

Political Empowerment and Participation of Women in India

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Abstract:

The political empowerment of women is a social process crucial to development and progress. The status of women is measured internationally by the participation of women in politics and their empowerment. Women remain seriously underrepresented in decision-making positions. The objective of this paper is to study the challenges, statistical data, comparison with other countries and empowerment of women political participation in India. The research paper uses the descriptive method of study. The finding of the study shows that different causal factors such as; economic, religious, social and cultural factors contributed to women's poor political participation in the country³. According to the statistics on women participation in politics women participation in politics is gradually increasing but not drastically as we see women participation in politics from 1952 to 2014 in india. but still awareness should be created among women to participate in politics with courage. The findings on participation of women in politics

¹ Shimelis kassa (September 2015), challenges and opportunities of women political participation, omicsonline.org

is increasing. There is significant in the study on political empowerment and participation of women in politics. To secure women's rightful place in society and to enable them to decide their own destiny and for the growth of genuine and sustainable democracy, women's participation in politics is essential. This will not only uplift their personality but will open the way for their social and economic empowerment. Their participation in public life will solve many problems of society.

Keywords: Women, political participation, empowerment, challenges, india.

Introduction:

Women empowerment may mean equal status to women, opportunity and freedom to develop herself. The focus of empowerment is equipping women to be economically independent, self-reliant, have a positive self-esteem to enable them to face any difficult situation and they should be able to participate in the process of decision-making. The Constitution of India attempts to remove gender inequalities by banning discrimination based on sex and class, prohibiting human trafficking and forced labor, and reserving elected positions for women. Women's involvement in political parties is tied to the increasing demand for equal rights. In spite of constitutional provisions of gender equality yet only a few women have been able to make decisions by themselves in legislature. Indian women are relatively disempowered and they enjoy lower status than that of men from times immemorial. Gender gap exists regarding access to education and employment. It is found that acceptance of unequal gender norms by women are still prevailing in the society.⁴ (Mohini Giri)

In india the political participation of women isn't spectacular compared with men. this is often the case in most of the countries across the globe. However, women's political participation now's quite encouraging compared to past times. nowadays it remains stronger than ever. But, in India, women UN agency have deciding powers invariably hail from urban and elite teams. Even today, illustration of women in Indian parliament is much from satisfactory. women are tight for extra space in legislative bodies. The study any unconcealed that political

⁴ Mohini Giri, V. *Emancipation and Empowerment of Women*. Gyan Books, 1998.

participation enable women to handle their basic issues and wishes in their community and ensures the openness, real fight against rent-seeking, responsibility, political commitment, political leadership, and political responsiveness of the prevailing national, regional, districts, and native levels. it's true that over 0.5 % of the world's population area unit women. But, they lack access to political deciding as compared to their counterparts the least bit levels of state. so women's equal participation in decision-making and politics is a requirement for straightforward justice or democracy(Bashevkin; Cirera et al.)

Hence the research work aims at to study the participation of women in politics also analysis the e statistical data on women participation in politics and study the issues and challenges faced by women in politics.

Review of literature:

Researcher has been reviewed the following articles, books etc. for completing the research work that has been discussed below:

Political participation of women is not impressive when compared with men. This is the case in most of the countries across the world. However, women's political participation now is quite encouraging compared to the older times. Today it remains stronger than ever. But, in India, women who have decision making powers invariably hail from urban and elite groups. (Singhal) India falls in the lowest quartile with respect to the number of women in parliament is 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 *panchayati raj*, that bedrock of rural government, has fostered more and more women participants and leaders.(Debnath)Women presence in Lok Sabha 1952-2014 is only 36%. And only 6.91% are women MPs in parliament. The presence of women in Rajya Sabha from 1952 to 2014 is about 22.92% out of total seats.(Fadia)

India's ranking in women's participation in political empowerment' by United Nations reveals that According to number of women elected or appointed to parliament as on January 1. It is ranked 148 out of 193 nation with only 11.48% women in Lower House of Parliament. The number of women heads of state government fell from 19 to 17 since 2015. The progress continues to be slow.(Sundström et al.; Bystydzienski). Indian women are relatively disempowered and enjoy lower status than of men. The women in India participate in voting, run for public offices and political parties at lower levels. About 59 MPs out of 543, meant the Lok Sabha was represented by 11% of women.(Ganesamurthy). Indira Ghandhi was one of India's strongest prime ministers and she served for 14 years. Several states currently have women Chief Ministers and leading parties, chairperson for more years etc. only 12% of elected members of parliament are women. India ranks 9th on the global gender gap report in terms of political participation.

Women's participation in decision-making is essential for women's interests to be incorporated into governance. It has been widely experienced that governance structures which do not provide for adequate participation of women, often suffer from state interventions which are neither inclusive nor democratic. Including women, especially in local governments is an essential step towards creating gender equal opportunities and gender sensitive policies. Since women have different needs and perspectives on social and political issues, it is important to involve women in governments to incorporate all of the societal viewpoints in policy and decision-making processes. Women are actively involved in household and community work and hence well aware of real issues faced by common people. This gives them insight and perspective which can be instrumental in sustainable overall development. (Saxena), only 21% of national parliament are women. Lack of financial resources can limit participation given the costs associated with elections. Independent funding and placing limits on campaigns spending may support women in overcoming the barriers to politics.(Bessell)

Political power is still a male domain in India' by Sohini Paul reveals that Cuba and Germany has higher women participation in politics and the lowest participation of women in politics is India and Japan. Rwanda, which exhibits the highest participation by women in the latest elections to its lower house, was the first nation to cross the halfway mark for women in Parliament, 7 percentage points ahead of Cuba, which occupies the second position. Alarminglly,

women's representation in Parliament in India is lower than even that of much smaller nations like Nepal and Afghanistan. political representation does not have any direct correlation with literacy or other related parameters. This is indicated by a comparison of female political participation in Kerala and Rajasthan, which lie at two opposite ends of the literacy bandwagon, with the female literacy rates being 92 per cent and 53 per cent in Kerala and Rajasthan, respectively, as per the 2011 Census.(CWDS)

There was a bill on 2008 as women's reservation bill or the constitutional amendment 104th which clearly states that women has 33% reservation to participation in politics. These reservations or quota brought quantitative changes, facilitated women to be represented in local governments and deserved to be hailed as major achievement in the empowerment of women. Success stories of women in local governments indicates the qualitative changes that are coming forth. Incrementalist perspective would enable qualitative change in the performance of women in politics and governance. It would provide a way to bring a sense of equality in gender.(Damodaran and Neupane)

India ranks 148 globally in terms of representation of women in executive governments and parliament. By comparison, Pakistan at 89, Bangladesh at 91, and Afghanistan at 99th rank fared better than India in the subcontinent. India's southern neighbour, Sri Lanka, was ranked lower than India at 179. In terms of women ministers, India ranks 88 with only five ministers (18.5 per cent) in the cabinet. This level of gender representation among ministers is better than the Asian average of 11 per cent but far worse than the leader of the table, Indonesia, which gives 25.6 per cent of its ministerial positions to women.(Hannabuss)

Women's political participation in India are socio-cultural factors, religious factors, economic factors. The Lack of economic resources is one of the biggest obstacles that prevent women from participating in politics in greater numbers. Making it easier for women to access economic resources, therefore, is a key in expanding women's presence in the political realm. In fact women's participation in political life depends largely on their access to employment which gives them not only material independence, but also certain professional skills and greater self-confidence. So that access to means of production and finances has a direct relationship and influence on the participation of women in political institutions.(Iwanaga)

Hypothesis:

Ho: There is no significant in the study of women participation in politics in India.

Ha: There is significant in the study of women participation in politics in India

Methods and materials:

The research paper on 'political empowerment and participation of women in India' The research paper uses the descriptive method of study. The secondary sources are given more importance in this paper. The secondary source of information used are the article of research journals, working of research paper, thesis and books of famous sociologist.

Research question:

Whether women are given equal rights in politics by the government of India when compared to other countries?

Political participation of women in India :

Political Empowerment is measured using three variables – the ratio of females to males in parliament, the ratio of females to males at the ministerial level, and the ratio of the number of years with a female head of state to the years with a male head of state (in the last 50 years). In India, political participation of women is not impressive when compared with men. This is the case in most of the countries across the world. However, women's political participation now is quite encouraging compared to the older times. Today it remains stronger than ever. India falls the lowest in 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 ⁵ (Shoba narayan, 2009)

⁵ Shoba Narayan (May 21, 2009), Role of women in politics, knowledge.whartonupenn.edu

That said, the recently concluded 15th Lok Sabha elections have delivered a record 59 women as members of Parliament, the highest since independence. According to number of women elected or appointed to parliaments as on January 1. It ranked 148 out of the 193 nations, with only 11.48 per cent women in the Lower House of Parliament and 11 per cent in the Upper House. Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, China and Iraq were ranked higher than India ⁶ (PTI United Nations, 2017)(Ballington)

In Parliament 59 women MPs out of 543, meant the Lok Sabha was represented by 11 per cent of women. That was the highest number of women MPs elected to the Parliament since Independence. Simultaneously, Rajya Sabha witnessed 10.6 per cent women's participation. In the 16th Lok Sabha, 61 women leaders have made their way to the Parliament. This is the highest ever number of Lok Sabha seats won by women and constitutes 11.23 per cent of the total 543 Parliamentary seats. Going back to the initial days after independence, it appears that the situation had been more than grim. The first Lok Sabha had only 4.4 per cent women members. The sixth Lok Sabha in 1977 witnessed the smallest proportion of women in Parliament at mere 3.5 per cent. Although the number of women MPs increased from 59 to 61 under the Modi government, it still remains far below the global average of 21.3 per cent. In a recent study conducted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), India is placed at 111th position in the list of 189 countries having women representatives in Parliament. Even the lesser developed neighbours of India such as Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal have around 20, 19 and 30 per cent women members in their respective parliaments ⁷ (Puja Mondal, 2016)(Ahmed)

Government initiatives and Constitutional provisions

There was a bill on 2008 as women's reservation bill or the constitutional amendment 104th which clearly states that women has 33% reservation to participation in politics.

⁶ PTI United nations(2017), india ranking in women political empowerment, www.financialexpress.com

⁷ Puja Mandal, essay on the role of women in politics, youarticlelibrary.com

The Constitution of India guaranteed justice-social, economic and political, liberty of thought, and equality to all citizens. Constitution provided for equality of women and called State to take measures to neutralize the socio-economic, educational and political disadvantage faced by women.

- Article 14: It guarantees equality before law and equal protection of law with in the territory of India.
- Article 15: It prohibits discrimination on the basis of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth. According to article 15(3), State can make special provisions for the benefit women and children.
- Article 16: Equality of opportunity for all citizens in matter relating to employment. No citizen can be denied employment on grounds of religion, race, cast, sex, decent, place of birth residence or any of them.
- Article 39: Article 39(a) provides for an adequate means of livelihood for all citizen. Article 39 (b) has provisions for equal pay for equal work for both men and women. Article 39 (c) has provisions for securing the health and strength of workers, men and women, and not to abuse the tender age of children.
- Article 42: It guarantees just and humane condition of work and maternity relief. Article 42 is in accordance with Article 23 and 25 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- Article 325 and 326: They guarantee political equality, equal right to participate in political activity and right to vote, respectively.
- Article 243 (D): It provides for the political reservation to women in every panchayat elections. It has extended this reservation to elected office as well.(Damodaran and Neupane)

In spite of the above provisions, participation of women in politics has not improved significantly.⁸ (“Constitutional Law: Constitutional and Charter Provisions: Right of Women to Vote”) The increase in the number of women in legislature definitely will not bring overnight changes in the status of women. It is foolishness to think that it will solve the entire problems faced by women and bring equality immediately. It is also true that powerful women leaders in

⁸ “Constitutional Law: Constitutional and Charter Provisions: Right of Women to Vote.”
Michigan Law Review, vol. 16, no. 2, 1917, p. 125.

our politics have failed to do much to the women in India. The 73rd and 74th Amendment to the Constitution of India with 33.33% reservation for women has given opportunity for the entry of large number of socially marginalized category such as women to enter into the domain of local institution and their performance is very encouraging. In the year 2006, 10,41,430 women were elected to the local institutions. These reservations or quota brought quantitative changes, facilitated women to be represented in local governments and deserved to be hailed as major achievement in the empowerment of women. Success stories of women in local governments indicates the qualitative changes that are coming forth. Incrementalist perspective would enable qualitative change in the performance of women in politics and governance. It would provide a way to bring a sense of equality in gender ⁹ (Sumitra Mahajan, 2017)(Collins)

Challenges faced by women in politics

The challenge is to estimate the actual participation of women in the decision making process.

Participation as a Proxy Candidate:

There have been evidences that due to reservation policy, certain women got elected into the setup, but they acted merely as the mouthpiece of the their male family members. This indicates that there is a possibility of on-roll women participation to be higher than what it actually exists on ground. Awareness programs and increase in female education is now taking care of such happenings and women active participation is on an increase. Still there is a need to record data at a more micro level so that women who only act as a proxy can be identified .(MD Sahabuddin Mondal, 2015)

Measurement of Decision Making Initiatives:

The quantitative data of political participation of women at local level is available but the qualitative data on the aspects of their active participation including the utilization of the

⁹ Sumitra Mahajan (2017), women be given reservations in politics respectfully, India express.com

Decision-making functionality provided to them is not being quantified properly. Although, the legislature has enabled their huge presence into the state of affairs, but their valuable essence into the system is yet to be established at most of the places. The data on their sensitization about their rights and its usage is still missing. Efforts can be made to capture the performance of women in debates, initiative in bringing legislation and participation in other aspects of the democratic process.¹⁰.(MD Sahabuddin Mondal, 2015)(Ambedkar)

Socio-cultural factor:

There is a conventional belief that, girls are created to require care of youngsters and do room works than taking part outside home activity. Hence, there's division of works between men and ladies, which suggests home activities ar belongs to girls and outdoors home activities are belongs to men. girls are weighed down with completely different home activities like preparation, take caring children, laundry and then on. These all activities create girls busy within the home and impede their involvement within the politics of the country. Culturally, there's a belief that girls are imagined to be diode however to not lead. after all stereotypical notions concerning girls represent major barriers; social perception concerning leadership ability of ladies, women's lack of self-assertiveness is a few barriers that hinder the participation of ladies. during this regard ancient attitudes towards gender equality in influence women's advancement in political participation. most significantly within the country girls are thought-about subordinate to men and second category members/ voters each within the family and within the society particularly in most components of rural areas¹¹ (Shimelis Kassa, 2015)

Religious factor:

Religion is another important source of cultural beliefs in most countries. Arguments about women's inferiority to men are present across all dominant religions, and religion has long

¹⁰ MD Shahabuddin, women participation in democratic government issues and challenges, legalserviceindia.com

¹¹ Shimelis kassa (September 2015), challenges and opportunities of women political participation, omicsonline.org

been used to exclude women from aspects of social, political, or religious life around the world. In India the major religion is Hinduism, the other minority religions are Islam and Christianity.

Hindu people mostly not allow women to lead as a head. They consider women are subjected to men. In a country like India this is very common among people but now a days the time has changed, women began to lead political parties, Several states currently have women Chief Ministers and ministers, chairperson for more years etc.¹² (Shimelis Kassa, 2015)

Economic factor:

The Lack of economic resources is one among the most important obstacles that forestall girls from collaborating in politics in bigger numbers. creating it easier for ladies to access economic resources, therefore, may be a key in increasing women's presence within the political realm. of course women's participation in political life depends for the most part on their access to employment which supplies them not solely material independence, however additionally bound skilled skills and kitchen utensil confidence. so access to suggests that of production and finances contains a direct relationship and influence on the participation of girls in political establishments. thanks to this facts girls continually has to get permission of the daddy to shop for some consumption materials and different resources of the unit. although girls ar salaried, most of the time their financial gain is controlled by men and typically if father and mother have their own financial gain severally, girls cowl unit expenses whereas men get pleasure from outside home like hotels and bars. thus girls ar continually obsessed on men economically that is that the main cause for his or her low participation to politics of the country.¹³ (Shimelis Kassa, 2015)(Costa and James)

Result:

According to the statistics on women participation in politics women participation in politics is gradually increasing but not drastically as we see women participation in politics from

¹² Shimelis kassa (September 2015), challenges and opportunities of women political participation, omicsonline.org

1952 to 2014 in india. but still awareness should be created among women to participate in politics with courage. To secure women's rightful place in society and to enable them to decide their own destiny and for the growth of genuine and sustainable democracy, women's participation in politics is essential. This will not only uplift their personality but will open the way for their social and economic empowerment. Their participation in public life will solve many problems of society.

Discussion:

Without equal participation of women to political process, the hope for democracy and democratization is nonsense. Thus, the democratic process is able to grow and develop effectively when all people are given equal encouragement to exercise their democratic rights, and when women can experience benefits equally with their counterparts. Additionally the active participation of women, on equal terms with men, at all levels of decision-making is essential to the achievement of equality, sustainable development, peace and democracy and the inclusion of their perspectives and experiences into the decision-making processes can result to the solutions that satisfy larger number of the society, which have social benefits, better and more appropriate social, political, legal, and economic solutions for their problems.

Here in this research my findings on participation of women in politics is increasing and so alternative hypothesis is proved. There is significant in the study on political empowerment and participation of women in politics.

Conclusion and suggestion:

One of the key challenges faced by women is lack of education which hinders their political involvement. We recommend bridging this gap by providing quality education to women in the country. Awareness about their rights and privileges as mentioned in the Constitution can only be ensured once women are appropriately educated.

The issue of gender-based violence and provision of safety and security of women should also be addressed on a priority basis to promote gender equality in the social and political arenas. Although the Government of India has initiated the National Mission of Empowerment of Women in 2014 with the broad objective of gender empowerment, the progress of this project is not up to the mark. It is thus imperative to strengthen its functioning and implementation. In

addition, there is need for capacity building of prospective women leaders by imparting leadership training to the female members of political parties.

To secure women's rightful place in society and to enable them to decide their own destiny and for the growth of genuine and sustainable democracy, women's participation in politics is essential. This will not only uplift their personality but will open the way for their social and economic empowerment. Their participation in public life will solve many problems of society.

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