

**Role of Women in Panchayat Raj Institutions:
A study based in the villages of Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh**

*A dissertation submitted to the school of Arts and Languages in partial
fulfilment of the degree of Master of Arts in Sociology*

Submitted by

Palle Deepthi

Registration No: 11510467



Under the supervision of

Dr. Muhammed Madappalli

UID: 19342

Assistant Professor of Sociology

Lovely professional university

Phagwara, Punjab

April 2017

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the dissertation titled “Role of Women in Panchayat Raj Institution, Guntur, Andhra Pradesh” submitted for M.A degree in sociology which is based on my original work and all ideas and references have been duly acknowledged. It does not contain any work that has been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma from any university.

Palle Deepthi

Investigator

Reg.No.11510467

Date:

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that Palle Deepthi has completed dissertation entitled “Role of women in Panchayat Raj Institutions, Guntur, Andhra Pradesh” under my supervision. To the best of my knowledge, the present work is the result of her original investigation and study. No part of dissertation has been submitted for any other degree or diploma. The dissertation work is fit for the submission and the partial fulfilment of the conditions for the award of M.A. degree in sociology from Lovely Professional University, Phagwara.

Date:

Dr. Muhammad Madappalli

Supervisor

Assistant Professor of Sociology

Lovely Professional University

Phagwara, Punjab

ACKNOWLEDMENT

I express my gratitude to all those who helped me in the preparation of this thesis. I am greatly indebted to my supervisor, Assistant Prof. Muhammad Madappalli, M.A., MPhil., Ph.D., Lovely Professional University whose timely help and being always approachable provided me the congenial atmosphere to complete the dissertation in this entire process. It has been my privilege and pleasure to work under his expert supervision

I owe a lot to my father P. Koti Reddy for his encouragement, care and affection bestowed on me.

Above all, I am thankful to god almighty for showering me abounding grace and blessings.

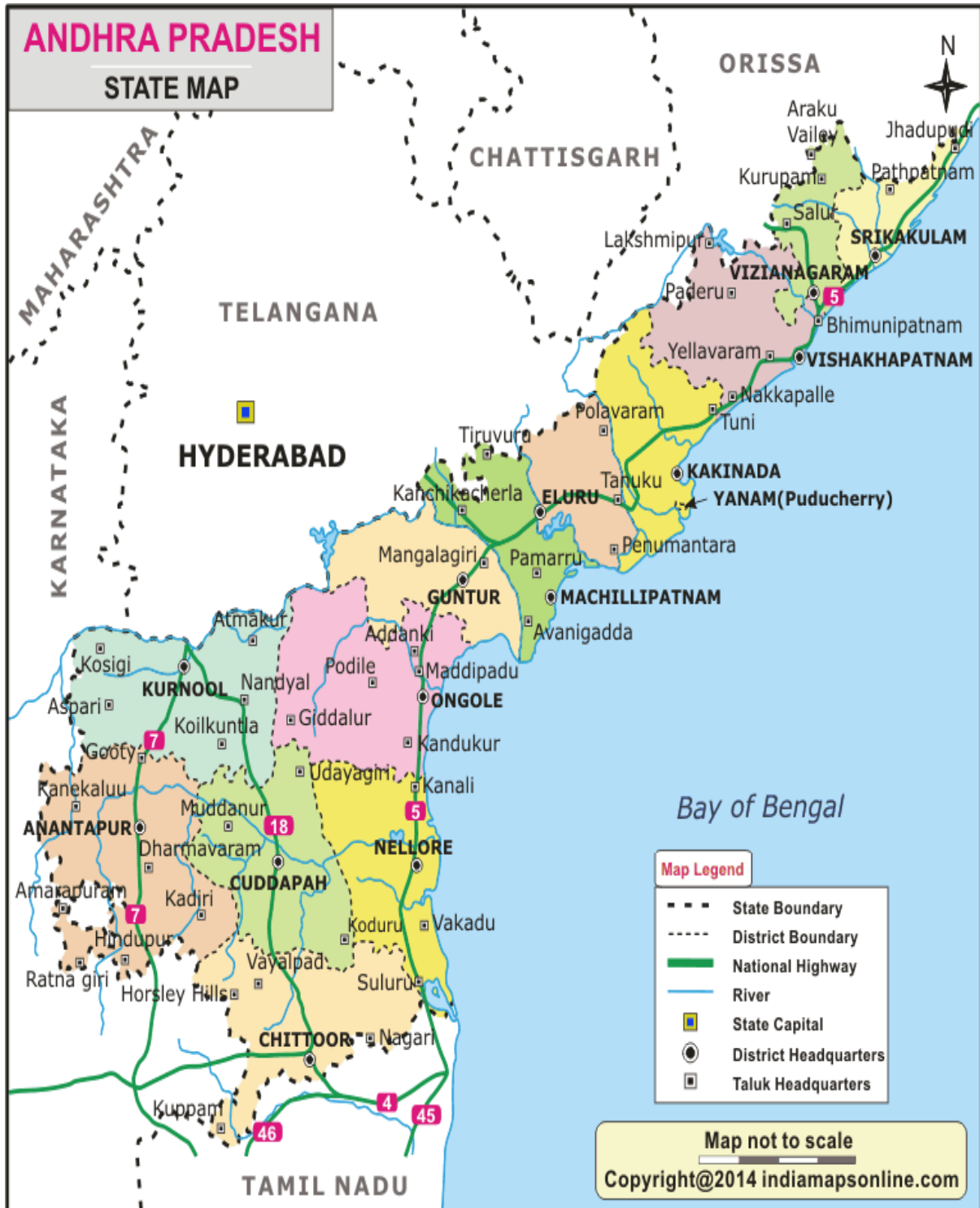
Needless to say those matters of analysis, interpretation, judgement, opinion, error or omission are entirely my responsibility.

CONTENTS

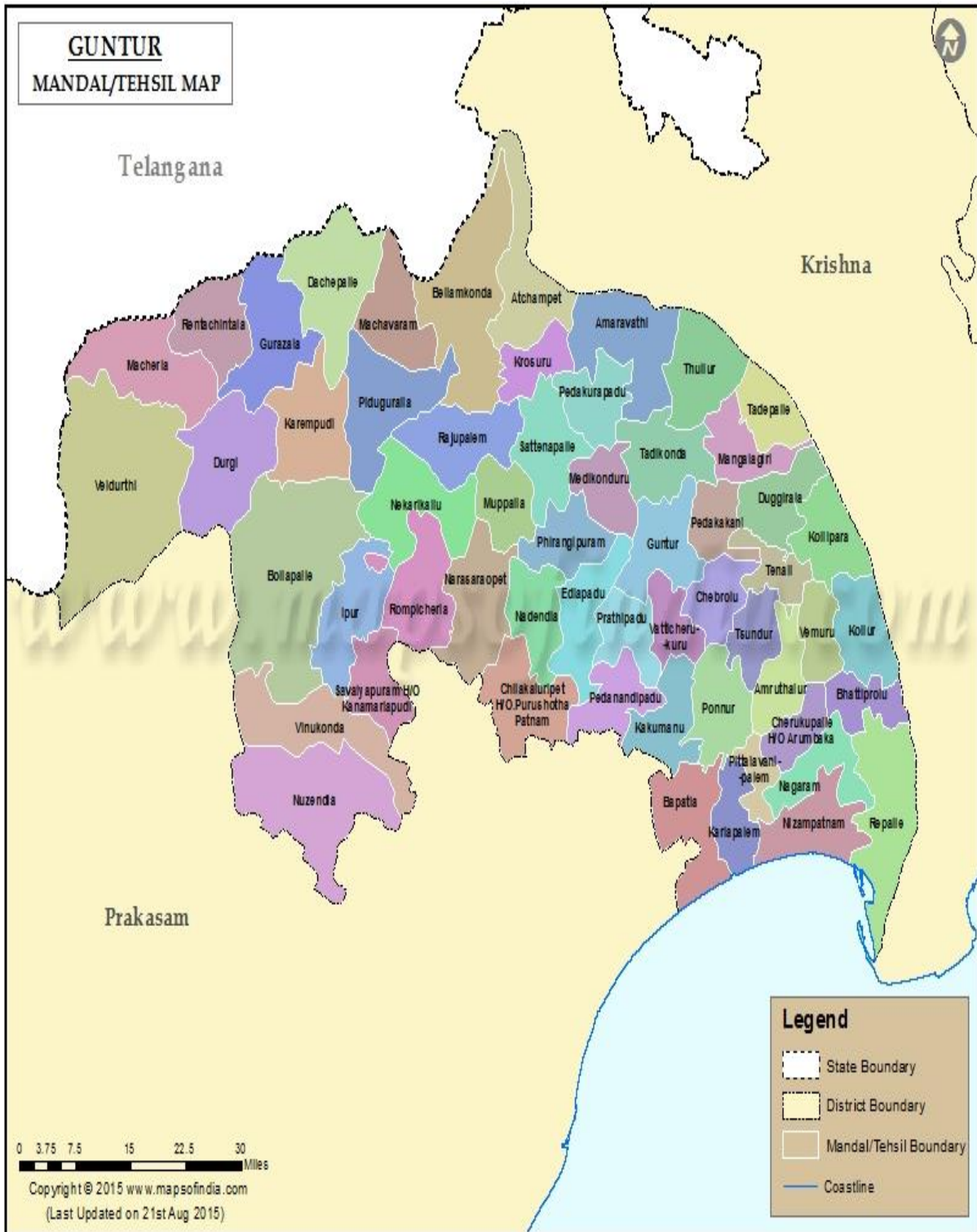
TITLE	PAGE NUMBER
DECLARATION CERTIFICATE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT MAPS	
CHAPETR 1 –INTRODUCTION	10-23
CHAPTER 2-EVOLUTION OF STATUS OF WOMEN	24-41
CHAPTER 3-STATUS OF WOMEN OF ANDHRA PRADESH	42-47
CHAPTER 4—PANCHAYT RAJ INSTITUTIONS AND WOMEN	48-63
CHAPTER 5-DATA ANALYSIS AND FIELD STORIES	64-68
CHAPETR 6-SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION	69-70
REFERENCES	71-73



SOURCE: GOOGLE images



SOURCE: GOOGLE images



SOURCE: GOOGLE images

CHAPTER-1

1.1 INTRODUCTION

“It is impossible to think about the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is impossible for a bird to fly on only one wing”-Swami Vivekananda

In India, on account of the presence of conventional society alongside the advanced society ladies are denied persistently benefiting distinctive open doors and focal points by connecting her part inside the four dividers of their home for as long as a few centuries. Oppression ladies is a standout amongst the most brutal thing for which ladies is misled and is having absence of chances both financial advancement, support in various exercises and advancement programs and benefiting chances of different offices which are connected straightforwardly or by implication with acquiring upgrades the way of life and the personal satisfaction due to the social backwardness due to which she is confronting twofold separation. Along these lines, the ladies are likewise prevented from securing right of basic leadership in their family undertakings on the record of the social and social imperatives forced by their family which is further prompting the continuation of the conventional framework. This conventional framework is unbending and unyielding to the changing circumstances and the changing needs of the ladies. This unbending nature is unmistakably noticeable when lady demonstrates her enthusiasm for political investment. She will be examined for craving, her character will be killed in the event that she don't withstand to the societal standards. Indeed, even the general population are so connected to the unbending nature that anything new or anything which engages ladies particularly political investment is considered as foul. Be that as it may, with the appearance of training this inflexibility is softening however it stayed firm. This resoluteness can be transformed into adaptability by empowering ladies in political interest which catalyzes in breaking the generalizations of the customary framework. This impetuses was seen as reservation of 1/3rd seats for ladies in panchayat raj establishments which came into drive by 73rd change in the year 1993.this correction developed as a beam of expectation in an entire dimness which ladies were pushed into for the sake of religion, culture and so on. However, as the years passed, even this open door was detracted from the ladies for the sake of culture, obligation and so on. One needs to recall that if half of the number of inhabitants in India is deterred from the political interest and further are smothered how the country advance and will it stroll forward towards the improvement. Therefore, this study is an effort to show how even after decades of the

implementation of the panchayat raj act and its provision of reserving seats for women the role of women in panchayat raj institutions is perceived and what are the factors which were obstructing their participation. In order to understand what women are perceived as, it is important to understand about what constitutes “women”

1.2. The concept “Women”:

Within the women community there were many sects which emerged over a period of time, which to be specific emerged simultaneously with the waves of feminism started in the West during 19th century and the early 20th century when women were on the streets demanding their right to adult suffrage. This was the first instance where a category of women started emerging in the field of politics who demanded equality. Then emerged a second wave of feminism (post 1920s) which had a radical edge, it was radical as this wave did not demand for equality but asserted superiority over the male counterparts. Unlike the first and second wave feminism, the third wave feminism (post 1950s) identifies the diversity and accepts the idea of change within the women community all over the world which includes women belonging to different ethnicities, religions, colour etc. When we analyse the transition of the category of women from that of first wave feminism to that of the third we observe that the category of women had broadened with the broadening of struggles they fought over the years. For instance, when third wave feminism emerged it emerged as a criticism to the first and second waves of feminism which overemphasised the experiences of the upper class white women neglecting the diversity within the women community, this can be said as a milestone in removing the fences which women built around themselves which earlier had become the reason for the non-diffusion of the idea of the feminism in the west to a country like India which certainly was more diverse than the west had ever thought. For instance, there was not much effort needed for the Indian women to fight for suffrage rights, as compared to that of the women in West. Indian women were fighting for something which was far away different from what the women of west were fighting for which was the question of their own existence i.e. their right to live. Here came the split when there was a huge difference between the “women” in west from that of the “women” in India.

In this section let us discuss what were the views of different thinkers about the very category of women and what a category of women in real consists of:

Fraser and Nicholson formulated the category of women as “plural and completely constructed conceptions of social identity”, this statement clarifies that there cannot be one

homogenised generalisation about who a woman is, it can be further elaborated that woman and her role it may either within the family or society completely depends upon the society i.e. it is socially constructed and as there are number of societies existing, hence the category of women is also plural. For instance:-kibbutz, Israeli farming community whose principles were based in equality i.e. both the genders were treated equally as such there is no role assigned to their sex on the other there are also societies like tribe of Mundugumor where the male is seen dominating the female.¹

Gail Omvedt articulates the category of women in terms of women belonging to agricultural labourers and poor peasant class, who then form the base for the women liberation movements, which means her articulation of the category of women is symbolic of women, who are involved in some physical work or labour. Omvedt's articulation of the category of women goes beyond the class/caste dimension and centres on the symbol of women's power woven around the rural women. Her own experience with the dynamism of women in the farmer's movement and other mass movements led her to articulate a different notion of women's power and further her articulation of women power is rooted much more in the ground level reality.²

Vandhana Shiva articulated the category of 'woman' in terms of woman's power resting in the recovery of feminine principle by Indian women. She positioned women as a category undifferentiated by race, class and ethnicity etc. Further, she also made connections between women's body or biology and oppression of women and nature. For her, the new relationship of men's domination and mastery over nature is also associated with new patterns of domination and mastery over women and their exclusion from participation as partners in both science and development.³

Gabriele Dietrich's verbalization of the classification lady takes in the wholeness of individual i.e. in every one of its measurements i.e. material, test, otherworldly, and so forth. She weaves this lady through focal points of class, position and religion. In support to her exchange she once expressed that "it has turned out to be clear at this point dialogs on sexuality in a women's activist viewpoint are not discourse about free sex but rather control connections and infringement of human dignity...the display example is that ladies are dealt

¹ "theory and practice of women's movement in India" by Supriya Akerkar, Economic and Political weekly,30 p.p.WS2-WS23

² [ibid]

³ [ibid]

with as property and that men are not answerable in their sexual conduct. We are taking a stab at a circumstance where no individual will be claimed another, however where everyone will be liable in shared obligation and sympathy".

These verbalizations about what the class of women makes it clear that distinctive scholars had diverse view with respect to what the women classification must comprise of however after the above exchanges it is significant that one must not connect "ladies" to a specific quality as they are different past creative energy. Subsequently, this class must be sufficiently adaptable to suit different discernments on ladies, and after that lone there will be a momentous upliftment in the status of ladies.

1.3. Arguments regarding the role of women:

There were many theories and arguments seen in order to establish what actually the role of woman in society in general and within the family specifically. This framing of woman's role began sporadically the moment woman started questioning the reasons behind her continuous suppression, it was the moment when theories started portraying how woman's body is best suited for the tasks like child rearing, being an ideal wife to her husband and nothing more than obeying her husband must be her sole responsibility. For instance, Talcott Parsons argues that woman has two basic functions in the modern industrial world, which include: young individual's socialization on the other hand adult personality's stabilisation. Parsons further describes that expressiveness is the feature of woman with in the family as which explains that she has to support her family members by supporting emotionally, security and warmth which according to Parsons is essential for effective socialisation of the young and relieving the tension of the male breadwinner who has an instrumental role wherein the male in order to compete and attain economical achievements by working all the day and sustain family's needs. According to Parsons, the foundation on which the sexual division of labour is depends is on the differences attained biologically⁴

Second argument came from the anthropologists, Lionel Tiger and Robin Fox who talked about 'biogrammar', which according to them was genetically based programme which predisposes mankind to behave in certain ways and these predispositions are not same as instincts since they can be considerably modified by the culture but they remain basic influences on the human behaviour. Further, according to them aggression is the more

⁴ Sociology-themes and perspectives by M Haralombus , Oxford university press, New Delhi

dominant in men compared to that of women and they linked these characteristics to gene inbuilt and inheritance of the gene matter from the primate ancestors. They further linked the male dominance as “sex linked characteristic”. As the genetic change is very slowly adapted to the in any society when compared rapid change in the culture, the genetic changes which once existed in the hunting society are still featured in the society which is modernised. Hence, drew conclusions that replacement of gender roles with unisex roles but there is guarantee that even this replacement will not go against nature.

George Peter Murdock saw contrasts in science amongst women and men is the reason for division in view of sex with in any generalpublic. He states " Man with his unrivalled physical quality can better attempt the more strenuous assignments, for example, stumbling, mining, quarrying, arrive leeway and house building where as ladies due to her physiological weights and organic capacity lady is fixing to the home base and is constrained to less strenuous work". As indicated by him, the nearness of an arrangement of division in view of sex is available in each generalpublic and further the favourable circumstances are acquired in light of this as it were.

John Bowlby, analyses the role of women especially their role as mothers from a psychological perspective. Through his studies he establishes that most of the psychologically disturbed juvenile delinquents had experienced separation from their mothers at an early age. His arguments imply that there is a genetically based psychological need for a close and intimate mother-child relationship.

The criticism for the above discussed theories came from Ann Oakley, a British sociologist. Oakley first takes on Murdock and maintains that Murdock’s interpretation of his data is biased as he looks at other cultures through both western and male eyes. In particular, she claims that he prejudices the role women in terms of the western housewife-mother role. Oakley further dismisses Bowlby’s claim that an intimate and continuous relationship between mother and child is essential for the child’s well being and she notes that a large body of research shows that the employment of the mother has no detrimental effects on the child’s development. In fact, Oakley claims that, working mothers enjoy their children more and are less irritable with them than full-time mothers. Oakley, attacks Parsons view in which the female’s role within the family. She accused him for generalising the values and beliefs in particular on the myths and culture of the superiority of male. It is argued by her that, for the family unit to function it is not always necessary that expressive mother-house wife to be

performed by women. She further claimed that Parsons explanation for women being oppressed is just myth validation⁵.

In this way there were many discourses which came up theorising the role of women and here it is very much important to notice that most of the theoretical framework was built up to prove the dominating role of man in both the family as well as societal level. On the other there were also perceptions which came up from the Marx, Engels, Simone De Bouveaioir, Gramsci, and Sherry B.Ortner who cited the reasons for such delimitation of women.

Engels states that, 'The predominance of the man in marriage is simply a consequence of his economic predominance and will vanish with it automatically'. Further, Marx and Engels always believed that when the capitalist society is changed into a socialistic state then only there will true equality between the sexes and until that gender inequality will exist.

Simon De Bouveaioir said "One is not born rather becomes woman, it is civilisation as a whole that produces this creature which is described as feminine". This statement makes it clear that it is not the biology but the society and its civilisation attaches gender roles to the women which mostly are suppressing.

Sherry B.Ortner on the other hand claims that it is not biology which ascribes women to their status in the society but the way in which every culture defines and evaluates female biology. She further elaborates that this cultural definitions attached to the women are the main reasons for the devaluation of women universally. She argues that every society plays more heed to the culture rather than nature and it is this culture which man uses as a weapon to control women at every level in the society.Ortner concludes that the universal evaluation of the culture as superior to nature is the basic reason for the devaluation of women and in terms of her biology, physiological processes, social roles and psychology, woman appears as something intermediate between culture and nature. Further, she adds that as culture is seen as superior to nature, woman's psyche is devalued and hence, men come out top.

According to Gramsci, power works by consent. This can be applied to the consent women are giving to the patriarchy because of which she is facing oppression at every point of her life. We can further emphasise that the moment she resists to give consent to the roles she is asked to play by the society, then she will be liberated from the oppression.

⁵ [ibid]

In the above discussion it is analysed how the thinkers analysed what constitutes the category of women and further also have discussed different arguments establishing the role of women. This discussion adds up to the understanding of the critical mindset of the people and generalising the factors of women's suppression in panchayats.. In this circumstance, the study is very important at its own place as the women now are participating in panchayat which means the theories which criticised woman saying that she has only one duty which according to the theories is to perform functions within the family as caretaker of husband and children, which the present study broke by bringing into limelight the women who are breaking the fences established by these theories. This chapter also provides the basic understanding that the problem of suppression arises when culture supersedes the existence of the women. Further, this unit helps in understanding that until and unless women stop giving consent to the religious and cultural constraints her suppression cannot be mitigated.

1.4 OBJECTIVES

1. To understand the perspectives of the members of panchayat regarding the role of women representatives in panchayat raj institutions, Guntur.
2. To understand problems faced by women representatives in panchayat raj institutions.
3. To analyze the socio-religious conditions responsible for the superficiality in women's role in the panchayat raj institutions.

1.5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study "Role of women candidates in the panchayat raj institutions-a casestudy based in Guntur district" is an effort to find out the status of women in village panchayats and socio-cultural factors which restrict women from holistically participating in the panchayat as elected representatives. Since this study is completely qualitative in nature, the researcher depended on interview method as a technique for collecting the data. To be more specific, the researcher used primary data collection method by going to the field using unstructured interview technique where informal interview session was held.

Experiencing the time constraints and difficulty in interviewing large number of the village panchayats, the researcher restricted to the study of five villages namely Lankelapurapu, kundurivaripalem, Narnepadu, Paludevarlapadu and Gollapadu out of ten villages which come under the jurisdiction of Mupalla Mandal, Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh.

This research was conducted in the Mupalla Mandal, Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh. This district is located at the south of the river Krishna and is bounded by bay of Bengal on South-East, South by Prakasam district, West & North-west by Mahbubnagar and North-east by Krishna district. According to the census of 2011, the total rural population of the Guntur district is 32,35,075 with 16,21,491 males and 16,13,584 females; 9,57,407 scheduled caste and 2,47,089 scheduled tribe population forming around 19.59% and 5.06% percentage respectively. The population density of the district is 429. The Guntur district is centre for business, industry, and agriculture. This region is identified as a major transportation and textile hub in India. Additionally, the Guntur area economy has an agricultural component that is internationally known for its exports of chillies, cotton and tobacco.

During the data collection the researcher did face some problems in making respondents understand what the research was all about. Other than this, the respondents were cordial in answering the queries.

1.6. SCOPE OF STUDY

The study is located in Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh and focuses on role of women in panchayat raj institutions and the obstacles faced by women representatives of panchayat and their role in decision making. This study is limited to five villages of Mupalla Mandal in Guntur district. This research studied the diverse opinions of the members of the panchayat and further enquired the problems faced by the women as the elected representatives of the panchayat raj institutions. The present study also analysed the reasons for the suppression of women in panchayats. The area chosen for the present study was Guntur which is the administrative district of the Andhra Pradesh. It has a coastline of approximately 100km and is situated on the right bank of Krishna River. It has an area of 11,391 square kilometre and is the second most populous district in the state. This district is a major centre for agriculture, education and learning. Amaravathi, the proposed capital of the Andhra Pradesh is situated in the Guntur district, on the banks of the Krishna River.

Andhra Pradesh is one the very few states to introduce panchayat raj and the Andhra Pradesh panchayat samithis and zilla parishad act of 1959 introduced a three tier system to promote the welfare of the local area in the Andhra Pradesh. Andhra Pradesh was the first state (1959) which recommended 5% reservation for women for the post of the sarpanch in each block where the percentage of the women electors was comparatively high which was turning point in the history of panchayat raj institutions. With this background, it is clear that Andhra

Pradesh has more than five decades of experience in implementing the panchayat raj. This makes the study interesting to know whether such a long journey towards the grass root democracy in Andhra Pradesh was successful in representing women in panchayat raj institutions or even till date she is still bound by the chains of culture, religion and social barriers keeping her away from participating holistically without being proxies of the male counterparts to full fill her duty as a representative in panchayats along with her male counterparts. In short this study will focus on the role of women in Panchayat Raj institutions in villages of Mupalla Mandal, Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh.

1.7. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A brief review has been done on the related literature of women participation in panchayat raj institution and factors affecting their decision making. A certain number of selected articles have been looked at in view of this. These articles will indicate how women were affected in decision making process and what kind of problems they face being an elected representative.

Srilatha Batliwala (1996), in her paper “Transforming of Political Culture” elucidated that women's participation in the panchayat raj institutions, as a result of reservation policy may serve to transform the culture and functioning of local government institutions. She further said that most of the times women representatives are termed as ineffective and are marginalised. She also quotes three main reasons because of which women representatives are considered as ineffective which include *lack of a critical mass of women in political institutions, lack of a strategic link between the women's movement and women in politics and women's experience of power in the private and public sphere.*

Mahi Pal (1998), in her article “Woman in Panchayat” paid attention towards the training camps which were established to train the women representatives to make them aware of their responsibilities as the elected panchayat representative. She further added that, it is due to these camps that elected women representatives learnt to solve the village problems but still they didn't have an appropriate plan to solve them. Through her research she found that the women representatives though they are working tirelessly, they were not even given the remuneration for their time, they spent and the work they perform. Because this economic dependence the elected women representatives has to ask money even for the bus fare to attend the panchayat meetings and further because of such dependence the women representatives couldn't resist the involvement of their husbands and the relatives in the process of their decision making. At the end she clarifies, that until and unless women

representatives are not economically independent, political empowerment of women is highly an impossible task.

G. Palanithurai (2002), in his article "Impediments to Empowerment of Women", analysed the experiences of the elected women representatives in panchayats in Tamilnadu. He expressed in his article that the empowerment of women is neither an easy process nor comes merely with the institutional arrangement for women representation. It requires a change in the social institutions, people's mindset, and far more determined effort on the part of the women representatives, NGOs, officials and policy makers concerned. He further elaborated saying that although women from different backgrounds, classes and communities have assumed the role of people's representatives, the patriarchal attitudes, lack of political experience and administrative knowledge, and a plethora of social structural limitations under which women function in these institutions have become big impediments in the performance of their expected responsibilities.

Neema Kudva (2003), in her article "Designing Elections" highlighted that, the degree of ladies' formal investment in legislative issues is a vital marker for ladies' strengthening and start is that expanding ladies' cooperation in political procedures, as both voters and competitors, will change the nature and working of open foundations, which will at last impact future improvement choices and make a more impartial, sex responsive and empathetic culture. She additionally expounded that, the adequacy of expanding ladies' support in formal legislative issues has been addressed often and they even viewed as appointive investment of ladies is just a typical signal, which eventually undermines ladies' strengthening by co-picking them into a patently degenerate, male-overwhelmed political framework.

Joti Sekhon (2006), in her article "Causing Grassroots Democracy", examined that the fundamental purpose for the ladies' viable interest in appointive governmental issues is women's activist legislative issues and the participatory majority rules system. She additionally contends that women's activist reconsidering of governmental issues and majority rule government can catalyze ladies' compelling investment and test the structures of patriarchy that cutoff political activity and social portability. She additionally explained that however the open door for the support of ladies in panchayat raj organizations accompanied the 73rd change ,this revision alone won't suffice for the successful cooperation since ladies are constrained by different variables which incorporate social, political, social and monetary

components, for example, conventional gendered desires of the part and position of ladies in the family and group, rank and class imbalances, absence of training, and absence of learning of the laws.

Sujata D. Hazarika (2006), in her printed material titled "Political Participation of Women and the Dialectics of 73rd Amendment" highlights the gross ignorance and confusions with respect to the Panchayat raj foundation and 73rd change, and firmly suggests refinement, preparing and limit working of both men and ladies alike as the essential stride. She clarifies that the essential goals to outline Political Participation of ladies through just establishments can be contained inside the issues like: - Awareness, Decision making, Empowerment, Participation, Aspirations and further, to find out basic leadership in political field included: - Delivery, Planning, and Implementation. Engaging ladies politically not be seen genuinely just by physically discovering their nearness. What's more, the support regarding physical nearness was itself defaced by various social elements, for example, ignorance, absence of education, weight of residential work, family and responsibilities, dread of character death, male driven social qualities and so on.

Shirin M. Rai (2007), in his article "Deliberative Democracy and the Politics of Redistribution: The Case of the Indian Panchayats" contends that institutional change (73rd correction) can exasperate hegemonic talks adequately to open a window of chance where deliberative vote based standards flourish and where, notwithstanding the governmental issues of acknowledgment, the legislative issues of redistribution additionally works. He perceived that institutional procedures themselves are implanted in structures of social power, which confine the adequacy of the results of consultation. His principle centre was deliberative vote based system. As per him deliberative majority rule government helps in making judgments about the procedures in which ladies are being made a request to take an interest, which is imperative element in managing ladies' investment notwithstanding a need acknowledgment of their endeavours or accordingly of an affair of the political procedure as undermining.

S. Waseem Ahmad, Nilofer and Gazala Parveen (2008), in their article "Ladies' Political Participation and Changing Pattern of Leadership in Rural ranges of U.P" talked about that, in provincial territories culture and conventions are watched all the more inflexibly, family and additionally standing assume a critical part in coordinating the course of life of person. This valid for all in the general public however is significantly more material for country

ladies, who will undoubtedly take after the convention and culture. Over the span of their exploration they discovered that ladies of lower position demonstrate preferable authority abilities over the ladies of higher standing though ladies of higher station don't frequently turn out as genuine pioneers and dynamic agents and their nearness in the panchayat exercises stays petite when contrasted with lower rank. They examined that the training assumes a key part in the improvement of the ability to comprehend the issues and issues confronted by the group and the capacity to impart one's thoughts to others are imperative characteristics of a pioneer. Throughout their exploration they found that lion's share of the ladies delegates admitted that without participation from their family they could never have possessed the capacity to challenge in the panchayat races and notwithstanding this her family chooses her administration and portrayal in administration to an expansive degree. It is found that ladies on getting support from the family work with more noteworthy eagerness and power.

Hiranmayee Mishra (2010), in her proposal "Arranging Privately for an Effective Role in Public Space: A Case Study of Women in Panchayats of Orissa, India" firmly contended that the quantity has effectively made a space for ladies in people in general circle and has constrained the Gram Panchayats to work in a sexual orientation touchy way. Country Indian ladies are arranging their incorporation in nearby legislative issues by making a decent attempt to keep up their own particular social practices. She presumed that in a nation like India, where society is "highly sexual orientation isolated", shares for ladies have an "extra importance". That is the reason the 73rd correction in 1993 turned into a way breaking mediation, which not just held 33% of seats for provincial ladies, additionally opened a radical new universe of chance for the poor ladies of the Indian wide open. It made the required minimum amount, as well as aided in making the earth lady inviting.

Shivani Phukan (2010), in her thesis work "Participation of Women in Panchayati Raj Institutions: A study of Jorhath zilla parishad" found that women members regard their membership as an avenue to be in position and power and enjoy privilege of being panchayats' members. This membership was considered as one of the best ways of serving the community because without political power no developmental work could be taken up in the division. Their social contacts have become widened which they feel will not be possible as housewives and in future they want to take part at the higher levels of decision making bodies so that people in general and women in particular can lead a better life. She further added that it has been felt that even after getting 33% reservation; women are still facing lots

of obstacles which put impediments on their participation. Though there are no constitutional obstacles for women's political participation at grass root level or any level of administration, in reality, various structural, functional, attitudinal and environmental constraints still exist which do not provide conducive environment for women's participation in panchayats.

Dr. S. Padmanabha Bhatt (2010), in his paper "Gender Quotas and Panchayat Raj Institutions in India" that his studies revealed that women have not been able to utilize effectively their constitutional opportunity due to many personal, social and institutional reasons. They are disadvantaged by patriarchal social system, social and cultural prejudices, financial dependence, lack of media support and exposure to political processes, limited training opportunities, family and child care responsibilities and by the criminalization of politics and further identified the serious problems faced by the women to participate in the functions of Panchayat Raj Institutions as the four Cs-"Cultural, child care , cash and confidence".

Nupur Tiwari(2012),in her printed material "Ladies and Panchayati Raj" underscored that reservation brings ladies into the Panchayat office however can't generally be said to enable provincial Indian ladies because of a few variables like absence of education, dialect obstructions, inability or low regard among kindred villagers. These are a portion of the primary issues plaguing dynamic support of ladies in the basic leadership. As a rule as a result of absence of accessibility of discussions and absence of legitimate grievance redressal component for sexual orientation related issues, the greater part of ladies chose agents in panchayats have extremely minor part in basic leadership and for the most part they are sham. She additionally closed by saying that mere political will and verbalization of arrangements will alone not convert into advantages for ladies. The interpretation into touchy execution would require changes in authoritative and social structures. In addition a synergistic approach between the family unit, the group, the State, associations and the media should be created. The approach should likewise be multipronged, considering arrangements, laws, legal procedures, dispositions and social imaging of ladies.

With the literature review of these articles one can understand that though 73rd amendment in the constitution led to the increase in the percentage of women participating in panchayat raj institutions, it didn't result in the inclusion of the women in the decision making. They were just the proxies of either husband or their male relatives. These articles further focus on how economic independence plays a crucial role in making her attain political status without being dependent on her counterparts on the other hand, few articles even showed how woman's

confidence was increased due to their political participation in panchayat raj institution. Further, few articles even provided solution for the inclusion of elected women from decision making processes which included participation of NGOs in making women aware about her responsibilities and train them in decision making.

CHAPTER-2

EVOLUTION OF STATUS OF WOMEN

“I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress which women have achieved”- B.R.Ambedhkar

2.1. Historical background of Women in India:

India is the largest democratic nation in the world. Democracy provides freedom to live the way human beings want to live. But, this freedom is largely limited to only a narrow population. The major question of the hour to be raised is that, what is the use of such democracy which does not include half of its country's population in its policy formulation. Is it worth calling it a democratic state when the people with power are continuously subjugating the powerless? The answer to the question is obviously “NO”, because democracy means freedom and liberty for all the sections of the society. The patriarchal society as India is, has formulated most of the policies and laws from that patriarchal point of view. Even in democracy the people who are enjoying the power are those who are formulating the policies with a mindset that women must be bound within the four walls and has to perform her duty as a daughter, a wife and a mother, above all whenever woman has tried to break this patriarchal barricades, the patriarchs in the name of culture, religion tried to make sure she remains within the boundary they drew to control her. In this present scenario the idea of democracy remains highly a utopian view. To turn this utopian view into a reality is really Hercules task but our women with continuous tireless efforts made this task not merely a dream but a desired reality. The struggle by the women to attain equality, liberty and freedom was not an overnight reaction to the inequality which they were facing through decades and this very idea to fight against the inequality didn't arise among the women group initially but the educated intelligentsia of India. Overages the women were excluded from the educational right, property rights, marriage rights, divorce rights and political rights in brief they were not included in all those rights which empowered her and made her realise her true potential. They needed an impetus to make them conscious about the discrimination they were facing within the society in general and family in particular. This impetus for the Indian women was found during the freedom struggle. But, the impetus was given not to elevate women's status but was done mostly for the political gains.

Women enjoyed equality and freedom equally with the male counterparts during the Vedic period and Upanishad period. Women was more than a wife, a mother and sister, she was a warrior, her decision was very crucial while taking crucial decisions and her marriage was done only with her consent but not just an alliance between kingdoms. She had the freedom to take her own decisions without any societal pressure. But soon, during the post Vedic period all her freedom was snatched away from her in the name of protection. Manu who was considered as the progenitor of the Hindu society was of the view that women must not be allowed to move freely without the permission of her husband. He also proclaimed that the women must be protected by father during her childhood, her husband after getting married and by her sons in her old age. The caste system ruined the status of women even more especially that of the untouchables. During Mughal period, the status of the women deteriorated even more. The purdah system, child marriages, sati system and female infanticide had become prevalent.

The status of women in Indian society can be analysed through the different phases which are mentioned as follows:-

The first phase of women empowerment didn't start directly as the women movement; rather it started as a reform movement where the social evils like sati system which made forced sacrifices of women along with their dead husband by burning alive in the funeral pyre. Surprisingly, this movement was not initiated by the women but by the educated elites like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwarchandra Vidhya Sagar etc and as a result of this reform movement there was an act passed by the British government encouraging widow remarriage and abolishing sati system. This can be said as milestone in the Indian history which tilted the focus towards the women issues and further this made the leaders of the freedom struggle to realise the benefits of including women in the freedom struggle. Later, the laws were implemented like sati abolition act, in the name of Bengal Sati regulation was formulated in 1829 under the lord William Benthic, followed by Widow Remarriage act in 1856, and later Child marriage restraint act was formulated under the name of Sarada act in 1929 which created a long term role on emancipating the role of women in Indian society. This was the phase when Jyotirao Phule and his wife Savitribhai Phule brought a revolutionary change in the thought of education by bringing up first girls school run by native Indians in the year 1848, which in itself was a radical thought in that society. They condemned discrimination based on caste and gender. This reform movement which was said to be the milestone was

limited to the Hindu society only and it did not challenge patriarchy but was successful in bringing awareness among the women folk about their rights.

The second phase of women empowerment was felt during the Indian national movement. During the national women M.K.Gandhi made women part of the movements launched by him against the British colonialism and the nature of these movements encouraged non-violence which was the feature of women which pushed them to participate in Swadeshi movement, non-violence movement etc. Not only that the symbols used by Gandhi like spinning wheel also represents the activity done by women which means he was also feminising the freedom struggle by inclusion of activities performed by women. But, these movements which included women for the freedom struggle cannot be exclusively called as *women movements* because the aim of the movement was the freedom against the colonialism but not breaking patriarchy and women rights. During, this phase at the international level also there was huge encouragement for the empowerment of the women. This was the period when there was world war-I and there was large proportion of women participation seen. This phase was also was more important because there were many women organisations like the All India Muslim Women's Conference (Anjuman E-Khavatin –E-Islam) Women India Association (WIA, 1917), the National Council of Women of India (NCWI, 1925) and All India Women's Conference (AIWC, 1926) which sprang up. These women organisations have taken the women movements a step forward because these organisations were the first ever formed organisation exclusively by women to deal with the issues related to the women. These organisations main aim was the welfare of the women. This was the period when first represented in the legislature during 1920's when Sarojini Naidu, Margaret Cousins led a delegation demanding the same rights as that of men in legislature before the Montague and Chelmsford committee. But this committee left the decision of inclusion of women into the legislature to that of Indian provinces and for the surprise of the Britishers, the Indian legislature provinces accepted the demand in a short span. Further, in the year 1931 during the Karachi session, the Indian national congress took a historic decision committing itself to the political equality of women, regardless of their status and qualifications. This proposal met with virtually no opposition. But, even after such historic commitment the participation of women was not recognisable. For instance, in the 1952 elections the Congress Party had only 14 women members elected to parliament. In the first Lok Sabha women constituted no more than 4.4 per cent of the total strength.

Though after the independence especially after the completion of the drafting of the constitution which gives the Indian citizen article 14,15 and 16 of the fundamental rights which talks about the equality and further abolition of discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, caste, religion or place of birth. But the third phase of the empowerment of women didn't include any of these ideas instead it can be said that women were dragged into the political participation just as the part of vote bank politics. During, this phase instead of making women aware about her fundamental rights and including her into the policy formulation they were just used as pawns to amass the women support all over the nation. Due to this tactic of vote bank politics, the political parties attracted women activists for forming a separate wing under the main political body which was said to be completely dedicated to the women participation and further boasted to have concern over the women rights at different strata. For example, All India Women Conference (AIWC), one of the oldest women's organisations, has close links with the Congress Party though it declared itself as a non-political organisation. The National Federation of Indian Women (NFTW), formed in 1954, has been affiliated to the Communist Party of India. After the split in the Communist Party, the CPI (Marxist) had organised a separate women's front i.e., All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA), in 1970. The CPI (Marxist-Leninist) had a loosely affiliated organisation of women in the Progressive Organisation of Women (POW), initially linked to the Naxalite students group in Hyderabad and later succeeded by the more autonomous Stri Shakti Sangh. The BharatiyaJanata Party (BJP) established its women's wing, called the BharatiyaMahilaMorcha. The women's wing of the RashtriyaSwayamSevakSangh (RSS) is the RashtriyaSevikaSamiti which also guides the MahilaMorcha, the women's wing of the BJP. The Socialist Party's women's wing, the MahilaDakshtaSamiti, has become the women's wing of the Janata Party since 1977. In this way the political parties for their political ends used women just as means to attain their ends that is nothing but to win the elections.

During the 1970's the international organisations like United Nations Organisation declared the period 1976-1985 as United Nations Decade for Women raising equality, development and peace as the slogans. This declaration had hugely impacted the women movements in India. The women associations which formed as wings under the main political body were activated by the political parties. Along with these political women wings, there emerged some autonomous organisations such as Saheli (women friend), Kali for Women (Delhi), the Forum against Oppression of Women, PurogamiStreeSangathan, in Maharashtra; Vimochana,

Bangalore; PennurimaIyaklam in Tamil Nadu; ChingariNariSangathan and Women Action group in Ahmadabad and many more groups and organisations for women in different parts in India. The most applaud able transformation during this forth phase was the formation of non-political women organisations which formed voluntarily for the upliftment of the status of women both socially, and economically for example, Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA), Working Women's Forum and Annapurna Mahila Mandal.

The fifth phase of the issue of the women movement for empowerment focussed on women reservation bill. Both 73rd and 74th constitutional amendment were the most famous amendment in the Indian history which gives power to the local bodies to govern and gave 33.33% reservation to the women to increase the women representation at this levels. Tough this reservation was hiked to 50% only few states adopted this reservation policy which are Uttarakhand, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh. The Statutory reservation of seats for woman in Panchayati Raj bodies has provided an opportunity for their formal involvement in the development and political processes at the grass root level thereby increasing the political participation of women and further enabling them to influence the decision making process in the local governments .But the very essence of the political participation is not achieved in the case of women because the very meaning of political participation which means increased decision-making power which further gives greater ability to influence matters that affect every individuals' lives in the community and the society is not happening. Women representatives, merely remain the proxies of their male counter parts and almost all the decisions are not taken by the elected women representatives but either by her husband or her family. So, this kind of political participation is not that thing for which all these years over decade's women had been struggling. Even now it is visible that women are not free from the chains of patriarchy.

From the above discussion it is crystal clear how women participated actively in many movements like freedom struggle, adult suffrage movements etc to empower themselves and to make sure that the future generation of Indian women will not face the difficulties they faced during their time. Though they paved a way for the women to participate actively in all the spheres like education, employment, and politics long back, the essence of their struggle seemed reality only due to the formulation of panchayats and allotting women 33.3% reservation. There is no doubt that the panchayats were successful in the diffusing the empowerment of the women to the grass root level but, the question to be answered is that how effective is this participation, are the women candidates facing any problems in breaking

the barricades set by the culture, religion and society which are limiting their active participation in decision making, is this kind of participation a boon to the aspiring women candidates or is just another version of the discrimination

2.2. Women: their present status in different dimensions

We discussed in the above section how the status of women was evolved along the time period. Earlier she was restricted to role of being a good daughter, a good wife and good mother. But now she is more than all these, she participates in deciding the head of the state, she participates in decision making and she has to the right to choose. As her roles are diversified she has to perform many functions which include the following:-

2.2.1. Women and constitution:-

The constitution of India has certain provisions relating to woman and her protection. This special provisions were drafted for the better treatment of women every sphere of life. now let us see the provisions in different parts of the Indian constitution which were drafted for the betterment of women, which are as follows:-

A) Preamble:-

According to N.A.Palkhivala, an eminent jurist and constitutional expert, called the preamble as 'identity card of the constitution' which means preamble gives us the essence of the entire constitution. It is the key to the constitution. It secures all its citizens Justice, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. These objectives were inserted with a view to give equal status to men and women without any discrimination.

B) Fundamental rights:-

Part III, of the Constitution of India deals with the Fundamental Rights. These fundamental rights are meant for promoting the ideal of democracy. The provisions regarding fundamental rights have been enshrined in Articles 12 to 35, which are applicable to all citizens irrespective to sex.

According to the article 15(3) of the constitution, discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth shall not prevent the state from making any special provisions for women and children. Under the constitution the state has been given power to make laws relating to women and children but this special provision shall not be violative of the article

15 of the constitution. Article 15(1) prohibits gender discrimination. Article 15(3) permits the state to positively discriminate in favour of women to make special provisions to ameliorate their social, economic and political conditions and accord them parity.*(dr.g.p.reddy on women are law,4 edition,2000,p.2)

The features of fundamental rights are as follows:-

1. Right to equality (article 14 and 16):-it means equality before law, equal protection before law, prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth and further promotes equality of opportunity in matters of public employment.
2. Right to freedom(Article 19-22):-protection of rights regarding freedom, in respect of conviction for offences, life and personal liberty, elementary education, and protection against arrest and detention etc.
3. Right against exploitation (Articles 23-24):-prohibition of traffic in human beings and forced labour and prohibition of employment of children in factories, etc.
4. Right to freedom of religion (Article 25-28):-right to freedom of religion means professing, practising and propagation of religion.
5. Cultural and educational rights (Articles 29-30):-the interest of minorities is protected under article 29 and article 30 of the constitution provides the right of minorities to establish and administer educational institutions.
6. Right to constitutional remedies:-every citizen has been provided the right to constitutional remedies. Article 32 to 35 deal with the right to constitutional remedies. Every citizen of India has the right to constitutional remedies that is approaching courts for enforcing fundamental rights.

C) Directive principles of state policy and women:-

B.R.Ambedkar, describes these principles as the novel features of the Indian Constitution. Part IV of the Indian constitution constitutes directive principle of state policy which includes the articles 38, 39 (a) (d) and (e), 42, 44 and 45 is the proof that India is a welfare democratic state deals with welfare and development of women.

- **Article 38** promotes the welfare of the people by securing a social order permeated by justice, social, economic and political and to minimize inequalities in income, status, facilities and opportunities.

- **Article 39(a)** secures the right to adequate means of livelihood for all citizens;
- **Article 39(d)** secures equal pay for equal work for men and women;
- **Article 39(e)** secures the preservation of the health and strength of workers and children against forcible abuse.
- **Article 42:-**To make provision for just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief.
- **Article 44:-** To secure for all citizens a uniform civil code throughout the country.
- **Article 45:-**To provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of six years.

D) Part IV A:-constitutes **Fundamental Duties** (article 51(A)(e)) promotes harmony and spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India and to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women.

E) Part IX :-According to the article 243 D (3), not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every panchayat to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a panchayat.

F) Part IX (A) :-

- a) According to the article 243 T (3), not less than one third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes) of total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Municipality to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Municipality.
- b) According to the article 243T (4):-reservation of offices of the chairpersons in municipalities for the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and women in such manner as the legislature of a state may by law provide.

In this way Indian constitution provided “equality” to women in order to not to show any gender bias.. Though the Indian constitution gave women all the rights to maintain the social, political and economic equality, the ground reality is far different when it comes to the implementation of the constitutional rights. The fundamental rights and directive principles of state policy are referred to as “conscience of the constitution” by Granville Austin and

referred to as the philosophy of the constitution, this philosophy ensures women equality but numbers say something contrasting. For instance, according to UN report “women constitute half of the world population nearly two-thirds of work hours, receive one tenth of the world income and own less than one hundred per cent of world’s property.

2.2.1. Women and the Indian Laws:-

Law had occupied a central role in various organised efforts to improve the women’s status in india. These efforts had different foci at different points of history. They include preoccupation with protectionism during the social reform movement of 19th century; a quest for constitutional and formal equality during the struggle for independence and finally the attack on patriarchy mounted by contemporary women’s movement.(as referd by shilpa phadke)

In India various legislations were passed from time to time both during the pre and post independence India, which are mainly responsible for the liberty and the equality of Indian women today. The acts which brought upward trend in the status of women are:-Abolition of Sati act,1829,the Hindu Widow Remarriage act,1856,the Child Marriage Restraint act,1929,the Hindu Women’s Right to Property 1937,the Hindu Marriage act 1955,the Hindu Succession act 1956,the Suppression of Immoral Traffic in Women and Girls act 1956-1957 and the Dowry Prohibition act, 1961 which are discussed as following:-

- **Abolition of sati act:** - in December 1829, the regulation number XVII was issued by the governor general William Benthic declaring the practice of sati or burning or burying alive of widows illegal and punishable by the criminal courts as culpable homicide. This was possible by the efforts taken by the Raja Ram Mohan Roy who strived for the abolition of the sati pratha.

In the year 1987, woman named Roop Kanwar who was immolated in an incident of sati in Deorala village, Rajasthan which resulted in huge outcry all over India. This event quickly produced a public outcry in urban centres, splitting a modern Indian ideology against a traditional one. The incident led first to state level laws to prevent such incidents, then the central government's Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act.⁶

⁶ The Hindu, 1987

- **Hindu widow's Remarriage act:**-this act was enacted on 26th July 1856 in order to legalise the remarriage of Hindu widows in all the jurisdictions of the East India Company. This act was enacted in response to the campaign held by Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidya Sagar. This act especially focuses on the Hindu child widows whose husbands had died before consummation of marriage. Before, the implementation of this act the widows were treated as a bad omen whose sight was believed to be sinful, their hair was completely shaven off and she was allowed only to wear plain colours mostly white and was not allowed to cover her breasts, she was ostracised completely from any public gatherings. This act came like a second life for the widows especially Hindu widows.
- **Child Marriage restraint act:**-this act was popularly known as Sarada act after its sponsor Rai Sahib Barbilas Sarada. This act was passed on 28 September 1929; according to this act the age of marriage for girls was 14 and for boys 18 was fixed. It was applied to complete British India and is not specific to any religion. It was the first social reform issue which was taken up by the organised women in India. Even the Muslim women presented their favour of raising the age limit of marriage .the protest which arose to increase the age limit of marriage saw the participation of women i.e. they were playing an independent political role. The all India women's conference, Women's India association and national council of India through their members developed and articulated the argument in favour of raising the age limit for marriage. The All India women's association pressurised the politicians for their support in the bill, standing outside their delegations holding placards and shouting slogans such as "if you oppose Sarada's bill, the world will laugh at you". Even after these efforts and struggle, this act remained a dead letter during the colonial period of British rule in India, as according to 1931 census the number of wives under the age of fifteen was increased from 8.5 million to 12 million but the number of husbands under the age of fifteen had gone from 3 to more than 5 million.
- **The Hindu Women's Right to Property Act:**-this act was first time implemented in the year 1937, but later it was amended in the year 1956 and 2005 with few changes. This act was considered as a watershed development in proving women with better rights. In the year 1937 this act was formulated as result of the outcome of discontent expressed by a sizeable section of society against the unsatisfactory affairs of women's rights to property.

As per the Hindu progression act 1956, no women can be denied property rights on the premise of any traditions, use or content and this demonstration improved the individual law and gave lady more noteworthy property rights and further as per this demonstration little girls were additionally allowed property rights in their dad's domain and further in the year 2005, a statement was included designating the girl and the child parallel share inside the property. Thus, gender segregation has been expelled to a bigger degree by 2005 act and further, now little girls can assert break even with appropriate in the self procured/isolate property and furthermore coparcenaries' property left by their father.

In this way, with the changes in the property rights led a path to economic equality with in women's family both at the family of origin as well as family of procreation.

- **The Hindu marriage act:-**This act came into force from May 18, 1955 and applies to whole of India, except Jammu and Kashmir. The word Hindu in the act includes Jains, Sikhs, Buddhists and the Scheduled Castes. This act permits judicial separation as well as annulment of marriage. Either party can seek judicial separation on any one of the four grounds: desertion for continuous period of two years, cruel treatment, leprosy and adultery. In a way this act is very important and is partly revolutionary too as in Hindu religion marriage is considered to be a sacrament and the relation between a husband and wife is believed to be tied for seven lives. This is partly revolutionary as it is breaking believes about the marriage. On the other hand this act liberalised women from the shackles of unwanted burden and was provided with right to separate.
- **The Suppression of Immoral Traffic in Women and Girls Act 1956-1957:-**this act was signed in international convention which was held at New York on 9th May, 1950 for prevention of immoral traffic. This act intends to combat trafficking and sexual exploitation for commercial purposes. This act protects women and children from forceful flesh trade and further aims at reduction of objectification of women and children.

National Crime Records Bureau report showed that almost equal numbers of women and children were trafficked. Figures showed that there were 9,104 trafficked children last year a 27 percent increase from the previous year. The number of women trafficked rose by 22 percent to 10,119 in 2016. India's west Bengal state which shares a porous border with Nepal

and Bangladesh registered more than one-third of the total number of victims in 2016 and Mumbai showed second highest number of trafficked women.

From the above numbers, it is clear that reality is far worse even though act to prevent immoral trafficking has been drafted decades ago. In order to reduce such kind of inhumane activities, there needs to be heavy penalisation of offence of human trafficking and further measures must be taken to provide effective rehabilitation and reintegration of victims of trafficking, then only there will a holistic approach to the act.

- **The dowry prohibition act,1961:-**this act was passed on 20 May,1961.This law prohibits the giving or taking of dowry, with respect to this act, deputy Law Minister (1957-66) of India had said that “it will almost be next to impossible to prove an offence under the bill because no parent is going blight the future of his daughter by making a complain that dowry is extracted from him”. In the year 1984,the 1961 act was amended,changing the definition of dowry by substituting the words as consideration for marriage to in connection with the marriage and further this act made punishment more stringent, making the offence non- bail able and shifted the burden of proof on the accused.

Though this act gave a stroke to the dowry receivers but this did not end the dowry practice. Maneka Gandhi, Minister of Women Child Development says that around 24,771 dowry deaths have been reported in the India in past three years(2013, 2014 and 2015) with maximum of them occurring in Uttar Pradesh with 7,048 deaths. From the statistics it can be visualised that though in the 1984 the prohibition act had been amended by including stringent punishment, the numbers show cruel reality that the occurrence of dowry deaths had been continuously increasing, and if the government will not spread awareness among the masses this figures remain increasing.

It is absolutely true that the above discussed laws have many loopholes and deficiencies and it must be realised that the social evils cannot be removed by merely enacting laws but it is an unavoidable fact that social legislation is very essential for a society to function. It must be understood that law sets a pattern of behaviour, kindles fear, activates social consciousness and provides a basis of work to social workers and reformers. These laws work as a support system to women to bargain the justice which they were demanding from a very long time and further when women are made aware of such laws they can well get off from the humiliation and injustice they face it may either be within the family or the entire society.

2.2.3. Women as voter:-

Compared to women of other developed countries like United Kingdom and United States of America, women of India gained this right without much difficulty. This right to vote gives women a powerful right to select the head of the state. She has to use this right with utmost responsibility. The following figures give us a clear picture about the actual scenario about the % of women voters from 1952-2014 general elections:-

Votes polled in general elections 1952-2014

General Election	Year	%of male votes	%of female Votes	Total
1 st	1952	53.00	37.10	60.50
2 nd	1957	56.00	39.60	63.70
3 rd	1962	63.31	46.63	55.42
4 th	1967	66.73	55.48	61.33
5 th	1971	60.90	49.11	55.29
6 th	1977	65.63	54.91	60.49
7 th	1980	62.16	51.22	56.92
8 th	1984	68.18	54.60	63.56
9 th	1989	66.13	57.32	61.95
10 th	1991	61.58	51.35	56.93
11 th	1996	62.06	53.41	57.94
12 th	1998	66.78	57.88	61.97
13 th	1999	63.97	55.64	59.99
14 th	2004	60.03	53.64	58.07
15 th	2009	60.24	55.82	58.03
16 th	2014	67.09	65.63	66.40

Source: Election Report, Government of India-2012<http://eci.nic.in>; NDTV.com

In the year 2014 general elections, the gender gap is 1.46 which is the lowest ever in the Indian history, it is clear from the above table that, there is an increasing awareness among the women regarding their right to vote. Not only that we can say that the gender gap between the male voters and female voters is reducing which is a good sign for gender development.

But, one should not forget that even now around 35% of women all over India are not utilising their voting rights and this must be taken into consideration without any delay so that there will be 100% turn out in 2019 election which shall be hailed all over the world.

2.2.4. Women as representatives:-

The real power to take decisions comes to women when they become representatives. In such honourable position women can emphasize the women problems and further provide them the deserved justice which was neglected to them. But the ground reality is something in contrast. The following figures show actual percentage of the women representatives.

Representation of women in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha 1952-2014

Year	Seats in LS	women	%	Seats in RS	women	%
1952	489	22	4.4	209	16	7.3
1957	494	27	5.4	237	18	7.5
1962	494	34	6.7	238	18	7.6
1967	523	31	5.9	240	20	8.3
1971	521	22	4.2	243	17	7.0
1977	544	19	3.4	244	25	10.2
1980	544	28	5.1	244	24	9.8
1984	544	44	8.1	244	28	11.4
1989	529	28	5.3	245	24	9.7
1991	509	36	7.0	245	38	15.5
1996	541	40*	7.4	223	20	9.0
1998	545	44*	8.0	245	15	6.1
1999	543	48*	8.8	245	19	7.8
2004	543	45*	8.1	245	28	11.4
2009	543	59	10.9	245	24	9.9
2014	543	61	11.2	243	27	11.1

*including one nominated member

Source:-election commission of India

Women elected to Lok Sabha in the year 1952 was 22 which accounts for 4.4% but, in the year 2014 the number has increased to 61 i.e.11.1% which is the highest in the Indian political history but it is still below the world average of 20%. But even this is low as the gender disparity remains skewed as nine out of ten parliamentarians in Lok Sabha are men.

(Reuters).it should be understood that until and unless there are women representatives the issues of women will not be answered as per women interest because a women representative can be empathetic in analysing the issues of women in every field.

2.2.5. Women as minister:-

Jawaharlal Nehru's first cabinet had only one woman minister-Rajkumari Amrit Kaur who was given in charge of Health Ministry. She was the one who played an important role in building All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in New Delhi. She was the one credited with the initiative of launching Tuberculosis Association of India and Central Leprosy Teaching and Research Institute. Though the first cabinet of Republic India saw a woman minister, the later years did not see any representation of women. Lal Bahdur's lean cabinet of 10 ministers had no place for women. The 5th,6thand 9th cabinet of India under Indira Gandhi's rule had no woman union minister.However,the 6th and 9th cabinet included eminent women such as Dr.Sarojini Maharshi ,Nandini Satpathy,Sushila Rohatgi and Saroj Khaparde as Ministers of State. On the other hand Rajiv Gandhi's cabinet could accommodate only one woman minister-Mohsina Kidwai. During, V.P.Singh's regime Maneka Gandhi was made Minister of State for Environment &Forestry. During all these years the percentage of women representation in cabinet was between 0-7 percent.

The 13th Indian cabinet under P.V.Narasimha Rao had only Mamatha Banerjee as Minister of State for Human Resource Development, Youth Affairs and Sports and Women and Child Development. During first Vajpayee Ministry, after a lot of interruption Sushma Swaraj was appointed as the Minister of Information and Broadcasting. Names such as Vasundhara Raje and Uma Bharathi were seen in the list of Ministers of state in the 17th and 18thcabinet. For the first time since independence, the cabinet (2004 to May 2009) inducted more than one woman as union ministers as Meira Kumar, Ambika Soni and Panabaka Lakshmi came into picture, taking the percentage of women representation to 10 percent.

At present in Narendra Modi's government, women have indeed fared better when it comes to their representation in the cabinet. At present six out of a team of 23 ministers in the cabinet headed by Narendra Modi are women. Not only that, thistime the portfolios headed by the women are most challenging, for instance the charge of the external affairs ministry was given to Sushma Swaraj. Other crucial ministries on women and child development, textiles, etc were given to women which is a positive sign for the status of women.

As we discussed earlier, even now after six decades of independence the status of women in the political participation is very less. Over the years, though there was improvement in the status of women this change was so negligible when compared to the world average. The Inter-Parliamentary Union compiled data on the basis of the information provided by national parliaments and classified 193 countries in descending order of the percentage of the women in lower house(Lok Sabha in India) in which India ranks 148 with 11.8% in lower house and 11.1% in the upper house. This ranking shows the clear picture that though India is improving in having women representatives but it is not up to the mark. Hence, there is an absolute need for the women to realise their potential and must participate in political administration.

2.2.6. Five year plans and the welfare of women:-

The first five year plan (1951-1956) was welfare-oriented and a perspective for women's welfare. With that orientation, the central social welfare board(CSWB) was set up in 1953 which undertook a number of welfare measures in collaboration with the voluntary sector. Private agencies, like All India Women Congress, National Council of Women, and YWCA etc. were also entrusted with the responsibility of women's welfare by the government.⁷

In the second five year plan (1956-1961) Mahila Mandals were organised to act as crucial points at the grass roots level for the development of Women. In this plan the issue of the well being was related to social, moral, hygiene and post-partum services.

The third, fourth and other interim annual plans (1961-1974) accorded high priority to the education of women. Measures have also been taken to improve the maternal and child health services, supplementary feeding for the children, nursing etc. Nevertheless, the third five year plan did not achieve the target in the implementation of welfare projects for women and children.

The fifth five year plan (1974-1979) was intended towards the development of women and aimed at the integration of welfare with developmental services. The national committee on status of women was set up in the year 1974. This report confirmed the plight of women in terms of decline in the sex ratio, lower expectancy, literacy rate, higher infant and maternal mortality, declining work participation, numerous disparities and various types of exploitation etc.

⁷ Women's welfare programmes by G.Madhavi, Rawat, New Delhi, 2011

Women's development in the sixth five year plan (1980-1985) became a separate chapter for the first time in developmental planning. The sixth plan focussed on the improvement in women's health, education and employment. However, nothing much could be achieved during the plan period.

The seventh five year plan (1985-1990) introduced the notion of empowerment and demanded integration of women in the national-building as equal partners. The developmental programmes for women were initiated with the major objectives of raising objectives of raising their economic and social status and to bring them into the main stream of national development. An important step in this direction was to promote the beneficiary oriented programmes for women in different developmental sectors. Bank loans, legal facilities, technology, training and accessibility for sufficient work etc .took place during this time .This way seventh five year plan was the first step to bring a significant change in the condition and status of women.

The eight five year plan(1992-97) intended empowerment of women from the concept of welfare of women. The three core sectors viz., education, health, and employment, were observed with an enormous attention. Women were enabled to function as equal partners and participants in the developmental process. During the eight plan period, the government formulated and presented an action plan in the united nations fourth world conference on women and it recognised that there is a need of increasing women's representation at the decision making levels in the governmental, non-governmental and semi-government sectors.

The ninth five year plan (1997-2002) intended to mainstream women into planning process through training, education and promotion of women's groups. Various aspects of women's empowerment, such as skill promotion, income generation, empowerment capacity building and employment creation,were taken into consideration. Equal participation of women has been promoted by incorporating specific policies and programmes for women in sectoral development policies and plans.

The tenth five year arranges (2002-2007) focussed on different systems so as to enable ladies. On the premise of the proposals of the national arrangement for strengthening of ladies, a three-overlap system has been embraced for enabling ladies amid this arrangement period, which secured social strengthening, financial strengthening and sex equity. Social strengthening includes the availability of all the fundamental least administrations to ladies and making them understand their true abilities. Financial strengthening includes training,

employment and salary era exercises with extreme target of making all potential ladies monetarily autonomous and confident. Sexual orientation equity includes end of sex separation by enabling ladies to appreciate essential opportunity keeping pace with men in all circles, for example, political, sparing, social, and common and culture

The eleventh five year arrange (2007-2012) has been planned with the vision of strengthening of ladies as far as comprehensive and coordinated financial, social, and political strengthening with sexual orientation equity. Inciting approaches and techniques for the strengthening of ladies incorporates halting savagery against ladies, starting plans of strengthening, promotion, mindfulness era and sex planning and so on. These are the primary purpose territories in the eleventh arrangement with regards to ladies' strengthening

The twelfth five year plan (2012-2017) which will be the last five year plan of India endeavours to focus on increasing women's workforce participation particularly in secondary and tertiary sectors. On the whole, the twelfth five year plan would focus on enhancing employability of women through skill development. In this way this plan on enhancing women's skill instead of fixing them into unskilled work force, which gives women scope of a meaningful wages.(women and child development report)

From the above discussion women in five year plans it becomes clear that from the first five year plan itself there were efforts taken by the government of India in order to uplift and empower women which is a good sign indicating an society walking towards welfare of women who were oppressed for years together. It can be analysed that initially the health of women was considered as the only important issue to be covered for the welfare of women but in the later years women's social, economic and political was thought to be most important issue for the holistic development of women.

CHAPTER -3

STATUS OF WOMEN IN ANDHRA PRADESH

3.1 Andhra Pradesh:-

Andhra Pradesh is the state of India which is located in the south-eastern part of the sub continent. It is bounded by the states like Tamil Nadu in south, Karnataka to the southwest and west, Telangana to the north-west and north; Odisha to the northeast.

The status of women is the same as we discussed in the previous section which was similar to that which existed all over the country but, the hard work and the struggle faced by the Andhra women cannot be ignored under this generalisation hence, it is necessary to discuss the status of women and how they fought against the evils in the society.

Initially during late 19th century, journals played a significant role in addressing social problems faced by women in Andhra Pradesh and were successful in portraying that in order to reform any society the status of women in that society functions as an indicator for the progress of that society. The unique feature of these journals which started was that they were started by the renowned social reformers, one among them was Kandukuri Veeresalingam (1848-1919). Kandukuri Veereshalingam was born in a Brahmin orthodox family in Rajmundry, Andhra Pradesh. He devoted his life for the emancipation of women and radical changes within the Telugu society. He was involved in social reforms which were concerned with education of women and remarriage of widows. Veeresalingam, in order to uplift women's status, to criticize superstitious beliefs Veeresalingam started a journal titled *Vivekavardhini (knowledge improver)* in the year 1876 which criticised social problems such as caste system, idolatry, prohibition of widow marriages. Later, Veeresalingam started *Satihitabodhini (1883)*, a journal which was exclusively started to address women issues; this journal had a sloka on its cover page this explains the main motto of this journal which meant the following:

“Those women who are compelled to stay at home are not actually protected, but independent women who can take care of themselves are the ones who are actually protected and are safe”.

Telugu Zenana (1893), was the second women's journal after Satihitabodhini which was dedicated only to women's issues. This journal was exclusively meant for middle and upper

class women of the late nineteenth century Andhra and it was intended to reach those women in seclusion. This journal was exclusively meant for the education, enlightenment and emancipation of women..

Other journals such as *AndhraPrakasika* (1885), *HindujanaSamskarini*(1885), *SatyaSamvardhani* (1891), *Sasilekha*(1894),*Desabhimani*(1896) and Christian missionaries also published journals titled *Vivekavathi* (1908) and *Intimations to Women* (1912) but, they had a Christian view and were mostly encouraging proselytisation activities of the missionaries indirectly. All these journals carried a crusade against social evils and championed the cause of women in particular by focussing attention on their problems. Further, the commencement of these journals coincided with that of reform movements as well as the struggle for the independence. The agenda of the reformers was the transformation of the society from its stereotypical components which had its roots deep inside the culture and religion. These reform movements strictly condemned social evils such as *kanyasulkam* (bride-price), child marriages, prohibition of widow re-marriage. They believed that enlightenment among the women folk through education was the ultimate solution to eliminate the social evils from the society.

The reforms of 19th and 20th century in Andhra Pradesh focussed on the religious reformation in addition to women emancipation as they believed that the reformation of the religion will automatically reform the evils within the society as they saw superstitions beliefs were the main reasons for the suppression of the women and the religion sanctions on women along practices like infant marriages, prohibiting widow remarriage, *kanyasulkam* (bride price).in order to curb these problem and to take forward religious reformation *Prarthana Brahma Samaj* came into existence in Andhra Pradesh which also aimed at religious reformation, it was a wing of Brahmoism which spread in Bengal. It endeavoured to achieve religious reformation through *Upanishads* and *Brahma sutras*.

During early 1950's,the entire political dimension was changed as *Potti Sreeramulu*,who was known for his perseverance and struggle to get Andhra people their own identity by demanded a separate state for the telugu speaking people. He fought tirelessly till his last breath to see to it that the Telugu speaking people will get the benefits they deserve to and he felt that this was possible only by getting a separate state on linguistic basis. Though the idea of separate state arose in 1911 but it was brought into the limelight by *Potti Sreeramulu*, when he had gone for an indefinite fast and died after 56 days in 1952.after this incident, in

the year October, 1953 the first linguistic state Andhra Pradesh was formed. This movement also had evidence for the participation of women.

Inspiration to fight against the evils continued with the women for a very long time. For instance, in the year 1992 an agitation was begun by the women in a remote village of Dubagmata of Nellore district, against the arrack auction. Women by this time understood that one had to raise their voice in order to get away with social evils. The women of this village protested against arrack auction and its supply, as the drinking habit of their husband was most frequent reason for violence in their family and as their husband was addicted to it wasted the entire daily wage for consumption of liquor. Gradually this movement attained such a momentum that it had become that movement which can make the state to renege from the complete deviation from its own accepted policy (here the liquor policy which was neglected as it gave huge income to the state government). Though the participation of women in this movement was applauded, it must be observed that the role of the upper caste women in this movement was only passive support. In this movement the village committees led by the women had pressurised men to take oath in the village temples to stop drinking arrack. The women squads of this movement used chilli powder, broom and fire as their weapons against the threat from the drunken males. They burnt down the arrack contractors den and the arrack barrels. All these attempts symbolically aim at the purification of their villages by burning the arrack demon but if this movement is to be analysed from the sociological perspective, the women who ever participated in anti-arrack movement felt that the harmony of the family was disturbed by the drinking habit of their husbands, they understood that the equilibrium within the family can be restored by curbing arrack production and supply, in a way they were trying to protect their family even though the main opposition to this movement was from their husbands. This movement can be analysed both as rebellious as well as conservative. It is rebellious by the methods they chose but was reformative as they were reforming their husbands in order to restore the harmony of their family to move away from the shackles of liquor.⁸

In Andhra Pradesh, the role played by different female association i.e. Mahila Mandals in bringing the solidarity among the women was huge. For instance, Stri Sanathana Dharma Mandali which was successful in conducting different social gatherings, conference for the awakening of the women. It also maintained many schools especially for the educating

⁸ Anti-arrack agitation of women in Andhra Pradesh by D.Narasimha Reddy and Arun Patnaik, economic and political weekly, 28-21, p.p.1059-1066

women. Bharath Mahila Seva Mandali was another such association which was set up in the year 1961 mainly to address women issues. These Mahila mandals worked hard by awakening women and mobilising them at the same time.

Women to be a part of political decision making has to be part of the administration, so in order to be a part of the political administration, she has to be elected representative. It is so surprising that though women's being half in population in Andhra Pradesh; her representation in the Andhra Pradesh state administration is not satisfactory.

Recent 2014 elections in Andhra Pradesh State report of women MLAs:-

DISTRICT	TOTAL NUMBER OF CONSTITUENCIES	NO. OF WOMEN CANDIDATES
ANANTHAPUR	14	2
CHITTOOR	14	3
EAST GODAVARI	19	2
GUNTUR	17	0
CUDDAPAH	10	0
KRISHNA	16	2
KURNOOL	14	2
NELLORE	10	0
PRAKASAM	12	0
SRIKAKULAM	10	2
VISHAKAPATNAM	15	2
VIJAYANAGARAM	9	4
WEST GODAVARI	15	1

Source: - Andhra Pradesh state portal

The above table gives a clear picture about the total number of women MLAs within the Andhra Pradesh state. The number of women MLAs account to 11.42% (20 MLAs). It is very surprising to note that Guntur which was very vibrant in conducting women gatherings during early and late 20th century has no women member elected from total 17 constituencies. In Nellore which was the focal point during the arrack movement also has no single women MLA from its 10 constituencies. On the other hand Vijayanagaram which has a total 9 constituencies out of which 4 are under women MLAs which account for 44.4%.

3.2. Women and crime:-

According to the crime reports in India, a total of 16,512 cases are registered which were crime committed against women in Andhra Pradesh. The rate of crime against women which means number of crimes against women per one lakh population of women is 65.1% in Andhra Pradesh.

The type crimes committed against women in the state of Andhra Pradesh include:-

- 1) Insult to the modest of women
- 2) Immoral trafficking
- 3) Kidnappings
- 4) Domestic violence
- 5) Rape(mostly the culprits were known to the victims)
- 6) Cyber crime
- 7) Murders related to love affairs

3.3 Women in schemes:-

Government of Andhra Pradesh announced schemes for the empowerment of women which include the following:-

- a. Opening an exclusive toll-free help-line '181' for women in distress.
- b. Compulsory registration of marriages in all gram panchayats and municipal wards to eliminate harmful practices like child marriages.
- c. Free master health check- up for women in 35+ age group through a master health card with special focus on early diagnosis and treatment of non-communicable diseases, breast and cervical cancer and lifestyle diseases.
- d. Free tele-ultrasonography services in 223 health facilities for screening of pregnant women, mother and child.(thehansindia.com)

As we have seen in the previous discussion that, the history of women in Andhra Pradesh is very appreciable and very inspirational but when the numbers speak about their actual participation in the present political scenario the picture is clear and it is really not at all convincing. Andhra Pradesh was once home to all the reformatory activities which strived to uplift the status of women by abolishing child marriage, encouraging education for girls, striking of the prohibition against widow remarriage.

But, the present situation is not reformed yet and it seems like all the fights the great leaders have gone for in order to make Andhra Pradesh a better place to live for people especially for women turned into a lost dream. The social, economic and political status of women is at stake again, crime rate against women is increasing day by day, and she is victim of all kinds of atrocities taking place in the society whether it may be abduction, rape, domestic violence etc

This time when all such atrocities are happening to women or when is seen that her political participation below the mark, it is the responsibility of women not any one else. The Indian constitution has always proclaimed to treat all its citizens equally without any bias and now it is the time for women's responsibility to realise .though the policies implemented for the benefits of women, the policies remained nameless among the women folk and it is responsibility of the government to make people aware with respect to the policies which are drafted for appraisal of the women's status.

If women do not open doors for their empowerment, then who will, unless and until they help themselves then who will. It is important for women to realise and ask these questions to themselves instead of waiting for a reformer to be their voice. They have to believe that they were always remained strong; it is important for the women folk to realise that it is just the society which hypnotised them in the name of religion to stay voiceless and this is the right time they get back with their great strength.

The present study titled "Role of Women in Panchayat Raj Institutions-Case study based in the villages of Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh" will highlight the answers to the questions raised in the above paragraph. This present study will thus ensure whether the panchayats were truly successful in mobilising women holistically or it was just the superficial.

CHAPTER -4

THE PANCHAYAT RAJ INSTITUTIONS AND WOMEN

The progress of India is possible only when the people living in the villages become politically conscious. This progress is bound up with the progress in Indian villages. If the progress of the Indian villages is taken forward, then there will not be obstacles for India to be a strong nation. Panchayat raj institution is one of those means through which India can go ahead by making the villages politically conscious which is further connected to the progress of Indian villages. Gandhi strongly believed that these village panchayats should play an integral part in the Indian government, ideologically, organisationally and functionally the panchayat raj system constitutes the most significant socio-economic and politico-administrative phenomena. The panchayat raj institution is considered as an excellent epitome of decentralization at the grass-root levels for development.

4.1. Panchayat: etymology and meaning

The word panchayat was derived from the Sanskrit word 'panchen' and 'ayatanam'. The literal meaning to the Sanskrit word 'panchen' means five members. In simple words panchayat means a body formed by the wise people to arbitrate and settle disputes. On the other hand, the meaning of 'ayatnam' means office. So, the meaning of panchayat means an "office of panchas". According to the Hindu mythology, these five members are considered as sacrosanct. They are further represented as the representatives of god and further each member of the panchayat refers to the one of the constituents of the mother earth. They are those five deities who are called as "panchayatani" in Sanskrit i.e. Ganapathi, Vishnu, Shankar, Devi and Surya. These gods together constitute supreme power. Thus, the panch constitutes the parameshwar, the great God of justice who is infallible. (Dey, 1962.p.5)

Therefore, it is well understood that, Panchayat Raj Institutions are the result of an ancient thought in a new form. They are the grass-root units of self-Government which have been proclaimed as the vehicles of socioeconomic transformation in rural India. The concept of Panchayat Raj is Indian in origin. Panchayat Raj Institutions are genuine and effective democratic institutions which provide ample opportunities for a large number of rural people to enjoy genuine and effective participation in the development and democratic decision making process. They influence the minds of rural people with help and a spirit of self-help

and non-dependence to obtain experience in the art of local self-governance. (Dr. S. Padmanabha Bhatt, 2010)

4.2 Evolution of Panchayat Raj Institutions in India:-

The concept of local governance was not new to India, it with the verge of time evolved itself through different phases of time and now in the contemporary times it took shape in the form of panchayat raj institutions. In order to get a clear idea regarding the evolution of panchayat raj institutions in India, it is most important to understand what resulted in the formation of these decentralised institutions.

The history of panchayat raj institutions in India can be divided into the following periods:-

- **Vedic period:-**

Five persons selected by the villagers indirectly for the governance purpose is referred to as panchayat and self government was the main motto of this body of five people.

In the old Sanskrit texts, panchayat is referred as panchayatnaam, and it was mentioned that among the five persons selected the presence of a spiritual man was most important. Not only that, one of the four sacred Vedas there was seen a mentioning of 'sabha' 'samithis' and 'vidath' which meant units of local self governance and democratic bodies at the local level.. Over a period of time these local self units which constituted a group of five selected people became those centres to decide critical issues like village disputes. Further, this local unit had become so powerful that the king had to get approval of Sabha regarding certain functions and decisions.

- **Epic era:-**

The administration during this period was divided into 'pur' and 'janapad' as referred to by the epic Ramayana. Here, 'pur' refers to city and 'janapad' to village and village people were referred to as janapada. Further, in Ramayana there was a mention of 'shreni' and 'nigam' which were local bodies but their composition was not known. Even in Mahabharata, Manu Smrithi and Kautiya's Arthashastra there was a mention of self government. Stressing the organised system of local self government, Manu Smrithi highlighted the importance of the decentralisation of state functions and further the king was advised to keep responsible ministers for advice. According to Manu, the smallest unit of governance was village and units of 10,20,100,1000 of village groups were also part of the system of self government.

The village responsibility was in the hands of Rakshak as his function was to maintain law and order and on the other had hierarchy was also maintained i.e. the lower Rakshak owned responsibility to the higher Rakshak.

- **Ancient Period:-**

The policy of decentralization of powers with village as the smallest unit of governance was adopted during the Chandragupta Maurya's reign, and the person elected by the people of village was called as "gramik". Megasthenese, the famous Greek historian described how the town Pataliputra was administered by six committees consisting of five members each.

In south India, during the Satavahana period which existed during 1st century B.C had local bodies for governance in cities as well as the villages. The Cholas also had the concept of self governance in the villages and 'Nadu parishads' were the representative bodies where 'Nadu' was solely responsible for the maintenance of the villagers.

- **Medieval Period:-**

Panchayats were prevalent during the medieval period, as the sultans of Delhi realised that impracticability in governing a vast country like India. Hence, they established local bodies for the smooth governance especially in order to collect the vast revenue generated from the from the agriculture production.

- **British Period:-**

For British government self governance was never an objective as their main motive was the protection of the imperial interests. With the same motive, the Britishers gave the powers to local level, so that their attention towards the administering of the urban areas will not be slipped from them. During 1883-85, local self government acts were passed in many provinces. These local boards could be superseded in case of abuse of powers. Another reason for Britishers encouraging the local self bodies was because they felt Indians are good at governing their local areas better than Britishers.

- **During independence:-** Because of the influence of Gandhi's ideology on the India national movement, the village panchayats also remained as one the ideologies as Gandhi always believed in the idea of "gram swaraj"(village self rule). In Gandhi's dream of country's future, India was seen as a highly decentralised polity, with extensive political and economic autonomy to the villages. According to him, a web

of interdependent political and economic networks through the creation of self-reliant village economic networks through the creation of self-reliant village economies and local self-government was regarded as the as most effective way of meeting the basic needs of the people. During freedom struggle, Gandhi saw a network of such rural organisations (panchayats) functioning in the villages without any connection with the government as the true foundation of civil revolt. He conceptualised the organizing an Indian polity based on communitarian principles in which power does not flow from the top to bottom, but travels from the village communities to the districts, and then upwards to the provinces, and then to the centre. Though, Gandhi's panchayats offered an entirely new pattern of structuring the Indian economy and polity which could not fit into the framework of the representative system of parliamentary government and the strategy of economic development associated with it. Hence, the constitution makers did not mention panchayats, neither did they reflect on the philosophy behind its thinking as enunciated by Gandhi. Therefore, the constitution took the individual but not the village, as the basic unit of the political system.⁹

The need and the importance of local self government are as follows:-

1. Effective management of local affairs.
2. Self-government
3. Good training for running the central and state governments
4. Relieve state administration of some of its burden
5. Extremely economical

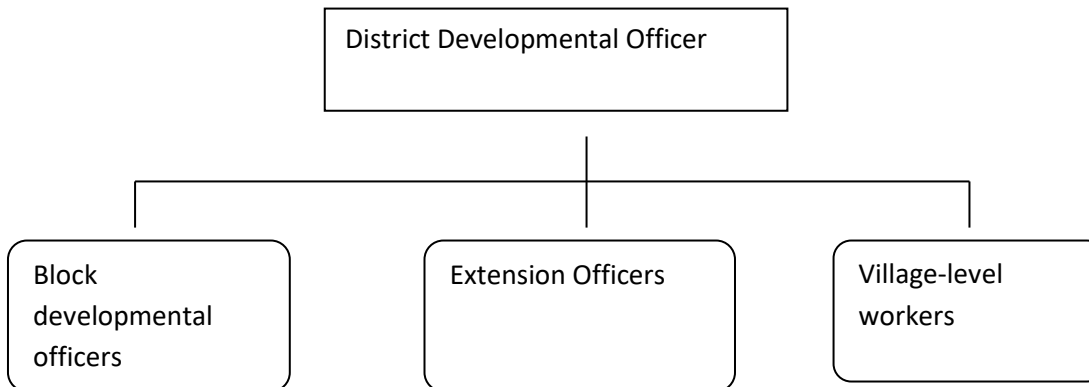
4.3. Community Development Programme:-

The return of panchayat raj in 1957 was triggered by the perceived failure of the ambiguous community development programme (CDP) begun in 1952. the organised structure designed to implement this programme was a hierarchical one, with a separate ministry and an extensive bureaucratic structure. Communication and power flowed from the central level to the state level and then to variegated district administrations for the implementation of the CDP. There was a remarkable expansion in the local bureaucracy which branched into what came to be known as developmental bureaucracy with the district collector assuming the role

⁹ Panchayati Raj –by Kuldeep Mathur ,Oxford university press, New Delhi,2013

of district development officer. Under him were the block development officers, extension officers and the village-level workers.¹⁰

Hierarchy of “developmental bureaucracy”



This was the first time that the reach of a centralised bureaucracy touched the village level with a functionary known as the village level worker. Departmental extension officers were also appointed at the Tehsil level. The boundaries of the Tehsil were redrawn to create what came to be known as developmental blocks. A local network of bureaucracy with links to subject matter departments was created. The implementation design of the CDP established a hierarchically organized administrative system, with communication links reaching from the village level to centre.

Though the Community Development Programme, aimed at eliciting people’s participation in development the programme did not do well. It was realised that the bureaucracy had severe limitations in initiating change and mobilising people’s cooperation. The government appointed a committee, with Balwanth Rai Mehta as chairmen, to review the entire programme. The recommendations of this committee ushered in the first generation of panchayat raj institutions. But even after this recommendations, there were many committees which were set up by different governments when came into power. The committees include: Ashok Mehta committee (1977), G.V.K.Rao committee(1985), L.M.Singhvi committee(1986), Thungon committee(1988) and Gadgil committee(1988).after all these committees recommendations came the 73rd amendment which turned Gandhi’s dream into reality.

¹⁰ [ibid]

4.4. The 73rd Amendment:

The preamble to the 73rd amendment to the constitution begins by pointing out that even though the panchayats have been in existence for some time, they have failed to acquire the status and dignity of viable and responsive people's bodies. It invokes article 40 of the constitution which enshrines one of the directive principles of state policy: 'the state will take steps to organize village panchayats and endow them to function as units of self government' i.e. this act has given a practical shape to the article 40. The preamble states that the amendment was made to correct the short comings of the past, and to provide panchayat institutions with certainty, continuity and strength. Among the short comings of the past, inadequate representation of SCs, STs, and women is specifically mentioned. The 73rd amendment set for itself the goals of creating panchayats as self governing institutions, and increasing the participation of deprived groups in the decision making processes of these institutions. The design of the initiative was that the constitution will provide certain mandatory structures with a supporting system that would make these structures viable and capable of performing the functions given to them. The content of the functions and how they will be performed will be left to the states to legislate. Such a design took care of the objections from the states regarding the encroachment of the powers given to them by the federal character of the constitution.

4.4.1. Significance of the amendment:-

This added a new Part IX to the constitution of India. This part is entitled as "The Panchayats" and consists of provisions from Articles 243 to 243 O and further this act a new Eleventh Schedule to the Constitution. This schedule contains 29 functional items of panchayats which are as follows:-

1. Agriculture including agricultural extension
2. Land improvement, implementation of land reforms, land consolidation and soil conservation
3. Minor irrigation, water management and watershed development
4. Animal husbandry, dairying, and poultry.
5. Fisheries
6. Social forestry and farm forestry.
7. Minor forest produce
8. Small industries, including food processing industries

9. Khadi, village and cottage industries
10. Rural housing
11. Drinking water
12. Fuel and fodder
13. Roads, culverts, bridges, ferries, water ways and other means of communication.
14. Rural electrification, including distribution of electricity
15. Non-conventional energy sources
16. Poverty alleviation programme.
17. Education, including primary and secondary schools
18. Technical training and vocational education
19. Adult and non-formal education
20. Libraries
21. Cultural activities
22. Markets and fairs
23. Health and sanitation, including hospitals, primary health centres and dispensaries
24. Family welfare
25. Women and child development
26. Social welfare, including welfare of the handicapped and mentally retarded
27. Welfare of the weaker sections and in particular, of the scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes
28. Public distribution system
29. Maintenance of community assets.

This act is a significant landmark in the evolution of grass root democratic institutions in the country. It transfers the representative democracy into participatory democracy. It is a revolutionary concept to build democracy at the grass root level in the country.

The most important features of the constitution act, 1992 are as follows:-

- Establishment of a three tier structure i.e. village panchayat, intermediate panchayat and district panchayat in states which have a population of 20 lakh and above.
- Regular elections to panchayats for every five years
- Reservation of seats of members and office of chairpersons to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in proportion to their population.

- Reservation of not less than 1/3rd seats of members and offices of chairpersons for women.
- Constitution of state finance commission every five years to recommend measures to improve the finances of Panchayats.
- Constitution of state election commission
- Gram Sabha at the village level.

4.5. Pattern of organisation:-

Three important organs of panchayat raj institutions are as follows:

- Gram panchayat:**-it is considered as the nucleus of the panchayat raj system. All the registered voters are the members of the gram Sabha of that village panchayat. According to the act, Gram Sabha has to meet thrice a year of at least once in six months. The president of the gram panchayat is the presiding officer of the meetings of Gram Sabha, and the president has to give approval to the budget proposed and has to give approval to the budget proposed and annual plan of the village panchayat.

Functions:-

The functions of the gram panchayat can be broadly be divided into two categories i.e. obligatory and discretionary.

Obligatory functions:-

The gram panchayat duty is: funds may be sanctioned to make reasonable provisions within its jurisdiction for construction, repair maintenance, cleaning and provision of street lamps.

- The medical relief
- Maintenance of sanitation and taking curative and preventive measures to remove and stop epidemic.
- Registering births and deaths and marriages and maintaining the registers.
- Removal of encroachments, of public places and property vested in gram panchayat.
- Regulating places for the disposal of dead bodies and carcasses and other offensive matter.
- Establishing and maintaining village primary schools for boys and girls.

- Maternity and child welfare.¹¹

Discretionary functions:-

- Planning and maintaining trees in public streets and other places
- The improved breeding and the medical treatment of cattle.
- Development of co-operation and establishment of improved seed and implement stores.
- Relief against famine and other calamity.
- Maintenance of libraries and reading rooms.
- Setting up of organisations to promote good will and social harmony between different communities.

- ii. **Panchayat samithis:-**by indirect elections the panchayat samithi should be constituted from the village panchayats.10% of the number of seats must be filled by the representatives of the directors of co-operative societies of that area and it should have a span of 5years.

The functions of the panchayat samithi should cover the development of agriculture in all its aspects, such as

- Improvement of the health of the cattle
- Promotion of local industries
- Public health
- Welfare work
- Administration of primary schools and collection and maintenance of statistics.

- iii. **Zilla parishad:-**the third and the higher tier of PRIs is zilla panchayat. In the Zilla panchayat there is an administrative wing and elected wing. The elected president is the executive head of the zilla panchayat; the chief officer is the administrative head and is responsible to the Zilla parishad and to the government. The district collector is the member of the zilla parishad in all the states. Special representation to the scheduled caste and tribes is also provided in all states except in west Bengal. The MPs and MLAs of the area are also attached as the members of the zilla parishad.

¹¹ Role of Panchayati Raj Institution for Rural Development by Singh, K.K and Ali, S .Sarup & Sons.new delhi.2001

Functions:-

- It examines and approves the budget of taluk parishad
- It issues directions to TPs for efficient performance for their functions
- It co-ordinates development plans prepared by the TPs besides, it co-ordinates the inter block activities.
- It advises the state government on all matters relating to development activities in the district.
- It informs the district collector and the divisional commissioner about irregularities, if any, committed by the panchayats and Taluka panchayat in the district.
- It advises the state government on allocation of work to be made among panchayats and panchayat samithis in the district and also on co-ordination of work between the samithis and among various panchayats themselves. It exercises such powers and performs such functions as may be conferred by the state government.

4.6. Panchayats in Andhra Pradesh:-

In Andhra Pradesh, local self government flourished from the days of Satavahanas to the days of Vijayanagara Empire. During the British reign, this grass root governance was centralised and then people started looking away towards centralised institutions for the betterment of their condition. But, during the late 18th century and early 20th century attempts were made in order to re-establish certain amount of local self government in Madras province. The Madras legislature in 1863 passed first legislative enactment pertaining to local self government called Education Cess Act of 1863. The Local Boards act of 1884 introduced a three tier system of village unions. Taluk boards and district boards wherein all the three together formed the local administrative system and this three tier system was endorsed by the Royal Decentralisation commission of 1919. This commission however emphasised the need to restore the village community and establish panchayats in villages. By keeping in view the recommendations, the Village Panchayat Act was passed in 1920 by the madras legislature widening the functions of local government bodies. Under this act, every village with a population of 500 people and above had a panchayat.

Andhra Pradesh was one of the two (other being Rajasthan) early advocates of the Panchayat Raj in India by accepting the recommendations of Balwanth Roy Mehta Committee and enacted a legislation in 1959 to introduce the panchayat raj in the state. Panchayat raj was introduced in the state mainly with a view to involve the representatives of the people in rural development.

The present pattern of Andhra Pradesh Panchayati Raj is functioning under the Andhra Pradesh Panchayati raj act of 1994, which was enacted in the light of 73rd constitutional amendment act, 1993 which has the following salient features:-

1. There will be Gram Panchayats at the village level composed of members elected the wards carved out on territorial basis.
2. The Sarpanch for every gram Panchayat shall be elected by the persons, whose names appear in the electoral roll for the Gram- Panchayat and his term of office would be five years.
3. There will be a Gram Sabha consisting of all electors in the village, which will meet twice a year.
4. There will be a Mandal Panchayat to every Mandal composed of the members directly elected from the territorial constituencies carved out for the purpose (MPTCs).
5. The President of Mandal Parishad would be elected from among the elected members of the Mandal Panchayat.
6. There will be a Zilla Panchayat for every district, consists all members elected from the Mandals in the District and each Mandal will be a territorial constituency for the purposes (ZPTCs).
7. Only the elected members of the Zilla Parishad will elect the Chairman of the Zilla Parishad.
8. There will be reservations of seats of members as also the offices of Sarpanch, President, Mandal Panchayats and Chairman, Zilla Panchayats for the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Women as provided in the Constitution Amendment Act and at 34% to backward classes.

9. There will be an Election Commission for the conduct of elections to conduct elections for Panchayati Raj Bodies headed by a person, who is holding or has held an office not less in rank than that of a Principal Secretary to Government, and

10. There will be Finance Commission headed by a person who has experience in public affairs.

Finally the Andhra Pradesh Panchayat Raj Act, 1994 (Act 13 of 1994) came into force with effect from 27th May, 1994. As per the new Act three tiers of decentralized institutions were working in all 22 districts of the state, except Hyderabad district which is purely urban in nature.¹²

4.7. Vision 2020 - Panchayat Raj Bodies

The Government of Andhra Pradesh has prepared vision 2020 document in order to make local self-government a vibrant and functional unit at the grass root level. The Vision document of Panchayat Raj Department envisages the following commitments in this direction.¹³They are:

1. Strengthening of the Panchayati Raj Institutional structure and systems.
2. Constitution of functional committees.
3. Prevention of criminalization of politics.
4. Audit and Accounts.
5. Role of Gram Sabha.
6. Identification of risk families.
7. Beneficiary committees.
8. Building regulations.
9. Recall of Elected representatives.
10. Devolution of Powers, Functions and Responsibilities.
11. Capacity building of P.R. Functionaries.

¹² New panchayat raj-by U.K.S.Bhatt,, Jaipur: Print Well Publication

¹³ Panchayati raj in India by R.Dayal, Metro Politan Book Co.Pvt,lmted, New delhi,1970

12. Strengthening of Finances of Local Bodies.

13. Property Tax Reforms, and

14. Rural Road Development Policy.

4.8 Reservation of women in panchayat raj institutions:-

Today, women are achieving so much every field and are competing equally with the male counterpart, but when it comes to a field like politics they remained far behind and the fact can't be avoided that until and unless women are politically uplifted not only by implementing pro women policies but also increasing ways for their political participation there cannot be equality in a democratic society like India. Hence, the reservation is one of those ways through which women can realise their potential.

In the 73rd amendment it has been stipulated that there will be reservation of 33% of seats for women which was brought in by an entirely new provision for women. This provision is historic, particularly if seen in the context of the failure to provide for women's reservation in the parliament. From the Prime Ministership of Rajiv Gandhi- a women's reservation bill was sought to be moved in Parliament. Several prime ministers have put their weight behind the bill, but it has failed to become law. It has been always obstructed for one or the other reason. Finally, it was celebrated for its successful passage in Rajya Sabha but this didn't last long as it had not got enough support in Loksabha during 1996. Therefore, the 73rd amendment has been signal of contribution in the reservation of women in panchayats.

In order to strengthen the representation of women in panchayats, many recommendations were made earlier for instance, Balwanth Rai Mehta committee recommended that a 20 member Panchayati samithi should co-opt or nominate two interested in working for women and children. States like Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Haryana and Punjab had followed this recommendation in their legislations.¹⁴

4.9. Structural constraints for political participation of women:-

Though the reservation for women in panchayats has been historical, the structural constraints within the provision cannot be avoided. The structural constraints are as follows:-

¹⁴ Panchayati and Women, Status of Panchayati Raj in the states and union Territories of India by Nirmala buch , New Delhi: Institute of social Science.,2000

- Mandatory rotation of seats among the constituencies from one election to the next which denies women's chance to nurse her constituency for the next time.
- Some states have introduced the two child norm as an eligibility criterion for contesting elections, which makes it impossible for the women with more than two children to stand for election. Though this condition is applicable for both men and women, it is particularly detrimental for women since most of them do not have control over reproductive decisions.
- Abuse of no-confidence motions, a practice that is rampant to unseat women on the reserved seats. Though some states like Kerala and Himachal Pradesh stipulate that only a woman will replace a woman if the post is reserved for women but in most of the states such safeguards are not provided which is giving rise to the assurance of tenure to political families, with women representatives who are surrogates of their husbands or other relative who cannot stand for election due to reservation.

Other than the structural constraints within the act, there are social, religious and cultural constraints which are faced by women such as:

- Inadequate awareness
- Aversion to public activities
- Burden of household work and wage work outside
- Custom and tradition
- Lack of support from family

Some states like Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh in order to overcome the constraints had issued that the male relatives must stay out from the governing issues of women sarpanches and further also gave directions to the women sarpanches to not get influenced by their male relatives or husband fulfilling their responsibilities. On the other hand the Government of Kerala has set up women self help groups/neighbourhood groups to ensure greater participation of women in Gram Sabha and other panchayat level institutions and has also taken steps to create awareness among the people (both men and women) regarding the role of women in Panchayat Raj Institutions.

4.10. Women participation in decision making:-

Representation and participation are two different dimensions of democracy. It is relatively easy to Legislate representation, but a far more complex and challenging task to create the conditions for participation. Proper representation does not automatically lead to proper participation. Moreover, not only institutional but social factors also influence participation. Actual participation of women in panchayats has not been a piece of cake, even though many states have taken steps to assure greater participation of women because participation also depends on the external environment in which the panchayats functions. In summarizing the characteristics of this environment, Palaniswamy points out the two characteristics: first, the governance environment within which elected representatives work which is measured by the sum of inequality, local power relations, gender differentials, caste based divisions and the different ways in which all these factors coalesce in different states is critical to the effectiveness of the reservation policy; second, the extent of domination of institutions of local government by the local political and social elite .thus, the governance environment lies in the heart of the question of the effectiveness on reserved seats and reservation policies.¹⁵

4.11 Empowerment of women:-

An urgent point for the improvement of the rustic India is the strengthening of the provincial ladies, which has turned into a noteworthy worry of the Government of India. With a specific end goal to convey ladies to the standard of improvement, 2001 has been announced as the back of ladies strengthening by the administration of India. Facilitate, the essential obligation of the state/union region organisation is introduction preparing for the chose delegates of the panchayat raj foundations. With the 73rd correction, the constitution of India has put a gigantic duty on the panchayats to detail and execute different projects for the monetary advancement and social equity and further, midway supported plans are being actualized through panchayats. Accordingly, for the ladies individuals who are fundamental, new participants need to secure the required expertise and proper introduction must be given so they can expect their legitimate parts as pioneers and leaders. Consequently, the states/union domains are sorting out preparing programs for chose delegates of panchayat including ladies individuals and chairpersons of panchayats. In order to catalyse the limit building activities for PRIs chose individuals and functionaries and to enhance the quality preparing programs, the service of country improvement likewise extends some monetary

¹⁵ Panchayati raj by Kuldeep Mathur, Oxford university press, new delhi,2013

help to the states/UTs. Devolution of energy is a progressing procedure and further, the States/UTs have decayed forces upon the panchayats in shifting degree as the constitution of India gives that State/UTs should degenerate utilitarian and monetary forces upon the panchayat raj establishments. However, regardless of the considerable number of steps taken by the legislature, the cooperation of ladies in all circles of life shifts with regards to contrasts in the social, monetary, social and local elements. Presently, it is being understood that the objective of destitution lightening can't be accomplished without full and dynamic investment of ladies.¹⁶

¹⁶ [ibid]

CHAPTER -5

DATA ANALYSIS-THE FIELD STORIES

Generally, when the question of political participation of women arises it was always believed that men in the name of religion and culture never wanted a woman to take part in politics. But even though in this vast majority there are exceptions like Masthan Wali, Panchayat Secretary of Mupalla Mandal who believes that women must participate not only in panchayats but in every field. He further said that women are proving themselves in every field which is completely contrasting to what once existed when women were limited only to kitchens, on the other hand according to Rammohan Pratap Reddy, Sarpanch of Kundurivaripalem women cannot participate in a field like politics as they don't know anything about this politics. He further says that as the women don't know anything their husbands will be the one who will be ruling, so at the end male is the one who will be ruling and there is no use of such thing as political participation of women. He further says that he had never seen an instance where a woman sarpanch is working directly without her husband taking part and elaborated that being a sarpanch there is need to come out of homes at some odd hour which a woman cannot manage.

In a field like politics which is a new platform for women to empower themselves they need a support and guidance to walk through a path which is opposed socially for example sometimes there is an utmost necessity of a guiding light when we enter into a completely unfamiliar place, in the same way women sarpanch who earlier were limited to only their family responsibilities they need some guidance to understand the way of doing things which according them was provided by their husband. All the sarpanch of three villages accepted and supported the fact of being guided by husband is not something which must be looked down too. They said that as their husband's being exposed to the outside world they know more things than they themselves and there is nothing wrong in taking advice and discussing situations with them. The main concern is not which arises because of support from their husband but it is when the husband acts as the sarpanch instead of his wife who actually contested and elected. When enquired about the role of her husband, Krishna Kumari says that the society is male dominated and there is no space for women in politics so, according to her she has taken the position of sarpanch on her husband's advice and as it was her husband's desire to be a sarpanch she wants to see it to be full filled and sees nothing wrong in it. Whereas on the other hand, Sailaja clarifies that there are some activities which must be

performed by male member for instance, she recollects that for MGNREGA and some infrastructure projects like digging garbage pits there is high demand for the labourers so a women going and calling them is something which is not acceptable in a society like ours so it is her husband who informs about the work, not only this she says that there are instances where sarpanch must accompany to police station most of the time during odd time (according to her after sunset) so it is her husband who does this and not her. She further explains that as a married women the society has framed some rules and regulations and if don't follow them there is a problem of character assassination hence, it is important that some work done by her husband instead of her.

To bring equality, political participation was always believed to be a platform, hence the Indian government brought the reservation policy of 33% which was implemented at panchayat level through 73rd amendment, but this policy becomes effective only when women participated by their own choice but not through compulsion which most of the times comes from the women's husband. However, there are exceptions where women enter into the panchayat by compulsion initially, but later they started developing a kind of interest towards their position and developed a kind of responsibility towards that post. For instance, Sailaja Kancheji, sarpanch of Paludevarlapadu was compelled by her husband initially but, later had developed a kind affinity and interest towards it. Not only has her, Kumari Bobbani who is sarpanch of the village Gollapadu also belonged to the same category as that of Sailaja. But, this scenario was not true in all cases, for example, Krishna Kumari even after 3 years of span of being sarpanch of Narnepadu village has not developed any kind of affinity towards her post and she accepts that it is just because of her husband she is in this post, she further elaborated that she literally is waiting for her term to end. So, there cannot be any generalisation that women must not be compelled as sometimes compulsion bought the hidden potential within them but at other times she remained within the same walls. Therefore, it is solely women who at the end decide how the opportunity given to her is utilised. The policies to empower women are drafted and implemented, but the success of such initiatives will be successful only when women take those opportunities instead of framing themselves in religious or cultural stereotypes.

There is utmost need for the balanced participation of both men and women in panchayat until and unless such consciousness arises within public the reservation policy must be implemented so that women can at least understand their policy. To a question regarding reservation in Panchayat, Sreedhara Boyina Umadevi, Mandal Parishad chairman opined that

there must be more than 50% of reservation as she feels that woman have so much of potential that it will be seen only when she is represented completely and in every field, without delimiting her to particular roles. For Sujata who is an agricultural officer, said that reservation must be 50%, according to her it will provide equal opportunity which is the basic principle of democracy. All the responses were not as positive as these but according Krishna Kumari it doesn't make a difference if reservation is there or not, for her both situations are same and further said that "even though the government provides in equality in political field may be by reserving seats for women, women like me will just be proxies and till the end of the term unaware about the functions of sarpanch".

In a country like India where nearly 68.84% of population resides in rural areas (2011 census) it becomes very important to know how the condition of women is in those areas as it gives the ground reality about what are the factors which are augmenting the upliftment of rural women and further when this ground reality is clear it paves path to draft policies which can curb those invisible factors which are pulling them down and further to make the dream of Indian constitution to provide justice and equality to its citizens into a possible reality. When asked what is equality to the women representatives, Kumari Bobbani without any second thoughts confirmed that she believes in equality and there must be equal representation of women in every field especially politics. According to her, if a woman is represented empathising situation of other women will be easy and can get them out of those problems easily. She recollected that in her time period of 3.5 years as a sarpanch there were times when village women could share their problems only as there was a female sarpanch. The main reason she thinks why a women approaches a women is not because a woman can understand her problems but because a male can never support a female in this patriarchal society but a female at least listens.

In India, women face multiple barriers in the name of culture, religion whenever they tried to do something which they were interested. For instance, during late 19th century though Jyotirao Phule made a revolutionary thought of educating women, most of the women in the name of culture were not allowed to get educated. In the same way, now when Government of India wanted its women members for political participation, they are barricaded by quoting same reasons which existed a century ago. Masthan Wali, said that the times are changing and now in the rural areas also the parents of girl wanted to educate as far as they can afford but when it comes to politics they are a bit resistant as the field was risky and includes those roles which are new as well as most of the times caused character assassination. Sailaja opined

that, the societal disappointment when a woman participates in politics is persistent in a society where everyone talks about gender equality, justice etc. According to her, this societal disappointment comes from the male members as she feels that when female members become a sarpanch the male members feel that their ego was destroyed as she becomes a public figure. She further added that all the societal norms are drafted by male in order to control woman.

Traits play an important role when one is performing an important and most respectable profession like that of being a sarpanch. When asked, whether women possesses the traits which are required to be a sarpanch, Masthan Wali was of the opinion that both men and women possess same traits as he was working under both male as well as female sarpanch. He said that those members who are with confidence though it is men or women can perform their responsibilities up to the mark. He for instance, gave example of Nagurmeera, male sarpanch of Lankela Kurapadu and female sarpanch of Paludevarlapadu. He said that though the sarpanch of Paludevarlapadu is a female she is very confident women and she knows how to answer whom and is a very courageous women where as on the other hand the Lankela Kurapadu sarpanch who though male didn't possess any of such traits. So according to Masthan Wali, female's traits must not be taken for granted and must limit her to homes and male members are not the only ones made for this. Whereas 9, Krishna Kumari said that women is not made for a field like politics and further they do not possess any traits, further she said that a woman is made to rear children and to take care of family and according to her if women possess those traits the male forces will rip off those traits as soon as possible.

When asked what is the major drawback for women in panchayat raj institution, Masthan Wali said the "rotation system" where seat for women is not given consecutively is the major drawback according to him because when women tries to understand the system and starts working towards her responsibility her time period gets over and every time this cycle repeats. Whereas for Krishna Kumari, patriarchy is the major drawback for women and unless and until that is removed from the society women will not be successful in any field especially in political field. She remembers an incident when she happened to show some interest in showing her responsibility as a sarpanch but the male folk tried to suppress her actions saying that she need not think too much as she was female and they even suggested her to leave the responsibility to her husband. Sailja Kancheti, remembers how she had to spent so much of money and had to approach court to get her check powers back when the her check powers were taken from her as she was from opposition party in Andhra Pradesh

which is YSCRP party and most importantly as she is female. She says that if people must be benefitted from the panchayats then party politics happening at the grass root level must be abolished and that she is the first person whose check powers were removed, even before her there were many women whose check powers were taken off and even at the end of time period as sarpanch they couldn't get them back. Further, she adds saying that there are women who put so much of money to get their check powers back and as they were not at a well off position they lost everything and at present those women are working as daily wage workers. Therefore, from both instances it can be observed that the obstacles to women are present in the norms of the functioning of panchayat and the politics happening at the level as well as the norms within the social system and existence of both these norms are obstacles and a threat to the women participation.

CHAPTER -6

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Chapter Summary:-It deals with the vital findings of the study and draws inferences for effective and holistic participation of women in panchayat raj institutions in Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh. It aims at enriching our understanding about the role of women in political institutions especially in panchayats. The introduction deals with importance of the topic and the review of literature. It also deals with the methodology with regard to various aspects such as scope of study, objectives, collection of primary and secondary data, criterion for the selection of the area of study i.e. Guntur district, criterion for the selection of the Mandal and subsequent selection of villages, sample, data collection, processing and analysis etc.

The second chapter deals with “Status of Women in India”. This chapter provides an holistic understanding regarding the evolution of women in different phases not only that this chapter also enriches the understanding about the role of women in dimensions i.e.as voter,as a minister, as a representative and it gives figures about the percentage of women in these dimensions. The other subsection of the second chapter explains the rights and the protection given to the women of India by constitution, legislation. This chapter puts forward the status of women in Andhra Pradesh and the policies drafted by the government to prevent atrocities against women and further this unit brings into picture the status of women in Guntur district in order to have an idea regarding the social, political conditions the women were in.

The third chapter provides an complete understanding about the concepts panchayat raj institutions and the way women are represented at the grass root democracy and what are the actions that must be taken care of for the holistic representation of women for instance the training programme must be rigorous in order to make women sarpanch aware of their rights and responsibilities.

The fourth chapter discusses about the field stories i.e. data analysis and discusses elaborately the views and the perceptions of the respondents who were majorly the members of the panchayat. The fifth and the final chapter discusses the summary and ends with the conclusion regarding the result of the empirical study.

CONCLUSION

The present study “Role of women in Panchayat Raj Institutions” is an empirical study conducted in the villages of Mupalla Mandal of Guntur district. This study emphasised whether women represented in the panchayats are well represented or is just another way to show the male dominance by controlling women in the name of reservation. This study questioned how well the reservation of women is utilized to empower women. It was also successful in enquiring about the factors which are responsible for the depriving status of women in political participation especially in panchayats. This study is like a two faced coin where the reader finds two contrasting features for instance, this study has evidence of women who faced the obstacles but governed and fulfilled their responsibility as a sarpanch and also on the other hand women were also of the category who even after 3 years of their span as a sarpanch do not know what the functions of a sarpanch are.

This study further broke the academic stereotype that women sarpanch are just puppets in the hands of either their husbands or the male relative, but it is proved wrong by the information collected from the women sarpanch. This study in itself is unique as earlier it was believed that the male members only control women but this study proved that there are members who become the support system of the women. It emphasised the factors which became obstacles in the way the of women sarpanch during her reign. It also showed how the politics show its dirty face at the lower strata and it turns ugly when the candidate is women. Later, it makes it clear that about the perception of women regarding the concept of reservation at the panchayat level.

In this way the study not only made it clear that how generalising males to be suppressive is not always right and one must also note that in a society like India which is patriarchal from the a very long time it was men started the reform movement and it is not always right for the blame game, instead both male and female must join their hands for a progressive development of the nation.

Hence, the study shows the ground reality of how women are performing at the grass root democracy as well as the factors which were augmenting their empowerment.

REFERENCES

1. Batliwala, Srilatha. "Transforming of Political Culture: Mahila Samakhya Experience." *Economic and Political Weekly*. Vol. 31- 21 (1996). 1248-1251.
2. Chaturvedi , T,N. "Panchayati Raj in Rajasthan." *Economic and Political Weekly*. Vol. 4- 25 (1969). 999, 1001-1002.
3. Devi,D, Syamala. and Lakshmi,G. "Political empowerment of women in Indian Legislature." *The Indian Journal of Political Science*. Vol. 66-1 (2005). 75-92.
4. District Census Handbook. Directorate of Census Operations, Government of Andhra Pradesh. 2011.
5. Kudva, Neema. "Engineering Elections." *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* . Vol.16(2003). pp. 445-463.
6. Katzenstein, Mary Fainsod. "Towards Equality? Cause and Consequence of the Political Prominence of Women in India." *Asian Survey*. Vol. 18-5 (1978). 473-486.
7. Mathes ,Valerie Shirer. "A New Look at the Role of Women in Indian Society." *American Indian Quarterly*. Vol. 2- 2 (1975). 131-139.
8. Mohapatra, Harapriya. "Status of Women in Indian Society." *Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Science*. Vol. 3- 6 (2015) . 33-36.
9. Omvedt, Gail. "Women, Zilla Parishads and Panchayat Raj: Chandwad to Vitner". *Economic and Political Weekly*. Vol. 25-31 (1990). 1687, 1689-1690.
10. Pal, Mahi. "Woman in Panchayat." *Economic and Political Weekly*. Vol. 33- 4 (1998). 150-152.
11. Pai, Sudha. "From Dynasty to Legitimacy." *India International Centre Quarterly*. Vol. 39 (2012-2013). 107-121

12. Rai, Shirin M. "Deliberative Democracy and the Politics of Redistribution: The Case of the Indian Panchayats." *Hypatia* .Vol. 22- 4(2007). 64-80.
13. Reddy, Gopinath. "Panchayat Raj Institutions and Parallel bodies in Andhra Pradesh." *The Indian Journal of Political Science*. Vol. 68- 2 (2007). 24-26
14. Sekhon , Joti. "Engendering Grassroots Democracy: Research, Training, and Networking for Women in Local Self-Governance in India." *NWSA Journal*. Vol.18-2 (2006).101-122.
15. Phadke, Shilpa "Thirty Years On: Women's Studies Reflects on the Women's Movement" *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 38, No. 43 (Oct. 25-31, 2003), pp. 4567-4576
16. Jeyabalan, N. "Rural sociology". Atlantic publishers: New Delhi. 2002
17. Kishwar, Madhu. "Women and Politics: Beyond Quotas" *Economic and Political Weekly* , Vol. 31, No. 43 (Oct. 26, 1996), pp. 2867-2874
18. Akerkar, Supriya. "Theory and Practice of Women's Movement in India: a discourse analysis". *Economic and Political weekly*. Vol.30, no. 17 (April 29, 1995). pp. WS2-WS23
19. Rai, Praveen "Electoral Participation of Women in India: Key Determinants and Barriers". *Economic and Political weekly*. vol 26 no 3 (january 15, 2011)
20. Khanna, R.D. "Panchayati raj in India". English Book Shop. Chandigarh. 1956
21. Khanna, B.S. "Panchayati raj in India: National perspective and state studies". *Deep and Deep publications*. Delhi. 1994
22. Lakshmi. "Women and Politics-a study in political participation". *Book link corporation*. Hyderabad. 1993

23. Mohanty, Bidyut. "women and political Empowerment". *Indian Sociological Society*. New Delhi. 2002
24. Narayan Rao, K.V, Sundar Ram, D. "Political developments in Andhra Pradesh 1978-1989" *Indian journal of political science*. vol. 51, no. 4 (oct-dec 1990). pp. 540-564
25. Panda, Snehalata. . " Emerging Pattern of Leadership among Rural Women in Orissa". *Indian Journal of Public Administration*. Vol. 42, No. 3-4. 1996.
26. Parida, J.K. "Measuring Rural Development in Orissa". *Journal of Rural Development*. 1987
27. Sinha , Rabindra Kumar. "Rural Development a Perspective". *Kurukshetra* vol. 32(2). 1982
28. Rajput, Ahuja. S, Khan, Singh, N (2005). "Role of Women SHGs – A View Point at Panchayat Level". *Indian Journal of Public Administration*. Vol. 68, No. 11.
29. Mohanti, S. "73rd Constitutional Amendment and Women". Bombay: *Economic and Political Weekly*. Vol. XXX, No. 52, December, 1997.
30. Mehtha, Balwant Rai. (1975). "Report of the Team for the Study of Community Projects and National Extension Services". *Government of India*. Vol. I.