

Political Participation of Women

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Abstract – India has rich history of measuring political participation of women since its Independence, with more responsive data on women participation, better gender budget initiatives aim to move the country towards a gender equal society. The constitution of India on the principles of equality and guarantees equality before law and equal protection to all its citizens. It not only guarantees fundamental rights and freedoms, but also prohibits discrimination on the basis of religion, race, caste, sex and place of birth. However, these rights have remained de jure and have not been translated.

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INTRODUCTION

Political Participation is broader than the one covering women's participation only in the electoral and administrative processes. It includes voting, support of political groups, communication with legislation, discrimination of political views and opinions among the electorate and other related activities. Reform movements had limited their effects to improving the position of Women within the traditional family structure in nineteenth century. The turn of the century, however, saw a minority of women participating voluntarily in social welfare activities out their homes, particularly in the cause of women's education, welfare of the weaker sections in society and relief to distressed persons.

Who can deny the fact that the theme of political participation of women has raised a major dilemma? It is our fundamental right of every citizen to contribute to the decision making process while it is our duty also and is based active participation of each member and have sufficient condition to achieve full realization of his or her respect in society. On the other side analysis on women participation graph had be decreasing as accepted by the mainstream of political scientists and policy makers.

There are spheres of power relationships which are created and institutionalized by being used to encourage central or more people's behaviour, out looks and belief in specific directions. Political Participation includes and involvement in any form of organized activity that affects or seeks to affect these power relationships. Activities intended to influence the attitude and behaviour of these who have power for decision making.²⁶ A still smaller group participated in the `revolutionary movement. The early twentieth century saw the birth of womens

organizations and the beginnings of the demand for political rights. In 1917, a deputation of Indian Women led by Sarojini Naidu presented to the British parliament a demand for the enfranchisement of women on the basis of equality with men. The Reforms Act of 1921 extended the franchise only to wives who had property and education. The foreign rulers could not believe that Indian society would ever regard women as equal partners of men.

Nor did they regard women as a separate political force. In the last decade, all political parties have shown great interest in women's problems as a result of various developments but primarily due to the pressure of women's groups. Parties in their manifestos promise to women all opportunities for increased participation in social, economic and political life. Yet, the record of most of the parties is poor so far as women are concerned.

Beyond their efforts many unions in the country had Played a special attention to women's issues and joint efforts have to be made to common reason for fight for the demands of women workers. Many workers from different scholar's had documented a number of struggles of women indicating the militancy and tenacity of women who were also involved in struggle of advises, contract workers, women coal miners, plantation workers, etc. A recent analysis shows the ratio of women in CITU and women in office but in some states picture is dismal. Seventy years ago freedom from British inspired the large part of world. Today also same women demand for equal opportunities for equal rights is running all around the world and are denied form all power at home and in parliaments. But nowadays there is a change in country to country as one country is influenced by the development of other country with new technological break thoughts which had rapid the rate of communication, and have emphasis on human rights and have given new way to women's

²⁶ Norman D. Palmer, elections and Political Development : The South Asian Experience (New Delhi : Vikas pub. House, 1976).

equality. International Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences refers political participation to those voluntary activities by which members of a society share in the excludes from the scope of political participation such involuntary activities as paying taxes, serving in the armed forces and performing Jury duty.²⁷

The very clear concept of political participation includes activities like voting, campaigning in elections, convincing other person to vote in a particular way, attending public meeting, distribution party literature, joining an organization or a party contributing money to a party, contesting elections an holding public or party office, etc. For a growing democracy, like India, higher participation is necessary for a healthy development of the democratic institutions in traditional India. Political authority was a hereditary right and most sections of the society had no access to political activities and political power. As a result, they were political due to lack of political education and experience. Freedom from Colonise inspired the world from large part in fifty years ago. Women`s demand for equal opportunity and political power with the idea cutting across national boundaries women were denied across to power at home and in parliaments development one country influence the another.

They used to the new technological break thoughts. Which facilitate instant communication and cross fertilisation of ideas Human rights has given a new fillip to women`s equality. Today the political interventions by women in India range from movements for peace and good governance to protest against rape, dowry, domestic violence , food adulteration, the price-rise and deforestation. They are raising their voices against discrimination and injustice in social, economic and political spheres. Politics for them does not mean only the activities of electing representatives and governing. It also includes effort of raising consciousness and changing the unequal power structure for a just and equal system.²⁸ Therefore it is necessary to attempt a definition of political participation which border that the one covering women`s participation only in the electoral and administrative processes. It involves the group of voluntary activities with a bearing on the political processes, including voting, support of Political groups, communication with legislators, dissemination of political views and opinions among the electorate, and other related activities. Besides social relationships, there are spheres of power relationships which are created and institutionalized by being used to encourage, control or move people`s behaviour, outlooks and beliefs in specified direction. Political participation can be considered to include an involvement in any form of organized

activity that affect, these power relationships.²⁹ Political participation is the mother and politics is the child. The former creates and determines politics and hence is of utmost importance both for the nation and the individual.

The politics of the nations is determines therefore by political participation in all its process.³⁰ Women`s education progress gave rise to the development of a consciousness among the educated women.

CONCLUSION

Political participation is considered as very complex phenomenon, a dependent variable hinges upon many factors such as the psychological, socio-economic a political which gives orientation to individuals either positively or negatively. Psychological refers to the degree to which any individual is concerned about the politics of his or her belonging nation and the current public affairs then those who are totally out of the range of politics and are only in link with their private life. The candidates who are belonging to any party have their own responsibilities, goal and aim and more actively participate in political affairs.

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²⁷ Mc Closky, "Political Participation," in International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences, vol. 12 (New York: Macmillan, 1968).

²⁸ Neera Desai and Usha Thakkar, Women In Indian Society, National Book Trust, India 2001.p 97.

²⁹ Afsar Bano, Indian Women The changing face, Kilaso Books, New Dehli 2003 p42.

³⁰ Raj Bala, The Legal and politics status of women In India, Mohit Publications, New Delhi, 1999.

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