources, officials and, most of all, by challenging men. PRI has also given many women a greater understanding of the workings of politics, in particular the importance of political parties.
 - PRI has given many women a greater understanding of the workings of politics, in particular the importance of political parties. PRI has helped to change local government beyond simply increasing the numerical presence of women. There is now a minority of women who are in politics because of their leadership qualities or feminist consciousness.
 - Some of the ways in which women, through PRI, are changing governance are evident in the issues they choose to tackle; water, alcohol abuse, education, health and domestic violence.
 - Women are also taking action against child marriage and child domestic labour, whilst promoting girl-child education. As with education, women have used their elected authority to address quality health care as a critical issue.

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