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Women in political participation and her challenges: A sociological Study

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Abstract

The term 'political participation' has a very wide meaning. 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 turnout during India's parliamentary general elections was 65.63%, compared to 67.09% turnout for men. India ranks 20th from the bottom in terms of representation of women in Parliament. Women have held the posts of president and prime minister in India, as well as chief ministers of various states. Indian voters have elected women to numerous state legislative assemblies and national parliament for many decades. But based on women population percentage her not take equality in political. because of discrimination. so this paper studying to how to women political challenges in India. this paper based on secondary data.

Keywords: Participation, discrimination, parliament, local governments, women

Introduction

Women are responsible for a variety of roles in families and development of nation. Women constitute half of the world population; perform nearly two-thirds of its work hours; receive one tenth of the world's income, and own less than one hundredth of the world's property. Indian society has always been patriarchal in nature. Regrettable, the norms of patriarchy has been normalized through social institutions. The society is encompassed with gender based stereotypes. Various movements, several laws, reforms, legislations, policies and programmes are enforced in respect to gender inequality and to uplift the women towards the development. But, women are facing more problems in all the streams, as the paper is about political participation which has restricted to the political agenda of women in the Indian society and also made an analysis of the challenges faced by women while participating in political activities political participation.

The early status of women in India

A historical understanding of status of women in early Indian society shows a declining trend in the position of women. The historical analysis of the position of women in ancient India shows that women did not share an equal position with men.

The common problem is being encountered in the analysis of women's position in India in order wise, as it has enormous literary data which seem impossible to arrange them chronologically; However, Historical attempts have been made clear ascertain with the women participation in all the sectors.

The early Vedic Period

During early Vedic period, Women were regarded as mother goddess in the Vedic period, a symbol of life with enormous ability for tolerance and sacrifice and so they help a respectable place in society. Women were associated with property in the epics and puranas. Women were provided opportunity to attain high intellectual and spiritual standards.

The later Vedic period

This period witnessed women sufferings with greater disabilities and also a decline in the status of women in society. Women in the upper class community are likely to have more status like gargi, Maitreyi and others. During the later Vedic period, woman was depicted as untrustworthy, fickle-minded, devoid of judgment, a temptress and an impediment to the spiritual pursuits of man (Phadke - 1967:174) thus, the picture of woman as noted above ultimately led to her deprivation of participation in public meetings.

Women during the period of Shatras, Epics and Parmashastras, Epics and Dharmashastras

Women were projected as symbol of chaste and purity, self-sacrificing and self effacing. The predominant role of a woman was emphasized as a faithful wife and devout mother. She was always treated as dependent throughout her life, in her childhood, she should depend on her father, in her youth on her husband and in her old age on her sons. Hence, this period produced disastrous consequences upon the position and the status of women (Altekar 221:59).

The Buddhist Period

There is a controversy over the impact of Buddhism and Jainism on the status of women. Some scholars (Mira seth 2001; Horner 2001) are of the opinion that Buddhism had a revolutionary impact on the status of women; they enjoyed more equality and a greater respect and authority than ever before.

The Medieval Period

The status of women including untouchable women during this period was further eroded due to the advent of Muslim rule in India.

The pre-independent period

(from 18th century to 1947): The two major movements which affected the status of women during this period were a) The social reform movement of the 19th century and b) the nationalist movement of the 20th century. Social reformers like Raj Ram Mohan Roy, Mahatma phule, and others i.e. Incessant crusade against the customs and practices such as sati, re marriage, polygamy, child-marriage, denial of property rights and education from which Indian women suffered for centuries. Further, they raised the question of better status for women. As a result of their efforts, various laws were enacted to improve the position of women.

The emergence of gender issues

In terms of sociology, gender refers to the socio-cultural definition of man and woman, the way societies distinguish men and women and assign them a respective social roles. Women are still having very low status in many developing countries and females are the only victims of gender discrimination. Gender discrimination is not only biologically determined but also socially determined factor. Gender inequality can be seen in all areas of women life.

Women and political participation

Indians were in need for the state where women should retain with their voting rights after independence. Unlike the

British and American women, Indian women did not face great difficulty in securing franchise. Gandhiji's stressed on the need for the active participation of masses during the freedom movement, including women encouraged total participation of women resulting in the emergence of a large number of women freedom fighters. The *Swadeshi* movement, the non-Cooperation (1920-22) movement, the Civil Disobedience movement (1930-34) and the Quit India (1942) movement drew large number of women. Such participation helped women to voice their need for the participation in the legislation process. Annie Besant, Madame Cama and Sarojini Naidu formed the Women's Indian Association.

Political participation is a process by which the common man communicates their common will to the ruling class and acts as a pressure group against the recalcitrance and authoritarianism of the state and government. Women in India since antiquity, barring a few one, have been placed on the margin of Indian polity and society. The condition in the present era however is changing; still their role in polity is not significant.

Political Mobilization and Participation

Historically many women have been active in the informal political sphere in terms of political mobilization and they have participated in large numbers in political demonstrations and mass agitations as well as in the activities of nationalist and political bodies and organizations. The political mobilization and participation of women has been impressive in the Indian National Movement, in revolutionary Left movements, anti-price rise stirs, on legislation on rape, against the practice of widow immolation, in the anti-liquor movements and movements against deforestation etc. During the National Movement against colonialism women were mobilized actively particularly under Gandhi's leadership and women's organizations within the political parties participated actively in the cause against colonialism for instance in the Civil Disobedience Movements and Salt Satyagraha etc. But once freedom was won, the women's wings were more or less marginalized and assigned areas that primarily dealt with women and children or other 'welfare' activities and women's organizations ended up playing a secondary and supportive role to the male leadership in power. The leaders of such organizations were seldom women with independent political careers unless they were from political families with the backing of male political activists.

Challenges for women

There are certain factors responsible for the negligible inclusion or exclusion of women in political participation in India. In the existing circumstances, even talented women cannot stay in politics on their one steam. If they want to stay in politics they have to face the challenge and prod lames in their respective area.

Economic Challenges

Now a days Politics is increasingly becoming commercialized, more and more money is needed to participate in politics. When women participating in election while some women did not know how much was spent on their election as their husband or a male member of their family will take care of their political expenses.

Conclusion

This paper demonstrates that political voice as an important determinant of accessing the justice for socially disadvantaged groups. We provide one of the systematic analysis of the effects of mandated political representation for women and low caste groups on crime outcomes against them, using the data from the *Panchayati Raj* experiment in India. Furthermore, we shed light on the relative effectiveness of alternative forms of political representation for minority empowerment. We found that having female political representation at the local government level induces strong positive and significant effects on *reporting* of crimes by women. It also induces greater responsiveness of law enforcement officials to crimes against women, as measured by the number of arrests as well as the quality of women's interactions with police. It is important to stress on the equal right to vote, participation and representation in legislative bodies which may not in itself be enough for women's political empowerment or to remedy the problems of discrimination faced by women in Indian society. While a women's socio-economic status bears her interest in politics and political activity the impact of a woman's position in the household cannot be denied. Whether a woman can negotiate space for herself independent of the household is an important determinant of whether she is an active participant in politics or not. This claims to be highlighting the fact that political participation is a public act and for that women to be equal participants in the public arena they need to be able to step outside the household – a sphere of male dominance in many parts of the world.

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