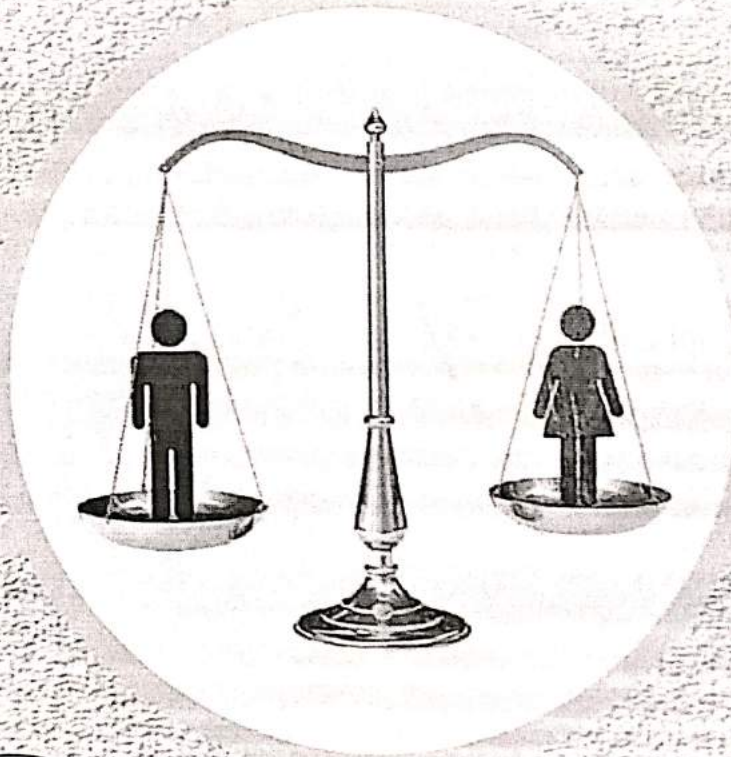


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### ABSTRACT

#### Introduction:

Women constitute almost 50% of the world's population. As far as their social status is concerned, they are not treated as equal to men in all the places. Though in the Western countries women are treated on par with men in most of the fields, their counterpart in the East suffer from many disabilities. The disabilities on the one hand, and the inequalities between men and women on the other, have given rise to what is known as the 'gender problem. All over the world and particularly in south and East Asia and Africa the gender problem has assumed importance during the recent years. The gender issue has become virtually a crucial point of argument.

The United Nations, in its various declarations, has made it abundantly clear that men and women should be treated alike. Women should not be asked to wait for any more time. Their sufferings, problems, disabilities, and the humiliations perpetrated on them are historical. Hence, gender problem in the context of new forces of development, assumes vital importance.

After independence various developments have taken place in the field of local self-government, particularly in rural local government. Now, the local government in India is comprised of two broad categories, rural and urban. Rural Local Government and Urban Local Government are called Panchayat Raj and Municipal Government respectively. Both rural and urban forms of local Government have been constitutionalised through 73rd and 74th constitutional Amendments in 1992. The panchayats were established by most of the state government in India after independence, but a major step in this direction was taken on the basis of Balavant Ray Mehta Committee's report in 1957 which recommended the three-tier Panchayati Raj system in India. As a result of the recommendation of this committee, three tier Panchayat Raj Systems; the Gram Panchayat at the village level, the Panchayat Samiti at the block or intermediate level and Zila Parisad at the district level was introduced. The committee remarked about the philosophy of Panchayat Raj that Panchayat Raj System establishes a linkage between local leadership enjoying confidence of local people and the Government, and translates the policies of the Government into action. Within the Indian federal architecture panchayat is the closest to notion of direct democracy distinct from the representative democracy of the Union and States, due to its proximity to the community it serves. Panchayat has deep faith in democracy in which the common man in the rural area has huge capacity to have a good living for himself and the community under the healthy

environment that the State creates. If a common man appears to be indifferent to the high economic growth, it is because he is devoid of the mainstream national development and has not been provided equal opportunity to participate in activities for his own betterment. The objectives of a panchayat include organising common men in the process of developing themselves through their own efforts on a continuing basis, at the same time, enhancing their capacity and self-reliance. This begins with 'citizen participation' in political processes and 'service delivery' of local public goods, e.g. potable drinking water, general sanitation, primary health, elementary education, maintenance of public properties etc. Hence, the key objective of panchayat is to balance the two values of 'citizen participation' and 'service delivery', the basic goals of decentralised democracy envisaged in Report of Balvantray Mehta Study Team (1957) and the subsequent 73rd Amendment to the Constitution of India. Considering the citizen participation, it will be unfair if women power is not mentioned. At present, women have 33 per cent reservation in panchayats and soon it will be 50 percent through constitutional way as the matter is under consideration. Professional Panorama: An International Journal of Management & Technology Women Empowerment in Panchayati Raj Institutions 3 As published in 'The Hindu' and other newspapers on February 5, 2016, Minister for Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, has said the government would be pushing a Constitutional amendment, first cleared by UPA Cabinet, to increase reservation for women in panchayats from 33 per cent to 50 per cent in budget session of Parliament. Speaking at a national workshop on the "Implementation of PESA Act: Issues and way forward", the Minister said that "though some States have provided 50% reservation to women in panchayats, the government will, through the Constitutional Amendment, ensure that it is implemented in the whole country." He also mentioned the Ministry would bring about other changes in the law to reserve a particular ward for women for two terms of five years each from the existing single term so that they can undertake developmental activities in a continued fashion. The UPA government's Cabinet had, in its second term, cleared the Constitution 110th Amendment and the Standing Committee on Rural Development had also gone through Bill as per norms. The Bill had first been introduced in Lok Sabha in November 2009, after which it went through committee process. It was re-introduced in the Lok Sabha in 2010 after the report had been tabled, then which it lapsed at the end of the 15th Lok Sabha in 2014. The Constitutional Amendment was to ensure that 50% of total seats filled by direct elections in every panchayat be reserved for women.

#### **A Solution to Gender Discrimination :**

It is now widely believed that empowerment of women, that is, providing equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities to women, will go a long way in removing the existing gender discrimination.

Gender discrimination and gender disabilities are not uniformly found in all the

countries even in the East. Further, there are regional variations also inside the big nations. For instance, in a vast nation like India, women are not allowed to move freely, to take up to education, to take up to jobs, to select their own life partners, in the North. Whereas in the South, the level of literacy among women is comparatively higher and hence, there is less discrimination against them. Women are found to be studying in educational institutions even at a higher level and working in offices, banks, public and private departments, in a relatively larger number in the South. In comparison with the Western Societies, women in general in South-East Asia are discriminated against. They are considered to be a weaker section of the society. This state of affair of women warrants appropriate plan of action to strengthen and support them. Empowerment of women is a positive step in this direction.

### **73rd Constitution Amendment Act-1993 :**

The 73rd Constitution Amendment Act has made an effort to give some special powers to women in all the three tiers of panchayat raj. The rationale behind this amendment was that the social and economic status of women could not be improved much without political power. Women in the villages as well as towns need to be given some political power. They should be given their share in the decision taking process. The new panchayat raj is the part of the effort to empower women at least at the village level.

### **Reservation of One- Third Seats for Women:**

As per the provisions of the 73rd Constitution Amendment Act, one-third of the seats are reserved for women along with Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes. This is, indeed, a very bold step towards the empowerment of women. The provisions of the Act for the women are in no way less than a revolution. Women who have been working in the fields as casual labourers, washing vessels at home, fetching water for drinking, cooking food for family members, are now legally permitted to share on par with the males, the village matters of decision-making. **Reasons For or The Rationale behind the Empowerment of Women.**

Why do women require empowerment? Is it a right step to establish between men and women? Does it help them to remove their disabilities? will it provide solutions to many of the problems with which they are suffering? –A series of questions like these come before us demanding an answer. The following explanation gives us some answer for these questions.

#### **1. Economic Exigencies :**

Women are found to be economically weak all over India. They are depended on their men folk for the fulfilment of their basic economic necessities. Only an insignificant number of women, that too in urban areas, are gainfully employed. Even in the urban areas they are culturally dominated by their men folk and they by themselves are not in position to take independent decisions without consulting the males. Women who are working as officers or office bosses are forced to play a subordinate role at home. Majority of women are

economically depended on men and this fact has made them to become weaker. They require economic power to stand on their own legs on par with men.

## **2. Poor Literacy :**

In most of the underdeveloped and developing countries, women are found to be less literate than men. The higher rate of illiteracy of women has made them to become dependent on men and to play a subordinate role. Same situation prevails in India. According to 2001 census, rate of literacy among men in India is found to be 76% whereas it is only 64% among women. Rate of literacy among women was found to be very poorer up to 1970s. Only recently, women are becoming more and more aware of education. The rate of school drop-outs is also found to be comparatively higher in the case of women. Lack of education has led to their exploitation and negligence. Only literacy can help them to understand the constitutional and the legislative provisions that are made to strengthen them. Thus promoting education among women is of great importance in empowering them.

## **3. Negligence of Health:**

Poor health on the part of women has also added to their weakness. Women consume less food and work more. They are shy of complaining about their ill health. They prefer to suffer silently than to approach a medical practitioner for obtaining medical assistance. This is mostly true in the case of a large majority of rural women. Surveys and studies have revealed that traditional importance shown towards the male children is also one of the reasons for neglecting the health of female children. Women are found to be maintaining relatively good health in the regions wherever the rate of female literacy is higher. Kerala provides here the best example. Thus from the health point of view also, women folk who are found to be weaker are to be made stronger.

## **4. Atrocities Against Women :**

Women represented the weaker sex. This fact is also borne by the number of crime and atrocities committed against them. There are cases of rape, kidnapping of girls, dowry harassment, molestation, sexual harassment, abuse of women, incest, sex relations and so on. Women in all walks of life are discriminated against by men. They have become the victims of atrocities in any number of ways. They require empowerment of all kinds in order to protect themselves and to preserve their purity and dignity.

## **5. UN Declaration and Women's World Congress :**

The issue of the empowerment of women no more remains a regional matter and it has become an international issue. The UN Declaration of 1975 [The International Women's Year] compelled the national government to shift its emphasis on women's programmes

from welfare to development. It was realized that undertaking of welfare programmes for women alone would not be of help unless supported by development programmes. Hence, the Declaration prescribed for the development of women.

Women's World congress held at Nairobi in the year 1985 released a document recommending effort towards empowerment of women. "in this document, the question of women political participation was highlighted and it was recommended that 35% of the total seats should be reserved for women. It was also recommended that some posts should be reserved for women at the block and village level bureaucracy. On the economic front. A number of income generating schemes were introduced for women. In addition to that provisions were also made to certain proportion of women as beneficiaries in all the developmental schemes like the IRDP, JRY, TRYCEM. And so on.

It is clear from the above that a number of national and international events have exerted their influence on the issue of status women culminating in the reservation of 33.3% of the total seats for them at the Panchayat level. The need for female empowerment was never so urgent as it is today. The 73rd Constitution Amendment Act is only a step towards the development of women.

#### **Conclusion:**

In present, women empowerment in panchayat raj system need to give power to women. but now a days women elected in panchayat but they are not taking the power of the system and men could not give to opportunities to work in society. In Indian context, people doing or taking everywhere traditional philosophy. So that now also fully women could not empowerer. If system will change to develop our Indian women, for that give to power where women are working in any sector then women empowerment automatically happen in india.

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