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**Women Empowerment in Local Self Govt. in Karnataka
With Special Reference to Udupi Dist.**

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Abstract:

This study seeks to make an investigation in to how much women in Karnataka could make use of the opportunities. Which the Act provided and how much it helped women's to empower themselves. Women empowerment in conditioned by the socio – economic and religion – cultural ambience, it could be achieved with or without governmental assistance and support. Nevertheless in Indian context women empowerment remained a distant dream for a good five decades till the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments Act began to be implemented. The passage of the above acts are landmarks in the March 07 women towards the ultimate goal of self-fulfillment. Women's participation in politics is closely related to their level of empowerment in literacy as well as health care. Karnataka women are for ahead however, their presence in political arena, even at the grassroots level was not all conspicuous until empowerment. Was as i.e. – were, thrust upon them by the 73rd Amendment Act. This Act made the involvement and participation of women in Politics Mandatory. Thirty-three percent of the total seats and posts in the three tier Panchayath Raj Institutions are now been filled by women. This is the background which prompted the identification of this topic for study and to pay maximum effort in to different dimensions of rural democracy and women's Political participation and involvement in them.

Keywords: Women participation, empowerment of women, Panchayath Raj Act, Grama Panchayath, Taluk Panchayath, Zilla Panchayath, Karnataka, Udupi District.

Introduction:

Since Independence, various initiatives have been taken for improving the Socio – economic conditions and empowering women in India. In this context the Constitution guarantees socio – economic and political equality and the provision of equal rights for availing different opportunities to all social groups of the population. Especially women, increasing emphasis has also been placed on initiating variety of development schemes and welfare programs for maximizing the participation of women in different activities. Various legal reforms and resolutions in Social status and empowerment of women in Indian Social System. However little progress has been visualized in the participation of women in different activities.

In view of these assumptions the introduction of reservation policy is in favour of women in the Panchayath Raj Institutions. This study relates to political participation of women in Panchayath Raj System in Karnataka. In this study an attempt is made to analyze the political participation of women in Panchayth Raj system. In Grama Panchayath – A case study of Thirty two Grama Panchayath in Udupi District.

India is known as the land of villages and even now majority of population live in the villages. In India women have been deprived of various kinds of opportunities and advantages by our traditional society for the past several centuries. Discrimination of women is commonly observed in providing opportunities of socio – economic development. Participation in different activities and development programs and availing the opportunities of various facilities, which are directly or indirectly linked with bringing improvement in the life style and the quality of life because of prevailing several social and cultural backwardness.

In the view of these assumptions the introduction of reservation policy in favour of women in the Panchayath Raj Institutions has therefore been an important Government intervention for maximizing the participation of women in different activities of Grama Panchayath levels and thereby to improve their socio – economic status.

Gender inequality which the society has inherited as an age old malpractice is not likely to vanish only by enacting a law or issuing a whip, sexual inequality has much deeper roots.

Therefore it is imperative to study all aspects of social problems being faced by women while discharging their responsibilities as a participant or a chairperson in newly constituted Grama Panchayath with new scenario of providing recent administrative and financial back up and co-ordination. The present study has attempted to examine various issues related to the implementation pattern of reservation policy and its awareness among women. The nature of participation of women members in different meetings, activities and various development programmes of Grama Panchayaths, social reform and welfare activities.

Objectives Of The Study

1. To understand the report the socio – economic, educational background of elected women representatives to Grama Panchayaths of the area under study.
2. To study and asses the level of awareness of the elected women members about their roles and responsibilities and various developmental programmes.
3. To study the involvement of elected women members in decision making.
4. To study the problems and difficulties faced by the elected women representatives in Grama Panchayaths.
5. To suggest suitable measures for the empowerment of women in Grama Panchayaths.

Profile Of Karnataka State

General:

The State of Karnataka is the 8th largest State in the Indian Republic in terms of geographical area of 1, 91,791 Square Kilometers. It is also 9th largest in terms of population. The State is situated in the Southwest India and accounts for 6.3 percent of geographical area and 5.1 percent of population in the Country. The State is bounded by Maharashtra, and Goa States in the North and North East; by the Arabian Sea in the West; Kerala and Tamilnadu in the South and Seemandra and Telangana in East. The State is confirmed roughly within 11.5 and 18.5 North latitudes and 74° and 78° East longitudes, situated on a table land, where the Western and Eastern Ghats ranges covered in the Nilgiri Hills complex. It composes of 30 Districts. The State capital city is Bangaluru.

Physical Features:

The State can be divided into four regions namely (a) Costal strip on the West (b) Western Ghats ranges (c) Mid – plateau (d) North Eastern plains. The Costal are rise above the sea level from 600 ft. Northern Eastern plains of Bidar, Kalburgi and Raichur lie about 600 – 1500 ft. The Mid plateau rises from 1500 – 3000 ft. The Western Ghats Ranges are seen from 3000 to 6000 ft. The Northern and Eastern districts like Vijayapura, Bellary and Chitradurga receive low rainfall whereas Dakshina Kannada, Uttara Kannada, Coorg and Chikmagalore in the Western Ghats and Semi – Malnad region receive heavy rainfall (more than 2000 mm). The distribution of rainfall closely follows with the evergreen belt of Western Ghats and Malnad regions. Through the State situated in the tropics, the climate is equable in the Southern districts and warm in the Northern district.

Current Population of Karnataka State

Name of Districts	Population in 2011			Growth Rate – 2001 -2011)	Density (Per Sq. Km.)	Sex Ratio (Females per 100 Males
	Persons	Males	Females	2001-211	2011	2011
Karnataka	6,11,30,704	3,10,57,742	3,00,72,962	15.67	319	968
Belgaum	47,78,439	24,27,104	25,51,335	13.38	356	969
Bagalkot	18,90,826	9,52,902	9,37,924	14.46	288	984
Bijapura	21,75,102	11,12,953	10,62,149	20.38	207	954
Bidar	17,00,018	8,70,850	8,29,168	13.16	312	952
Raichur	19,24,773	9,66,493	9,58,280	15.27	228	992
Koppal	13,91,292	7,01,479	6,89,813	16.32	250	983
Gadag	10,65,235	5,38,477	5,26,758	9.61	229	978
Dharwad	18,46,993	9,39,127	9,07,866	15.13	434	967
Uttara Kannada	14,36,847	7,27,424	7,09,423	6.15	140	975
Haveri	15,08,506	8,19,295	7,79,211	11.08	331	951
Bellary	25,32,383	12,80,402	12,51,981	24.92	300	978
Chitradurga	16,60,378	8,43,411	8,16,967	9.39	197	969
Davanagere	19,46,905	9,89,602	9,57,303	8.71	329	967
Shimoga	17,55,512	8,79,817	8,75,695	6.88	207	995
Udupi	11,77,908	5,62,896	6,15,012	5.90	304	1,093
Chikmagalur	11,37,753	5,67,483	5,70,270	0.28	158	1,005
Tumkur	26,81,449	13,54,770	13,26,679	3.74	253	979
Bangalore	95,88,910	50,25,498	45,63,412	46.68	4,378	908
Mandya	18,08,680	9,09,441	8,99,239	2.55	365	989
Hassan	17,76,221	8,85,807	8,90,414	3.17	261	1,005
Dakshina Kannada	20,83,625	10,32,577	10,51,048	9.80	457	1,018
Kodagu	5,54,762	2,74,725	2,80,037	1.13	135	1,019
Mysore	29,94,744	15,11,206	14,83,538	13.39	437	982
Chamarajanagar	10,20,962	5,13,359	5,07,603	5.75	200	989
Gulbarga	25,64,892	13,07,061	12,57,831	17.94	233	962
Yadgir	11,72,985	5,91,104	5,81,881	22.67	224	984
Kolar	15,40,231	7,79,401	7,60,830	11.04	384	976
Chikkaballapura	12,54,377	6,37,504	6,16,873	9.17	298	968
Bangalore Rural	9,87,257	5,07,514	4,79,743	16.02	441	945
Ramanagara	10,82,739	5,48,060	5,34,679	5.06	303	976

Development of Panchayath Raj Institution in Karnataka State:

The Mysore Government in 1918 enacted the Mysore Local Board and Village Panchayath. Act which provided political and administrative powers to the elected representatives in the State. Maharaja of Mysore strengthened these bodies and ensured the largest possible measure of responsibility and autonomy.

In 1952, the Government of Mysore has passed the Mysore Village Panchayath and District Board Act. The Government appointed one more committee called the Local Boards Enquiry Committee under the chairmanship of D. Chandrashekhariah. The committee recommended a three tier structure of Local Self Government with District Boards at the apex, Taluk Board at the middle and Village Panchayath at the base.

In 1959, Mysore State had passed the Panchayath and Local Board Act. It was adopted in 1960 and Grama Panchayath and Taluk Panchayath came in to existence in the State. 1983 Chief Minister Sri Ramakrishna Hegde and Panchayath Raj and Rural Development Minister Abdul Nazir Sab adopted the New Panchayath Raj System. The Government of Karnataka under the leadership of Sri Ramakrishna Hegde had enacted the Karnataka Zilla Panchayath, Taluk Panchayath, Mandala Panchayath. The Nyaya Panchayath Act 1983 which was brought into operation from 7th April, 1987. The Zilla Parishad Act of 1983 transferred a wide range of the State's functions to Zilla Parishads, encompassed vital development areas in the State.

According to the new law in Karnataka State in 1991 Former Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao had introduced another draft bill pertaining to rural areas. The large National Convention was organized by Ram Nivas Mirda, Former Minister to gather intellectual and practical input for the development of Panchayath Raj System in India. The Balwanth Rao Mehta Committee had made recommendations for different States to establish Panchayath Raj System to ensure democratic de-centralization. Accordingly in 1993, the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment came in to force in order to create Local Government across the Country. The 73rd exclusively dealt with the Grama Panchayath System in rural areas. While the 74th Constitutional Amendment deals exclusively with Urban Local Government in India. In Karnataka the Government implemented the three – tier Panchayath Raj System namely Grama Panchayath, Taluk Panchayath and Zilla Panchayath in 1993. The objectives of Karnataka Panchayath Raj Act includes:-

- ❖ Establish a three – tier structure for Panchayath System at Village, Sub – District and District levels.
- ❖ Elect Members to the three – tiers through the direct elections at all levels.
- ❖ Elect Chairperson and Vice – Chairperson through indirect election.
- ❖ Reserve seats for scheduled caste, scheduled tribes and women at all three levels.
- ❖ Conduct elections to all the three levels under the State Election Commission.
- ❖ Empower State Finance Commission to determine the sharing of funds between State Government and the Panchayath Raj Bodies.
- ❖ Maintain accounts and conduct audits all three tier of the Panchayath System.

Grama Panchayath:

The Grama Panchayath to the basic of lowest level of Panchayath Raj in Karnataka. It has jurisdiction over the group of Villages Grama Panchayath represents and assembly of the Village elders who are directly elected by the Citizens of the Village. The following functions:-

- ❖ Provide Sanitary Latrines to at least one – tenth of the households every year.
- ❖ Construct and maintain sufficient community Latrines for use by men and women.
- ❖ Maintain water supply work on its own or through annual contract.
- ❖ Revise and collect taxes, rates and fees at fixed periods.
- ❖ Ensure enrollment of children in primary school.
- ❖ Ensure Immunization of children.
- ❖ Registration of births and deaths.
- ❖ Sanction for proper drainage.
- ❖ Construct, repair and maintain public streets.
- ❖ Remove the encroachments of public streets and public places.
- ❖ Provide street lights.
- ❖ Make payments for electricity charges on regular basis.
- ❖ Fill up sanitary depression and re claim unhealthy localities.

- ❖ Maintain all community properties.
- ❖ Maintain records related Population Census, Cattle Census, Crop Census, Causes of unemployed people and people below poverty line.
- ❖ Assign places away from the Village dwelling areas for dumping manure and refuse.

Taluk Panchayath:

The Taluk Panchayath is the intermediate level of Panchayath Raj in Karnataka is Constituted in each Taluk. The representatives of Taluk Panchayath Samiti are directly elected by the residents of the Non – Urban areas of the Taluk. The President and Vice – President elected from among the members. The tenure of Taluk Panchayath members is five years. The Taluk Panchayath has provision for reservation of seats for SC/ST on the basis of their population. Two seats reserved for women. The functions of Taluk Panchayath include:-

- ❖ Construct and Expand water supply work to get at least Forty Liters per – capita per day.
- ❖ File reports of Grama Panchayath activities within the Taluk regarding.
- ❖ Constructions of Community Latrines.
- ❖ Collection and revision of rates, taxes and fees.
- ❖ Payment of electricity bills.
- ❖ Enrollment of children in schools.
- ❖ Progress of Immunization.
- ❖ Maintain primary school building and provide sanction for sufficient class rooms and water supply in schools.
- ❖ Obtain land to create manure pits away from village dwelling areas.

Zilla Pamchayath:

The Zilla Panchayath is the apex level of Panchayath Raj in Karnataka. The Zilla Panchayath is constituted for each District of the State. It has Jurisdiction over the entire District. Except those portions that are included in smaller areas or are under the authority of Municipal Corporations, Town Panchayath or Industrial Township. The members of the Zilla Panchayath are elected from the District. The representatives of the Zilla Panchayath are elected for the five years term. Zilla Panchayath has seats reserved for SC/ST, OBC and Women. The functions of the Zilla Panchayath include:-

- ❖ Establish health centers, maternity centers, as per Government rules.
- ❖ Construct underground structures for water re – charge to make water available in the drinking water wells.
- ❖ Prevent drilling of irrigation bore – wells near drinking water wells to ensure adequate drinking water.
- ❖ Create a plan for Social Foresting development in each Taluk.

PROFILE OF UDUPI DISTRICT**Historic Background**

The study is based on the Thirty – two Grama Panchayath of Udupi District. Udupi is one of the Costal district of the Karnataka State. The various inscription available in the district confirm that the district was being was being ruled by Alupas during the 7th Century A.D. During the 10th and 11th Centuries, Barkur of Udupi district was the central place of politics during the reign of the Shantaras, subsequently Barkur became the capital of Alupa King Aluvendra. After Alupas the district was under the Hoysalas for short period. It came under Vijayanagar Empire later.

From 1554 the Nayakas of Keladi, ruled this place for nearly two Centuries and it came under the spell of Mysore Sultan after the war of Bidanoor during 1763 A.D. After death of Tipu Sulthan in 1769 A.D. with the fall of Srirangapattana the place come under the rule of British and was a part of Madras Province until the re-organization of States in 1956.

The Udupi District has the districts of Uttar Kannada to his north, Shimoga and Chikmagalore to its east, Dhakshina Kannada District to its south and Arabian Sea to its west.

Udupi is a newly carved district out of erst while Dakshina Kannada District. The district is geographically divided into 3 areas namely Costal Belt, Interior Area and Western Ghats. The Costal area is having very good transport and communication system with well developed Infrastructure facilities. Hence the population in the area is quite thick. The important crops grown in the area include Paddy, Pulses, Sugarcane, Groundnut, Coconut, Cashew nut etc.

Socio – Economic and Political profile of respondents:

Socio – economic and political status of women depend much upon their basic background, characteristic pertaining to their own personality and the society in which they live. The socio – economic profile is vital to any study as it helps in building a comprehensive and complete picture of the respondents. Several socio – economic factor have been taken in to account in the study that give a good idea about the background and the profile of the women Grama Panchayat members under study. For drawing up a coherent picture of the participation of women in political activities, a sample of 127 women members of Grama Panchayat was randomly from the members list of 16 Grama Panchayat. Another sample of 20 male members and 15 officials was also randomly drawn from the same members list to study the attitude of men towards women. The individual profile is derived by looking at factors such as age, caste, religion, marital status, type of family, educational level and occupation and annual income of the respondents. The education and occupation level of the respondent's husband is also taken in to account to gauge the economic status of the family.

Women Empowerment through Panchayats:

The empowerment of women is becoming an increasingly popular term in development discourses. Women's empowerment is a process, and the outcome of the process by which women gain greater control over material and intellectual resources, and challenge the ideology of patriarchy and gender – based discrimination against women in all the institutions and structure of society.

Women's empowerment is not against men, but against the system of patriarchy and all its manifestations. The empowerment spiral transforms every person involved – the individual, the collective and the environment.

The method of measuring and evaluating women's empowerment and progress is by looking at:-

- ❖ Whether women status has improved as a result of being in Panchayats?
- ❖ Whether awareness levels of women in Panchayats has increased?
- ❖ Whether the ability of effective participation in Panchayats has increased?
- ❖ Measures whether the women have been raising problems in Panchayat meetings.

A women empowerment begins with consciousness – perception about herself and her rights, her capabilities and potential awareness of how gender and socio – cultural and political forces affect her.

Empowerment is a process by which marginalized groups recognize their powerlessness and address deprivation and discriminations in their individual capacities well as through collective bargains.

Women's empowerment refers to the process by which women acquire due recognition at par with men, to participate in the development process of her society through the political institutions as a partner with human dignity.

Women empowerment challenges traditional ideas of male authority and supremacy. Empowerment has been variously understood as a process, a movement, a collective action and challenging existing power relations and gaining greater control over the source of power, it requires political action and collective assault on cultural as well as National and community power structures that oppress women.

Implications:

- (1) The 73rd Constitutional Amendments and the reservation policy for women undoubtedly make them to enter into public sphere. But reservation for women by itself will not empower the women members. They require regular orientation, training, educational awareness building programme which should provide the government.
- (2) Reservation policy for women has set a positive trend. Therefore reservation for women and reservation on the basis of caste should be continued.
- (3) Biased opinion of male members towards women should be given up.
- (4) Hard working, result oriented and qualified women should be encouraged to join politics.
- (5) In most of the case maintaining a balance between their family life and political life is challenging. This appears to be the major impediment for women in not making much headway in politics.

Suggestions:

- (1) A long – term solution to women's participation in political activities rests in greater awareness about their role, responsibilities and entitlements.
- (2) Participatory approach need to be adopted.
- (3) Expansion of information, education and development of communication skill of women.
- (4) Empowerment as a process requires multi – dimensional efforts and holistic interventions. This requires concerned and sustained efforts by all concerned – policy makers, Governments, NGO's, training institutions.
- (5) Political empowerment of women need more support from officials and the public.

Conclusion:

An integrated approach is necessary to make the Panchayaths truly democratic and strengthen good Governance. Training and research Institutions concerned state and central departments have role in strengthening the Panchayath Institutions.

Awareness and training programme to a large extent have focused on general aspects relating to the functioning of Panchayaths. In a majority case the awareness level of women on the aspects are quite encouraging. Women cannot function and play their roles effectively unless they are able to assert themselves.

Empowerment is a process and multi – dimensional, it cannot be confined to a limited sphere; planned interactions have to be made in areas including the economic, social and political spheres for true empowerment to take place. Therefore women have to be provided access and opportunities to the basic rights such as literacy, legal and ownership rights etc. Political empowerment can be better sustained if women have at least a degree of economic independence.

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment and the reservation policy for women undoubtedly have a set of positive trend. Women in large number have been able to create and occupy space in the public sphere. It has given them greater visibility as well as mobility. Women have also been able to enter other sector and actively participate in local organizations. This has changed the perception and outlook of women and given them greater self-confidence. Women have gained better status both in family and outside. Family members and men in many instances perceive women in a more positive way.

There is a lot of scope and potential for women to emerge as leaders and decision makers and play a key role in the development and good Governance of Local Institutions. It requires dedicated and committed efforts by all concerned.

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