

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN KARNATAKA PANCHAYAT RAJ INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract : This study seeks to make an investigation into how much women in Karnataka could make use of the opportunities which the Act provided and how much it helped women to empower themselves. Women empowerment is conditioned by the socio-economic and religio-cultural ambience. It could be achieved with or without governmental assistance and support. Nevertheless, in the Indian context, women empowerment remained a distant dream for a good five decades till the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendment acts began to be implemented. The passage of the above acts are the landmark in the march of 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 far ahead; however, their presence in the political arena, even at the grassroots level, was not at all conspicuous until empowerment was as it were, thrust upon them by the 73rd 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 Panchayat Raj system are now filled by women. This is the background which prompted the identification of this topic for study and to pay maximum effort to delve into the different dimensions of rural democracy and women's political participation and involvement in them.

Index Terms - Women political participation, Empowerment of women, Panchayat Raj act, Gram Panchayat, Taluk Panchayat, Zilla Panchayat, Karnataka, Hassan district.

INTRODUCTION

The local-self government in the Karnataka state was transformed into Panchayat Raj and rural development in 1987. Karnataka state has adopted 3-tier Panchayat Raj System namely – Zilla Panchayat, Taluk Panchayat and Gram Panchayat. The Panchayat Raj Institutions are entrusted with the task of grassroots governance and development in the state. Consequently, upon the implementation of the Panchayat Raj system, the women power has emerged across the state. The women representatives practically constitute the majority in the Panchayat Raj Institutions of Karnataka state. Hassan district also enjoys the distinction of a majority of women elected representatives in the Zilla Panchayat, Taluk Panchayat and Gram Panchayat bodies. The profile of Karnataka state, development of Panchayat Raj in Karnataka state, women power in Panchayat Raj institutions of Karnataka state, profile of Hassan district and women power in Panchayat Raj institutions of Hassan district are delineated in this chapter on the basis of qualitative research methodology.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

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 the 9th largest in terms of population. The state is situated in South West India and accounts for 6.3 percent of geographical area and 5.1 percent of the population in the country. The state is bounded by Maharashtra and Goa states in the north and northwest; by the Arabian Sea in the west; Kerala and Tamil Nadu in the south and Andhra Pradesh in the east. The State is confined roughly within 11^o.5' and 18^o.5' North latitudes and 74^o and 78^o.5 East longitudes, situated on a table land, where the Western and Eastern Ghats converge in the Nilgiri hill complex. It comprises of 30 districts. The state's capital city is Bengaluru.

Karnataka state has a rich legacy of cultural and administrative traditions traceable to the Vijayanagara kingdom, Bahamani kingdom, Hoysala kingdom, Mysuru kingdoms, Tipu Sultan kingdom and so on. Karnataka State has various types of variations in topography – high mountains, plateaus, residual hills and coastal plains. It is enclosed by a chain of mountains to its west and north. It consists mainly of the plateau which has a higher elevation of 600 to 900 meters above mean sea level. The entire landscape is undulating, broken up by mountains and deep ravines. Plain land of elevation less than 300 meters above mean sea level is found only in the narrow coastal belt facing the Arabian Sea.

Karnataka State extends to about 750 km. from north to south and about 400 km. from east to west. It covers an area of about 1,90,498 sq. km. Karnataka is one of the 30 states in India, emerging as an industrial super power of the country. The state has 30 districts and 176 taluks. There are 20 sea ports including Mangalore Port and Karwar Ports. Karnataka has four revenue divisions namely Kalburgi, Belgaum, Bangalore and Mysuru. Karnataka also has four functional airports at Bangalore, Mangalore, Belgaum and Hubli. The International Airports were commissioned in 2008 at Bangalore. The railway network in the state covers a

total length of 3172 kms. The major cities like Bangalore, Mysuru, Hubli-Dharwad, Belgaum, Kalburgi and Mangalore are well linked by rail to other parts of the country.

Physical Features

The State can be divided into four geographical regions namely – a) coastal strip on the west, b) Western Ghat Ranges, c) Mid Plateau and d) North Eastern plains. The coastal areas rise above the sea level from 0-600ft. The north eastern plains of Bidar, Kalburgi and Raichur lie about 600-1500ft. The mid plateau raises from 1500- 3000ft. The western Ghat Ranges are seen from 3000 to 6000ft. The northern and eastern districts like Vijayapura, Bellary and Chitradurga receive low rainfall whereas Dakshina Kannada, Uttara Kannada, Coorg and Chikmagalur in the Western Ghat and semi Malnad region receive heavy rainfall (more than 2000mm). The distribution of rainfall closely follows with the evergreen belt of Western Ghats and Malnad region. Though the State is situated in the tropics, the climate is equable in the southern district and warm in the northern districts.

The State of Karnataka enjoys 3 main types of climate and the tropical climate covers the entire coastal belt and the adjoining areas. The coastal region receives excessive rainfall during June to September every year. The winter season exists during December to February while the summer season exists during March to May. The state also receives about 70% of normal annual rainfall during the south-west monsoon and north-east monsoon. Karnataka has Krishna, Bhima, Tungabhadra, Cauvery and other major rivers.

Demographic Features

According to the latest figures of 2015, Karnataka has 65,061,069 people living. The population of the state was estimated to be 61,130,704 in 2011 Census of India. From there on, Karnataka has added another 3.9 million people to its growing population between years 2011 to 2015. Bangalore is the largest city in the state with over 1 million people living there. The state adds around 1 million people every year to its existing population. There are over 30 districts in the state of Karnataka. Among all the districts in the state, Bangalore Urban, Belgaum and Gulbarga are the most populated districts with a total head count of 3 million people in each district. Male to female ratio or Sex Ratio is quiet good in the state with 1000 males available for every 964 females. In the last 30 years, Karnataka has been showing major signs of decline in its population growth. The urban poor constitute about 25.25% while the rural poor constitute about 17.38%. The agriculturists and agricultural laborers together accounted for 67.7% of the main workers in the state about 55% of the work force is associated with the agriculture sector while the remaining the work force is associated with industry, business and other unorganized sector. Rapid industrialization and growth of various metros in Karnataka has contributed a lot towards its population growth. Bangalore, the capital city witnessed a large number of migratory populations from other parts of India. With state government providing a better health services to the people, it has further resulted in controlling the health related problems in Karnataka.

Current Population of Karnataka State

Name of Districts	Population in 2011			Growth Rate 2001-2011	Density (per Sq. Km)	Sex Ratio (females per 1000 males)
	Persons	Males	Females	2001-2011	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	23,51,335	13.38	356	969
Bagalkot	18,90,826	9,52,902	9,37,924	14.46	288	984
Bijapur	21,75,102	11,12,953	1,06,21,49	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	15,8,506	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	1005
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
Mysuru	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

Courtesy: India Guide : Population of India : Karnataka's Population 2015

Development Indicators

The first hydro-electric power station was set up as far back as 1902 in the state. The infrastructure development index of the state was 106.12 as against 100 at all India level as per the estimates of CMIE, 2000. The state has registered an impressive economic growth during 2001-10. The annual growth rate of GSDP for the state was at 8% as compared to 9% at all India level during the present decade. The sector wise shares in the income of the state stood at 20.9% for primary, 23% for secondary and 56.1% for tertiary sectors. The developmental expenditure stood at 63% while the non development to the expenditure stood at 37% in the present decade. However, expenditure on agriculture and allied services formed 11% of the total development expenditure.

The State has a total road length of 2, 09,014 km, which works out to 108.98 km of road length per 100 sq. km. About 70 percent of villages are connected with all weather roads and the rest are connected by fair weather, kutcha and non-motorable roads. The agriculture sector consists of about 55% of net shown area followed by 16% forest, and 29% of the land consisted of non agricultural, uncultivated and barren land. The small and marginal holdings accounted for 72.9% in the state and a large proportion of farmers in the state were small scale cultivators. The state also witnessed decline in the size of land holding mainly due to division of families, fragmentation of holdings and migration of cultivators to urban areas. The state has about 43.95% of irrigation resources. The major sources of irrigation were canals (33.7%), wells (15.1%), bore wells (31.3%), tanks (6.3%) and other sources (13.6%).

Food grain production in the State was estimated to be 97.90 lakhs while production of oil seeds was estimated to be 13.49 lakh tones during 2006-07. Animal husbandry played an important complementary role in the rural economy. The state also achieved commendable progress in the field of dairying due to implementation of cross breeding programme, disease diagnosis and control, adoption of new technology, improvement of infrastructural facilities and other developments. Small farmers and landless labourers accounted for about 53% of the animal husbandry and 51% of milk production in the country. The extent of awareness of modern aspects of farming, crop insurance, membership of registered farmers' organization and membership of Self Help Groups consistently grew in the state during the present decade.

Karnataka state is a leader in financial services, with one district alone being the birthplace of five major commercial banks. It is also a prominent centre of high technology manufacturing industries after independence in areas such as machine tools, defence electronics, aerospace, telecommunications, and earth-moving equipment. It also introduced decentralized systems of governance. It provided a supportive environment for the creation of India's globally competitive information technology services industry and today accounting for 35-40% of software exports from India. It is considered as a pioneering e-governance in India through Bhoomi project to computerize rural land records and make available land record information for a nominal fee. The state as maintained about 18% of share of industrial sector and the average annual growth of industrial production stood at 6.39% during 2004-05. The growth of IT sector has been phenomenal. The state leads the IT revolution with software exports of over US\$ 1.6 billion. About 110 new IT companies were established in the state with an investment of Rs.2000 crores during 2004-05. About 131 biotech companies have also invested about Rs.1000 crores in the state during this period. About 12,780 small scale industries were also established in the state with Rs.433.47crores of investment.

Karnataka state has gained the leadership position in software and information technology-enabled services, biotechnology, nanotechnology, and light engineering industry (particularly precision engineering). Karnataka also has a strong base of education and research institutions in the country. It has a well developed higher education system which is noted by the various stakeholders of education. The notable features of Karnataka include - Strong economic growth, A well-structured and qualified administrative system, fertile lands and high agricultural productivity along river basins and in irrigated areas, leadership in coffee, raw silk, sandalwood, and floriculture production, reputation as a progressive state, strong position in new high-technology industries such as biotechnology, rub-off from success of high technology industry, availability of trained manpower,

wide network of educational institutions, generally peaceful environment and communal amity, according to Karnataka Vision – 2025 document.

Karnataka has the potential to move to be within the top three ranks on an all India basis on these human development indicators by 2025. The State has also registered satisfactory progress with respect to the indicators of health and quality of life as compared to all India levels. The worth rate (20.6%) and death rate (7.1%) were also lower as compared to the all India level. The infant mortality rate was also lower at 50 per 1000 while life expectancy at birth was 62.8 years for males and 66.2 years for females. The literacy rate is (66.6%) in 2001 and the state occupied 8th rank in the country in this regard. Gross enrolment rate at the primary school level was (98.06%) for boys and (97.98%) for girls. The State has also implemented Vidya Vikasa, free uniforms and textbooks and mid-day meal programme in order to enhance the educational status of children.

Human Development in Karnataka

The Karnataka Human Development Report (KHDR) - 2005, the state took into account both National Human Development Report (NHDR) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) methodology. The state has followed the UNDP methodology for the purpose of assessing human development indicators which include - longevity measured by life expectancy at birth (LEB), educational attainment computed as a combination of adult literacy (which is given two-thirds weight age) and enrolment ratios at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels, as well as command over resources measured by per capita real GDP adjusted for purchasing power parity in dollars (PPP\$), there are other indices used to measure development.

Karnataka Human Development Report, 2005 measured the state's performance in human development. It has taken into account important factors like equity, social justice, good governance, people's participation and so on. The level of human development is much higher in Karnataka (0.650) than at the all-India level (0.621). Among states, it ranks seventh, with Kerala occupying the first place. The attainment of human development in Karnataka is more or less on par with that of Egypt and considerably above the level of Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh. It can thus be argued that the state is well placed in the context of human development in South Asia. The HDI for the state has increased from 0.541 (revised) in 1991 to 0.650 in 2001, showing a 20 per cent improvement. Districts where the decadal percentage improvement in the HDI is higher than the state average are Bangalore Rural (21.15), Gadag (22.87), Gulbarga (24.50), Hassan (23.12), Haveri (21.57), Koppal (30.50), Mysuru (20.42) and Raichur (23.48). What is truly significant is the fact that the backward district of Koppal has performed best and that 3 out of 5 districts of the Hyderabad Karnataka region have made remarkable progress. However, despite the marked improvement in the pace of human development in the most backward districts of the state, there is no corresponding change .

Vision of Karnataka – 2025

The Government of Karnataka has developed a novel document entitled "Vision of Karnataka – 2025" which envisages integrated development of the state on the basis of constructive participation of all stakeholders of development. The government is primarily responsible for the development of the state by mobilizing the resources and enhancing the budgetary allocations for infrastructure development, civic amenities and social and economic programmes. The regional imbalance should be overcome through suitable development measures. In particular, the human development goals should be achieved to improve the quality of life of the people. The industry and commerce sector also has a great corporate social responsibility to go beyond their economic roles to partner with government and NGOs in human development. The non-government organizations also have a salient role to play in three dimensions of the vision – leadership in human development, balanced regional development, and improving accountability in governance. The progressive organizations and media institutions also have a great responsibility of sensitizing the government, industry and other stakeholders of development to take appropriate actions in the right time for the integrated development of the state.

Development of Panchayat Raj in Karnataka State

In 1902, the British government passed the Mysore Local Boards Act with a view to remedy the defects and also to revitalize the rural local government bodies. It provided for union panchayats with nominated chairmen, taluk boards with subdivision boards officers as Presidents and Amaldars as Vice-Presidents and district boards with Deputy Commissioners as Presidents. The Mysore Government in 1918 enacted the Mysore Local Boards and Village Panchayats Act which provided political and administrative powers to the elected representatives in the state. The MahaRaja of Mysore had strengthened these bodies and ensured the largest possible measure of responsibility and autonomy. The Government of Mysore enacted Mysore District Boards Act and Mysore Village Panchayats Act in 1926. These two were constituted and armed with adequate powers, functions and resources. The Government of India Act of 1935 strengthened the local self-government institutions in the country. The Government of Mysore had established the Integration and Co- ordination Committee before the inauguration of Community Development Programmes.

The Government of Mysore had passed the Mysore Village Panchayats and District Boards Act in 1952. The Government appointed one more Committee called the Local Boards Enquiry Committee under the chairmanship of D. Chandrashekaraiyah, an eminent public administrator. The committee recommended a three-tier structure of local self-government with district boards at the apex, taluk boards at the middle and village panchayats at the base in 1954. The Committee suggested that 2/3rd of the taluk board members should be elected directly, 1/3rd should be reserved for the representation of the village panchayats and town municipal councils at the taluk. Further, it suggested that both the taluk boards and district boards should function as executive bodies.

The states have the responsibility of strengthening the grassroots administration and development processes through establishment of Panchayat Raj Institutions in India. In 1959, Mysore state had passed the Panchayat and Local Board Act. It was adopted in 1960 and Gram Panchayats and Taluk Panchayats came into existence in the state. In 1983, the then Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hegde and Panchayat Raj and Rural Development Minister Abdul Nazeer Sab adopted the new Panchayat Raj System. The Government of Karnataka headed by Ramakrishna Hegde had enacted the Karnataka Zilla Panchayats, Taluk Panchayats, Mandal Panchayats, the Nyaya Panchayats Act 1983 which was brought into operation from 1st April 1987. The Zilla Parishad Act of 1983 transferred a wide range of the state's functions to Zilla Parishads, encompassed vital developmental areas in the state.

The report of Asok Mehta came in handy for those leaders who were inclined to revive the system in India in the early 1980s. In 1987 for the first time elections were held for Zilla Panchayats and Mandal Panchayats. There were no Taluk Panchayats

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. A large national convention was organized by Ram Nivas Mirza, former minister to gather intellectual and practical inputs for the development of Panchayat Raj system in India. The Balwant Rai Mehta Committee had made recommendations for different states to establish Panchayat Raj system to ensure democratic decentralization. Accordingly, in 1993, the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment came into force in order to create local governments across the country (Narayanaswamy, 2011:179). The 73rd exclusively dealt with the Gram Panchayat system while the 74th Constitutional Amendment dealt exclusively with city local governments in India. In Karnataka, the government implemented the three-tier Panchayat Raj system namely– Gram Panchayats, Taluk Panchayats and Zilla Panchayats in 1993. The objectives of the Karnataka Panchayat Raj Act, 1993 include:

- Establish a three-tier structure for panchayat system at village, sub-district and district levels
- Elect members to the three tiers through direct election at all levels
- Elect Chairpersons and Vice Chairpersons through indirect elections
- Reserve seats for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and women at all the 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 the State Government and the Panchayat Raj bodies
- Maintain accounts and conduct audits at all the three tiers of the panchayat system

Gram Panchayat

The Gram Panchayat is the basic or lowest level of Panchayat Raj in Karnataka. It has jurisdiction over a group of villages. Gram panchayat represents an assembly of the village elders who are directly elected by the citizens of the village. The representatives of the Gram Panchayats are elected for five years. While the members are directly elected from wards, the Sarpanch is elected by the members. There are seats reserved for women, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in Gram Panchayats. The Gram Panchayat has to perform 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 works on its own or through annual contract.
- Revise and collect taxes, rates and fees at fixed periods.
- Ensure enrolment of children in primary school.
- Ensure immunization of children.
- Confirm swift registration and report of births and deaths.
- Provide sanction for proper drainage.
- Construct, repair and maintain public streets.
- Remove encroachments on public streets or public places
- Provide sufficient number of street lights
- Make payments for electricity charges on a regular basis
- Fill up sanitary depressions and reclaim unhealthy localities.
- Capture and destroy rabid and ownerless dogs
- Maintain all community properties vested in it
- Maintain records related to population census, cattle census, crop census, census of unemployed people and people below poverty line
- Assign places away from the village dwelling areas for dumping manure and refuse.

Taluk Panchayat

The Taluk Panchayat is the intermediate level of Panchayat Raj in Karnataka. The Taluk Panchayat is constituted for each taluk. The representatives of the Taluk Panchayat Samiti are directly elected by the residents of the non-urban areas of the taluk. The president and the vice-president of the Taluk Panchayat Samiti are elected from among members. The tenure of Taluk Panchayat members is five years. The Taluk Panchayat has provision for reservation of seats for scheduled castes on the basis of their population. Two seats are reserved for women in the Taluk Panchayat Samiti. The functions of Taluk Panchayat include:

- Construct and expand water supply works to get at least forty litres per capita per day
- File reports of Gram Panchayat activities within the taluk regarding :
- Meeting of Gram Sabha
- Progress of water supply works
- Construction of community latrines
- Collection and revision of rates, taxes and fees
- Payment of electricity bills
- Enrolment of children in schools
- Progress of immunisation
- Maintain primary school buildings and provide sanction for sufficient class rooms and water supply in schools
- Obtain land to create manure pits away from the village dwelling area.

Zilla Panchayat

The Zilla Panchayat is the apex level of Panchayat Raj in Karnataka. The Zilla Panchayat is constituted for each district of the state. It has jurisdiction over the entire district except those portions that are included in smaller urban areas or are under the authority of Municipal Corporations, Town Panchayat or Industrial Township. Members of the Zila Parishad are elected from the

district. The representatives of the Zilla Panchayats are elected for a tenure of five years. Every Zilla Panchayat has seats reserved for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, backward classes and women. The functions of Zilla Panchayat include:

- Establish health centres and maternity centres as per the government rules
- Construct underground structures for water recharge 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 forestry development in each taluk

The Panchayat Raj Institutions have provided adequate political space to women in particular. The Karnataka's pioneering efforts in reserving seats for women in Panchayats, supplemented with training, have strengthened their hand in village decision-making (Kadekodi et. al, 2007:111). The Karnataka model has attracted the attention of the nation from the point of view of decentralization of power and empowerment of women and weaker sections. According to the new legislation, the villages which consist of 5000 to 7000 of population is called as Gram Panchayat. One member is elected from about 400 people in the Gram Panchayats. The Grama Sabha plays an important role in the selection of beneficiaries for various rural development programmes. The District Planning Committee also plays an important role in the finalization of developmental plans for the entire district.

Karnataka has the distinction of enacting a comprehensive Panchayat Raj act, which incorporates all the essential features of the 73rd Constitution Amendment (Kumara and Farooque, 2014:134). There are clear reservations for SC, ST and women in Panchayat Raj institutions in Karnataka state (Kavya and Manjunatha, 2015). In the present times, Karnataka has 30 Zilla Panchayats, 176 Taluk Panchayats, and 5,659 Grama Panchayats. All the three units of the Panchayat Raj have members directly elected by the people. The government does not have any provision to nominate representatives to any of these institutions (Shridhar and Halli, 2016:256).

The Panchayats are expected to play an important role in rural development in India, particularly after independence. Plan documents of both the central and state governments and various committees have emphasized the importance of these bodies in the polity. The Panchayat Raj Institutions have always been considered as a means to good governance. The new system paved the way for democratic decentralization and provided political space to the disadvantaged sections of the society like Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Women (Kamble, 2016:114).

Discussion

Women Power in Panchayat Raj Institutions of Karnataka State

The Directive Principles of State Policy uphold gender justice, equity, social democracy, economic justice and empowerment of women and weaker sections in Indian society. Article 40 of Indian Constitution says, 'the state shall take steps to organize village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self government. Women are excluded from political participation because traditionally, male and female roles have been quite distinct in Indian society. Women have also contributed for the political independence of the country. The presence of woman in Panchayat Raj in India has influenced many dimensions of political theory and practice. Active participation of women in Panchayat Raj Institution would be a step forward to equality.

The active participation of the women in developmental process of rural area through Panchayat certainly increases their capacity of decision making by their own and also to utilize physical and intellectual capabilities. The sheer number of women that PRI has brought into the political system has also made a difference. The difference is also qualitative because these women are bringing their experience in governance of civic society into governance of the state. The number of women's involvement in PRI has helped them to affirm their identity as women with particular and shared experiences.

Participation of women in political processes is an essential input to facilitate empowerment of women in modern society. Consequently various steps have been taken to improve their political status in India. Women have not become visible at various levels of government, especially in ministerial and other executive bodies for obvious reasons. A new political wave has brought significant changes in the lives of women after the 73rd Constitutional Amendment.

Karnataka was also the first state in India to introduce the policy of reservation for women in Panchayat Raj institutions. The percentage representation of women in the three levels of Panchayat Raj Institutions Grama Panchayat, Taluk Panchayat and Zilla Panchayat are 43.02 % 41.7% and 37.11% respectively. Women need adequate representation in power structures and decision making process in modern times (Kumari and Sara, 1992:137).

The role of women in Panchayat Raj has been considered important to strengthen the functioning of the grassroots democracy. It is important to understand that the participation of women is important to address the effective functioning of the panchayat. As a social group, women still possess fewer political resources than men do. They have to be engaged in constant battles against a number of social, economic and political obstacles even today (Vidya, 1994:298).

The engineering of elections through gender quotas is a crucial component of strategies for empowerment of women. In Karnataka state, the introduction of reservation for women in Panchayat Raj institutions has increased self-efficiency of women representatives (Kudva, 2003:128). The women and weaker sections have now become a part of Panchayat Raj Institutions which had remained as the domain of the vested interests and privileged sections of society. The participation of women has significantly increased with the fifty percent mandatory reservation for women as members as well in the position of Adhyaksha and Upadhyaksha of panchayats at all three levels. Karnataka is the only state that has consistently recognized, respected and enabled women's participation in local government.

Karnataka state has gained reputation in the country for introducing reservation for the women in panchayats for the first time. This has enabled larger participation of women and deprived sections of the society in the grassroots level governance. However, the caste and patriarchy have larger implications in the emergence and performance of women leaders at the grassroots level (Sutar, 2007:276).

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment was primarily responsible for the 33.33 per cent women's reservation in the Panchayat Raj Institutions. It has not only unpacked gender relations but also transformed the quality and thrust of local self government. It provides opportunities for women to assert their rights over resources and have a definite say in the development process. Women can play an important role in the grassroots development process. 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 (Nayana, 2008:182).

Panchayat Raj Institutions have become useful political space for the women and other marginalized sections of society in India. Women are recognized by the major political parties as active participants in the grassroots democracy. The goal of political empowerment of women can be achieved effectively on the basis of suitable structural changes at all levels of social-economic, political, mental and attitudinal set up of the society (Phukan, 2010:200). The success of PRI lies in the possibility of women transforming the state from within. It is the first step towards converting grassroots leadership into state leadership, which would bring about equitable and Gender Oriented Development (Choudhury and Debnath, 2011:46).

The inhibiting factors for effective women participation in Panchayat Raj Institutions are many in modern times. The rural women are pre-occupied with their domestic works and agricultural activities. Their workload may be such that can hardly find time to do justice to panchayat work. The cultural inhibitions accompanying women's participation often pose major problem of men and women held in villages. Caste is an important factor in socio-political intervention and more so for women. The women representing the socially and economically backward sections find it really difficult to participate actively in the programmes of Panchayat Raj Institutions.

Several committees such as Balwant Rai Mehta Committee (1957), Ashok Mehta Committee (1978) and working groups have advocated the cause of democratic decentralization in India (Kasturi, 2014:117). The enforcement of 73rd Constitution Amendment Act enabled the women to contest the elections to Panchayat Raj Institutions. Women also enjoyed equal opportunities to hold political posts and positions in the newly created institutions (Mahalinga, 2014:143).

The policy of political empowerment of women aims at eliciting their active participation in decision-making process in these institutions. Panchayat Raj institutions have created opportunities for the women's involvement in the decision making and implementation of development activities at the grassroots level. Panchayat Raj and community development programmes were introduced mainly so solicit women participation in the development administration of the government.

Women representatives in the Panchayat Raj Institutions should come out of male domination and subordination in modern times. They need adequate education and training in order to function effectively as change agents and catalysts of development at the grassroots level. The seeds of empowerment have been sown and now it is the responsibility of the NGO, political leadership and the bureaucratic structure to educate it to flower bud (Kumar and Mahesh, 2014:130).

The Panchayat Raj Institutions have enhanced the opportunities for political participation of women. This reservation was extended to the posts of presidents' participation through increased political representation 25% of reservation to women was raised to 33% in a span of 10 years from 1983 to 1993. The new Amendment Acts provide for a 33 percent reservation of seats for women in the governance of local bodies both rural and urban with target of good governance and fair representation in the development process at grassroots level (NagaRaja and Kusugal, 2014:171).

Panchayat Raj Institutions have enabled the rural women in Karnataka to achieve the goal of political empowerment. The women are not adequately encouraged and trained by the government and non-government bodies to develop leadership skill and competence in the Panchayat Raj Institutions which were dominated by the men and other vested interests (Kumar and Kumari, 2014:131).

The elections to gram panchayats held in June, 2015 had two important features—compulsory voting and the 50 per cent of reservation of seats for women. The share of seats reserved for women in Gram Panchayats in Karnataka state is more than 50 per cent in almost all taluks. This will mean that the dominance of men in gram panchayats is all set to come to an end and for the first time women will get a chance to assert their rights (Sivanandan, 2015:271).

The Karnataka Gram Swaraj and Panchayat Raj Act, 2015 came into effect on February 25, 2016. The new act envisages proper implementation of various development programmes at the grassroots level on the basis of transparency, accountability and social responsibility. The Panchayat Raj Institutions need adequate funds for effective implementation of various development programmes (Rai, 2016:209). The Gram Panchayats have 50% of women representatives in the present times. They need adequate training, orientation, motivation and security to fight against the social evils and work for the development of women and marginalized sections of society. The Gram Sabhas should be conducted regularly in order to ensure selection of beneficiaries on the basis of equality and justice rather than social and political considerations.

The women representatives in Panchayat Raj Institutions have faced certain challenges under the changed political circumstances in Karnataka state. They have been able to make a considerable difference to the lives of the people in the countryside. They have been able especially reach out to women from marginalized communities who were otherwise deprived of their right to participation and progress. Experience reveals that women elected representatives have been able to intervene in the process of grassroots democracy and function effectively as angel guardians of decentralized development in the state.

Profile of Hassan District

Hassan district is famous for historical monuments, tourist centers and natural resources. The district lies between the _Malnad' tract and _Maidan' tract of South interior Karnataka. It was ruled by Mouryas of North in the 3rd BC and Kadambas, Gangas, Hoysalas and Vijayanagar Kings subsequently. The Hoysalas brought world wide acclaim to Hassan district through their unique style of temple architecture. The district is famous for Belur Chennakeshava temple which represents Hoysala sculpture. The Halebeedu has Hoysaleswara temple which is the best example of Hoysala architecture built in 12th century. The Gomateshwara statue of Lord Bahubali is situated in Shravanabelagola. It is a famous Jain pilgrim center in the world. Tippu sultan had built Manzarabad Fort near Sakaleshapura in Hassan district. It is known for cultural, religious and historical legacy.

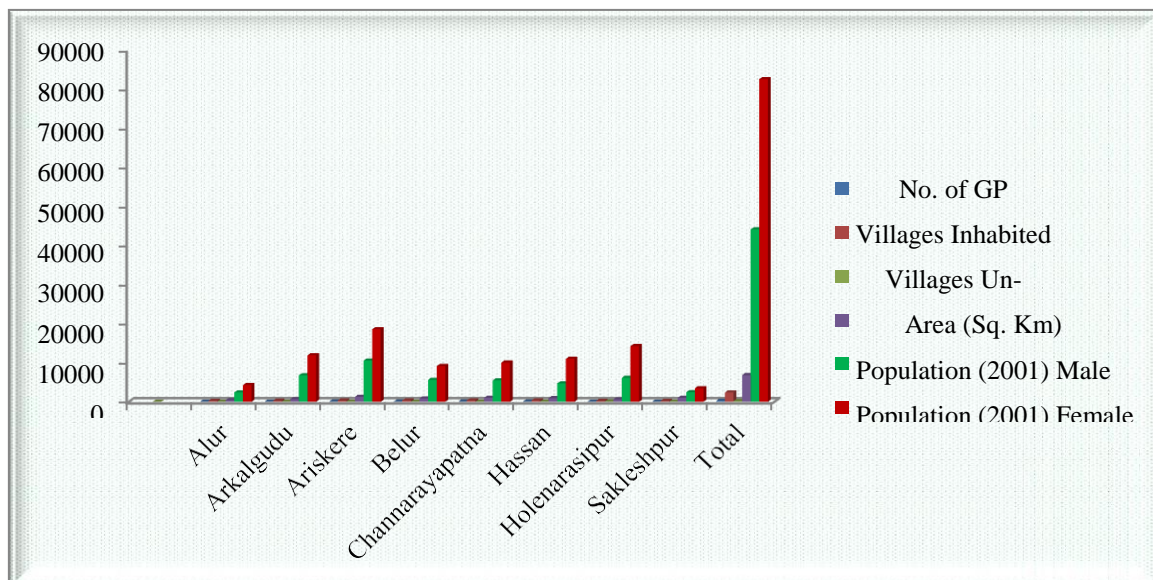
Geography

Hassan district lies between 12° 13' and 13° 33' North latitudes and 75° 33' and 76° 38' East longitude. The district has a total area of 6826.15 Sq. Kms. The greatest length of the district from South to North is about 129 Kms and its greatest breadth, from East to West, is about 116 Kms. The district has 8 taluks, 38 hoblies and 2369 villages. The geographic area of the district is 6845 square Kms. The population is 15.67 lakhs. The district has 3 important rivers namely – Cauvery, Hemavathi and Yagachi. These 3 rivers are important sources of drinking water and irrigation. Hemavathi reservoir at Gorur is the main Dam which irrigates sizable chunk of agricultural land in the district. Yagachi and Vatehole are the other two small reservoirs in the district.

Table No :1 Area and Population of Hassan District

Taluks	No. of GP	Villages		Area (Sq. Km)	Population (2001)		
		Inhabited	Un-inhabited		Male	Female	Total
Alur	15	250	09	429	2406	4274	6680
Arkalgudu	29	279	17	672	6804	11881	18685
Ariskere	45	339	30	1268	10512		29054
Belur	37	357	26	840	5614	9128	14742
Channarayapatna	40	375	10	1041	5484	10025	15509
Hassan	40	368	23	939	4701	10995	15696
Holenarasipur	26	210	39	599	6131	14241	20372
Sakleshpur	26	222	05	1026	2451	3470	5921
Total	258	2400	159	6814	44103	82556	126659

Figure 1 Area and Population of Hassan District



Administration

Hassan is one of the 30 districts of Karnataka state. It is headed by the Deputy Commissioner. Hassan is the district headquarters. It consists of two revenue sub- divisions namely – Hassan and Sakaleshpur. Hassan sub-division includes Hassan, Arasikere, Holenarasipura and Channarayapatna taluks. Sakaleshpur sub-division comprises of Alur, Arkalagud, Belur and Sakaleshpur taluks. The district has 258 Gram Panchayats, 08 Taluk Panchayats and 01 Zilla Panchayat after the implementation of Panchayat Raj System in India. There are City Municipal Council and Town Municipal Councils to facilitate governance in the urban areas.

Economy

Hassan district has achieved notable progress in the fields of education, agriculture, industry, tourism and other spheres of human life. It has average rainfall and relative humidity. The district has a good economic profile since it contributes Rs. 6,612 Crores for the GDDP of the state. The major sources of income include – agriculture, animal husbandry, forestry, fishing, industry, construction, real estate, hotels and restaurants, banking and legal services. The major crops include – coffee, sugar cane, rice, ragi, cereals, pulses, oil seeds and other commercial crops. The district has irrigation facilities and electricity facilities for agriculture and industrial activities.

The district has also achieved moderate progress in the industrial sector. It has about 400 acre Industrial Growth Center with fully developed road linkages and completely loaded infrastructure with dedicated power and water supply. It has industrial growth centre, large and medium scale industries, small scale industries and business establishments. It has Thermal Power Centre, Biomass Power Company, Renewable Source Biomass Power Project and other resources. The district has prominent tourism centers which attract large number of domestic and foreign travelers. Tourism and hospitality management have emerged as prominent sectors of economic development in the district.

The district has adequate social infrastructure such as educational institutions, hospitals, medical colleges, engineering colleges, technological institutions, domestic airport, railway line and other resources. The district also has special economic zones which have increased the investment opportunities.

Women Power in Panchayat Raj Institutions of Hassan District

Table No : 2 Population of India, Karnataka and Hassan District (2011 Census)

Area	Population	Male	Female	Population ratio per sq.kms	Literacy rate in percentage
India	121,01,93422	62,37,24,248	58,64,69174	382	74.04%
Karnataka	6,11,30,704	3,10,57,742	3,00,72,962	319	75.60%
Hassan	17,76,421	8,83,667	8,92,764	251	76.07%

Source: Director Census Operations, Bangalore.

Table: 3 Table of Women's Participation in Hassan District ZP, TP and GP in 2010 Elections

Sl. No.	Level of PRI		Male Members	Female Members	Total Members
1.	Gram Panchayat	No.	1424	1538	2962
		%	48.08	51.92	100
2.	Taluk Panchayat	No.	68	82	150
		%	45.33	54.67	100
3.	Zilla Panchayat	No.	18	22	40
		%	45.0	55.0	100

Source: Directorate of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, GOK, Bangalore

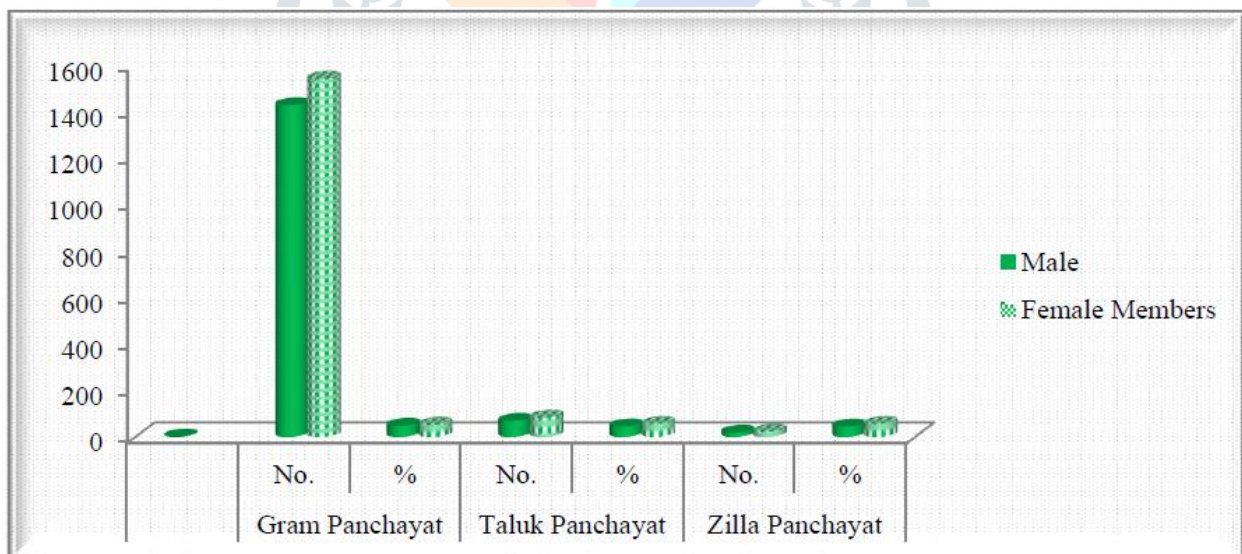


Figure 4.6.2: Figure of Women's Participation in Hassan District ZP, TP and GP in 2010 Elections

Table reveals the data about women's participation in Hassan district. Hassan is one of the 30 districts of Karnataka. The Zilla Panchayat came into existence on March 1987 in Hassan district. It was called as Zilla Parishad in 1995 according to the new regulations. A majority of women elected representatives are found in Gram Panchayat Samitis (51.92%), Taluk Panchayat Samitis (54.67%) and Zilla Panchayat Samitis (55.0%) respectively in Hassan District. The data reveal clear emergence of women power in Panchayat Raj Institutions of Hassan district.

Summary

The 73rd exclusively dealt with the Gram Panchayat system while the 74th Constitutional Amendment dealt exclusively with city local governments in India. Karnataka State has been considered as a model state from Panchayat Raj and rural development points of view. In 1987 for the first time elections were held for Zilla Panchayats and Mandal Panchayats. In Karnataka, the government implemented the three-tier Panchayat Raj system namely – Gram Panchayats, Taluk Panchayats and Zilla Panchayats in 1993. Active participation of women in Panchayat Raj Institution would be a step forward to equality. Karnataka was also the first state in India to introduce the policy of reservation for women in Panchayat Raj institutions. 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. Hassan district is famous for historical monuments, tourist centers and natural resources. The data reveal clear emergence of women power in Panchayat Raj Institutions of Hassan district.

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