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The Role of Women in Indian Politics: Achievements and challenges.

1. **Author: Vanamala Srinivas**, Guest faculty, School of Law, NMIMS University, Hyderabad, India.

2. **Author: Chhandasi**, Undergraduate Law Student, School of Law, NMIMS University, Hyderabad, India.

3. **Author: Kiran**, Undergraduate Law Student, School of Law, NMIMS University, Hyderabad, India.

4. **Author: Devyani Singh Jadaun**, Undergraduate Law Student, School of Law, NMIMS University, Hyderabad, India.

Abstract

After independence, the Condition of women in India has developed. Almost half of India's population is female. A civilization or culture that does not respect and esteem women cannot be deemed civilized. New legislation and regulations in India have increased the number of opportunities for women's empowerment. Once the country won its independence, women were also granted the universal suffrage. Nevertheless, the proportion of women serving in the Lok Sabha and the Parliament is progressively growing. This has led to an increase in the participation of women in politics, and this article examines this tendency. It examines the evolution of women's political power and the history of the feminist movement. It also investigates probable factors for women's underrepresentation in politics. The essay also discusses Indian women's political advancement and future potential.

Keywords: *Women empowerment, Politics, Voting rights, Public office, Parliament. Panchayat, Political parties.*

Introduction.

India, an ancient culture but a young country, is a shining example among the democratic nations of the globe. Its constitution is a hybrid that combines the best aspects of several international constitutions. The Indian Republic's foundational values of liberty, equality, and justice offered Indian women a sense of optimism and security for the future. However, their ambition of full citizenship has yet to be realized. Notwithstanding the progressive goals of the constitution, it has failed to address the complexity of gender discrimination fully.

Without women, a culture cannot operate correctly. They are vital characters when it comes to a nation's destiny. It is impossible to overestimate the significance of their engagement in society's economic and political concerns. However, the history of society demonstrates that women have not received the respect they deserve. There is high sexual harassment and social exclusion against women in India. Persistent social stigmas continue against them, particularly in less developed countries such as India. Their equality exists mostly on paper and not in reality. In a

century such as India, when the feminine form is the ultimate object of adoration, the alarming increase in crimes against women is perplexing.

The position of women in society as a whole must be addressed while analyzing issues relevant to women in politics. In many respects, the rules and conventions of the society in which women are entrenched influence entirely their life. Women have long been entrusted with transmitting their societies' beliefs, traditions, and customs. Nevertheless, the socialization children get at home does not prepare them to handle standards that depart from the norm.

It is troubling that despite more than 60 years of democratic rule, the government and officials have not turned statutory rights into actual rights to enhance society. From the study of historical political systems, it is evident that women have never been incorporated into political decision-making or granted a seat at the political table. This further demonstrates how other institutional contexts do not acknowledge or value women's participation and contributions. To have a multiplier impact, women must have a more significant role in decision-making than they do now. Their involvement in governing bodies has remained the same throughout time. According to the available figures, the number of women seeking electoral office has remained the same over the last three decades. No legislature has ever had more than 15 per cent female representation historically.

Reasons behind the absence of women's participation in politics

Patriarchal cultures: The reality that "strong female leaders" are not respected in our male-dominated culture cannot be denied. Fear of public opinion is another issue stopping women from standing for political office. When men govern political parties, they are less likely to promote women to positions of authority, which may have a detrimental effect on their self-esteem and discourage other women from joining politics. Unless a woman finds one, every political party is essentially male-dominated.

Violence against female politicians: Female politicians have been the focus of antagonism, discrimination, and even torture throughout India's turbulent history. The "Assault on Ms Jayalalitha" and "Sexual Assault on Ms Banerjee" cases are prominent examples. To frighten and humiliate these women politicians only for being women and speaking up in politics, they were assaulted, mostly by male chauvinists, to intimidate and degrade them. This violence deters women in India from participating in politics.

There is pervasive sexism in the political realm: When women join politics, they are often restricted to positions that are consistent with conventional ideas of femininity—the frequent sexual harassment of women holding powerful positions by male politicians. As a consequence, women who want leadership roles often feel discouraged. In recent years, substantial progress has been achieved in this area, such as appointing women to high-ranking positions in the Ministries of Defense and Finance. However, there is still more work to be done.

Psychological factor: Over the board, Indian women are indifferent towards political engagement. They are considerably less inclined to have an interest in politics, discuss politics, attend political gatherings, and control political outcomes. Politics has long been associated with a desire for power and a readiness to use force to accomplish

one's objectives. Politics is a "dirty game" consisting of cynical and dishonest individuals, as she has been conditioned to think over the course of her whole life. Due to societal pressures to adhere to stereotyped gender norms, many women prefer not to join political parties. Many people anticipate males because they are thought to possess significant characteristics such as objectivity, self-control, ambition, and openness.

Achievement of women in politics.

Voting Rights: In response to a national movement for suffrage, the fight for women's suffrage started in the early 1900s, The British colonial government until 1947 gave no voting rights to the majority of men and women. In 1950, when India attained independence from the British, its constitution specifically granted women the right to vote. Prior to the introduction of universal suffrage, women only had the right to vote in regions where it was lawful for them to do so. The British administration in Madras granted women the right to vote in 1921, but only if they were registered property owners. The privileges gained as a consequence of the suffrage movement were restricted to individuals who satisfied the prerequisites of literacy and property ownership, including their spouses' property ownership. Due to their poverty, most Indian men and women were denied the right to vote. In 1950, all eligible adult Indians were granted the right to vote.

In 1950, with the aid of universal suffrage, voting rights were given to the women. The Indian Constitution's Article 326 makes this explicit. The Rajya Sabha (upper house) and Lok Sabha (lower house) comprise India's legislative system (upper house). In 1984, 58.60% of eligible voters participated in the election for the Lok Sabha, compared to 46.63 % in 1962. In 1962, 63.31% of men voted, compared to 68.18% in 1984. The gender gap at the polls has decreased from 16.7% in 1962 to 4.4% in 2009. In the 2014 general legislative elections in India, just 65.63 per cent of women were registered to vote, compared to 67.09 per cent of men. In 16 of India's 29 states, more women than men were registered to vote. In April and May 2014, 260.6 million Indian women voted in the country's legislative elections.

Women in Public Offices: There is no one institution responsible for operating in India; authority is distributed across several tiers of government. Members of both the state legislatures and the national congress are elected at large. In 2012, women comprised 10.9% of the total number of elected MPs in India, which was higher than the percentages in Brazil (9.6%), Hungary (8.8%), Malaysia (9.8%) and China (9.6%). (9.1 per cent).

There are more considerable indications of political activity, such as the number of women who run for public office and hold legislative seats at the state level. According to the World Economic Forum's annual global gender gap index studies, which take into consideration such a bigger scale, India has consistently rated among the top 20 nations in the world, with the ninth-best grade in 2013. India has more women in politics than any other nation, including the United Kingdom, Denmark, Switzerland, Germany, France, and France.

Panchayati Raj Reforms: In 1993, the 73rd amendment to the Indian constitution made provisions regarding the establishment, powers, and responsibilities of the panchayat with a three-tier system, i.e., Panchayats at the village,

intermediate, and district levels in every state, except provisions omitting the intermediate level in states with less than 20 lakh populations. The states determine the constitution of panchayats in accordance with the law. As part of the shift, women and members of socially and economically disadvantaged groups were allocated quotas. This has created chances for engagement in administration and development at the subdistrict level for all sections of society, including historically underrepresented groups like women. The quota for women has been crucial in the huge increase of female municipal representatives. India maintains track of the proportion of women serving as panchayat members, and the data indicate that between 30 and 50 per cent of the delegates at the local level are female.

Reservation of women in local bodies: While women are underrepresented in positions of political leadership, there has always been an urgent need for steps to boost their numbers. In an effort to establish a precedent for granting women a legitimate presence in public life, the 73rd and the 74th constitutional Amendment Act designated seats for women in local bodies, that is municipalities and panchayats. After these modifications, Articles 243d and 243t were introduced to the constitution to ensure that women would be guaranteed at least of one-third of the total of local seats available for direct election and that these seats would be rotated among the different districts. This is an enormous step forward towards the grassroots representation of women in decision-making. Hence, the condition of disadvantaged communities who have obtained political representation via Panchayati raj during the last fifteen years has improved. As a result of the strong ties, they've formed inside the community, a number of them have assumed positions of authority and facilitated real social change. In certain instances, women have been able to improve the living conditions of the whole community by putting a focus on health, education, and access to basic utilities.

A few states have raised the reservation quota to 50 per cent, including Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Kerala, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tripura, and Uttarakhand. The central government has suggested increasing the reserve percentage in Panchayati Raj Institutions to fifty per cent.

Women's Reservation Bill: The said bill was drafted in order to guarantee that women make up at least 1/3rd of all parliamentarians in the Lok Sabha and state legislatures. According to the principal Clauses of the Bill, one-third of the seats in the Parliament and the State legislative assemblies are planned to be reserved particularly for women under the 108th Constitutional Amendment Bill, 2008.

Bill, 2008. Parliament will create the authority responsible for assigning reserved seats. Women from the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes shall be granted 1/3rd of the total number of the Parliament and the legislative assembly seats allotted for SCs and STs. It is possible to assign reserved seats on a revolving basis to different state or federal territorial districts. After 15 years from the day this Act becomes law, women's quotas will no longer exist. As soon as the amendments were made in the constitution to provide reservations for Other Backward Classes, a report reviewing the women's reservation bill of 1996 recommended quotas for OBC women (OBCs). It also proposed the extension of reservation to the Rajya Sabha as well as Vidhan Sabha. It is essential to emphasize that these recommendations have yet to be included in the Bill.

Present trends and Challenges: Women in Politics

Women have consistently demonstrated that they are excellent community developers. Since they are naturally equipped with insight, intuition, and compassion, they are well suited to discern people's needs, give effective assistance, and adopt leadership roles that encourage the growth and development of their followers. Moreover, women have been shown to be more adept than men in forming coherent social groups. Notwithstanding rules that make it easier for women to run for office, social and economic forces continue to work against them. Sometimes, husbands and other male relatives have their wives or other female relatives masquerade as proxies in PRIs, while they wield true control. This method is referred to as Panchayat Patis. Although women are found to be more prevalent in urban and community-based organizations' top positions, such as mayors, corporators, and municipal officials, male employees sometimes need more support to provide female leaders with the necessary assistance. This is because male employees feel intimidated and resentful by female employees in authoritative positions.

When it comes to matters involving the Legislative Assembly and the Lok Sabha, women confront far more difficulties than they do at the local level. At this more intricate level of electoral politics, parties in politics, with all of their organizational and economic resources, play a much more significant role. Due to the substantial preparation required for electoral politics, political parties seldom accept female candidates for "winnable" seats. This is because some districts have historically been controlled by males and are consequently seen as unfriendly to women seeking government. Women are frequently relegated to supporting positions in political campaigns, and their candidacy is normally supported for less secure seats when the party's prospects are uncertain. Due to the fact that they are less likely to have the support structure that male members of an unofficial boys' club in politics have, women typically suffer when running against a high number of male candidates.

This widespread hostility is most evident in the ongoing criticism of laws that safeguard women's voting rights. In 1996, 1998, 1999, and 2002, bills that would have permitted women to contest for one-third of Lok Sabha seats were proposed but had yet to be approved. The Rajya Sabha pushed the constitutional (108th Amendment) Bill through in 2010, in its present form with significant backing from the left and Bhartiya Janta Party. Unfortunately, it failed to pass the Lok Sabha and is once again ineffective. Regardless of the fact that the ranks of political authority including Speaker of the House, Chief Minister, Union Minister, and even Prime Minister and President have been held by women, a virulent patriarch persists to oppose a more equitable distribution of political power. A campaign for political office is also costly, as any serious observer would confirm. A further obstacle to overcome is the fact that women often have less economic influence than men. Nonetheless, the majority of women who pursue public office must either use their own assets or those of their families or rely on contributions from their peers.

Modern political times provide new difficulties. Political battlegrounds have relocated from the traditional maidan to online places like WhatsApp groups and social media websites like Twitter, which has radically altered campaigning. A credible candidate can only be elected with an organized and sponsored digital outreach campaign

that is coordinated at the highest levels of government today. Male applicants are more likely to have the time, energy, and resources to execute this assignment.

41 of the 59 women who served as Members of Parliament in the 15th Lok Sabha possessed bachelor's degrees or more, proving that historically, women legislators have had greater average levels of education than males. Nevertheless, they need more resources and assistance to properly implement innovative advertising strategies.

According to BR Ambedkar, the cornerstone for social progress is political power. Policymakers often believe that tackling concerns of women's empowerment can be simplified to make sure that women must have equal representation in the legislature. To encourage the establishment of a progressive society where everyone has equal access to opportunities and to strengthen women's organizations, it is important to comprehend the relevance of participation of women in political and economic decision-making. Male politicians should take the initiative in addressing attitudes that perpetuate inequality, and they should vehemently reject derogatory statements made by their female colleagues.

Objective 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals has the following political, economic, and public objectives: Ensure that women have parity in the distribution of power at all tiers of administration and are given every chance to fully engage in these roles. Everyone on Earth must collaborate to make this a reality (SDG goal 17- Partnership for the goals). There is no universal answer to the issue of sex discrimination in politics. Yet, there is much that can and should be done to amplify the voices of women.

Conclusion.

Women's political engagement in India has been researched since the nation's independence. In light of the decentralization of government that has occurred over the last two decades, assessing women's participation in decision-making has become more significant. The Indian government prioritizes the gathering and analysis of real-time datasets to better analyze and react to social indicators more effectively. Efforts to improve gender budgeting aim to increase women's equality by collecting and evaluating more precise data on female's participation. At each and every stage of society and government, one-third of all program financing is already devoted to women.

Despite the fact that each country's political system has its unique peculiarities, it is always unjust and unwelcoming to female participation. Women confront challenges worldwide while attempting to join politics. These difficulties are ingrained in our current political systems and social and economic structures. In the setting of India, a woman's familial history is crucial to her public career. Most women are hesitant to exert the effort required to attain public office. Few of them hold key government jobs. Women and men have equal possibilities to engage in political sphere as a unit of an electorate, campaigners, candidates, and party officeholders.

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