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Sr No	Name of Authors	Title of Paper	Page No.
1.	Dr. Ramesh S. Mangalekar	Developmental And Displacement: 'Gain' V/S 'Pain'	1 To 3
2.	Dr.Smt.Survana S.Walika	Sustainable Development: Challenges in Modern Business	4 To 5
3.	Dr. N. M. Makandar Dr.F.H.Nadaf	Self Help Groups: A Tool For Women Empowerment	6 To 12
4	M.M.Javali Dr Umapati K.L	Condition Necessary for the Successful Working Of Democracy	13 To 16
5	Dr M.M.Barchiwale Prof.M.M.Javali	Indian democracy: Issues and Challenges	17 To 20
6	Dr.I.R.Kajagar Dr.A.R.Jagatap	Indian Democracy And It's Challenges Transitions in Indian Democracy:	21 To 26
7	Dr. Vishnu J. Bhandare	Impact Evaluation Study of Work Life Balance Challenges with Reference to College Teachers	27 To 34
8	S.D.Soudagar I.R.Yakkundi	Challenges And Opportunities For Rural Women Entrepreneurship In Karnataka With Special Reference To Dharwad District	35 To 38
9	Dr. Jayaramaiah Smt. Rabiabanu B Nadaf	Women Empowrment In India: Issues And Challenges	39 To 42
10	Dr. Bajrang A. Metil	A Study Of Corruption Ineducation System	43 To 44
11	Mr.Shahu D. Ovhal	Impact Of Privatisation Of Higher Education On Society In India	45 To 48
12	Dr. (Smt) Basavarajeshwari R Patil Dr. Vijaykumar R. Betgar	Women Empowerment And Karanataka Politics	49 To 52
13.	Dr (Mrs) Rahath unnisa.M	Women Empowerment in India	53 To 55
14.	Smt.P.N.Munavalli	Democracy And Gender Equality	56 To 58
15.	Pratiksha Mangalekar	A Comparative Analysis Between Bhagwad Gita And The Alchemist	59 To 62
16.	Mrs. Patil Manisha Vilasraol Dr. K.Chinnasamy	Role of The Library in Information Freedom And in Promotion Of Knowledge Societies in Democracy	63 To 69
17.	Dr. M.K. Kamble P. N. Kamble	Decentralized Local Governance in India: Some Excluded factors and Inclusive Policy	70 To 75
18.	Bharati Santosh Shinde	The Geographical Study of Sacred Grove in Ajara Tehsil of Kolhapur District	76 To 79
19.	Shri. Bharat Patil Dr. B.S. Jadhav	Spatio Temporal Analysis of Agricultural Density in Kolhapur District (2001-2011)	80 To 84
20.	Dr. R.U. Deshpande	ICT and Women Empowerment	85 To 85
21.	Dr. Namdev D. Patil	Impact Of Western Culture And English Language On Indian Culture And Society	86 To 90



## Women Empowerment And Karnataka Politics

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*The representation of women in a political system is a good test of its claim to democracy. The claims that women make for representation are claims for their citizenship and at the heart of their engagement with politics. The constitution of India recognizes the political rights of women without any discrimination, distinction or qualification to participate in the decision making process at all levels. However, after many decades and tremendous strides in democracy and development, women's participation and role in public life has not made much headway. The women participation in politics whether national or state level is still very marginal and the same is reflected in Karnataka state polity as well. Generally participation of women in political process implies the degree of equality and freedoms enjoyed by women in shaping and sharing of powers and value that is given by society to the roles which their male counterparts enjoy. Political participation of women does not mean only women's participation in electoral and administrative processes. But also, it includes the whole range of voluntary activities which has a bearing on the political process including voting, supporting political groups, communicating with legislators, disseminating political views and opinions among the electorate and other related activities.*

*Until the dawn of Industrial revolution, women had a secondary status in society throughout the world. They were not granted to take part in social, political and economic activities and remained confined to the four walls of their family lives. Industrial Revolution spearheaded movements for democracy, equality and social justice, paving the way for women to take part in industrial productivity and economic activities and thus bringing a change in their roles in society. In the later part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the idea of 'equality of the sexes' took shape in Western Europe and North America, the position of women in political arena started taking a new turn. During this period, Suffrage Movement and demand for political rights of women brought a new era for women's participation in public space.*

With the voting rights granted to women in most countries of the world, women's struggle for more political space in decision making arena started getting recognition. With the advent of feminism in USA in 1960s the concept of participation of women in political process (not only in voting but also in other political activities) took a new direction.

In 1952, the General Assembly of United nations adopted the Convention on the Political Right of Women which stated that "Women shall be entitled to hold public office established by national law on equal terms with men without any discrimination". In 1979, the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was adopted by the General Assembly of United Nations. Consisting of a preamble and 30 articles, it defines what constitute discrimination against women and sets up an agenda to end such discrimination. The CEDAW also highlighted the participation of women in politics.

India becoming a republican country having a written constitution, citizens of India, are guaranteed fundamental rights to equality and political participation. Articles 325 and 326 guarantees political equality to all men and women without any discrimination, distinction, or qualification to participate in the decision making process at all levels. Though there are about 33 corer registered women voters, only marginally less than 36 corer male voters. Women participation and role in public life has not made much headway.

**Objectives Of The Study:** The objectives of the present study are as follows:

1. To examine the present status of women in Karnataka politics,
2. To assess the role of women representatives in state.
3. To study the coverage of women in politics with regard to 73<sup>rd</sup> & 74<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendments,

The reason for low participation of women in Karnataka assembly is, decline in the quality of electoral politics brought aversion in people, special in middle class people, to encourage women to take part in politics women couldn't cope up with the changing scenario of elections. This turned into a battle ground with money and muscle power, and lack of reservation. Political parties continued to doubt women candidates' ability to compete with male opponents.

Discrimination continues even after the election of women as legislators. In the political history of the state, none of the women have enjoyed the position of chief minister or deputy chief

Source: Election Commission of India, Karnataka State Elections.

Year	Contested	Won	Percentage
1957	24	13	54.16
1962	30	18	60
1967	09	05	55.55
1972	28	00	00
1978	30	08	26.66
1983	34	01	2.94
1989	78	10	12.82
1994	117	07	5.98
1999	62	06	9.07
2004	101	06	5.94
2008	107	03	2.80
2013	176	06	3.40
2018	219	07	3.12

Table No. 1. Karnataka Assembly Elections and Women Representation.

In Karnataka from the 1952 elections to till the overall women representation is very marginal. But comparatively women representation in state assembly was better off in 1950s and 1960s, at that period women had better representation in the state legislative assembly and had a good chance of victory in the electoral battle. The highest number of women elected to the assembly so far, from 1957 to 2013, is 18 1962. In 1957, when there were 179 constituencies, 13 women had got elected. The good trend continued in 1967 too, when five women gained entry into the Karnataka assembly. In the decades of 50s and 60s in Karnataka women enjoyed a good success rate in the electoral battle. In 1957, out of 24 contestants, 13 emerged victorious. In 1962, 18 out of 30 and in 1967 five out of 9 have got elected. A nightmarish trend surfaced from 1972 and it has continued till date. For the first time, though 28 women contested none could make win. Since then, it is male domination.

Even the legacy of the Gandhi's hasn't helped the prospect of women in Karnataka. Way back in 1978, former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi chose the state for her political rebirth. After losing the seat in Rai Bareilly in 1977, she contested from Chikmagalur and got elected, to return as a Prime Minister two years later. Twenty one years later, in 1999, her daughter-in-law Sonia Gandhi contested from the state (Bellary) and got elected, but the number of women elected to the Parliament from the state is grossly inadequate. However, the case of some women like Basavarajeshwar, Taradevi Siddharth and Margret Alva is a silver lining, as they got an opportunity to serve as union ministers.

The remarkable women's reservation bill to provide 33% reservation of seats for women in parliament and state assemblies is pending before the parliament for the past 14 years. However after few decades and tremendous strides in Indian democracy and development, the political status of women the levels and quality of their political participation are far from adequate considering their share in the population structure. Political participation of women, whether national or local levels are still very marginal and the same is reflected in the Karnataka state polity also.



minister or home minister. K.S. Nagaratnamma was the only women MLA to become the speaker and the opposition leader in the assembly. Motamma was the only women to have become the leader of the opposition in the council

So in India we cannot deny the fact that greater participation of women in the political process would be a pre-condition for their economic and social emancipation. However, even though a significantly large number of women vote in the country, yet only a few of them assume the reins of power. Paradoxically, though women have held the posts of president and Prime Minister as well as Chief Minister of various states in India, the country ranks 20<sup>th</sup> from the bottom in terms of representation of women in parliament, as per the world economic forum's global gender gap report 2012.

To find a remedy to the low representation of women in politics, India in 1994 established reservations vide the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendments to reserve 33 percent of the seats in local governments for women. The women reservation bill 108<sup>th</sup> amendment has also been introduced in the national parliament to reserve 33 per cent of the Lok Sabha seats for women, but the bill is yet to be passed.

But the outcome of the reservation bill in local government is the subsequent rise in political participation by women, which up from 4-5 per cent to 25-40 per cent among women, and gave millions women the opportunity to serve as leaders in local government<sup>5</sup>. Karnataka has had several women ministers, namely Margaret Alva, Basavarajeshwari and Taradevi Siddharth in the Union cabinet, and Nafees Fazal, Manorama Madhvaraj, Rani Satish, etc., in the state cabinet. The late KS Nagarathnamma was the only woman...

#### **Status of women in Karnataka:**

Women in Karnataka play a crucial role in their social, cultural, economic and religious ways of life. But they are still lagging far behind in the various walks of life like education, employment, health and economic empowerment. Educated women have found a new freedom in the life of big cities. More than 75 per cent of the women who lives in the rural areas are still living with illiteracy, ill health, lack of access to technical skills, science and technology, information and knowledge, proper training, new employment avenues and political power. According to current census the present sex ratio of female was 964 per 1000 males in Karnataka. Crimes against women is raising country wide, more than 2,150 rape cases were registered in Karnataka alone in the past three years.

According to Legislature Committee on Women and Child Welfare statistics 9,201 cases of sexual harassment and 936 dowry death cases were reported in last three years in Karnataka. And 180 women die out of every lakh population because of poor health.

#### **Political Empowerment:**

The 73rd and 74th Amendments of the Indian Constitution in 1993 provided for reservation of seats for women in the Panchayats (rural areas) and Municipalities (urban areas) respectively, laying a strong foundation for their participation in decision-making at the local level. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment created opportunities for political participation of women at the grass roots level. In Karnataka even political parties also doesn't take it as serious. In rural area women are leading life according to men's suggestion. Men domination is a general rule in Karnataka. Politics is also not an exception to this. Kannada language newspapers rarely carry this kind of news. During the time of elections, some of the newspapers publish stories on women empowerment and reservation in politics. According to a lady reporter, newspaper carries news on women participation in politics. These are serious type of news, and these news items find place in editorial page. Most of the women never read or look at editorial page. Even educated women also never read it. So it is far from rural women.



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