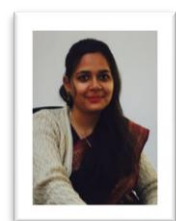# Decentralization and Political Empowerment of Scheduled Castes Women
(A Study of Agra City)

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Abstract

This paper draws attention towards the "Decentralization and Political Empowerment of Scheduled Castes Women" To know the political activities , analyses the factors , analyses the factors influencing their participation and investigated the key obstacles and barriers confronting in the active participation of political processes. The data obtained from a survey on scheduled castes women and their political participation conducted on 300 sample size among scheduled castes women of Agra city of Uttar Pradesh. The response rate was 300 (96.77%). The findings reveal that 53.33 per cent respondents interested in politics, while the rest 46.66 per cent respondents were not inclined towards politics, 11.66% had acquired membership of political party 88.333% women had not acquired membership in any political party, 16.66 % were found in political rallies, 32.33% women took part in the political procession and 51% liked their participation in strike and dharna. A least women had been participating in political activities were found to be not fully conscious about the participation in different political activities.

Keywords: Decentralization, Women Empowerment.

Introduction

Decentralization has changed the political and institutional context for promoting the full and equal rights of citizens in many societies around the world. Decentralization reforms are promoted as a means of deepening democracy and improving development. Decentralization has the potential to empower citizens, including such historically excluded groups as women, poor people, and racial, ethnic, sexual, and religious minorities. Many women and men are enthusiastic about the opportunities decentralization affords for participation in public life and are committed to pressing for greater gender equality and equity in decentralized systems. Decentralization is likely to contribute to sustainable development when it is linked to the democratic aspirations of women and men, and responds to local political, social, economic, and cultural needs and conditions.

Empowerment is the most recent policy approach to women in development. It takes into account not only both the practical and strategic gender needs of women but also recognizes their triple role in development. Empowerment has a number of dimensions with political participation as being one of them. The political presence of women in politics, however, has a disappointing track record. This is because a number of existing structural, institutional and cultural factors offers constrain to their participation in politics. Women's political presence and empowerment have some obvious links e.g. by having political presence in decision-making structures, women can influence the formulation of policies affecting other women in society. Decentralization provides greater opportunities for the citizen to participation in governance at the local level and hence could be a good policy option for enhancing women's political participation. It does so by increasing descriptive representation of women, which in turn leads to women's responsive policies. Women's empowerment and the movement toward gender equality is a modern phenomenon that continues to develop around the world.

Democratic type of constitution exists in India. It has three main organs-legislature, executive and judiciary, which have to play a definite role in country's politics. The political administration runs soundly where the people are educated, politically conscious and have experience of efficient

administration. So it comes back to people to choose their representatives who are responsive and responsible.

Equality of women's in power sharing and making at all levels must be ensured in the political process. In this context 33 % representation of women in seats of parliament and the legislative assemblies of the various states can be seen according to the women's reservation bill. Participation of women has been encouraged effectively in the developmental process by women friendly personnel policies. The 73rd and 74th amendments (1993) to the Indian constitution ensured equal access and increased participation in political power for women by reserving seats for women. In present time women have been inadequately represented is in the political area. Article 325 and 326 guarantee equal political right to participate in political processes and right to vote respectively and latter women has been exercised and enjoyed their right and right to equal political participation is still far from women. Presence of the percentage of women is lower than men right from the developed to the developing countries in any political system.

Women had fought long war to get their right to vote in many countries. But in present the percentage of women as voters has increased and their participation in politics is not equal to men as it should be. Women have not been regarded as important part of the political sphere, participation in politics at every level is dominated by men. Participation of female and representation in national decision making institutions has significant outcomes for women. Women have half the population in a political sphere which helps equality for both men and women and legally eligible to political office. Participation of women should be equal to men. The evolution of women's participation in politics can be taken back to the nineteenth century reform movement. Raja Ram Mohan Roy focused on women's education and abolition of sati. Many famous women reformers participated in this movement and religious reform movement of this period. Pandit ramabai, Manorama majumdar, Sarla Debi Goshal who started Bharat Stree Mahamandal and gave contribution in education of women.Sakhisamiti is the women's organization started by Swarna Kumara Devi in 1886 for widows are few examples.

The low enrolment of women voters in the new electorate, even below the already unequal percentage of 47.6% at the national level, shows that current awareness and outreach programs are not reaching women and there is a clear need to concentrate more on women's enrolment in the years ahead. This is extremely important because most data analysis shows that a male dominated electorate results in policies disfavouring women.

Psychological traits stem from cognitive structures and individual personalities focused by social psychologists and include sociability, sense of alienation, sense of efficacy, sense of civic responsibility and authoritarianism. The cognitive status of low self-esteem and feeling of pessimism and alienation from society and political apathy

assumed that it has relation between it. This political apathy affects political participation which is not much clear and certain Political participation has definitely influenced by the social environment which includes elements like education, occupation, age, sex, income, caste, mobility, ethnicity and habitation. Education is a better transmission to be able the children and people for knowledge and political interest. In this respect, educational institutions serve as the basic ground in the development of articulateness and skills of political participation through schools/college/university unions. One learns here to join in an organization, fulfil duties, participate in meetings, discuss social issues and organize to achieve group goals. Participation in political activities depends on the political

Environment or the political setting where individual receives political stimuli and finds him/her. Right to participate in a democratic political system is a main feature but it's not completely exercised. Criteria of participation and non participation have been taken as levels of political interest including awareness of issues and interest in politics. Political parties have played an important role in political participation. It's a powerful reference group in its own right and inspires its members a feeling of belongingness as a partly expressive and partly instrumental. In the instrumental functions mobilizes rallies, organizes campaign activities selects party nominees, party contacts and registers voters influence the electorate during elections to vote. Party attachments and reinforcing candidate preference affects by campaign and rally and the most significant aspect of the relation between individual and political environment is influenced by propaganda.

It has been argued that there is a positive correlation between these two processes and the political participation. Both the processes help in increasing the extent of political communication which leads to greater political awareness. Political participation facilitates widely through increasing media, raise literacy which affects socio-economic status of women. The amount of Political participation has increased through high socio-economic status. The process of modernization increase class-based participation and decrease communal-based participation. Rightist parties are voted by majority of the upper and middle class persons while left parties generally voted by majority of lower class persons. Socialization is a process to become people aware about the issues and ideology to identify with a particular political party and affects the amount and quality of people participation. Because the politically aware people better knows to relate their social values to their political opinions to achieve stable internally consistent belief system. People can participate in the political processes of a society by varieties of ways such as political activities, electoral sub-system; voting and campaigning .Voting is a very wide citizen activity affecting all the members of a society and determines the leadership policies and issues for the party as well as the whole nation. Campaigns and election campaigning is another way of political participation in which leaders can increase

their influence over citizens and voters and collective outcomes come from campaign activity. Electoral process is an important activity in political sphere. Voting and election campaign is a sub part of electoral process where people can participate outside this process and can take part in another activity like organization and groups which deals with social and political problems etc.

Women have many faced obstacles and barrier in the way of participating in politics due to existing societal value system, male preponderance in political institutions, and the private-public divide in terms of domain identification which restrict women to get their right and a fair participation in the political competition. The lack of representation of women in decision making is restricted women's agenda for getting reflected and addressed in public programmes and policies.

Women in India seem to have failed to break the glass ceiling and relegated to the fringes in power sharing at the top level, which has an adverse impact on their overall political status in the country and acted as barriers and obstacles in political participation of women. Panchayati raj institutions have been strong roadblocks and obstacles to women's entry into politics and a backlash of violence to keep them away from electoral politics and 33% reservation of seats for Indian women at state legislature and Parliament is having a negative impact on women's share in the representations.

Therefore, lower economic starta, marginalised groups and backward castes would get further excluded from political participation and sharing political power. Men and women should get a free and proportionate chance to enjoy and exercise their political rights and participate in competition.

Among the political obstacles that women face, the following feature prominently:

The prevalence of the, 'masculine model' of political life and of elected government Bodies, Lack of party support, limited financial support for women candidates, and limited access to political participation and the more stringent standards and qualifications applied to women, Lack of sustained contact and cooperation with other public organizations such astrade (labour) unions and women's groups, Lack of access to well-developed education and training systems

For women's leadership in general, and for orienting young women towards Political life; and the nature of the electoral system, which may or may not be favorable to women candidates.

Review of Literature

Review of Literature is an essential aspect of the whole research work. Studies on the status of scheduled caste women have brought out the important role of education, employment, socio - economic status, constitutional benefits and consequential change as contributing to the improvement of their status in society.

1. Beteille (1969) shows that in pursuance of the government plans and policies there seems to have taken place a slow but a steady erosion in the legitimacy accorded to inequality between the Scheduled Castes and the castes Hindus.

2. Sachidananda (1971) brought out in his work that urbanization improved economic, social and political conditions, decreasing influence of caste disabilities and the new government policy of protective discrimination etc, have been considered as effective forces for the change in their style of life.

3. Duskin (1972) found that there is a slow but positive change taking place among Scheduled Caste because of the benefit of the constitutional policies.

4. Kuppuswamy (1975) observed in his work on "Social change in India" that as a result of the laws passed the legal disabilities of the Harijans were removed. A big social change has come among the Harijans or the basis of the temple entry legislation, the provision of educational facilities and employment opportunities.

6. Singh (1986) found that the impact of the development program on the scheduled caste in Rae Bareli district (UP) was not up to the mark. They are still economically very poor and work as agriculture labourers.

7. Chetty (1991) observed that the impact of development on the Scheduled Castes in Andhra Pradesh and finds that the programs have played a vital role in providing for the increased output, increased net income, and improved asset position these people. However still they have to go a long way to come up into the mainstream of Indian national scenario.

8. Prasad and Pajnikanth (1991) studied a different kind of mobility taking place among the chamars of West Bengal, Bihar, Rajsthan, and Gujarat. They observed that the development of leather industries has considerably ceased the traditional occupation of the chamars of the above states because the people prefer more of Foot-wear produced by the industrial entrepreneurs than shoes produced in the traditional household-leather industries. As a result the chamars have left their traditional calling and taken to non-traditional occupations.

9. Johnson (2003) lays out the political dynamics that preceded the constitutional amendments in 1993, and then explores the extent to which these reforms have been implemented in AP and MP. It reviews the literature on decentralization in India, analysing three elements that are thought to have undermined the power and autonomy of village-level Panchayats – India's federalism, the 'resistant' bureaucracy and 'élite capture.' It then develops hypotheses to explain the conditions under which Panchayats can be made more responsive and accountable to the interests of groups traditionally marginalised by local political processes.

10. Patel Sujata (2003) presented in this collection to analyse Maharashtra employment gurantee scheme from a sociological and political perspective. they investigate the variety of ways in which the political mobilization of the oppressed takes place and simultaneously

examining the manipulations by the ruling Maratha landed caste to disempower and eventually co-opt such struggles in order to perpetuate its own political dominance. this research analyses the contestations that have emerged in the context of this programme in the last three decades as groups and classes have confronted in each other in using the EGS to further their own respective interests.

11. Iyer and Mani (2012) emphasized on using state-level variation in the timing of political reforms, we find that an increase in female representation in local government induces a large and significant rise in documented crimes against women in India. Our evidence suggests that this increase is good news, driven primarily by greater reporting rather than greater incidence of such crimes. In contrast, we find no increase in crimes against men or in gender-neutral crimes. We also examine the effectiveness of alternative forms of political representation. Large scale membership of women in local councils affects crime against them more than their presence in higher-level leadership positions.

12. Smith Stephanie L. (2014) studied four analytical categories drawn from policy process literature: constitutional, governing and social structures; political contexts; actors and ideas. The experiences of two south Indian states—Tamil Nadu a leader and Karnataka a relatively slow — are examined. Process-tracing, a case study methodology that helps to identify roles of complex historical events in causal processes, was employed to investigate the research question in each state. The study is informed by interviews with public health policy experts and service delivery professionals, observation of implementation sites and archival document analysis. Historical legacies—Tamil Nadu's non-Brahmin social movement and Karnataka's developmental disparities combined with decentralization—shape the states' political contexts, affecting variation in maternal health policy and implementation. Competition to advance consistent political priorities across regimes in Tamil Nadu offers fertile ground for policy entrepreneurship and strong public health system administration facilitates progress. Inconsistent political priorities and relatively weak public health system administration frustrate progress in Karnataka. These variations offer insights to the ways in which sub-national political and administrative contexts shape health policy and implementation.

13. Clayton Amanda (2015) focused on "Women's Political Engagement Under Quota-Mandated Female Representation" and found that having a quota-mandated female representative either has no effect on or actually *reduces* several dimensions of women's self-reported engagement with local politics. In addition, implications from the policy experiment suggest that the quota effect is not accounted for by differences in qualifications or competence

between the different groups of councilors, but rather stems from citizens' negative reactions to the quota's design.

14. Halim Nafisa (2016) discussed on using a national district-level dataset of India composed of information on investments in primary schooling [data from the District Information Survey for Education and information on demographic characteristics of elected officials [data from the Election Commission of India, we examined the relationship between women's representation in State Legislative Assembly (SLA) seats and district-level investments in primary schooling. We used OLS regressions adjusting for confounders and spatial autocorrelation, and estimated separate models for North and South India. Women's representation in general SLA seats typically was negatively associated with investments in primary-school amenities and teachers; women's representation in SLA seats reserved for under-represented minorities, i.e., scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, typically was positively associated with investments in primary schooling, especially in areas addressing the basic needs of poor children. Women legislators' gender and caste identities may shape their decisions about redistributive educational policies.

15. Azad Pratap Singh (2017) witnessed panchayat Raj and decentralization as tremendous popularity both in the 20th century as well as in the second decade of 21st century. Democratic decentralization is a highly concerned concept for development. Decentralization promotes local level representation, solves local issues and enhances decision making powers of the rural people. Effective decentralization provides greater choice to the people to participate in decision making and this could act as a mechanism in the development process. This paper is attempts to look into the dynamism of the process whereby women empowerment is achieved through legislation or women participation in the Panchayat Raj Institutions.

16. Bharti Chhibber (2018) examined the Research Questions: Has Panchayati Raj institutions brought about a change in the role of women in Indian politics? What are the issues and challenges women have to face while exercising their powers? Whether women are truly able to exercise their right in improving the village conditions for the betterment of people? Study uses comparative methods to understand women's political empowerment while leading the gram panchayats at the village level. The comparison will be based on both primary and secondary sources including the websites of the central and state governments in India in conjunction with ground realities and existing literature and media reports. The arguments will be substantiated through case studies from some of the states in India further supported by tables.

Objectives of the Study

The study is undertaken with following objectives:

1. To understand the decentralization and political empowerment of scheduled castes women.
2. To ascertain the participation of Scheduled castes women in political activities and their empowerment.
3. To analyse the factors influencing participation of women in politics.
4. To study the key barriers and obstacles in women's active participation in political processes.

Hypothesis

Participation of Scheduled castes women in political activities and empowerment is positive.

Methodology

Sample

The study was conducted on a sample size of 300 women in Agra city of Uttar Pradesh due to the availability of sampling unit and proximity to house respondents selected randomly through lottery method of simple random sampling.

Tool

Self prepared Interview Schedule on political participation of scheduled castes women was used in present investigation. The scale consisted of 6 items on different aspects which were divided into different categories i.e. Inclination towards politics, Membership of political party, Participation in political activities, Political honour achieved through political participation, Influence from political party and vote casting in the election.

Statistical Techniques

The analysis of the data was done by computing average and percentage.

Women's status in politics can be defined as the degree of quality freedom enjoyed by women in shaping and sharing of power and the value given by society to this role of women. The literacy among scheduled castes women has raised their political awareness and participation too.it is very interesting to point out that working and professional women who are really very sensitive with the politics, their representation has not been shown in the political sphere. Political participation has been explained as a citizen's active participation in public institutions, which include candidacy, voting, occupying, campaigning, political office and lobbying individually or by membership in a group. Political participation of women lie with geography, level of socio-economic development, culture and the type of political system. Representation and political participation of women in Indian politics needs parliamentary reforms.

Political participation in terms of the degree to which citizens are exercising their right to engage in political activities (e.g., to protest, to speak freely, to vote, to influence or to get more energetically involved). Political participation defined as an activity which aims to influence political authority. Political participation designed as an "activity by private citizens to affects government decision-making" Women has the right to participate in political processes that influence them, their societies, and their families. Countries with increased women's participation and leadership in civil society and political parties tend to be more inclusive, responsive, egalitarian, and democratic.Women's participation and leadership in political parties, civil society has increased and tends to be more inclusive, responsive, egalitarian and democratic.

| S.No.		Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Inclination towards politics	Interested in Politics	160	53.33
		Not interested in Politics	140	46.66
2.	Membership of political party	Acquired membership of political parties	35	11.66
		Didn't acquire membership of political parties	265	88.33
3.	Participation in Political Activities	Participation in rallies	50	16.66
		Participation in political procession	97	32.33
		Participation in strikes and dharna	153	51
4.	Political honour achieved through political participation	Attained social status and honour	169	56.33
		Didn't attain social honour	131	43.66
5.	Influence from any political party	BJP	21	7.0
		BSP	184	61.34
		AAP	04	1.33
		Congress	79	26.33
		Other parties	12	4.0
6.	Vote casting in the election	Yes	214	71.34
		No	40	13.33
		Sometimes	18	6.0
		Always	28	9.33

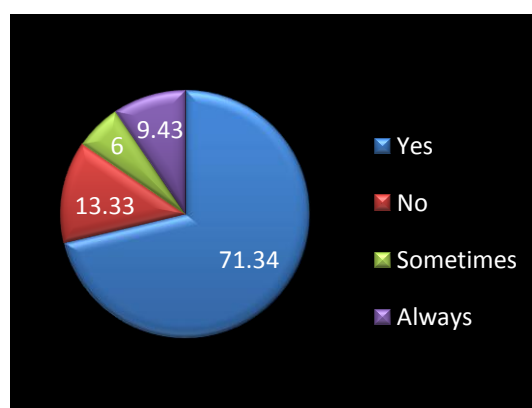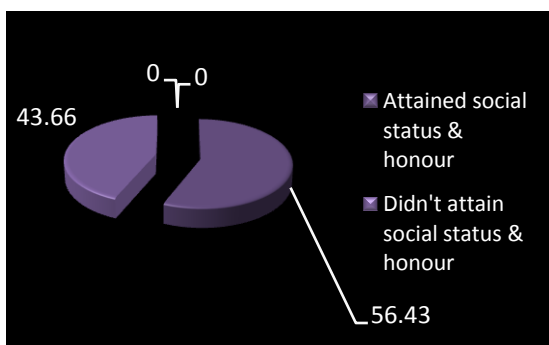*Remarking An Analisation*

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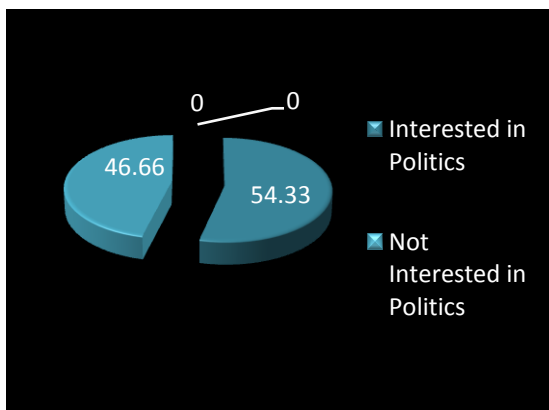
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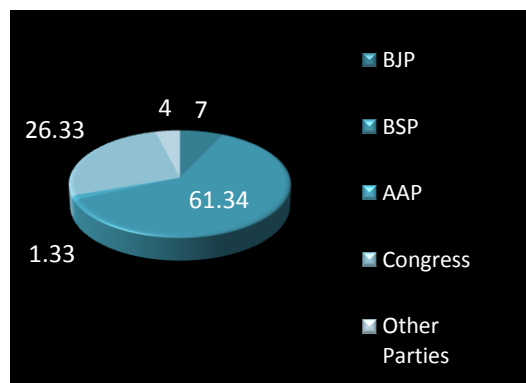
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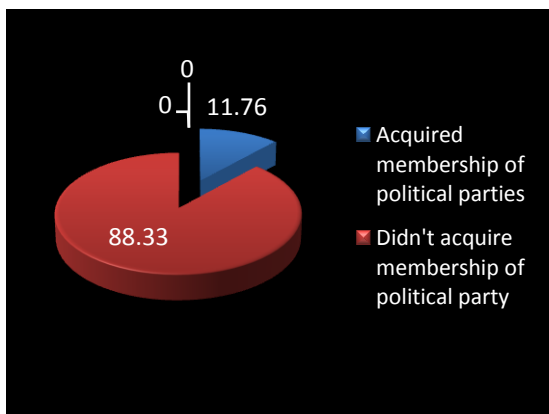
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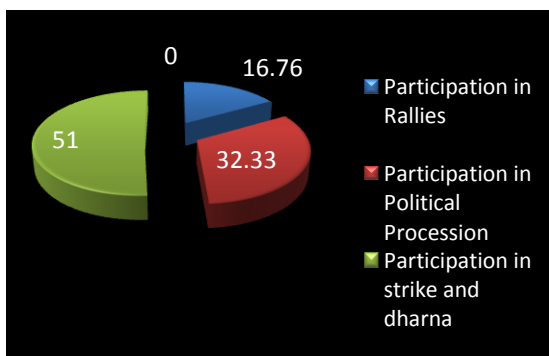
Results & Discussion

In order to assess the contribution of political participation of scheduled castes women to the status dynamics, their types of respondents to politics were examined. The above table shows that out of 300 respondents, 160 (i.e. 53.33 per cent) respondents interested in politics, while the rest 140 (i.e. 46.66 per cent) respondents were not inclined towards politics. It appears from the above discussion that the majority of the scheduled castes women and their participation in public meetings, demonstration, and election campaign have become a nature. The above figure shows that out of 300 sample cases only 35 (i.e. 11.66 per cent) respondents had acquired membership of political party majority of 265 (i.e. 88.333 per cent) respondents had not acquired membership in any political party, hence, it can include that only lesser number of respondents took active participation in political affairs and majority declined to such participation.

Political behaviour of members is generally manifested in different ways. These manifestations vary in its mode of it. The figures in the above table represented that 300 respondents in which 50 (i.e. 16.66 per cent) were found in political rallies, while only 97 (i.e. 32.33 per cent) respondents took part in the political procession and 153 (i.e. 51 per cent) liked their participation in strike and dharna. Therefore, it was concluded that a least respondents had been participating in political activities were found to be not fully conscious about the participation in different

Political honour achieved through Political Participation

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political activities. This may also be due to illiteracy prevailing among scheduled castes respondents. The reaction of scheduled castes women towards achieved honour through political participation have been analysed and indicated that 169 (i.e. 56.33 per cent) respondents out of 300 had attained better status and honour through political involvement, remaining 131 (i.e. 43.66 per cent) respondents were not attained social honour.

It has been observed that the majority of 169 (i.e. 56.33 per cent) scheduled castes women respondents had admitted that awareness of participation in political affairs was an indicator for better status and dignity. The figure in the above table observed 21 (i.e. 7 per cent) respondents influenced by BJP (Bhartiya janta party), 184 (i.e. 61.34 per cent) respondents were influenced by (Bahujan samajwadi party), 04 (i.e. 1.33 per cent) respondents were influenced in AAP (Aam Admi Party), 79 (i.e. 26.33 per cent) respondents influenced by congress while rest 12 (i.e. 4 per cent) influenced by other parties. It has been observed that 214 (i.e. 71.34 per cent) respondents had casted vote in their election, 40 (i.e. 13.33 per cent) respondents were not casted vote in the election, 18 (i.e. 6.0 per cent) respondents said that sometimes they casted vote in the election while rest of 28 (i.e. 19.33 per cent) respondents always cast vote in the elections.

Conclusion

Political participation of women and decision making process is an essential part for women's interest. And their active involvement in household and community work make them well aware towards their participation in outside activities and gives them insight and perspective in overall development of different sectors. The studies explain that 53.33% women are interested in politics and 11.66% women acquired membership in political party while rest of women didn't acquire membership. Due to some reasons such as prevalence of the, 'masculine model' of political life and of elected government Bodies, Lack of party support, limited financial support for women candidates, and limited access to political participation. The data reveals that women have participated in rallies, political procession and strikes and dharna. That means if women would get equal opportunity and status in politics they can give better participation in politics at local level and in decision making process. India has a rich history of measuring political participation of women since its independence. Women's stereotypes roles in society has been breaking and encouraging women in local governments and politics.

Participation of women in politics can be measured in three aspects: As a voter, as an elected representative and their decision in politics at local level. Women can play an active role in the politics as a good public administrator. Women's political participation is very useful for policy makers and planners to make better schemes and programmes. These programmes and schemes can be better implemented by women at local level. The power to take decisions, power to influence decisions, power over who should get what, how and when, and the

power over values, ideas and recourses etc. This leads us to the notion that political presence to a great extent can help empower women. Decentralization is about good governance. It increases participation of citizens in governance at the grass root levels. In many countries, decentralization has resulted in government's affirmative action's to ensure inclusion of women in the political sphere of life.

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