

Political Participstion of Women in Panchayatraj Institutions (PRIs) for Development: An Analysis of Democratic Decentralization in Karnataka

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ABSTRACT. Women's movements for their rights started in the later half of the 19th century and continued till the first half of the 20th century, ultimately crystallizing to a demand for the 'right to vote'. Women in many countries had to wait long and grim battle to get this right. Radical feminists have gone beyond just the right to vote, maintaining that the demand for right to vote came from women of the elite class to find some room for themselves in the established power structure. There is now an emphasis on the right to participate in the political decision-making. political participation as public membership of Political participation also connotes activities for protecting one's rights and duties and advancing interest through competition. Participation of women in the political process has been very low. Their presence in the legislative and decision-making bodies is scarcely above 10 per cent except some Nordic countries. In Indian politics, Caste is an important factor. Social scientists have been grappling with the phenomenon of caste for a long time, but only few have appreciated that the major instrument for maintaining the hierarchy even more than diversity is the subordination of women. Thus, the present paper focuses on the historical perspective of political participation of women in India in general and Karnataka particular through the Panchayat raj Institutions and its impact on the development of Indian society. Finally, the paper suggests the policy implications based on the Karnataka model for the overall development of Sri Lankan society. Historical and descriptive methods of research will be employed.

Key words: Political Participstion, Women, Caste.

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