

# POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN INDIAN POLITICS

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**Abstract:** women constitute half of the world population, but they are the largest excluded category in almost all respects. Women are neglected at family, community and societal levels and living as an oppressed class. Historically they have been exposed to extreme form of physical, sexual and psychological violence and enjoy least socio-economic status. They have been victims of gender based violence and their miseries got intensified further due to patriarchal nature of society. Women attempted diversified strategies to liberate themselves from shackles of exploitation and feminism was a major response to challenge patriarchy at global platform as well as within national boundaries. An important area where women have been inadequately represented is in the political sphere. Articles 325 and 326 of the constitution of India guarantee political equality, equal right to participation in political activities and right to vote respectively. Lack of space for participation in political bodies has not only resulted in their presence in numbers in these decision making bodies but also in the neglect of issues and experiences in policy making.

**Keywords:** Empowerment, political participation, Representation, position of women, Indian politics.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

"There is no chance of the welfare of the world unless the condition of the women improved"

(Swami Vivekanand)

Women's issues are of great importance in contemporary societies and culture. Although gender relations are concerned with both men and women at present gender studies are still mainly focused on women because they have been marginalised for so long. Throughout most of human history there has existed an asymmetry in relations of power between men and women. Thus there exists a major agenda to be addressed in order to overcome women's invisibility, marginalization and subordination. Gender has now become a critical category for analysis in all fields social, economic, religious, cultural and political. Many current issues in debates about women their status and role in a society. Politics and economy are influenced by Historical, cultural and religious factors. Women constitute more or less half of the citizen of any country, yet they lack support for fundamental functions of a human life.

According to Indian's constitution, women are legal citizens of the country and have equal rights with men (Indian parliament) because of lack of acceptance from the male dominant society. Indian women suffer immensely. Women are responsible for baring children, yet they are malnourished and in poor health. Women are also overworked in the fields and complete the all of domestic work. Most Indian women's are uneducated. Although the country's constitution says women have equal status to men, women are powerless and are mistreated inside and outside the home. In workplace they face greater obstacles including discrimination in hiring and sexual harassment in workplace. Gender equality in the realm of politics continues to be elusive even today. Even though they make up half of the adult.

Population and contribute more than their share to the society they are frequently excluded from the positions of power. They are underrepresented in the ranks of power policy and decision making. To participate in the political processes, women need to enjoy the full exercise of their civil and political rights democratic freedoms such as expression, media, opinion, peaceful assembly association and others are necessary vehicles for women's full political participation in countries where the freedom of expression is limited, women find themselves under constant surveillance and sometimes under threat by their own government. In countries where religion and culture impose social restrictions and impinge on state laws, women experience more difficulties in accessing education and engaging in public political space. The fulfilment of basic survival and social needs, economic independence and freedom from family and community violence and crucial requirements in women's realization of their political potential. The enfranchisement of women or in other words their admission in law and to equality in all rights political, economic, civil and social. With the male citizen, is not a new question to the thinkers, nor to any one by whom the principles of popular government are felt as acknowledge.

In post independence India, large number of women's autonomous groups have sprung up challenging patriarchy and taking up a variety of issues such as violence against women greater share for women in political decision making etc both at the activist and academic level. India has a rich and vibrant women's movement but it has still a long way to go to achieve gender equality and gender justice.

Women's empowerment is still a debatable issue in India. She is still treated as a second class citizen and the reason besides are illiteracy, customs, traditions, poverty, ignorance, her own lack of interest in her own political empowerment leads to such government policies, which lack proper insight and direction. It is important for the empowerment of women that the women actively participate in the political process of nation.

## II. OBJECTIVES

1. To know the role of women in the political arena and their political consciousness.
2. To examine the causes responsible for low level participation of women in Indian Politics.
3. To explore the constraints faced by women in performing their role in electoral politics.
4. To find out the position of women in National Parliament.

## III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The information for this paper has been primarily collected from secondary sources I.e Books, Journal, Government reports and Internet.

### *Evolution of Women's Participation in Political Activities:*

The roots of the women's participation in politics can be traced back to the nineteenth century reform movement. This movement emerged as a result of conflict between the Indian bourgeoisies, trying to wrest control from the British. This class made attempts to reform it, mainly by campaigning against caste, polytheism, idolatry, animism, purdha, child marriage and sati etc. Male social reformers who took up issues concerning women and started women's organization from the end of nineteenth century, first at the local and then at the national level. In the years before independence the two main issues they took up were political rights and reform of personal laws. Women's participation in the freedom struggle broadened the base of women's empowerment. It is important for the empowerment of women that the women actively participate in the political process of the nation.

Women's are the world's largest excluded group in political arena. 21.9 % of the members of national parliament worldwide are women. Women hold 16.0 % of the seats in Arab state parliaments and 21.8 % of the seats in Sub-Saharan African nation's parliament. In Americas women hold 26.6 % .On the other hand in the developed nations of USA, France and Japan 18.3 %, 26.2 %, 8.1 % respectively of the House of Representatives of Lower House of parliament are comprised of women. In Palestine 13.0 % of the Legislative Council members are women and in Morocco women make up a mere of 17.0 % of Parliament. In India women comprised 11.4 % of National Parliament.

Austria was the only state to have elected a member to the presidency of one of the Parliaments chambers (the Bundersrat) before the Second World War. Currently, 59 women presides over one of the House of the 183 existing parliaments (32.2%). In 1955, Sweden became the first country to have an equal number of women and men in Ministerial posts. At present Swedish Cabinet comprises equal number of male female, cabinet Ministers.

One of the biggest setbacks that the women of the state have faced in last few years related to the provisions of the 73rd and 74th amendment of Indian constitution. These amendments related to the Panchayat raj institutions (PRI's) have brought about a silent revolution by the provisions related to 33 % reservation for women in the institutions of local self government. They have brought a drastic transformation in India as far as participation of women at the gross root level politics is concerned. As per an estimate there are nearly 7 Lakh women Panch and Sarpanchs and the Chairpersons of Panchayat.

The twentieth century has been a worldwide revolution in the extension of political rights to women. Less than ninety years ago there was no major country in the world where women are guaranteed the right to participation in politics on an equal basis with men. Today only a handful states, most of them little populated Arab nations ,legally bar women's participation in political life. In several major waves of change in this century, the ideal of the political equality for women has spread from those states where it originated to the rest of the world and has been translated in to legal guarantees.

#### ***Women in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha***

The 16th Lok Sabha in India ( 2014 )comprised 62 women members only 11.41 %of the total Lok sabha membership. While it has increased from 9.02% in 1999, it is almost half of the world average of 22.2%. The Rajya Sabha does not fare much better, with 29 women members comprising 11.9% of the total membership in 2014. Again ,while this is an improvement from the 1999 figure of 7.70% it is far below the world average of 19.6% it comes as no surprise then that India is ranked 141 in the world rankings of women in national parliaments ,compiled by the inter - parliamentary union. India's rank is one of the lowest in the region and falls below her neighbours, Nepal ranked at 40, Afghanistan at 45, China at 71, Pakistan 86.

#### ***Women in Panchayat Raj Institution***

Women in India are much better represented in the panchayat raj institutions as compared to the parliament. As per the Ministry of Panchayat Raj , in 2008 the Gram Panchayat had 37.8% women members ,the Intermediate Panchayats 37 % women members .The total representation of women in all three tiers of the Panchayat amounted to 36.87 % . This seems to be a result of Article 243 D of the Indian constitution, mandating at least 1/3rd of the seats in all tiers of the Panchayat. A further amendment to the Article was proposed in 2009 ,increasing to 50 % but was not passed .some states such as Bihar have 50 % reservation for women in the Panchayat Raj as per the state Legislation ,but not all the states in India have adopted similar legislations.

#### ***Position of Women in National Parliament***

##### **LOK SABHA**

| Year | Seats held by women | % of female members | Year | Seats held by women | % of female members |
|------|---------------------|---------------------|------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 1952 | 22                  | 4.41                | 1989 | 27                  | 5.22                |
| 1957 | 27                  | 5.50                | 1991 | 39                  | 7.17                |
| 1962 | 34                  | 6.76                | 1996 | 39                  | 7.18                |
| 1967 | 31                  | 5.93                | 1998 | 43                  | 7.92                |
| 1971 | 22                  | 4.22                | 1999 | 49                  | 9.02                |
| 1977 | 19                  | 3.49                | 2004 | 45                  | 8.28                |
| 1980 | 28                  | 5.15                | 2009 | 58                  | 10.68               |
| 1984 | 44                  | 8.09                | 2014 | 62                  | 11.41               |

Source: Election commission of India.

**Position of Women in Rajya Sabha**

| Year | Seats held by women | % of female members | Year | Seats held by women | % of female members |
|------|---------------------|---------------------|------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 1952 | 15                  | 6.94                | 1984 | 24                  | 10.24               |
| 1954 | 16                  | 7.3                 | 1986 | 28                  | 11.98               |
| 1956 | 20                  | 8.6                 | 1988 | 25                  | 10.59               |
| 1958 | 22                  | 9.5                 | 1990 | 24                  | 10.34               |
| 1960 | 24                  | 10.2                | 1992 | 17                  | 7.29                |
| 1962 | 17                  | 7.6                 | 1994 | 20                  | 8.36                |
| 1964 | 21                  | 8.8                 | 1996 | 19                  | 7.81                |
| 1966 | 23                  | 9.6                 | 1998 | 19                  | 7.75                |
| 1968 | 22                  | 9.2                 | 2000 | 22                  | 9.01                |
| 1970 | 14                  | 5.8                 | 2002 | 25                  | 10.20               |
| 1972 | 18                  | 7.4                 | 2004 | 28                  | 11.43               |
| 1974 | 17                  | 7.0                 | 2006 | 25                  | 10.41               |
| 1978 | 25                  | 10.2                | 2010 | 27                  | 11.11               |
| 1980 | 29                  | 11.9                | 2012 | 28                  | 11.43               |
| 1982 | 24                  | 9.8                 | 2014 | 29                  | 11.9                |

Source: Election commission of India.

**IV. ESTIMATE**

Women in India have made major inroads in various male -dominated professions, included the governmental bureaucracy. In the fields of business, medicine, engineering, law, art, and culture, women who were given opportunities to acquire the necessary skills and education have proven themselves capable of holding their own, without availing of any special measures to facilitate their entry. But they have failed to gain ground in the field of politics. Moreover, the agenda of women's empowerment seems to have the kind of moral and political legitimacy it enjoyed during the freedom movement, as was evident from the ugly scenes in the aftermath of tabling the women's Reservation Bill in Parliament. Such a response would have been inconceivable in the India of the 1920s to the 1940s.

All the trends indicate that women's representation in politics requires special consideration, and cannot be left to the forces that presently dominate our parties and government. Today, even the best of our female parliamentarians feel sidelined and powerless within their respective parties. The few women in leadership positions have not been able to encourage the entry of greater numbers of women in electoral and party politics, and are an ineffective minority within their own respective political groupings. Therefore ,it is urgently required that we have take special measures to enhance women's political participation in ways that help them influence decision -making at all levels of our society and polity. Our democracy seriously flawed if it fails to yield adequate space to women.

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