

Political Participation of Indian Women's

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Introduction

Woman is the companion of man, women have gifted with equal mental capacities. Women has the right to participate in the minutest details in the activities of man, and she has an equal right of freedom and liberty with him.-M.K. Gandhi

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, birth, language, religion, sex, or other status. But it is the most disastrous that women have hurt inferior position to men in almost all societies of world. The condition and status of women in the family and society at large was no better than those of slaves and had been treated like ordinary chattels-incapable of enjoying any rights as human beings.¹

They were fated to perpetual suppression to their fathers, husbands and guardians. Under the various old law such Christian law, the woman was not even considered a 'person'. In the Christian Law women are neglected in Equality. Thus, she had no right of a human being such as she could not join a School or College, She couldn't be registered as a medical practitioner or a lawyer for the same reason. In any political structure, participation of women is very few associated to men right from the developed to developing countries. It is pretty clear that voting is the most common and accepted political action in elections. So that Due to many reasons, large frame of women are kept out of political participation and arena.²

Twentieth century, women didn't have any right to vote in the European Christian countries and. It means in the Ancient law of the Christian Countries, women labored under various disabilities and also their participation in civil life, in the work

force, in the industries, in the education and administration was negligible. In many European countries women had to wage long battles to get right to vote. Even though that in the political participation and arena of politics, they were not able to get rightful position. Because there was no serious attempt made for women's Political Participation. The Concept of Political participation has been defined in various ways.

Political Participation means not only working out the right to vote, but also equal opportunity, voting rights, power sharing, co-decision making, policy making, at all levels of governance of the State. Political participation is generally defined as being a process through which individual performs a role in political life of the social order, has the occasion to take part in deciding what the common aim of that society are and the most excellent way of achieving these goals.³

Political participation refers to actual participation in these voluntary activities by which members of the society share in the selection of rules and directly or indirectly in the formulation of public policy. It means that by the process of political participation, the people actually take part in political activities. No doubt, one of the significant political activities of the people is exercise voting rights during elections; however, political participation is not just casting vote rather wide range of other activities is also included in it like membership of political party, attending and participating political meeting and decision making process, electoral campaigning contesting elections, demonstrations, communication with leaders, holding party positions, membership in representative bodies, influencing decision making and other related activities.⁴

The said views deals with the empowerment of women who are lacking in power and position and are over represented amongst the poor. The concept of women empowerment is based on the enhancement of their participation in the political arena. It deals with the totality of having decision-making power, participation of the women. In the present situation, the participation of women in the politics is very important for their overall liberation and empowerment.

The study exposes the previous as well as the present political situation of women at state, national and international level. The influence of male-controlled structure can be seen during ancient, medieval and in the present era also. In the traditional society, Government and politics were concerns of narrow elite. However, even then during ancient times, the status and decision-making and power-sharing were much higher as compared to present times.

At World level, a number of norms and treaties relating to empowerment of women through their political participation have been made which are of particular concern since majority of the nations have ratified these standards and made them an important part of their local laws aiming at the overall growth and development of women.

As political participation is the hall mark of democracy and modernization but despite of all the efforts made at national (Indian) level, Political Reservation Bill could not be enacted which would have far reaching impacts on the gender equality as well as women empowerment which is main objective of Indian Government as a society and welfare State.

The Concept of Political Participation

Political Participation is a development and expansion approach, which distinguishes the need to involve problem segments of population in the framing design and implementation of policies concerning their security. The **strengthening** of women's participation in all spheres of life has become a major issue in the development discourses and hence, socioeconomic development cannot be fully achieved without the active involvements of women in the decision making level in all society.

On the other hand political participation refers the active involvement and engagement by

individuals both women and men with political process that affect their lives. The act of active engagements includes rights of voting, participation in decision making, strengthening women rights, standing for office, joining of political party or to take part the political campaigns of the political parties and to exert influence in the decision making process through public debate, and dialogue with the representatives they elected or through their capacity to organize themselves; or exercise public power by holding public office at different levels of administrations- local, regional, national and international.

Therefore, political participation is understood as a requirement for political development hence, by improving women's political participation, given that they constitute over a half of the world's population may help to advance of political development and improve the quality of women's lives . In fact, without the active participation of women, and the incorporation of women's perspective at all levels of decision making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved.

Indian History: The Women's Political Participation

Nevertheless, In India also women have a long history of misery and exploitation. The women remained victims of forceful actions and also they had to suffer various types of judgement, exploitation and suffering- both physical and mental not only in the men's society but also within the four walls of the family thereby distressing the steadiness in the society. In ancient India, the woman enjoyed equal status with men in all spheres of the life.

Hymn XXI of the Rig-Veda extols the virtues of woman even greater than that of man. The description of the God's head as half of man and half of woman in the concept of Ardhanari-Swara itself depicts the story of the equality of woman in the Vedic period. The Shakticult is also centered on destructive strength and superiority of the woman. But the status of women began to decline with the Smritis especially Manusmriti.

There was a tendency to curtail religious rights and privileges of women. Women came to be regarded in the same lines as the Shudras. Their position continued to deteriorate apart from pcenters

and rural district, women single and married, young and old came forward and joined hands. No doubt women actively participated equally with men in the Indian national freedom movement both in the moderate and extremist factions but the number of them who acquired positions of power or membership in the representative bodies were less compared to men. In the 1937 election, 42 women were elected from the reserved constituencies and eight from the general constituencies and when the provisional cabinet was formed, they became ministers.

In Uttar Pradesh, Vijayalaxmi Pandit became minister for local self Government and later in Madhya Pradesh and Sindh, Absuyabai Kale and J.T. Sipahimalchi were appointed Deputy Speakers respectively. In Bombay and Panjab, offices as Parliamentary Secretary were taken by Hansa Mehta and Begum Shah Nawoy respectively. There were 14 women members in the Constituent Assembly which met in December 1946. However, as representatives or in power positions, there was no proportionate increase in women. For example, out of 350 delegates, only 16 were women in 1922 the All India Congress Committee (AICC) meeting, 13 in 1937, 5 members were women in 1940 and only 14 members were women in the Constituent Assembly. Additionally, women who were active in the politics and politically successful, majority of them were from wealthy and progressive families and were supported by husbands or family members who were active in Congress.

This practice is being followed even after independence. At the same time, there were some clear drawbacks of the participation of women. It is also true that large number of women participated in the freedom struggle legitimizing and strengthening it but gender equity was nowhere the agenda of that movement. However, despite of this fact, the transfer of power from British to Indian hand provided Indian women an opportunity for participating in the democratic process. Thus, it can be said that the campaign for equal political participation in favor of women was itself divided into two phases.

The first phase was regarding achieving female enfranchisement and being eligible for entering into the legislature during the period of 1917 to 1928. From 1928 to 1937, there was second

phase in which the issues were the liberalization of the terms of equality rights of voting for women and also the enlargement of their representation in the legislature.

In India, the context of colonial situation created two sets of political authorities before whom the women had to make an appeal—the British Government and the nationalist leaders in order to achieve their electoral demands. The right to vote was granted by the Government of India Act, 1935 for all women above 21 years of age by whom the conditions of property and education were fulfilled. In the year 1950, the Constitution of India granted adult franchise to all its citizens.

Sr.No	Loksabha	Year	Total Member of Women's
01	15 th	2009	52
02	16 th	2014	64
03	17 th	2019	74

(Growth of Women' Political Participation in Loksabha)⁵

Objectives of the Study

The aim of the present study is to investigate into the dearth of political view relating to political participation of women in the present scenario and then try to develop the concept of empowerment of women through the achievement of the following objectives:

- (a) To evaluate equal access of women in the decision-making in order to participate in political and economic empowerment.
- (b) To help in removing deficiency in law in order to strengthen legal system aimed for elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.
- (c) To suggest measures for establishment of supporting platform for women by building alliances so that they achieve higher level of energy and commitment.

Methodology

The Present Article depend heavily on United Nations reports, Government of India reports, NGO reports and important works by modern

researcher who contributed a lot towards the evolution and growth of studies. Help of various libraries located at SSC College Junnar, Narayangaon is taken. This paper studies various Constitutional provisions and other statutory enactments providing special privileges and favorable laws for the benefits of women. It also studies the dearth of political participation and its various shortcomings in real situations.

Role of Women in Indian Politics

India should work towards empowering women economically through self-help group and microfinance programs and also encourage greater political participation of women leaders in panchayats, or village councils, Zilla Parishad and other Councils.

The world's largest democracy has conveyed their verdict and India waits with bated breath to learn whether Ex Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's second administration will be different than the first. While India exults after yet another peacefully concluded election, one question remains: What is the role of women in Indian politics? The answer is both big and small. Typical of India, it contains contradictions.⁶

In other view, India falls in the lowest quartile with respect to the number of women in parliament (9.1%). Even the UAE, with 22.5%, has more women representatives, according to the UN's 2008 survey of women in politics. That said, the recently concluded 15th Lok Sabha elections have delivered a record 59 women as members of Parliament, the highest since independence, raising their parliamentary participation to 10.9%. Seventeen of these women are under 40. And representation of women leaders at the grassroots level in India is nearly 50%, especially since the passing of the 73rd amendment in 1992, which allotted one-third of all seats to women. The panchayat raj, that bedrock of rural government, has fostered more and more women participants and leaders. Some states, like Karnataka, had inducted women into rural politics even before it was mandated by the constitution. Several states, including Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Bihar and most recently, Uttarakhand, have allotted not just the required 33% of panchayat seats for women but increased it to 50%.

Indian women beating the Odds

The upsurge of Indian women as panchayatraj leaders is a remarkable achievement given that India has one of the worst records with respect to the way it treats the female sex. Famished, suppressed, uneducated, violated and discriminated against, Indian women have the odds stacked against them. Even birth is a hurdle, thanks to widespread female infanticide in rural areas. But for every Sushma who will be married at 14 because her mother, a devadasi (prostitute) in Adupalli, Karnataka, cannot afford to pay a dowry, there is a Parvati, who is serving her first-term as the panchayat leader of ravalpatti.

As Indian women we have to asking those women about political reform in Indian politics, and their answers reflect concerns that every woman and mother can relate to. They emphasis on three things: healthcare, education, and the funds to make these two things happen.

For most numbers of villagers, a child's suffering from illness, even something as treatable as malaria, dengue can wipe out several months of savings, sending a family spiraling deeper into debt. The answer, according to the Gates Foundation no slouch when it comes to solving global problems in an accountable manner is "bringing safe financial service to the doorsteps of the poor." As a means to that end, the Foundation has pledged \$350 million for microfinance, whose beneficiary is primarily women.

Economic Empowerment

Ever more entities are knowing the power of self-help group and micro-loans and how they can elevate an entire section of society. And the route to the underserved is frequently through women, thanks to models based on Micro Finance, Grameen Bank and others. Chennai-based Equitas, and other Bank such Bandhan Bank for instance, only works with women.

In March, The Indus Entrepreneurs launched Stree Shakti, a platform for training women entrepreneurs at all levels of Indian society. Goldman Sachs's ambitious "10,000 Women" program aims to train and develop women entrepreneurs across the globe by pairing them with resources in the West. In all these cases, women serve as the lynchpin for programs, whether they are

rural Self Help Groups (SHG) or global programs that aspire to foster entrepreneurship.⁷

Microfinance is not the only answer to solving and helping to the poor's problems but it is one good way to help women help themselves. The good news, at least in India, is that these microfinance initiatives are reaching bigger swathes of the underserved.

Reforming Education

Panchayat raj women leaders have been active in bringing education to their villages even though they are frequently held hostage by caste politics . Rural education is a quagmire of poor policies that nobody in government seems to have the will to change. The Administrative Reforms Commission repeats a long-standing recommendation that the selection of school teachers in rural schools be delegated to each panchayat instead of making it state-wide and therefore subject to caste-based selection. So my Suggestion is they have no caste-based affiliation makes it a losing proposition from the get-go.

Panchayat raj leaders who don't have a say in the kind of teachers their village-schools attract end up focusing on infrastructure and other issues within their purview. Women panchayat leaders talk about building separate bathrooms for girls, which studies have shown will reduce the number of female drop-outs after puberty. They bring safe drinking water to their students. All these are not just palliatives, but are necessary developments in rural education.

Conclusion

It can be conclusively stated that there has been a radical change in the movement for empowerment of women. Recognition is dawning that women are indeed becoming a political force, both nationally and internationally. In this context it would be noteworthy to recall the observations of Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen in his book, "India : Economic Development and Social Opportunity", "Women's empowerment can positively influence the lives not only of women themselves but also of men, and of course, those of children".⁸

Political parties cant remain uncaring towards women who constitute 586.5 million population and nearly 48.46 per cent of the

electorate Although almost all parties have attempted to build women organizations to secure their support and make their organizations more broad-based, but in practice they have fielded much less proportion of women candidates in the elections giving them proportionately much less representation in the legislative bodies than their actual population strength.

Former Chief Election Commission- M.S. Gill's recommendation to make it mandatory for all political parties to nominate at least a-third of women candidates for the seats deserves to be commended. If they are not prepared to accept the principle of representation within their own parties, what moral right do they have to advocate reserving parliamentary constituencies for women.

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