



EMPOWERING INDIAN WOMEN THROUGH POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

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Abstract: Empowerment of any section of a society is a myth until they are conferred equality before law. The foundation of freedom, Justice and fraternity is based on the recognition of its inherent dignity and of equal and inalienable rights of all members of the society.

Key Words: Gender equality, empowerment and inalienable rights.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Women empowerment relates to equal status to women in terms of opportunity and freedom to develop herself by being economically independent, self reliant and having a positive self esteem which enables her to tackle any difficult situation. It is a buzz word these days and is a critical determinant of economic well being, social status and political power. Gender inequality prevailed in Indian since times immemorial some of the historical factors such as patriarchal Symbolism, ritualism, dualism, martial traditions and caste systems that prescribe the status of Indian women are responsible for the lower status of women in India. But the Social reforms both from the governmental and non-governmental sectors are working on reversing this situation. In recent years special acknowledgement to the girl children and women as a special group and moreover increasing realization that it is imperative empowering women for family, society, national and international development and progress. In order to make this actually happen the government, non-government and at the Grass root level every individual has to work towards its establishment. It has been internationally discussed at UN World conference on women and the first ever world Conference on women was held in Mexico in 1975 targeting the issue of gender inequality.

2. Political Participation:

In order to have a gender equal society empowerment of woman particularly in the political sphere would lay its foundation. The political empowerment of women is based on three fundamental principles

- Equality between Women & Men
- Women exercising their right to full development of their potentials.
- Right of women to self represent and their self determination.

The key to political, empowerment is the 'Power' 'Shakti' along with effectiveness, Capability and force to challenge and transform the patriarchal ideology. It is the process through which the individual plays a role in political life by exercising the right to vote, power sharing, membership of political parties, electoral campaigning attending party meetings, holding party positions, contesting elections, co-decision making, co-policy making at all the levels of governance of the state.

2.1 Pre-independent Political participation of Women :

Political participation of woman dates back to late 19th and early 20th centuries with the social reformers like Rajaram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar worked towards raising consciousness among women and educating them. This led to the establishment of Women organization.

- The women's Indian Association (WIA):** This organization worked towards religion, education and politics with Annie Besant its first president.



- **The National Council for women in India (NCWI):** It was a national branch of International Council of Women establishment in 1925
- **The All-India Women’s Conference (AIWC):** This organization opposed social customs like child marriage and Purdah System and worked towards women education.

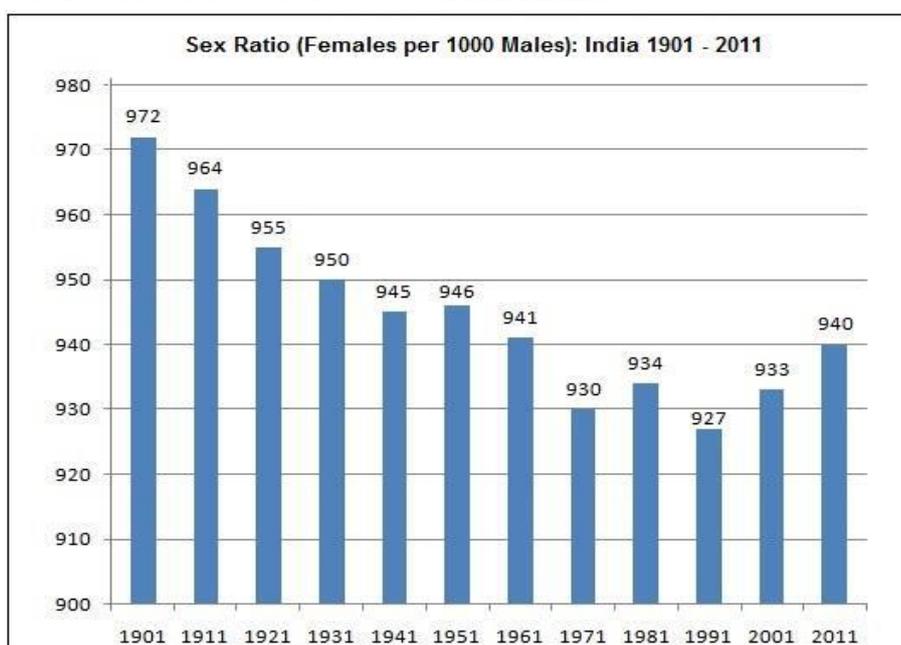
2.2 Post-Independence political participation of woman: Ever since India’s became free, there has been phenomenal changes in the conditions of woman. The woman began to participant in national and state politics. The first assembly after independence had only 2% of woman. Subsequently woman held 4-5% of seats in Lok Sabha and increased up to 7-8%. In Rajya Sabha women hold. Representation of women in 16th Lok Sabha is 61 which is the all time highest. Presently Rajya Sabha has 29-woman members. Six of 23 Cabinet Ministers are presently in the Govt, claiming 25 percent of the total.

Table:

Table 1: Women’s Participation in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha

Year	Lok Sabha			Rajya Sabha		
	No. of Seats	No. of Women MPs	% of Women MPs	No. of Seats	No. of Women MPs	% of Women MPs
1952	499	22	4.41	219	16	7.31
1957	500	27	5.4	237	18	7.59
1962	503	34	6.76	238	18	7.56
1967	523	31	5.93	240	20	8.33
1971	521	22	4.22	243	17	7
1977	544	19	3.49	244	25	10.25
1980	544	28	5.15	244	24	9.84
1984	544	44	8.09	244	28	11.48
1989	517	27	5.22	245	24	9.8
1991	544	39	7.17	245	38	15.51
1996	543	39	7.18	223	19	8.52
1998	543	43	7.92	245	15	6.12
1999	543	49	9.02	245	19	7.76
2004	543	45	8.28	245	DNA	DNA
2009	543	59	10.86	245	22	8.98
2014	543	61	11.23	241	28	11.62
Average	530	35	6.59	240.00	21	9

Source: Election Commission of India’s website (www.cci.gov.in).





3. Constitutional Provisions:

The constitutional Provisions Guarantee equality to all citizens having Social, Economic and Political and Liberty of thought. The various articles like Art 14, 15, 16, 39(a), 3(b), 42, 325, 326 and 243 (b) support women in different arenas.

There is a growing momentum among the governments and society to ensure women's participation and leadership in political arena. Quota for women representation has been establishment at different levels in the Government. According to 73rd amendment Act (1992) minimum one-third of seats for women have been reserved. Within all of India's locally elected Governance bodies referred to as Panchyati Raj.

4. Initiative of Government for empowering Women

- Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)
- Swayam Siddha
- Swadhar
- Indira Gandhi Matrina Sahyog Yojana
- Janani Suraksha Yogna
- Government of India has consolidated all programs of woman under National Mission of Empowerment of Woman (NMEW)

5. Conclusion:

The women entry into politics across the world faces obstacles. In spite of all the reservations for woman implemented by the Government the role of woman in politics has still to be empowered. To conclude it can be stated that there has been a major change in the movement for empowerment of women. Women are indeed becoming a political force, both nationally and internationally. Political parties cannot show indifferent attitude towards women Although almost all parties have attempted to build women organisations to secure their support and make their organisations broader based, but actually 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.

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