

Political issues involved in women's development

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ABSTRACT

Development is a value laden concept that improves socio-cultural, economic, material and non-material well-being of the society. Anjali Kurane (2005) says "development means increase in material wealth through productivity, increase in social well-being through education, health, improvement in social content of the human life, community feeling, music, art, safety, freedom, opportunity, sense of participation in local, regional and national affairs, depending on the individual interest and preferences".

Though women constitute half of any country's human endowment, they are exploited and marginalized in each and every walk of life such as food, health, education, economy, and political participation and suffer from lack of fundamental needs and amenities.

The political empowerment of women is one of the most important aspects in the overall empowerment of women. Even after five decades of the grant of political equality, statistics over the years reveal that while there is visible gender equality at the voter level, gender visibility within the power structures show cause for women concern. Therefore the present study examines the political issues involved in women's development.

Pune city was selected for the research as it is characterized by cultural, educational, military, religious and industrial centres. The important areas and suburbs of Pune city such as Pune station, Aundh, Shivajinagar, Kirkee, Pimpri, Yerwada, Nigdi, Bhosari and Chinchwad- were selected as research areas for the study.

The present study has focused on Maharashtrian women of Pune and Purposive sampling method was used for the study, were participants were selected with known characteristics. A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection was used. Quantitative data was collected through pre-tested structured interview schedule. Un-structured interview schedule were employed in group interviews, were the discussions were informal in nature mainly aimed at collecting maximum information. The case study method was also employed for intensive investigation.

In India the participation of women in political activities and programs is of recent origin. In the past it was felt that politics was the exclusive field of men but with the development of society, it was felt that women should be encouraged to participate in the political field.

It is seen that almost all women under study participated in voting, exercised their vote with lot of independence and did not consult anyone on whom to vote and are aware that each vote is important as it decides the destiny of a party which is a significant change from the traditional days.

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Regarding campaigning the data shows that some of the respondents who had a political background and four respondents, who were members of political parties took part in canvassing, distributed slips, pamphlets during elections, shouted slogans, took part in "padyatras", agitations and arranged meetings to give knowledge to the people about their rights. On the whole it can be said that though woman voters are increasing in numbers they are still traditional in outlook when it comes to real participating in politics.

Regarding reservation almost all the respondents were of the opinion that there should be 33% reservation for women in legislative bodies because women are an oppressed lot and unless and until more or equal number of women as men are at the decision making levels the status of women will remain same and the reservation bill will be a means for women's upliftment, empowerment and development and they felt since a woman understands the problems of women better, therefore she should hold the post of decision maker. Those who did not favor reservation felt that a woman should come up on her capabilities and they also felt that the women representatives who come through reservation are just dolls taking orders from the male members of the "panchayat" or "sarpanch" Some felt that irrespective of gender an honest and dedicated person should be at the helm of affairs as some women also become selfish once they get power.

The data on membership in organizations reveal that very few of the respondents were members of some associations such as "mahila mandals", "bhajan mandals", "Bal sansthas", labor unions and Doctor's associations which worked for economic upliftment of women by giving loans on less interest rate, welfare of children, organized free check ups for the poor, some were involved in religious activities, by updating the women about the legalities in case of a problem, by arranging lectures on health related topics, organizing "satsangs" and visits to religious places. While few respondents were members of political party, two of them were corporators and they solved the common man's problems by taking them to the higher authority and two of them were members who helped their parties by organizing meetings, by campaigning during elections and by creating political awareness among the people. Thus it is seen that women's participation in organizations is very limited.

Majority of the respondents were of the opinion that increased women's participation in politics will bring qualitative change in administration, they felt that with qualities such as understanding, affection, patience and sensitiveness in handling problems can make women good leaders and with more women in politics, women's problems will be solved, will raise the status of women and will lead to fast welfare of the nation that is a significant change. While some of the respondents felt that whether men or women once in power they become self-centered. They also said that the main decision makers are men, moreover when a woman enters politics she is a mere puppet and her image is blemished so politics is not the field for women.

In a nut shell it can be said that women are interested in politics but are doubtful about their success due to traditional values and family commitments on one hand and due to increasing corruption, criminalization and muscle power in politics on the other hand. It seems household tasks, limitations imposed by the family members and lack of interest is the barriers in their path of participation.

Though the process of change has started it will take time to gather momentum.

INTRODUCTION

The status of women can be examined by the level of their political participation, their

representation and share in decision-making bodies. The political empowerment of women is one of the most important aspects in the overall empowerment of women. Political participation

will create more opportunities for women to expand themselves and their personality and would have a positive impact on the rest of the country. Jasprit kaur soni (2006) in her study on women's empowerment quotes A.D. Benoist words that "The highest measure of democracy is neither the 'extent of freedom' nor the 'extent of equality', but rather the highest measure of participation". Political participation is an important means to empower women in decision making in society and to achieve the goals of equality and development.

The U.N. General Assembly adopted the Declaration on rights to Development in 1986. The Declaration defines Development as a comprehensive economic, social, cultural and political process, which aims at the improvement of all individuals on the basis of their active, free and meaningful participation in development and the distribution of benefits from development fairly to everyone.

Development is broadly understood as growth of human capabilities for acquiring control over natural forces and processes with the aim of improving the material basis of human life. Development in any country means the improvement in the quality of life of the people as a whole as also of the individual. A nation's development is determined by its economic, social and technological development.

In the modern age man's power over nature due to advancement in scientific knowledge and technology has resulted in growth of material goods and services, especially in the developed countries. But development in the wider sense means much more than the growth of material wealth, it also means utilizing material wealth as a means of achieving non-material ends for improving the quality of life. In other words growth should be a means of enriching the lives of everyone, it should serve as an aid to liberation especially women from all forms of social and economic exploitation.

Therefore development is a human centered process. A prerequisite for development is participation of all people in building their society,

it is the privilege of all people to enjoy the benefits of this participation in common efforts. People are the ends as well as the means in this process.

Thus development is multidimensional, total, and a value laden concept both qualitative and quantitative in nature that improves socio-cultural, economic, material and non-material well-being of the society. The concept of development therefore means material progress at one end and social and economic liberation at another end. Though there are different views on the concept of development it is seen that development is essential and everybody wants it. Therefore to understand development one should see it from several angles.

Development for common person means provision for basic needs like food, clothing and shelter and some guarantee for stability in life. According to Anjali Kurane (2005) "development means increase in material wealth through productivity, increase in social well-being through education, health, improvement in social content of the human life, community feeling, music, art, safety, freedom, opportunity, sense of participation in local, regional and national affairs, depending on the individual interest and preferences".

The world in general and particularly the developing countries have identified women's development as one of the thrust areas as they are facing numerous problems related to the issues involved in women's development.

POLITICAL ISSUES OF WOMEN IN INDIA

In order to understand the political issues involved in woman's development in India one needs to know the historical perspective of women's development.

According to the historians during the early Vedic period women had the same educational and social opportunities as men. They enjoyed a position of high status and respect. Ram Ahuja (1994) points that in Vedic India women had ample rights and were not treated as inferior or

subordinate but equal to men. The status of women was lowered in the 'Pauranic' period, pre-puberty marriages came to be practiced, widow remarriage was prohibited, education was denied to women, sati and 'purdah' system came to be practiced, and property rights were denied to her and so on. Women in the Buddhist period had an honored place in social field but their political and economic status remained unchanged. From the first invasion of India by the Muslims till the middle of the eighteenth century, when the British established their rule in the country, women continued to hold low status in the society. Padmini Sengupta (1974) says Muslim period was regarded as the black period in the history of women when status of women in India was at the lowest ebb. In the traditional societies political system and its control was the privilege of the few.

During the British rule, a number of changes were made in the economic and social structure of our society and some progress was achieved in eliminating inequalities between men and women due to industrialization and spread of education through the Christian Missionaries. In the end of the nineteenth century, women in India suffered from disabilities like child marriage, severe restrictions on widows, non-access to education and restricting oneself to domestic and child-rearing functions. The social movements initiated by social reformers such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Vivekanand, Jyotiba Phule, Maharshi Karve, Swami Dayanand Saraswati played an important role for equal rights of women and as such these movements succeeded in arousing social consciousness for the liberation and equal status of women.

In India the participation of women in political activities and programs is of recent origin. In the past it was felt that politics was the exclusive domain of men but with the changing pattern of socio economic and political conditions in post independent India, it was felt that women should be encouraged to participate in the political field. Thomas. P (1964;306) writes "In free India Government is trying its best to provide equal opportunity in social, economic and political fields and several efforts are being made to develop

women". Yet social outlook and patriarch psyche of men have not changed and women are in subordinate position in the society. The political participation of women in India is very low. Three main indicators have been applied by the National Committee of the ICSSR to judge the political standing of women in our country 1) participation in the political process as voters and candidates in election. 2) Political attitudes such as awareness, commitment and involvement in politics and autonomy in political action and behavior and 3) their impact on the political process. Hate. C.A (1969) reported that in the political field equality of sexes has not been achieved as the proportion of women playing a real part in political leadership is ridiculously small. There are hardly any women in the bodies which take political decisions and direct the state. According to her women still have to fight against traditions and discrimination that hindered the realization of their political rights.

Even after five decades of the grant of political equality, statistics over the years reveal that while there is visible gender equality at the voter level, gender visibility within the power structures show cause for women concern. On an average, women's representation in Lok Sabha, from 1952 to 1996, has been 6% and in Rajya Sabha is 10.3%. The representation of women at state legislative assemblies is also very poor. There exists a large gap between representation and reality. The 73rd and 74th Amendments, which have enforced 33% reservation for women in local government, have been an effort to fill in these gaps. It is seen that the women 'panchas' lack an independent power base of their own. As a result they become dependent on the male members who have been dominating politics for years.

There are several reasons for low participation such as cultural socialization, traditionally defined sex-roles, socio-cultural values and attitudes, various customs and practices prevalent in Indian society which views women as being socialized into feminine and non-competitive roles, division of labor which limits women to domestic sphere, lack of resources like education, employment, lack of skills, political experience, attitudes of the family and society, behavioral code imposed on

women, criminalization of politics, sexual abuse and character assassination all these hamper women's participation in politics.

In Indian culture women's role is of self-sacrifice and tolerance. Parvin (2005) states that though women constitute half of any country's human endowment, they are brought up in the culture of silence. Women continue to be exploited and marginalized in each and every walk of life such as food, health, education, economy, and political participation and suffer from lack of fundamental needs and amenities. And they form the most vulnerable section of the Indian society and remain backward educationally, economically, socially and politically.

Though there has been some change in the political, economic and social status of women in the last 50 years, but we can see that the progress is not that satisfactory. A radical change can take place only when the women realize that they themselves possess the power to alter their situation. Change in the mental attitude and discipline in our administrators, politicians and the system are the only factors which will bring a change in the status of women in India and their development. Effective political participation of women at the local, state, and national level will not only improve the quality and style of governance but will also be a reflection of their needs and eventually their development. Reservation will provide them an opportunity to voice their grievances; will equip them to discharge their responsibilities to the best of their abilities.

Adequate access to resources, power and decision making is a must towards gender justice. Gender equality and development of women are recognized globally as the key element to achieve progress in all areas as women represent half the resource and half the potential in all the societies. Efforts to promote gender equality between men and women can contribute to the overall development of human society and the nation's progress. Swami Vivekananda said: ".....a nation would not march forward if women are left behind". Equality of women is needed not just on the grounds of social justice but as a basic

condition for social, economic and political development of the nation. Recent decades have witnessed a critical emphasis on increasing role of women in the socio-economic development of the country.

Therefore the present study deals with the political issues involved in women's development by concentrating on the interest of the women in politics and the extent of their participation in the politics.

For the present study I have prepared the following operational definition of Development-Development means growth of human capabilities and freedom and meaningful participation in each and every aspect of life. For instance, meaningful participation in decision making process at family as well as society level, freedom to have choice and opportunities in socio-cultural, educational, economic and political sphere of life and freedom from domination, exploitation and economic dependence. And tried to understand the political issues involved in women's development as it is one of the important factors for women's development.

THE SETTING

The present study was conducted among the Maharashtrian women in Pune city (18° 31' N latitude and 73° 51' E longitudes) located in the state of Maharashtra situated at the foothills of Sahyadri Mountains. Pune city was selected for the research as it is characterized by cultural, educational, military, religious and industrial centres. Pune is known as the queen of Deccan because of its historical, social, cultural, political and educational importance and is also known as the cultural capital of Maharashtra. Pune is the eighth largest city in India and is also known as "Vidyeche Maherghar" (Home town of education) and University of Pune is called "Oxford of the East" as it has several well-known colleges. Pune the city represents a fusion of old and new, of the traditional and modern, of quaint wadas and glitzy malls. The researcher visited different localities, important areas and suburbs of Pune city and

discussed the interview schedule for research with several informants and then selected Pune station, Aundh, Shivajinagar, Kirkee, Pimpri, Yerwada, Nigdi, Bhosari and Chinchwad as research areas for the study. The selection of these areas was purposive. Firstly people belonging to different socio-economic strata stay in these areas, secondly illiterate as well as highly educated people live in these areas and thirdly there are schools, colleges, factories, municipal corporation offices, private offices, as well as government offices are located in these suburbs so women were engaged in various occupations in these areas. Areas such as Shivajinagar, Aundh, Pune Station, Pashan are the educational and cultural centres while Pimpri, Chinchwad, Bhosari are the industrial centers.

THE SAMPLING

Purposive sampling method was used for the study, were participants were selected with known characteristics. In the first stage some groups were selected such as doctors, engineers, self-employed women including those helping the families in the family business, housewives, social workers, domestic servants, students, and so on. And then from selected group some units were selected as it was felt that these units represent the group considering the purpose of the research.

A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection was used. Quantitative data was collected through pre-tested structured interview schedule. Un-structured interview schedule were employed in group interviews, were the discussions were informal in nature mainly aimed at collecting maximum information. The case study method was also employed for intensive investigation. Six case studies were conducted in the present study were the cases had some peculiarities and typical ness. This combination was purposive as this gives a holistic insight to the research problem and adds to the anthropological understanding of the study.

THE POLITICAL ISSUES IN WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT

In order to see the actual interest of the women in politics and to know the extent of participation of the women in politics the following indicators were selected for the study such as:

1. Voting behavior
2. Consultation for casting the vote
3. Participation in canvassing, political meetings and agitations
4. Opinion on 33% reservation
5. Membership in any association or political party
6. Attitude towards increased women's participation in politics

Voting behavior

Voting is the commonest yet most important act of political participation. Voting is the basic means by which citizens are assimilated in the political process. Women voters constitute an important component in any democracy. Increasing awareness among women voters about their rights has begun to influence the political scene. In fact now there are large scale efforts to woo the women voters. The "Doordarshan" Telecast 'Ankhon Dekhi' (1999) reported that the chief minister of Rajasthan has declared to build four lakhs houses to provide shelter to widows. Shashi Jain (1988) and Sanjay Ketan Jena (1994) and Kaur (1983) reported that women's participation in the voting process was very high.

In order to know the political awareness and participation of the women the respondents were asked 'Do you vote?' The enquiry reveals that almost all (90.9%) of the respondents voted, except some of the respondents 21(5.3%) whose names were not in the voter's list, or few of the respondents 6(1.5%) were not voting due to change of address or few of the respondents 9(2.3%) who were not interested in voting. The respondents who voted said that it is the duty of every citizen and voting is a channel through which they can actively participate in politics.

In a group interview six respondents said that they voted as it is the way through which they can show their support to their leader or party and that each vote is important in an election as it decides the fate of the party and so everybody should vote. Six of the respondents said that they have changed their residence and the place of voting is far so they did not vote in the previous elections, but now they are in the process of getting their names in the list of their new address so that they can vote the next time. Nine respondents said that they were not interested in voting as they felt that if any party wins the condition will remain same. All political parties they said are same with selfish motives and once they come into power they forget the promises they had made. Four respondents who were members of political parties said that they not only voted, but also paid house to house visits during elections, gave guidelines for voting to illiterate people and sat near the election booth and worked for the whole day.

Thus it is seen that almost all women under study participated in voting which is a significant change from the traditional days. They are also aware that each vote is important as it decides the destiny of a party. Few of the respondents did not vote due to change of address but they were getting their names included in the new list, few of the respondents names were not in the voter's list and few of the respondents were indifferent and did not vote as they felt that all political parties instead of working for the people have their own selfish intentions and make false promises.

Consultation for casting the vote

It is generally seen that in social matters a woman rarely exercises independent judgment. She is even told by the men in the family about whom or which party to vote. She will not exercise her choice in most of the cases because she has never learnt to exercise her choice due to her submissive role, socio-economic dependence or lack of knowledge in decision making. Shashi Jain's (1988) and Seema Salgoankar (2006) study revealed that majority of the respondents exercised their independent judgment in casting their votes.

So to further investigate the voting behavior of the respondents they were asked 'Whom do you consult before voting?' It is seen that almost all (82.5%) the respondents did not consult any one and exercised independent judgment in casting their vote. And few of (5.6%) the respondents were told by their husbands whom to vote while few of (2.8%) the respondents consulted their friends and relatives before casting their votes.

Five of the respondents said "There is no need to consult someone for a simple thing such as voting. We read newspaper, watch news and we are aware of the political happenings and we have knowledge of the various political parties so we know whom to vote". Two respondents said that their husbands work for the BJP party and during elections the husbands tell them whom to vote and they do as they are told. Three of the respondents said that they discuss about the various candidates and then they decide whom to vote.

Thus it is seen that almost all the respondents took their own independent judgment to vote which shows that women have become politically aware. That is a noteworthy change. But few of the respondents had to listen to their husbands. It seems that these respondents still consider their husbands as supreme and are stuck up in traditional values and few of the respondents discussed with their friends or relatives before casting their votes.

Participation in campaigning

The technique of personal contact with the voters through political meetings, canvassing, holding agitations for demands imparts a personal touch and is more effective. Election meetings are one of the important media for approaching the voters collectively to inform about the party, its programs, and its symbol and to introduce the candidate. Proper and wide canvassing help in the mobilization of voters. Seema Salgoankar (2006) reported that though the voting turnout is good the interest and involvement in campaign activity was low as the meetings are usually held in towns where there is no proper transport facility, the meetings are mostly held at night so the time is not convenient for women, also the social taboos on

the movement of women, lack of individual incentive are the reasons for non-participation of women in political campaigning.

In order to understand the degree of exposure of women voters to the campaigning, the women were asked to inform whether they participate in campaigning, activities such as political meetings, election campaigns and agitations. It is seen that only few of (3.3%) the respondents took part in agitations and political meetings. While some of (12.9%) the respondents took part in canvassing. It was seen that out of the thirteen women, who participated in agitations and political meetings nine of the respondents were from politically active families and two of them were corporators and the other two were members of BJP party.

In a group interview nine women who were from political families and four of them who were members of political parties like the BJP party and Congress party said that they not only participated in political meetings, but whenever the political leaders visit their areas or during elections they arrange meetings so that it created political awareness, and confidence among the people. Also to give knowledge of their rights and to create awareness among the masses about the present political situation in the country they tell others to participate in the political meetings. These respondents also said that they participated in agitations to show their unity to their party and to show their determination of their demands. They said that they also convince others to join as agitations, bring awareness and changes up to some extent. Sixteen respondents said that they participated in the election campaigns for canvassing of their leader or party. They said they participated in the corporation, Vidhan Sabha and Lok Sabha election campaigns. Another four respondents said that they distribute slips and pamphlets of their leader; they shouted slogans of their party, made house to house visits for canvassing and convinced others also to take part in canvassing. These respondents also took part in "padyatras" during elections not only in their locality but also in other localities. Six respondents said that they never took part in any political meetings, canvassing and agitations as they

themselves didn't feel like, they said that politics is not the field for women and they felt that all have self interests in politics. So if one feels like doing something for the country one can do it without entering politics also. Three respondents said that their in-law and husbands do not like them to go for canvassing because according to them women from good homes doesn't go for canvassing or agitations on the roads, as it harms the family status.

The above data shows that some of the respondents took part in canvassing, they distributed slips, pamphlets during elections, shouted slogans, and moreover they also took part in "padyatras" and convinced others also to join to support their candidate. In doing so, they create awareness among the people and take their support. Few of the respondents took part in political meetings and agitations, but it was seen that these respondents' families had a political background; four of them were members of political parties. These respondents said that they arranged meetings during elections and also when a leader was visiting their area to create awareness, to give knowledge to the people about their rights. They also took part in agitations to show their unity and support to their leader, to press for their demands and to bring a change in society. One interesting finding is that almost all the respondents exercised their voting rights but it is seen that when it comes to actually participate in politics they are not so keen or interested in campaign activities as they feel that politics is a dirty field and is not meant for women. In some cases the family feels that it will harm their status if their women went for canvassing or meetings or agitations. They are of the opinion that one doesn't have to serve the nation only through politics as there are many other ways to serve the society. On the whole it can be said that though woman voters are increasing in numbers they are still traditional in outlook when it comes to real participating in politics. It seems domestic responsibilities, restrictions imposed by the family members and lack of interest is the barriers in their path of participation.

Opinion on 33% reservation

In spite many Acts it is seen that women's position has not been satisfactory, they continue to remain almost invisible in the power structures. This is due to the fact that there is under representation of women in politics in India. There exists a large gap between representation and reality. The 73rd and 74th amendments have enforced 33% reservation for women in local government only. There is demand for such reservation for women at parliamentary and assembly level. According to Seema Salgoankar (2006) who studied the political position of women "panchas" in Goa reveals that women simply joined as dummies and for 21.2% of them the decisions were made by the male family members and 33.3% of them were influenced by the male members in the family in decision making. Political parties are reluctant to give tickets to women candidates unless they are sure they will win. So the question arises whether women should organize themselves to demand more tickets for contesting elections or should there be reservation of seats for women. She also observed that majority of her respondents' favored reservation for women, which shows that if given the opportunity they are willing to have a say in decision making.

In the above context the respondents of the present study were asked to give their opinion on 33% reservation for women in legislative bodies. Almost all (80.5%) of the respondents were of the opinion that there should be 33% reservation for women in legislative bodies and the reasons given for their opinion are 1) Women were oppressed right from the beginning so they need privileges for their upliftment 2) As women should reach 50% as fast as possible like men in all fields. 3) For empowerment of women.

Some of (10.5%) the respondents were of the opinion that there should be no 33% reservation for women in legislative bodies and the reasons given for their disagreement are 1) Women should attain equality on their capabilities instead of asking for reservation. 2) Asking for reservation itself shows that women are inferior.

In the group interview three respondents holding government jobs said "Of course there should be 33% reservation for women in legislative bodies as women are oppressed and suppressed even today and to improve their status, women should be there at the decision making level and this is possible through reservation as parties will be forced to put up women candidates and it will be easier for women to fight elections. One respondent working as a maid servant said "Bayka baykanche paristhiti samajthat, bai varchya post la asli tar baikancha bhala honar". (A woman can understand the problems of women so if a woman holds the post of decision maker, women's position will be better). Two respondents, one an educated housewife and another a teacher said "Today women are showing their capabilities and are excelling in all fields more than men. So why one should ask for reservation, asking for reservation itself shows that we women are weak and cannot compete with men. The experience of reservation in local bodies in some villages has already shown that the women members are mere puppets in the hands of the "Sarpanch" husbands. Moreover many women do not like to enter politics because of the increasing greed, conflicts, corruption and unholy competition. So there is a need to build confidence among people and change the opinion of people regarding politics and this has to be done by the government and our judiciary system". One respondent who is a professor said "There are women leaders who are also corrupt and don't work for the masses. It is wrong to think that women will do a better job, if such women come through reservation, it will be of no benefit to anyone. Someone who is really honest and dedicated to work for the country irrespective of gender should be on the decision making level".

The above data reveals that almost all the respondents were of the opinion that there should be 33% reservation for women in legislative bodies as according to them women are an oppressed lot and unless and until more or equal number of women as men are at the decision making levels the status of women will remain same and as men do not want to lose their power they are not allowing the reservation bill to be passed.

Reservation bill will be a means for women's upliftment, empowerment and development. They also said that a woman can understand women's problems well. While some of the respondents felt that there should be no 33% reservation for women in legislative bodies as women have proved their abilities in other fields they should prove themselves in the field of politics also. They feel that by asking reservation, women are proving that they are weak and inferior. They also felt that the women who were elected through reservation in the "Panchayat" are just dolls taking orders from the male members or "sarpanchs" and moreover due to corruption and controversies women think that politics is a dirty field. They suggested that it is the job of the government and the judiciary to change the viewpoint of people regarding politics. Some felt that irrespective of gender an honest person should be at the helm of affairs as it is seen that even women become selfish once they enter politics.

Membership in any association or political party

Till recently women were only a unit of the family but now due to the various socio-political processes which have been at work since the early 20th century, have made the woman a significant unit of the society. She has now become a leader, a social figure and an important instrument of social change. According to Hate (1969) the extent of women's participation in community life is the measure of social change in India. Seema Salgoankar (2006) reports only 6.6% respondents as members of organization in her study on women's political participation in Goa. Memberships to organizations or associations also indicate social participation. Organizations perform an important function of interest articulation. Membership or identification with a political party indicates a person's political thinking and beliefs. They take up various issues from time to time which have its impact on elections.

So in order to know whether the respondents of the present study were involved with any organization or association they were asked 'Are

you a member of any association or political party?' If they were members of any association or political party they were asked to tell about the nature of work of the association. However among the total respondents only few of 22 (5.1%) the respondents were members of some organizations and few of 4 (1.1%) of the respondents were members of political party-- two of them were corporators and belonged to the Congress party and two of them were members of BJP party.

Out of the 22(5.1%) respondents, 4(1%) were members of "Mahila Mandals" and they worked for upliftment of women such as giving loans to women on less interest for their economic development, 7 (1.8%) of the respondents were members of organizations working for children and women like giving shelter to orphans, teaching the poor kids and counseling them on various issues, there were two lawyers working for these organizations whose job was to counsel the women and update them with the legal procedures in case of any problem. And 2(.5%) of the respondents were members of "Bhajan Mandali" and they were involved in religious activities such as organizing "satsangs" and visits to religious places and 3 (.8%) of the respondents were members of "mazdoor sangh"/ labor union and were involved in taking up issues of the staff or workers to the management and to fight for the labor demands. While 4 (1%) of the respondents who were doctors were members of Doctor's association and they arranged for free check ups for the poor and also gave lectures on health related topics to bring awareness among the people and also undertook counseling.

In the group interview two respondents working as clerks in an office and two self employed women said "We started the 'Mahila Vikas Mandal' some four years back, there are twenty members in it we collected thousand rupees from each one and deposited the amount in the bank. The minimum amount given as a loan is Rs. 2000 and the maximum amount given is Rs. 5000. And the interest rate is just two percent. Till now five poor women have benefited from this- one has become a vegetable vendor; one makes pickles and 'papads', three of them have

started a mess and give lunch boxes to office goers. They have been regular in paying back. So if well to do women of the society come forward and do such things it will help many a poor women to stand on their feet". Two of the doctors said "We are members of Indian Dental association and we organize lectures on dental issues to create awareness among the people about dental problems and we also keep free check ups every second and fourth Saturday of the month". Another doctor said that she works for the Lion's club and that she gave free consultation to the patients on every alternate day at the Lion's club office. Two teachers said that they were members of 'Bal Shikshan Sanstha' and they took English classes free of charge twice a week. One of the respondents who is a corporator said "I make use of my position to take up the issues of common man up to the higher level authority and try my best to find solution to the problems". Another respondent who is a housewife and is a member of the BJP party said "Right from the beginning I am interested in social work, and I do a lot of social work in our area, seeing it I got the membership in BJP party. Now I work for the party such as arranging visits of the leaders during elections, campaigning for the party and so on". Eleven respondents said that they don't like to work through some organizations and neither are they interested in dirty politics. According to them whether all these organizations are really genuine or not cannot be said so it seems they preferred to work on individual basis like helping someone poor directly, by donating food clothes and even books directly to the concerned children, or by sponsoring a child's education and so on.

The above data indicates that almost all the respondents were not members of any association or political party and they preferred to work for the betterment of society on individual level as they had no faith in organizations and political parties. Very few of the respondents were members of some associations such as "mahila mandals", "bhajan mandals", "Bal sansthas", labor unions and Doctor's associations. These associations worked for economic upliftment of women by giving loans on less interest rate, some

were involved in religious activities, and some worked for welfare of children and some of the organizations held free check ups for the poor. The respondents helped these organizations by collecting funds, by teaching and guiding the poor children, by counseling the women on various issues, by telling them about the legalities in case of a problem, by arranging lectures on health related topics, by organizing free check ups and by organizing "satsangs" and visits to religious places. While few were members of political party, two of them were corporators and they solved the common man's problems by taking them to the higher authority and two of them were members who helped their parties by organizing meetings, by campaigning during elections and by creating political awareness among the people. Thus it can be concluded women's participation in organizations is very limited. It seems that tradition and family commitments still rule women when it comes to their social life and though it has started it will take time to gather momentum.

Attitude towards increased women's participation in politics

Women are confined to home bound activities and the role of mother; wife and daughter are seen as the natural roles for them. But in recent decades a strong opinion is building up in favor of increasing women's involvement in the decision making processes of the government. Reformers believe that if women come to power the entire political system would be transformed. It is claimed that female leaders by virtue of their sex, would act as a cohesive force to bring out social change due to their innate qualities such as loving, caring, sharing and sensitiveness in handling problems.

It was therefore decided to analyze whether the increased participation of women in politics would lead to qualitative change in administration. The respondents were asked 'Do you foresee any qualitative change in administration with increased women's participation in politics?' Majority (63.7%) of the respondents agreed that increased women's participation in politics will

certainly bring a change in the administration of the government and the reasons given for their positive reply were: 1) Nearly half of (41.4%) the respondents said that women's problems will be solved and it will raise the status of women. 2) Some of (10.2%) of the respondents felt that people's faith in politics will increase. 3) Some of (29.9%) the respondents felt that it will lead to fast welfare of the nation. 4) Nearly half of (47.2%) the respondents felt that the nation's progress has to be achieved on individual basis by working with ethics and morals and it is not in the hands of politicians whether men or women. 5) Some of (33.5%) of the respondents said that corruption will decline and will lead to clean politics. While some of (36.3%) the respondents answered in negative, they were not of the opinion that increased women's participation in politics will bring a qualitative change in the administration and the reasons given for their negative reply were: 1) Some of (17.5%) the respondents were of the view that men or women politics will always remain same. 2) Few of (6.6%) the respondents felt that women are just puppets in politics dancing to the tunes of men as men are the main decision makers. 3) Few of (3.6%) the respondents felt that the field of politics is not meant for women due to the increasing crime and corruption and it also tarnishes one's image and character. 4) Some of (27.4%) the respondents felt that the nation's progress has to be achieved on individual basis by working with ethics and morals and it is not in the hands of politicians whether men or women. The responses do not total up to 100% as the respondents gave multiple responses for this question.

In a group interview sixteen respondents said that increased women's participation in politics will certainly lead to qualitative changes, women's entrance will clean politics. Women are responsible for bringing up the next generation in right direction due to qualities such as affection, hard work, patience, understanding, faithfulness and so on. These are the qualities a leader should possess to bring changes in society so definitely with more number of women; the politics of the country will witness a qualitative change.

According to these respondents some women are corrupt but not as much as men they said. Two respondents who were corporators said "Women have a habit of getting into the depth of a problem and she handles issues sensitively so for any problem women will approach easily to a women leader as they have faith in her and this will make a difference. It will increase confidence among women and in turn will solve their problems and raise their status." Five respondents all of them well educated and holding jobs said that "Today politics is full of crime and corruption, everybody whether men or women are hungry for power and money. To get the power they use all possible means available and once they get it they use the position for selfish motives and forget the promises made to the public before getting elected. Even an honest person becomes corrupt once he/she enters politics as one has to go with the system otherwise he/she is thrown out of the system. So the Nation's progress depends on an individual who has morals, ethics dedication and devotion to work for the betterment of the country". Two of the respondents, one a housewife and the other self-employed said "Politics is a dirty field. Once a woman enters politics she becomes a puppet in men's hand, she has to move around with men and this damages her character. It also involves a lot of money and muscle power so politics is not the field for women".

The above data indicates that majority of the respondents were of the opinion that increased women's participation in politics will bring qualitative change in administration, they felt that a woman has qualities such as understanding, affection, patience and sensitiveness in handling problems so with more women in politics corruption will decline, women's problems will be solved, will raise the status of women and will lead to fast welfare of the nation. While some of the respondents felt that men or women, politics is full of crime and corruption and that before elections the candidates make false promises never to be fulfilled, once they come into power by any means they become selfish. They also said that women are mere dolls in the hands of males and the main decision makers are men, moreover when a

women enters politics her image is blemished so politics is not the field for women. According to some the nation's welfare is not in the hands of politicians but on individuals with ethics, morals and dedication to work. In a nut shell it can be said that women are inclined towards politics but are doubtful about the success of their participation due to traditional values on one hand and due to increasing criminalization in politics, also due to excessive use of money and muscle power on the other hand.

CONCLUSION

Traditionally the fundamental duty of a woman was towards the family, to take care of each member of the family. The concept of self did not exist for her. However due to education and socio-economic changes many a women are coming out of the four walls of the home and the situation is changing. Without making women aware of their rights and duties, without obtaining their active participation no plan of development can really succeed. In India the participation of women in political activities and programs is of recent origin. In the past it was felt that politics was the exclusive field of men but with the development of society, it was felt that women should be encouraged to participate in the political field.

It is seen that almost all women under study participated in voting which is a significant change from the traditional days. They are also aware that each vote is important as it decides the destiny of a party.

It is seen that almost all the respondents exercised their vote with lot of independence and did not consult anyone on whom to vote which shows their political awareness and that can said to be a remarkable change.

The data on campaigning shows that some of the respondents who had a political background and four respondents, who were members of political parties took part in canvassing, they distributed slips, pamphlets during elections,

shouted slogans, took part in "padyatras", agitations and arranged meetings to give knowledge to the people about their rights. One interesting finding is that though almost all the respondents exercised their voting rights, when it comes to actually participate in politics they are not interested in campaign activities as they feel that politics is a dirty field and is not meant for women and harms the status of the family. On the whole it can be said that though woman voters are increasing in numbers they are still traditional in outlook when it comes to real participating in politics. It seems household tasks, limitations imposed by the family members and lack of interest is the barriers in their path of participation.

Regarding reservation almost all the respondents were of the opinion that there should be 33% reservation for women in legislative bodies because women are an oppressed lot and unless and until more or equal number of women as men are at the decision making levels the status of women will remain same and the reservation bill will be a means for women's upliftment, empowerment and development and they felt since a woman understands the problems of women better, therefore she should hold the post of decision maker. Those who did not favor reservation felt that a woman should come up on her capabilities and they also felt that the women representatives who come through reservation are just dolls taking orders from the male members of the "panchayat" or "sarpanch" They suggested that the government and the judicial system should work to change the viewpoint of people regarding politics. Some felt that irrespective of gender an honest and dedicated person should be at the helm of affairs as some women also become selfish once they get power.

The data on membership in organizations reveal that very few of the respondents were members of some associations such as "mahila mandals", "bhajan mandals", "Bal sansthas", labor unions and Doctor's associations which worked for economic upliftment of women by giving loans on less interest rate, welfare of children, organized free check ups for the poor, some were involved in

religious activities, by updating the women about the legalities in case of a problem, by arranging lectures on health related topics, organizing "satsangs" and visits to religious places. While few respondents were members of political party, two of them were corporators and they solved the common man's problems by taking them to the higher authority and two of them were members who helped their parties by organizing meetings, by campaigning during elections and by creating political awareness among the people. Thus it is seen that women's participation in organizations is very limited. It seems that the women's social life is still ruled by tradition and family commitments, though it has started it will take time to gather momentum.

Majority of the respondents were of the opinion that increased women's participation in politics will bring qualitative change in administration, they felt that with qualities such as understanding, affection, patience and sensitiveness in handling problems can make women good leaders and with more women in politics, women's problems will be solved, will raise the status of women and will lead to fast welfare of the nation that is a significant change. While some of the respondents felt that whether men or women once in power they become self-centered. They also said that the main decision makers are men, moreover when a woman enters politics she is a mere puppet and her image is blemished so politics is not the field for women. In a nut shell it can be said that women are interested in politics but are doubtful about their success due to traditional values on one hand and due to increasing corruption, criminalization and muscle power in politics on the other hand.

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