



Reflections on the Political Inclusion of Women

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Abstract

Indian constitution has been given several political rights. But the very exercise of these rights is accompanied by several challenges. It is to be understood that political & economic rights always go together. Women's empowerment through political as well as economic rights has to be perceived as a progressive action plan towards a nation's all round progression. Women generally become financially inaccessible because they lack access to finances & such other economic resources. But she is politically inaccessible because along with political rights, she needs education, social awareness & equality. This paper examines the challenges of political empowerment of women through economic inclusion.

Key words: political rights of women, economic inclusion, equity of rights, accessibility challenges

Introduction

In India, political entry to women is barred by several challenges as the political women are either the wives or daughters or widows most of them, enter politics forcibly either to save / support / sustain their male counter parts. With the 73rd & 74th Constitutional amendment India could progress towards institutionalizing good framework of governance. 33 % reservation for women was another step ahead in this direction. This was a great step in the empowerment of women. Women in village panchayats were able to draw attention of the policy makers towards infrastructural lacunas such as shortage of drinking water, lack of schools, lack of energy, lack of drainage facility, lack of basic infrastructure etc (National Policy For Women IN India -Government Of India publication New Delhi 2014). Women turnout during India's 2014 parliamentary general elections was 65.63%, compared to 67.09% turnout for men. In 16 out of 29 states of India, more women voted than men. A total of 260.6

million women exercised their right to vote in April-May 2014 elections for India's parliament. This shows that women are becoming more responsive towards political involvement only thing they need to keep up this consistency in all political frame working. (Report of the Election Commission 2014).

The Concept: 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.

Challenges -Women should be empowered to- participation & representation of women in politics in challenged by poverty lack of education, patriarchal society pattern, inaccessibility to financial resources, Lack of awareness of political rights which hamper the woman's ability to take independent decisions. Criminalization of politics had a negative impact on women's participation in politics. (Report of the Census of India Government of India publication New



Delhi 2014). Women find it difficult to be elected in key elections; even though they are elected they face threats of harassment and physical threats. (Report of the Election Commission 2014). There are several instances where male counterparts retain power by proxy; thus they persuade their women counterparts to fight elections on reserved seats. (National Policy For Women IN India - Government Of India publication New Delhi 2014). Major political parties do not field women in key elections because they are not sure of their winning . They do not consider women as part of the election process itself. Women are considered as marginalized groups with no personal responsibilities. (National Mission For Empowerment Of Women. Ministry Of Women & Child Welfare 2014). Several political parties even evade women from filing nominations because they consider women as lacking ability to generate resources which is needed for elections. Some political parties do not even consider women in constituencies because they feel women cannot support their after elections promises. Majority of the political parties field only those women who are either widows, sisters, or mother, or wives of a deceased male political leader. Major political parties in India have never given good number of seats to women even though their election manifesto boasts of achieving women empowerment.

Role of Women in Legislation

1. Handful of women who are elected or become ministers in cabinets, need to make structural changes for political inclusion of women through strong legislations.
2. By laying stress on women education & by expanding educational

resources across the country they have to lay the foundation for right representation of women through awareness campaigns.

3. Capacity building programs for women , community awareness programs & individual awareness programs can be made to lift women form the ignorance about political participation
4. ICT can be used to make women more participatory in political process . .
5. Women legislators should realize that gender equality is critical to the development process of a nation. It calls for creating opportunities for women to be part of this development process.
6. women legislators should support political participation to further generate awareness and mobilizes other women to be a part of the political process to promote their and societal interests at large. (National Policy For Women IN India - Government Of India publication New Delhi 2014).
7. In certain families social taboos for against women. Indian family atmosphere needs women to be a party of the family rather than part of a political party. Women who take part in election canvassing are ousted socially. (Vasanthi – The Implementation Of Quotas For Women Centre For Women's Development Studies. International Institute for Democracy And Electoral Assistance 2014).
8. Women legislators should also think that mere legislations will not work in empowering women. Women need



to challenges their rights with creation of political mindset. (Report on the Ministry of Panchayathi Raj –Press Information Bureau – Government Of India Publication New Delhi 2014).

Answering the Challenges - the challenge of lack women participation & awareness can be dealt with

1. **Need for a mindset change** - political inclusion policy can become more effective only when public mindset changes. She suffers from denial to public rights only because she is a woman. She is a target of heavy discrimination & public violence. The social attitude should change before attending any challenges. because only when a society starts to think of women as social partners , then a society can change its mindset towards women. (Shashi kaaul & Shradha Sahni -Study on the Participation of Women in Panchayati Raj Institutions).
2. **Creation of educational opportunities**- Education of women is vital to bring them out of the darkness of ignorance, make them aware of their socio-economic and political rights and duties. The need is to make them independent intellectually and financially, so that they can take their own decisions.
3. **Creation of a positive atmosphere** - All are aware of the fact that Indian constitution guarantees equal rights to all but what India lacks is the creation of positive condition hailing this constitutional right.73rd & 74th amendments have been helpful for creation of an opportunity for women to participate in political process. (Vasanthi – The Implementation Of

Quotas For Women Centre For Women's Development Studies. International Institute For Democracy And Electoral Assistance 2014).

4. **Understanding Political process**- Reservations in the panchayats have shown that women not only stand for office and come to power but make positive use of it. Through their participation in politics, women are making use of power and resources to bring about the necessary changes. Water scarcity and education are two of the important issues that have been dealt with by women. But there are several other issues which needs the recognition by women.(Report on the Ministry of Panchayathi Raj – Press Information Bureau – Government Of India Publication New Delhi 2014).

Conclusion: women empowerment needs to be spread as a mission through education & public awareness. The cause of women's empowerment, political representation and economic freedom are related to each other. Indian democracy will be a truly vibrant democracy only if we acknowledge and respect political power due to womenfolk. The indecision about the Women's Reservation Bill can be resolved through change in public thinking & societal mindset change.

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