



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

## EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN THROUGH POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Aayasha Parvin, Dr. Goutam Sarkar  
Ph.D. Research Scholar, Assistant Professor,  
Political Science,  
Raiganj University, Raiganj, India

### ABSTRACT

The term political participation has broader perspective. It does not only consider “Right to Vote” but also active participation of an individual as a political leader. Since past decades Indian government is making efforts to empower women but lack to do so in a considerable way. Generally, government, NGO and SHG focuses more on educational upliftment and providing better health facilities but lack to considering political aspect. India being a democratic country not only demands its citizen to participate in political decision-making process but also demands to have gender equality in this participation process. To have this gender equality, the Indian government has provided reservations to Indian women but unless and until they will realise the importance of political participation for their empowerment, such efforts will go in vain. Present scenario of India demands a greater number of female voters as well as a greater number of female leaders. For achieving these other barriers against this should be eradicated from the society such as illiteracy, poverty, socio-economic barriers, harassment in and out of house, unemployment etc.

Keywords: Discrimination, Empowerment, Encourage Participation, Reservation.

### INTRODUCTION

This fact is worldwide accepted that gender equality and women empowerment is the key for a country’s sustainable development. But generally, in this woman empowering journey, political aspect is unfortunately not considered well. Even after such advancement in India, women’s leadership and political participation is restricted. Due to various discriminatory laws, gender stereotypes, social practices, poverty, lack of education, lack of information, lack of access to health facilities and due to many more such reasons, women continue to be put aside from the political zones. Therefore, to eliminate such issues it is important to empower women and more specifically political empowerment is must. Political empowerment will open door to more opportunities for women. Since past few years gender gap has been reduced world-wide in various field such as education, job opportunity, access to health facilities, political participation etc but in India the scene is different. India is still far behind in achieving gender equality especially in politics.

Participation of women in executive government and parliament is very low in India. But scenario is changing toward better direction but in a very slow rate. From the first Lok Sabha to the sixteenth Lok Sabha women’s participation has increased from 3.4% to 12 %. Women participation in Rajya Sabha has increased from 7.2% to 12.8% but if we compare these figures with the increasing rates globally, then it will be easy to conclude that this progressing rate is very slow and various measures should be adopted to enhance this rate in order to politically empower women in India. Hence to understand that what measure will be effective enough in this direction, it is first important to understand the political structure of India regarding women representation before independence and also after independence. Detailed parliament structure is need to be considered and percentage of seat reserved in every level taking it from panchayat raj, Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha. In global mapping after various survey in terms of women’s participation in the parliament, India ranked 148 among 193 global countries, ranked 31<sup>st</sup> among all 47 Asian countries, and ranked 5 among 8 SAARC countries. This shows that India lack behind empowering women politically. Therefore, its urgent time to study the present structure regarding women in parliament, loopholes it holds, scope of betterment, and ways by which women can be encouraged to indulge themselves in politics.

## OBJECTIVE

1. To understand need of political empowerment of women in India
2. To study changing scenario of women participation in pre- and post-independence era in India.
3. To review present reservation for women in Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha and Panchayat raj of India.
4. To understand the relation between women empowerment and their political participation.
5. To conclude various measures by which women can be given more room to actively participate in politics and hence to provide a path toward women empowerment.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The information of this article has been collected from both offline and online informative sources. Various books, articles, research papers and government reports have been examined. Different websites have been studied regarding political structure of our country and Indian women participation. Number of governmental and non-governmental organization's head and member were interviewed to understand their working regarding encouraging women for their political participation and how it can help them to empower themselves in every possible way. Few political leaders have also been consulted regarding what are the possible ways by which government can frame better roadmap for Indian women to actively indulge themselves in politics.

## POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN PRE-INDEPENDENCE ERA

During ancient time, Indian women enjoyed an equal position with men of the society. They were given same platform as were given to men to uplift them and work for their betterment. They had lead their life on their own. They were active in social, educational and political field. But with passing years the condition of women degraded and politically they became inactive due to pressure of barrier being put on them by the family and the society.

In the twentieth century, during the freedom movements lead by many famous freedom fighters and leaders, women started involving in the fight and the processes of acquiring freedom from the Britishers as it was realized that in order to have freedom more and more number of individuals whether men or women should stand together and show the strength of unity. With this mindset, women started contributing in the ongoing process and involved in even major decision makings. The social condition of women was quite appreciating in those times and gave them the confidence to come out of their home. They realized that in order to help our country get free from the rulers its important first that women set them free first from the social barriers they were facing since last many years. It was believed by the leaders at that time that women have to play a much visible role in politics. Our country's freedom struggle was a platform for restructuring the socio-economic and political status of women.

## POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN POST-INDEPENDENCE ERA

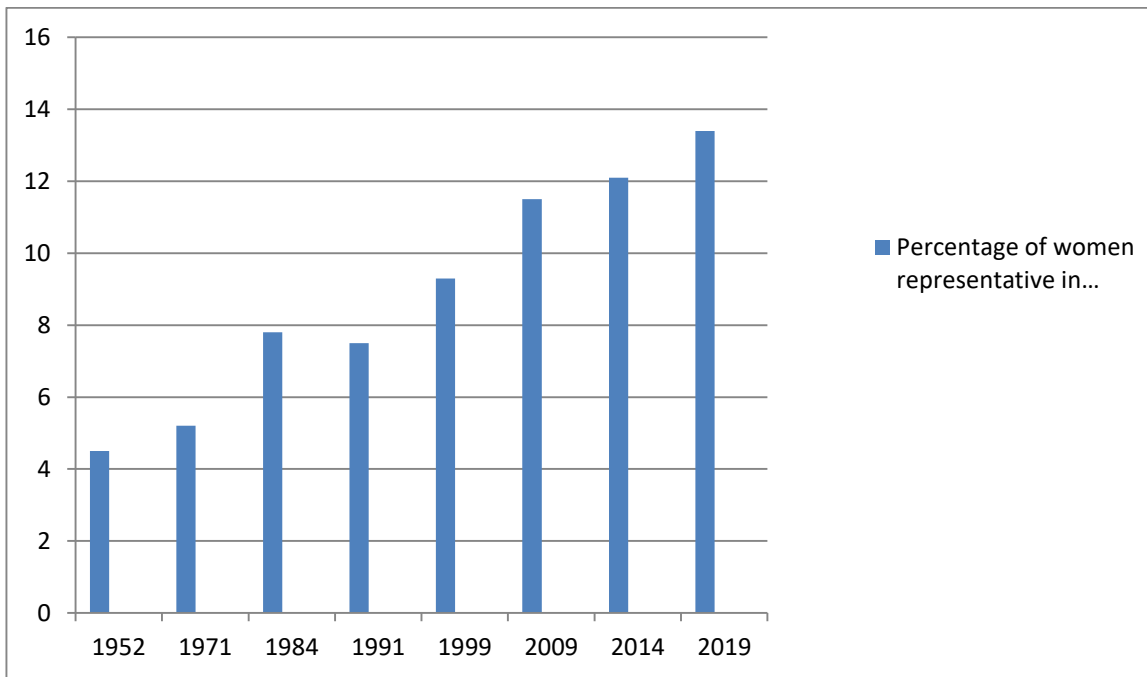
After independence, the status of women again started degrading. Men started dominating the women section. They got restricted to freely participate in social, economic, educational and political activities. They were seen as not worthy enough to participate in reconstructing the new independent strong India. Hence, a large number of women focused groups has come up challenging the existing patriarchy and male preferences and considered variety of issues such as violence against women, educational opportunities, participation of women in political decision making, better health facilities etc. these efforts were fruitful to some extent. Many women political leaders came out to actively participate in politics and even had an appreciable journey which encouraged many more women to let themselves free from barriers and explore their capabilities.

Due to various government plans and programmes, and number of NGO and SHG condition of women improved. Female literacy rate have enhanced. Family started investing in the education of girl child. Many schools and colleges for girls and been constructed by the government and incentives were being provided to the family who will send their girl child to school and colleges. Women were started working and earning wages for their expenses and even looked after their family financially. Government and NGO collectively worked to reduce incidences of female infanticides, domestic violence, dowry deaths, rapes and harassments etc. Since then India was witnessed many women's movement and women have seen to develop in every field but it has still a long way to go to achieve gender equality and women empowerment.

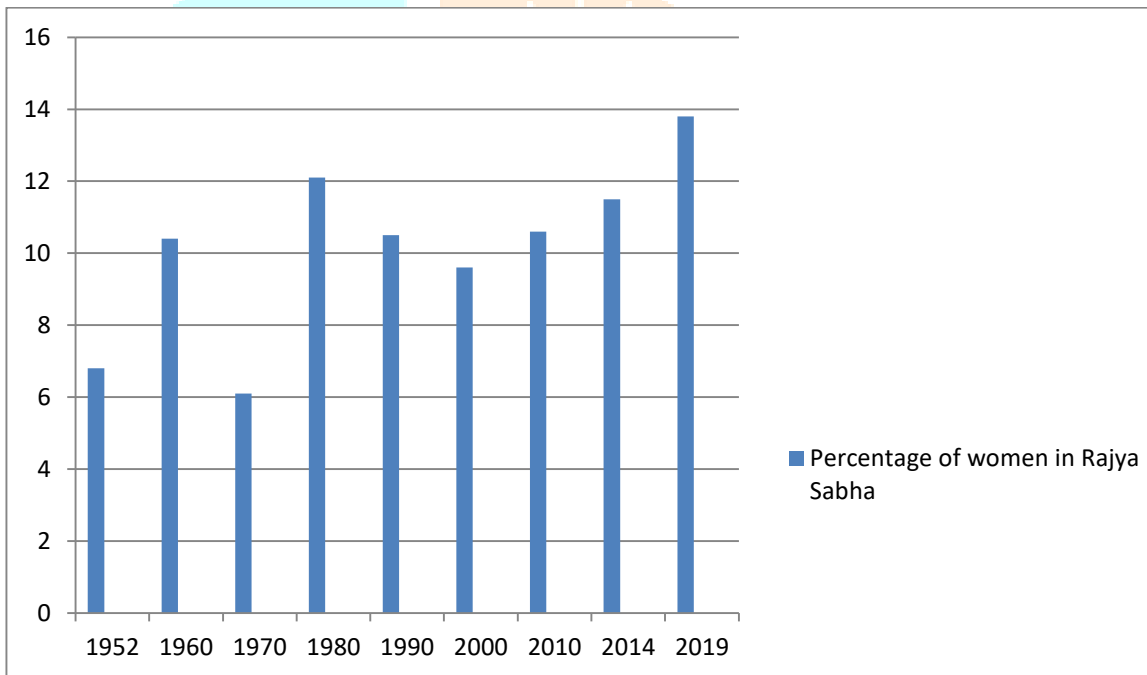
## WOMEN IN LOK SABHA, RAJYA SABHA AND PANCHAYAT RAJ

After approaching a considerable level of women empowerment, Indian women actively participate in voting and run political parties. Women has been elected as president, prime minister and chief minister of various Indian states. To overcome the remaining gender inequality, government instituted various reservations for women.

India has two parliamentary houses; one is Lok Sabha also known as lower house and another is Rajya Sabha also known as upper house. Percentage of women involved in both the house have been increased showing a better participation of women in politics as shown in the graph below:-



Source: Oxfamindia.org



Source: Oxfamindia.org

In year 1997, bill was passed by Dev Gowda, introducing 33% reservation for women in Parliament and state Legislature. But this bill was opposed due to overlapping of reservation of women in both general and lower caste category. However, on 9 march 2010, passed the bill which introduced reservation of one third of all seats on the Lok Sabha and state legislative.

Women in India have better participation in Panchayati raj then in parliament. The 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> amendment in Indian constitution have given 33% reservation to women in local government. Some states such as Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar have even reserved about 50% seats for women in local government. Cases in local governance requires a deep-rooted approach to sort them out, because of which women are believed to be the best leader as they were seemed to involve in every basic incident in far better way than men.

## REASON FOR LESSER WOMEN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

- Lack of political knowledge-Majority of women are unable to participate due to lack of sufficient knowledge in politics as due to old age stereotypes they were always kept out of these topics due to which they don't know how politics work and how the country is governed.
- Household barriers- Most of the women in India are not allowed to work. They are generally forced to only look after their family and household work due to which they don't have enough time, support and motivation to work for their betterment. Other than this domestic violence is another main reason for their lesser participation in politics.
- Safety issues- harassments, rape, eve-teasing cases etc. are another major reason due to which they either don't feel to go out and work or either they are not allowed to go and explore the world outside.
- Socio-cultural norms- women political leaders are not appreciated by the society or even their co-workers due to old age social beliefs that women are not the suitable one to be the part of government and rule the country. Women are generally not involved in basic decision making in their home itself due these kind of mindset of the people.
- Lack of role models- there are not enough role models who can show them the path to fight against all odds and inspire women to participate in the political field.
- Illiteracy and economical instability- major section of women do not acquire even the basic education due to which they are not able to participate in political affairs as they are not knowledgeable or confident enough. Most of the women are unemployed, hence they are not economically stable enough to involve themselves in any such work which needs a little funding.

## WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH POLITICAL UPLIFTMENT OF WOMEN

Having more number of women political leaders will smash down the age-old stereotypes and baseless social thought processes. Women are always considered to be not worthy enough to get involved in such an important field. But when more women leaders will be elected, this will definitely encourage more women to break out every barrier and participate in politics. Generally women don't participate in politics also because of the lack of a role models. So, if there are more number of women leaders in politics it will encourage and inspire other women. They will gather their courage and will surely get themselves involve in politics.

Apart then a role models for other women there are other benefits too which will directly and indirectly will bring a better platform to work for women empowerment. It will be easier for the elected women political leaders to bring focus on other existing women's issues which hinder them to develop. Generally, these issues are not recognized and considered by the men in power. Being a women, it's easier for them to recognize the hurdles which every women have to face in and out of their home in order to empower themselves and lead their life on their own terms.

Active participation of women as a voter or political leader will bring gender equality and will have women beneficiary effect on policy making by the government. Women political leaders will work more efficiently on opening door to more opportunity for women regarding education and employment, will focus more on providing better health facility, will bring out stronger rule against domestic violence and social harassment. Women political leaders can involve directly with the government to frame better and more effective plans and programmes for betterment of women.

Hence all these will surely enhance the rate of women empowerment in India.

## CONCLUSION

Overall, we can conclude that it is very important for a democratic country to involve both men and women of the country equally in the governance and law-making process. More the number of Indian women participates in politics more it will bring gender equality in India. Active participation of women in politics will help them to regain their respect, dignity, freedom and authority in home as well as in the society. Hence political empowerment is a key to achieve women empowerment in India.

## REFERENCES

1. Bardhan Pranab, Mookherjee Dilip. (eds.) Decentralisation and Local Governance in Developing Countries: A Comparative Perspective, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2007.3.
2. Behar Amitabh, Kumar Yogesh. Decentralisation in Madhya Pradesh, India: from Panchayat Raj to Gram Swaraj (1995 to 2001), Working Paper 170, ODI, London, UK, 2002.5.
3. Behar Amitabh. Madhya Pradesh Gram Swaraj: Experiment in Direct Democracy', Economic and Political Weekly, 2001.6.
4. Chattopadhyay, Raghavendra, Duflo, Esther. Impact of Reservation in Panchayati Raj: Evidence from a Nationwide Randomised Experiment, Economic and Political Weekly, 2004.9.
5. "Constitutional Law: Constitutional and Charter Provisions: Right of Women to Vote." Michigan Law Review, vol. 16, no. 2, 1917, p. 125.
6. Haris Jamil (2017), why aren't we dealing with the lack of women in Indian politics, the wire.in
7. Jha SN, Mathur PC. Decentralisation and Local Politics-Readings in Indian Government and Politics-2, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1999.13.
8. Kothari Rajni. Panchayati Raj: Re Assessment, Economic and Political Weekly. 1961; 13:757.
9. Kaul, Shashi; Shradha Sahni (2009). "Study on the Participation of Women in Panchayati Raj Institution". Studies on Home and Community Science 3 (1): 29–38.
10. Mohini Giri, V. Emancipation and Empowerment of Women. Gyan Books, 1998.
11. Sinha Dr. Niroj. Empowerment of Women through Political Participation, Kalpaz Publications, Delhi, 2007.
12. Sharma Dr. Sheetal. Gender Equality and Women Empowerment, Kurukshetra: A Journal on Rural Development, March, 2015, 63(5).
13. <https://in.one.un.org/unibf/gender-equality>
14. <https://www.isas.nus.edu.sg/papers/women-empowerment-in-india-more-needs-to-be-done>
15. <https://vikaspedia.in/social-welfare/women-and-child-development/women-development-1/women-empowerment-in-india>

