

A Study of Women's Empowerment and Political Participation in India

Amit Kumar^{1*} Dr. Seema Rani²

¹ Research Scholar, Department of Political Science, OPJS University, Churu, Rajasthan

² Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, OPJS University, Churu, Rajasthan

Abstract – Political empowerment supports creating policies that would best support gender equality and agency for women in both the public and private spheres. Methods that have been suggested are to create affirmative action policies that have a quota for the number of women in policy making and parliament positions. and the study which discussed about Historical Background of Women Empowerment, Women Empowerment in India , Women Empowerment through Education, Participation of Women in the Post-Independent Period, Political Participation before Independence, Historical Background of Women Empowerment, Women's Political Participation, The Non-Participants (Women), Political Participation, Concept of Women Empowerment, Concept of Empowerment, Empowerment.

Keyword – Empowerment, Political Participation, Women Empowerment

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INTRODUCTION

Women's empowerment may represent a variety of things, including equal position, financial security, and the ability to pursue her interests, empowerment, and the emphasis is on preparing women to be financially independent, self-sufficient, and to have good self-esteem so they can confront any tough scenario, and they should be able to participate in the decision-making process. Human trafficking, forced labor, and the reserving of elected offices for women are all prohibited by the Indian Constitution, which aims to eliminate gender inequities. A growing desire for equal rights has led to an increase in female participation in political parties.

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The author E. K. Abtsi (2012) states that there is a disparity in access to school and work between men and women, Women continue to accept unfair gender norms, according to research.

For political empowerment, involvement in the political process is essential. It is possible to quantify women's political engagement on three different levels: as a voter, elected official, and in the actual decision-making process. Since the first general election, their involvement as a voter and as an elected representative has been measured by the electoral commission. There is a high degree of female representation at the municipal level due of the reserved seats for women, but there are serious worries that males have actually been governing by employing women as proxies. A slew of causes are to blame for the current predicament. Women were active participants in Indian nationalist movements before to independence, but their numbers dwindled as a result. Women's actual political empowerment has been hindered by society's perceptions about women's gender roles. Traditional division of labour, illiteracy, economic constraints, and the kind of election system have hindered women from participating in politics. In addition, the expense of running for office is quite high. Women are unable to afford the significant sums of money needed to compete in elections because they lack the financial resources. Women have been held back by a centralized power structure and a culture of corruption. Political parties' gender prejudices are

stumbling barriers for women in leadership roles. Without a political party to support them, women have a hard time gaining a footing in politics.

Empowerment

Empowerment has been a common buzzword among activists and academics, as well as among legislators, health care providers, and educators, social workers, and managers, not to mention disadvantaged communities. It is easily taken and used, meaning that the simple use of the phrase may result in a wave of empowerment for those who hear it. References to empowerment abound, to the point that it's reasonable to assume that the world's 6.4 billion people are already on the path to being empowered. Wieringa (1994) claims that empowerment-speak encompasses a wide variety of ideas. In response to the ever-changing meanings, interpretations, methods, and stakeholders, it is disseminated and used via many ideologies, movements, and technologies all over the world. In part, the absence of a centralized definition in the discourse reflects these differences; in addition, it illustrates the importance of empowerment in many different challenges. Any theories on women's empowerment attribute impotence to economic disadvantage, material poverty, a lack of access to quality education or health care, or some combination of these issues. The author of this article (Bawa, S. 2016) Disempowering circumstances might be presented as the result of structural violence or as a matter of human security shortfalls in a human rights discourse. Despite many advances in reducing gender inequality in various fields over the 20th century, being a woman is still seen as a chronic disadvantage in empowerment rhetoric. Even while women have made great strides in the political world (representing just 16 percent of parliamentary seats internationally), despite all the progress made to reduce gender gaps in the 20th century, and nothing has changed in this regard. Persistent gender disparities and low participation of women in political leadership are inextricably linked, as outlined in the United Nations' MDGs.

Concept of Empowerment

Empowerment has been one of the popular principles which emphasize to include in programmes, policies and projects as a process for women to experience changes along with the developmental goals. The women participation in decision making is a crucial process and that is why empowerment does not take place in a vacuum. Empowerment means to uplift women or to give power to women in terms of social, economic and political aspects. It also means to have access gain and develop its ability to actively participate in economic, social and political life. Empowerment is the only steps which challenges the existing power system in a society. For any developmental goals empowerment of women is the first prerequisite that should be given to women. In India Women

empowerment greatly depend on their socio-economic status, geographical location, and educational status etc., and in which women always play a less important role in politics.

Concept of Women Empowerment

Empowerment acquires women to impart knowledge so that they can have the ability to understand gender relations and to destruct the old beliefs that hampers women to participate in decision making. Women empowerment is the action that relishes a great pose or challenge to the existing behavior of wield power so that it will increase their control over power and as well as resources. The old patriarchal political system which did not allow women to hold higher position or in decision-making process, Empowerment is to empower women so that they can be treated equally in the society. Through empowerment now women all over the world is aware of their rights and equality. Women empowerment is an action that will give women a large amount of share to have control over human resources like in finance, material and as well as will help them to develop intellectually. This day's women empowerment is a buzz-word in a day-to-day life. Women empower themselves so that they can protect from social discrimination and also to have equal opportunity with their counterparts. It is through women empowerment that will bring transformation to this institution for the society. Globalization also plays a pivotal role in liberating women from all bondages. Education solely plays a vital role for women as it helps them to have knowledge about gender discrimination that they face and also it sweep away the illiteracy of women day by day. It is through education that can build women to enhance their self-confidence and to make them equip in economic area. Through this it will improve women status in the society. Empowerment of women has reached all over the societies regarding women's rights and gender equality. Women empower themselves either through scheme like Self Help Groups (SHGs) or by organizing themselves into various organizations. Women empowerment carries a slogan that fights for women rights and equality. Empowerment approaches is not only for providing services to women but also to give them access to resources. It is the political empowerment that will give confidence to women to participate in politics.

Political Participation

Individuals actively participate in political movements via political involvement. Political engagement includes more than merely casting a ballot; it also includes running for office, becoming a member of a political party, holding office within that party, and participating in elections. For women, political engagement is seen as a bad thing, and they have no authority in decision-making since they are excluded from the political process. Socioeconomic, cultural, and political

factors all influence how many women run for office. In other words, it's a lot of money. Because of the low level of female political engagement in India, the amount to which Participation. People become involved in politics via political involvement. Voting is an essential part of the democratic process since it allows citizens to participate in their government. Voting for a representative and formulating public policy are both examples of political involvement for people. Taking engaged in politics helps people feel more empowered. Being politically active entails more than simply going to the polls and casting a ballot. As well as participating in a wide range of other activities- such as political party membership and electoral campaigning- it also includes things like going to party meetings and holding demonstrations. It also includes things like communicating with party leaders and holding positions in representative bodies. Politics and political affairs go hand in hand, with political involvement being the most important feature of every political system.

The Non-Participants (Women)

The percentage of women who do not participate in politics should also be considered. In certain nations, women make up a small but significant portion of the electorate, with just a small percentage of those entitled to vote exercising their right to vote. Women from minority backgrounds are more likely to become involved in politics. Some characterize non-participants as having no interest in politics, while others see political engagement as a personal failing. It doesn't matter if you don't participate in politics if you're a non-participant. Non-participants are those who refuse to change, are alienated, or are apathetic about the project. Politics is often avoided by the public because they believe politicians are untrustworthy or politics is fraught with tragedy or crisis, and this is attributable in part to the lack of political participation.

Women's Political Participation

The term 'political participation' has a very wide meaning. It is not only related to 'Right to Vote', but simultaneously relates to participation in: decision-making process, political activism, political consciousness, etc. Women in India participate in voting, run for public offices and political parties at lower levels more than men. Political activism and voting are the strongest areas of women's political participation. To combat gender inequality in politics, the Indian Government has instituted reservations for seats in local governments.

Women's political engagement in India is hampered by a variety of causes and difficulties. In India's political party structures, men outnumber women. The partisan electoral system, which favors males over women, has reduced women's participation in politics. They don't anticipate getting involved in politics because of the prevalent negative

stereotypes about women that exist in the general public. Furthermore, the lack of financial resources is a major barrier to women being involved in politics. Politics in India is seen as a nasty game that must be avoided at all costs. This is particularly evident during election seasons when crime and violence are at their highest. Women are less likely to become involved in politics because of the prevalent milieu of political brutality and violence. Women are uninterested in politics at this time due to the current situation. Cultural differences may contribute to the current gender disparities. Other data points to inherent difficulties in the discussion of women and politics, such as the absence of opportunities for political training and skill development, which has been a discouraging factor for female political engagement.

Historical Background of Women Empowerment

Discrimination against women in India may be traced back to a lack of women's empowerment. Previously, they had a poorer social and economic standing as well as a weaker political position due to their ethnicity. The feminist movement, women empowerment, self-help groups, and so on has aided women in modernizing their social and economic activities. However, in the political sphere, women continue to fight for equality and rights so that they can take part in decision-making. They are still fighting for these things today. The standing of women has evolved, however, as seen by the fact that they now have access to educational opportunities, as well as freedoms and rights, and are held in high regard by the general public. As part of the empowerment process, women have high hopes of being active in politics and achieving equality in the workplace. Many women have been liberated from oppression thanks to the emergence of movements for women's emancipation. Although males started to have a greater influence in decision-making due to the increasing strength of their relationship with women, women now encounter difficulties when it comes to running for office. Even though women's socioeconomic standing has improved tremendously, political equality is still a long way off. The grassroots level is where women are seeking to get greater control over authority so that they may make decisions in the development process.

Political Participation before Independence

Women in India have an elevated social status. Even in political and intellectual arenas, ladies were recognized as equals with men in ancient times. Women's standing in society worsened with time, and as a result, they were marginalized politically. After Mahatma Gandhi and his inspirational liberation fight, women's participation in politics in India was finally acknowledged as the

natural course of events throughout the twentieth century. Gandhi's views on the role of women in the independence movement contrasted sharply with long-standing Indian biases against them. Even in those times, women's social status was deplorable. Women's fight against British imperialism was won in part because of purposeful efforts by leaders at the vanguard of the independence movement. When women have an important part in politics, Gandhi argued, politics becomes more responsible, transparent, and free of corruption. "Enrolling women as voters, imparting or having taught to them practical education, teaching them to think independently, releasing them from the constraints of caste that bound them to bring about a change in them," he wrote in *Harijan* on April 21st, 1946... They will help to clean up the current dirty environment if they do this." He accurately predicted that India would be doomed if women did not participate in public life. The national authorities saw our battle for independence as part of a broader effort to restructure society's socioeconomic and political structures to ensure, among other things, gender equality. Smt. Sarojini Naidu and Ms. Margaret Cousins led a group of women in the Indian Provincial Legislatures in 1920 to seek equal representation for the fair sex. He believed that political participation by women may be independent of their socioeconomic level and might perhaps be more essential than the social change in empowering women.

Participation of Women in the Post-Independent Period

Many women's autonomous organizations have emerged in post-independence India, fighting patriarchy and tackling a range of topics including violence against women and a higher role of women in political decision-making. These groups operate on both an active and scholarly level in India. India's women's movement is strong and dynamic, but the country still has a long way to go in terms of achieving gender equality and justice for women. Indian society is divided on the subject of women's empowerment. To date, she has been treated unfairly because of her race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status; her lack of interest in political empowerment has resulted in policies that are ill-informed and misguided. Women's participation in the political process is critical for their empowerment and that of the country.

Women Empowerment through Education

A community, state, or nation cannot function effectively without the participation and empowerment of women. In a child's early years, a woman has the most influence. Women play a crucial role in our culture. Education as a tool for women's empowerment might result in a shift in attitudes. Hence, it is critical for India's socio-economic and political development. The Indian Constitution grants the state the authority to take

positive actions aimed at encouraging women's empowerment. Women's lives are vastly improved by education. In many official and informal initiatives across the globe, discussions around women's political rights are at the forefront. The empowerment of women was first discussed during the NAROI International Women's Conference in 1985. Education is a key milestone in women's empowerment because it gives them the ability to face their societal expectations, react to problems, and transform their lives for the better. As a result, education is critical to women's empowerment. For example, Byrnes & Freeman (2012) found that given the progress women's education has made in India, the country has been dubbed a rising global superpower in recent years. Women's education and empowerment are becoming more important in defining women's status, as shown by recent studies. We must prioritize the education of women above all else if we want to become a superpower. This is the method through which it will compel women's emancipation.

Women Empowerment in India

Independence of India makes laws for women beneficial. The constitution provides equality to men and women and giving them opportunity as well as protection to know their interests effectively. Special laws were enacted by the constitution of India to prevent offensive representation of women in the media and sexual harassment in workplaces. The laws also gave women equal rights as men.

Although in India, women constitute almost half of the population and their participation by way of voting has increased, but their participation and representation in lawmaking and law implementing bodies is still low. The 73rd and 74th constitutional amendment tried to address the women's decision making at grass root level but still in parliament and state legislature their representation is very low (i.e. 11.42%). In 16th lok sabha election without security women were not allowed to develop leadership qualities. In reality, when a man proposes, they themselves dispose, women representatives are good in nature but political consciousness is among them is very weak. They are always hindered by one or another way like caste and class sections, feudal attitudes, patriarchal nature of the family and village social, environment ethnic, religious, separatism and the like. They are written members only; allegedly they were totally ignored while taking a decision. Thus, male dominance was always on the women representation in the village administration also and no equal power between men and women has been seen also in the villages.

Historical Background of Women Empowerment

Empowerment of women in India emerges as the root cause of discrimination against women. Earlier they were accorded lower status and position in socio-economic, political life. But due to modernization and with the rise of various organizations like feminist movement, women empowerment, Self Help Group etc women begin to take shape in social and economic activities but in political sphere women are still fighting for their equality and rights so that they can participate in decision-making. But nowadays the status of women has changed; they do get education, liberty, rights etc and women were given high self esteem in the society. Through empowerment process women have high hope in getting involved in the participation of politics and also their equal rights. Emergent's of women empowerment has helped many women to come out of their oppression. But with the increase of power relation male began to dominate women in decision making and because of that women face challenge during the time of election. Though the status of women in socio-economic has improved significantly but its status in political area has still not yet improved. At the grass root level women are trying to gain more access to control over power in which they can take decision in bringing development process. With new implementation of policies taken up by the government in the present contemporary political scenario, the status of women have emerged to a little higher extent to which they have a voice and freedom of expression towards addressing and acknowledging their problems and concerns to the mainstream politics and emphasizing more on the area of activity and sphere of development for their overall participation in the civil and political life of the governance in a democratic set up. A true democracy thus prevails when both men and women enjoy equal participation in politics. Many countries have adopted or established women's organization, a mechanism towards providing an avenue for women to become an active participants and a leader. Those women organizations can influence many party positions for women's leadership and decision-making and as well as issue concern for women's status in the society

CONCLUSION

There has been a long history of gender inequality and discrimination against women over the world. Empowerment aims to mobilize the self-help of the poor and vulnerable. Women empowerment has five components: women's sense of self-worth, their rights to have and to determine choices; their rights to have access to opportunities and resources; their rights to have the power to control their own lives; both within the home and outside the home. Empowerment is the process of obtaining basic opportunities for marginalized people, either by those people, or through the help of non-marginalized others who share their own access to those

opportunities. It also includes actively thwarting attempts to deny those opportunities, Women's empowerment can positively influence the lives not only of women themselves but also of men, and of course, those of children. Political parties cannot remain indifferent towards women who constitute 586.5 million population and nearly 48.46 per cent of the electorate. Although almost all political parties have attempted to build women organisations to secure their support and make their organisations 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. It is necessary to make it mandatory for all political parties to nominate at least a-third of women candidates in their party organisations and laid the foundation of political participation of women. Women are the legal citizens of the country and have equal rights with men.

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Corresponding Author

Amit Kumar*

Research Scholar, Department of Political Science,
OPJS University, Churu, Rajasthan