

WOMENS PARTICIPATION AND NON- PART POLITICAL PROCESS IN KERALA

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Politics is not just electoral politics or taking up membership of political parties but as the collective action of women against oppressive patriarchal power with the long term goal of social transformation that would ensure women's rights and their liberation subjugation, superstition , exploitation ,degradation and injustice By this definition women can be seen as playing an active part in the political process in the Country. This can be termed as non – party political process too. It is recognized that women and other marginalized groups like Dalits and Tribals of our country have very little scope in mainstream politics . so we should be careful when we define the term non-party political process .these groups are not apolitical but as they have certain limitations , it is best that they are confined to the non – formal political process through which the grass root organizations can lobby for change. Faced with this danger of marginalization these groups will have to be particular that they make an impact on mainstream politics as well. In non party political concept , even values like equality [constitutional ,political and economic] or rights [property , access to resources] may be meaning full only when women possess and exercise them for bringing about a change in their own position as well as of the society.

In Kerala there are a good number of women's groups / organizations and network who are working in the areas of development , action , research , documentation , movement and particularly the empowerment and mobilization of women in Dalit, tribal, rural and fishermen communities of Kerala. It would be helpful to understand the processes of these organizations and women's participation. Activities of a few of them are detailed :- KIZHAKKUM KARA MAHILA SAMAJAM ,SELF EMPLOYED WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION (SEWA),SOCIO ECONOMIC UNIT, SAKHI, NISA,KERALA UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S FORUM , KERALA VANITHACOMMISSION ,ANWESHI, DALIT DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY ,DALIT WOMEN'S SOCIETY, TEERA DESA VANITHA VEDI,KERALA STREEVEDI, KUDUMBASRI OTHER SELF HELP GROUPS etc.Participation of these and similar many other women's organization s in non-party political processes has helped to the setting up of a large number of small group of activities committed to the cause of building a gender just society in Kerala.

The aim of the aforesaid organisations are as follows,

1. To change the attitude of the society about the role and rights of women
2. To cultivate the feeling of 'women equality 'in constitutional , economic and political process
3. To ensure active participation of women in the developmental process of our nation
4. To uplift the women of socially backward classes

Outcomes

Non-party political process played a very important role in the socioeconomic and political upliftment of women in Kerala. Certain organizations deserve special credits. All organisations especially the one working for the upliftment of women in dalit, tribal and fishermen community are willing to conduct various research works, exhibitions and other women welfare programmes. Women were invisible in the mainstream development process until few years back. Now, as a result of the activities of women empowerment organizations and various political organizations women became part and parcel of the developmental process in Kerala. Even though Kerala is the most literate state, there is still inequality in the literacy rate of men and women in Kerala. Another sector in which inequality still persists is the health sector. A greater proportion of the well-educated women are still reluctant to find a job or to become entrepreneurs. Even though the government is promoting small scale business / industries by women to bring them forth in the developmental process only 22.8% of women are engaged in such activities.

Suggestions

- 1. Women must become the producers rather than the consumers of development**
- 2. Make governing process so transparent that the opinion of women are given greater importance**
- 3. The development process must give importance to environmental protection, yet the land retrieval process must ensure the wellbeing of tribal community especially of the females and children**
- 4. There should be strict legal measures to prevent the violence against women especially of the dalit and tribal women**
- 5. There should be measures to ensure the sustainability of women working in fisheries, coir, and cashewnut sector**