

CHAPTER-IV

CONCLUSION, SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 CONCLUSION

Political empowerment for this research means "Freedom of Choice" and "Freedom of Decision-making". So in the light of this definition, one has to examine the impact of 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act on political empowerment of women, whether rural women are aware of their powers, functions and responsibility while holding due political office and to examine their role of participatory decision making that leads to positive changes in the participation of women so that it can overlay the way for political empowerment of women. This study developed an empirical and theoretical approach to various effects of gender quota on female empowerment and found out factors that facilitate and prevent women's entry and participation in the political field. To evaluate the impact of gender quota on the women's political empowerment, six concepts were prepared which included: Political knowledge, Political participation, Political interest, Political trust, Confidence and Gender role attitude. The data of the present study reveals the least interest of rural women in politics and gender quota had not much positive impact on the 'participation' of women, instead, elected women candidates with 'remote control' in the hand of their male counterparts. Elected women office bearers are more or less a dummy candidates. On the other hand, lesser number of elected women representatives during interviews and discussion said that they have a good knowledge of politics and with the experience, they become more competent and efficient towards their rights and duties. In this regard, it can be said that reservation may not be yielding desired results but it is instrumental in changing the political behaviour of women. This change though is not very drastic, nevertheless signs of changes appearing in women who were earlier apathetic towards political events like elections, are now taking interest in contesting elections, holding public office and gradually asserting political power. Though rural women at par say, are still ignorant, politically indifferent and in the shackles of tradition and patriarchy. In Indian rural communities, women's fate is controlled by men due to the patriarchal setup of the society that discourages and prevents them to come forward and take part in the decision-making process. Patriarchy is not only practised by the male but

women are also an equal supporter and instrumental in sustaining patriarchy. So there is a need to sensitize the society that includes both male and females through various means like media- television and newspaper that can be proved to be an important tool in spreading awareness. With regards to facilities and opportunities for rural women, then they always had a less advantage than women residing in urban areas as urban women always had opportunities like better education, better economic resources, and more availability of required things as compared to rural women. Most of the families in rural areas are still deprived of better education, clean drinking water, conveyance facilities and number of other necessities that are required in day to day life. In most of the families, men went to the urban areas in search of work to earn some penny for his family and there remains a woman at home, whose duty is to take care of both inside and outside activities from home. It includes washing, cleaning, feeding, weeding, sowing, livestock care and many more. It is a fact that women play a pivotal role in the welfare of household as well as the community. Thus, for the upliftment of rural women in every sphere of life like earning income, to be educated, to be a decision maker, there is a need to empower them politically as development and progress of women become an empty promise without including women in decision making process. Consequently, the status of women will get boost up immediately with their equal participation with men.

Unfortunately, society perceives empowerment to be anti-men or typical misandry. The fault lies in our society that teaches us the opposite of black is white and the opposite of men are women. It is this very notion that proves to be the faux-pas of the idea of empowerment. Men and women aren't meant to oppose each other, rather they complement each other. Empowerment is not only about vesting women with rights or authority of consent, but also about educating men regarding women's contributions towards an enlightened and objective society. There is a need for 'dialogue' at various levels of society without sounding imposing which is unfortunately missing in India. And this is the main reason for women not being able to entitle to empowerment in rural areas despite reservation. Reservation that could have acted as booster, for large number of rural women who are poor, illiterate, harassed and under the control of patriarchy, could not yield the desired results. All these factors are indications of deterioration of socio-economic and consequently political status of women.

4.2 SUGGESTIONS

Issues of women's rights and equality clauses are being incorporated more and more through amendments or as a part of constitutional reforms. Although constitutional guarantees of equality do not ensure that these rights are available in practice, it is an important basis for the realization of the rights of women as well as an important expression of political will. Constitutional provisions can increase the legitimacy of rights claims and act as an enabling framework in facilitating legal change.¹ However, gender-sensitive constitution should be analyzed from gender perspective rather than involving a narrow set of women's issues. In the preamble of the Constitution, there should be specific references to equality among women and men to strengthen equality priorities in the entire document. A constitution should also consider gender equality in political and public life. For example, the Colombian Constitution says: "Officials will guarantee the adequate and effective participation of women in the level of public administration decisions". The Constitutions of Uganda and Rwanda both even established concrete thresholds for women in political bodies, the prevention of political discrimination against women and the institutionalization of gender quotas in political bodies².

Provisions should be made in order to self-execute the international treaties regarding women's human rights law within the constitution. It can be seen from the constitutions of both Germany and Slovenia where international law overrules the federal and local law. Numerous researchers point out that the political structure can drastically affect women's access to parliament. The electoral system where proportional representation is there, results in three to four times more women being elected to parliament³.

The way of participation of women in political parties and how these parties encourage women's political contribution is crucial to the political empowerment of women. Party organization and financing should also be more favourable to women's participation. It is important for parties to establish rules that guarantee the interest of women. In the end, the incentives and disincentives for including women need to be significant enough to impact party behaviour. Therefore, incentives should not be based on the number of women on the candidate lists but on the percentage of women within a party who actually win a seat. Internal reform initiatives are also needed to break down the resistance to women's leadership, as well as working with the

political party leaders on the issue of female leadership. It is essential to involve women in the process while working on removing the barriers to women's access to leadership and gain their support to implement initiatives that will increase women's political participation. Within political parties transparency is indispensable. A lack of transparency and accountability is linked to the old political party mentality that limits the participation of women, while transparency represents progress.⁴

The Liberal Democrats in the United Kingdom questioned what it was that kept women out of politics and set up a campaign with the name “Cash, Confidence and Culture” which addresses the three major barriers newcomers face in politics. First, the issue of disproportionate monetary resources for women candidates. They established a trust fund to assist female candidates to meet up the personal costs of campaigning, including travel costs and costs associated to the child or elder care. Second, the self-confidence plans included a program where MPs at work were shadowed to discover the real aspects and demands of political culture. Based on these observations, specific trainings for women were organised (e.g. public speaking, hostile questions and debates, etc). Third, a campaign for raising awareness at the local party was set up to encourage the creation of skills database for the recruitment of spokeswoman and candidates.⁵

Also, the parliament should provide chances to rural women to convey their issues and problems before parliamentary committees by opening doors for women organisations. Parliamentarians should learn to consider the national budget from a gender perception and should demand budget law through gender analysis to guarantee the needs of both women and men. Although Indian Constitution and law provide a forward-looking environment for women, but the patriarchal society and culture are not prepared to give equal status to women. Thus, empowerment is more of rhetoric rather than a reality. Most women are not able to transcend the limitation imposed on them by the society. Authoritarianism though not unique to India is nevertheless very deep-rooted here. Socio-cultural stereotypes divide the women as 'good women and bad women', where the former includes a woman who follows the stereotypes pertaining to woman-hood- soft-spoken, wearing Indian dresses, submissive and not raising their voice against wrong. Women themselves accept these stereotypes. Empowerment then is primarily a fight of a woman against herself. Empowerment does not necessarily mean a great academic degree or high salaried

jobs; it actually means the courage to assert, the rationality to distinguish between right or wrong, just or unjust and raise your voice against the evil. Women must realize their own strength. The standard of empowerment is not men but women themselves.

Progress in empowerment of women and gender equality has proved to be the hardest in incorporating the voice of women in politics and government. Therefore, it is important to enhance the tools that are available for women and to debate more and more on women's political participation. It not only implies a larger number of women elected at all the governance levels, but also ensures the larger impact on women elected for those positions as well.

4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS:

1) Education plays a vital role in bringing about consciousness on women's rights. To give women a rightful place within the family and the community there is a need to raise up both boys and girls with mutual respect and understanding of their capabilities and roles in the society. But, sadly enough, rural education maintains the myth that boys are intrinsically superior to girls. This is further reinforced by the family, where even mothers tend to give more consideration to male child and provide more opportunities to their boys than girls. There is a need to convince rural women about benefits of education and empowerment and how politics or power-sharing can contribute towards uplifting them from the poverty and downtroddenness. Also about, how they can change the direction of development by being a decision maker? Through media education, drama and nukkad natak, women are to be made aware of their own potentials and their due.

2) The low percentage of women among economic and political decision-makers at the local, national, regional and global levels replicate structural and attitudinal obstacle that needs to be addressed through affirmative measures. Governments, the mass media, banks, transnational and national corporations, scholarly and scientific institutions, and regional and global organizations, including those in the United Nations system, do not make complete use of women's talent as top-level managers, policymakers, representative and negotiator. The equitable allotment of power and decision-making at all levels is reliant on Government and other actors undertaking statistical gender analysis and mainstreaming a gender point of view in policy

development and the execution of programmes. Equality in decision-making is vital to the empowerment of women. National, regional and worldwide statistical institutions still have inadequate knowledge of how to present the issues interrelated to the equal treatment of women and men in the economic and community affairs. In particular, there is inadequate use of existing databases and methodologies in the essential subject of decision-making. In addressing the disparity between men and women in the power-sharing and decision-making at all levels, Government and other actors should encourage an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perception in all policies and plans so that before decisions are taken, perspective is made of the effects on women and men, respectively.

3) Special training programs can be organized from time to time for elected women representatives belonging to OBC, scheduled tribes and scheduled caste. It has to be done in addition to the regular programs running in the district. NGOs/governments that are running SHGs(Self Help Groups) can encourage enthusiastic women members to join the local administration as these members will be better representatives who use their experience from the SHG forum. Non Governmental Organizations working in the field can organize training / awareness programs on the empowerment of women and the importance of becoming a member can be clarified.

4) To avoid the exploitation of reservation policy, possible efforts should be directed to prevent proxy membership by women as it comes in the way of women's freedom and autonomy. The rural population and all related authorities should understand the cause of empowerment of women and should work accordingly to achieve it. In other words, there should be a multi-dimensional approach to reduce the problems of women and bring them into the mainstream.

5) Also, the social, economic and political justice can only be provided to women through decision making process and there is a need to associate women more closely with this course of action. The participation of women in political process help them to develop their leadership skills which ultimately help economy in its development process and recent global crisis and it would become really difficult for a country to achieve the targeted growth without women's participation in decision making process. To achieve a complete democracy, there is a need to put the subject of rural women's status and representation in the broader context.

6) Political parties can take advantage by keeping in mind the needs of rural women into account in their platforms and policies, thereby not only women's participation and gender equality be promoted but also can get political benefits. As actors within their respective parties, parliamentarians have the opportunity to address the needs of rural communities and especially giving attention to the rural women, that would help in deepening the democracy and thus promoting the sustainable development. Women's political participation across the world is improving, but too slowly. As a global average, women's representation in legislative bodies stands at 20%, compared with 11.3% in 1995⁶.

7) The Women's Reservation Bill that provides 33% of reservation to women in Lok Sabha and in all the State Legislative Assemblies through 108th Constitutional Amendment Act, is a lapsed bill in the parliament of India. Sadly, no effort has been made to politically empower women after the bill is lapsed. India already has the disgrace of being ranked 148th globally in the context of women's representation in the executive government. In the Lok Sabha, India has only 11.8 percent of the women compared to the global average of 22.8 percent in national legislatures (till June 2016)⁷. These figures only indicate the depressing situation of empowerment of women, especially in roles that involve decision-making. So, it is strongly recommended to pass the Women's Reservation Bill to compete globally and to provide women a bigger platform in decision making process

In summary, it can be said that the government of India is trying to empower the women through a variety of socio-economic/political policies and programs but there are still some gaps to be bridged. The aim of empowerment of women will not be met by reservation alone, and there are so many obstacles identified by the respondents. It can be noted that entry and participation of women in the political arena is having more restraint factors than the facilitating factors, and it is equally interesting to find that the restraint factors are so many and varied. Steps are being taken to overcome these obstacles, but this is a very time-consuming process. A composition, which has been created over centuries, cannot be dismantled within a small period of time. To advance and speed up this process it is important to implement some additional policies which strengthen the self-confidence of women, build women's capabilities and remove operational hindrances. There is a need to make over many aspects of the existing gender relations, authority distribution and to take hard decisions with

reference to power-sharing. While it cannot be claimed that women are positively empowered through these reservations, but also it cannot be denied that they have attained a certain level of authority and assurance as a direct outcome of the quota. The publicity of reservation, propaganda around elected women representative and revitalisation of local self-governments in the post 73rd and 74th amendments acts, are evident of changes. Entry of many well educated and confident young generation women, like Chhavi Rajawat, who is the first woman Sarpanch in India with an MBA degree in village Soda, Rajasthan and many others, make it possible to overcome the shackles of tradition and patriarchy. The scenario has started changing. Though the change is gradual and presently not at a very wide scale but it may prove to be an optimistic change in coming years.

REFERENCES

- ¹ “Engendering Transitions: Women’s Mobilization, Institutions, and Gender Outcomes”, Waylen, G. (2007). Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press (2007), pg. 538
- ² Women & Political Representation Handbook on Increasing Women’s Political Participation in Georgia
- ³ ibid
- ⁴ Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. “Increasing Women’s Roles in Political Parties. A Programmatic Perspective”. Accessed 115/08/2014 at http://www.cpahq.org/cpahq/Mem/About_Us/Programmes/Conferences/Commonwealth_Parliamentary_Conferences/56th_CPA_CWP4/Increasing_Women_s_Roles_in_Political_Parties__A_Programmatic_Perspective.aspx
- ⁵ Council of Europe Positive Action Survey 1998 (Women Liberal Democrats and Jackie Ballard, Liberal Democratic MP
- ⁶ Inter-Parliamentary Union, Women in Parliament: 20 years in review-Data
- ⁷ Why the women’s reservation bill is important now more than ever, MADHURI DANTHALA