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WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract:

Development is an integral process to promote a better quality of life in economic, social, political, cultural and moral aspects. Basically, it is a process of liberalization from structures and mechanisms which are exploitative, oppressive and discriminatory. Thus, development becomes a phenomenon where power is transferred from a small minority to the greater majority. India adopted economic planning for economic development, weaker sections were identified and a welfare approach was adopted in order that these sections too might share the trickling down benefits of the economic development. Social welfare concept was put to practice to protect women rights and to provide them some services.

INTRODUCTION :

Right from the beginning to planning era, women in India were looked upon in this light. The words such as development and welfare, used in policy statements had this socio-economic connotation. Therefore, this welfare approach marginalized women to a great extent. The programmes, in the context of exploiting socio-economic systems, not only were meager, but it robbed the dignity of women by making them dependent objects in the society. However, after Fifth Five Year Plan, there was a perceptible shift from viewing women as target of welfare politics to treat them as critical agent for development. Now the emphasis has shifted from development to empowerment. Our policy makers have underscored the need for women's empowerment for country's progress. It augurs well for the country that it has now been recognized that women hold the key to sustainable development. It has also been rightly emphasized that the rights of women can be safeguarded if they are empowered at all levels.

WOMEN RESERVATIONS IN MUNICIPAL BODIES:

The municipal bodies in India are aimed at mobilizing the effective participation of people in decision making and managing the local affairs and development schemes. With this objective, efforts have been made to democratize the municipal local bodies in India and to endow them with powers and authority as units of self government. Through 74th constitutional Amendment Act, care has been taken to reserve 1/3rd of total seats to women in membership as well as chairmanship. In the municipal bodies, 1/3rd of reservation for women in urban local bodies has opened up new vistas for women participation in the country in the municipal politics. This clearly indicates change in the traditional norm which restricted free movement of women in the Indian societies. The Constitutional Amendment (74th) providing 1/3rd representation for women in municipal bodies as well as reserving of 1/3rd chairpersons posts has been a step forward towards the political empowerment of women. Certainly, our social taboos and traditional. It was also being felt that women would not come forward with their male counterparts and even if they come, they would not be effectively participating in meeting and would not have freedom of free decision making, so no substantial change could be brought about. Under the present study, above mentioned aspects have been analyzed.

Some respondents stated that reservation provided opportunities to the downtrodden while a size

of respondents favour the reservations on economic criteria whereas very few recommended the abolition of the reservation in municipal bodies. Political empowerment of women implies the degree of equality and freedom enjoyed by women in shaping and sharing of power and value given by society to political role of women. The Indian constitution guarantee political equality to women. The 74th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 further enhanced the opportunist for their political participation in urban local politics. Accordingly, one third of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every municipality have been reserved for women. Such seats are allotted by rotation to different constituencies in municipal bodies. Further there is a provision of 1/3rd seats of the total number of seats reserved for scheduled caste to be reserved for scheduled caste women. Further provision has also been made for reservation of offices of the president of the municipal bodies. Out of these 5 percent of the women including those belonging to scheduled caste have been given representation as a president in municipal bodies of all categories.

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