

WOMEN IN POLITICS: AN ANALYSIS IN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

Dr. Manju Yadav
Lecturer of Economics
Department of Economics
B.S.R. Government Arts College, Alwar, Rajasthan

Abstract: Political participation has been defined in various terms. According to one political participation refers to those activities by which members of a society share the selection of rulers and directly or indirectly in the formation of public policy. These activities typically include voting, seeking information, discussing and proselytizing, attending meetings, contributing financially to party fund and communicating with representatives. The more "active" forms of participation include formal enrolment in a party, canvassing and registering voters, speech writing and speech making, working in campaign and competing for a public or a party office

The under-representation of women in the legislature is not Q the characteristic of India alone, it is a global phenomenon.

Traditionally, political scientists have paid almost no attention to the problem of under-representation of women in the governing institutions. The failure to raise questions pertaining to the representation of women has stemmed, in part, from sex stereotyping. The domination of politics by men has been viewed as a natural extension of the sexual division of labour within the family. Women's preoccupation with home and family has been seen as the reason for their relative absence from political position. Because women have been assumed to share the political views and references of their husbands and fathers, women's representation in the political sphere has not been viewed as an issue of major 7 concern .

Keywords: Women empowerment, Sex-stereotyping, Inter-parliamentary Union, UNDP (United Nations Development Program, CEDAW

I. INTRODUCTION:

"Development without democracy is improbable. Democracy without women is Impossible".

Madeleine K. Albright

The developmental thinking since 1990s is increasingly focusing on empowering women, decentralization and governance. The empowering need of women arises due to the fact that women are not equal participants in socio-economic and political spheres. Woman's participation in the political process, especially in decision making, is more important despite all social problems being related to political decisions the gender gap remains wide in the area of decision making and thus deprives women of enjoyment of rights and responsibilities as citizens and excludes their perspectives and interest from policy making and decision making. It is now recognized in development circles that economic growth and social betterment is best achieved when the mass of the population is informed about and involved in development aims and plans and sees itself as a direct beneficiary of the expended resources growth should bring keeping in view the philosophy of empowerment it is essential that an integrated policy and strategy be formulated that addresses economic social and political empowerment once such a comprehensive policy and programs flowing from it are put in place It will be possible to enable an all-round development of women which will usher in true empowerment.

II. OBJECTIVE:

The objective of this paper is to showcase the participation of women in politics through the prism of their parliamentary representation. Here a comparative study has been made among position of women in politics in India, Asia, Brics countries, SAARC nations and the world as a whole. Also, the study strives to ascertain the trends in woman's role in politics and underlying reasons for the same. At the same time a link has been tried to establish between the political representation and empowerment of women.

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Nie and Verba realized the importance of participation and further observe that it gives some sort of satisfaction to the citizens, satisfaction with the government and satisfaction with one's own role. They hold that if one does not participate in the decisions that affect one's own life, one's self esteem is seriously damaged.

Milbrath and Goel argued that the citizens must at least participate in the choice of their public officials in order to keep public action responsive to the wishes and desires of people. They further observe that participation in politics and in public debate helps to build a better and more noble character in the people ... people would be better human beings if they so participated.

Almond and Verba (1972) in their work 'The Civic Culture' have examined the various aspects of the civil society, and have concluded that political culture is created simultaneously under the operation of forces under the political system. Thus, the members of the political system generally imbibe the values and cultures, of the existing political environment. They viewed that democracy is characterized by the fact that power over significant authoritative decisions in a society is distributed among the population. The ordinary man is expected to take an active part in governmental affairs, to be aware of how decisions are made, and to make his views known.

Mc Glen and O'Connor presented an important altitudinal study on women's political participation in the USA. The authors have examined the attitudinal variables of women by citing different studies conducted mainly in the 70s and the 80s. In order to account for the male female attitudinal discrepancy three reasons have been mentioned viz, negative cultural stereotypes about the role of women in politics, lack of preparation on the part of women for political activity and finally discrimination by male political leaders.

Kathleen M. Blee (1985) observes that marital and occupational mobility do affect women's political orientation. But the direction of political change across the mobility statuses was not consistent.

Newmann Noelle (1981) observes that the women's liberation movement in Germany did have a marked impact on the political attitudes of the women.

Again, in a study on 'Women and the Public Sphere' it has been shown that even when women were employed in the public sphere their employment is considered as secondary to their 'real' roles. This has created two sociologies of work: the job model for men and gender model for women.

S.N. Sharma et. al (1984) in their study 'Participation and Development of women' have focused on the concept and dimensions of participation, participatory development, participation through voluntary action, as also the imperatives of participation.

Syed Qurban Ali Naqvi (1989) in his study 'Social Change and Political Participation' has discussed at length the various levels of participation as also the interpretations of participation.

Dowse and Hughes (1972) in their book 'Political Sociology' have discussed the concept of political socialization vis a vis the social psychology of politics. They associate socialization with role training in society and assume that socialization begins early. However, they opine that blind assumptions about political behaviour and psychological characteristics, need to be treated with caution.

Roopa Vohra and Arun K. Sen (1986) in their book 'Education and Problems of Indian Women' have studied the status of Women from a historical perspective and have presented the varying roles of women from the Vedic age till after independence. The graphic rise and fall in the status of women from the Vedic period to the advent of Muslim rule and British colonialism has been interestingly highlighted.

Snehalata Panda in 'Determinants of Political Participation and women and public Activity has focused on the women of Orissa in particular and compartmentalized awareness and participation, in separate compartments. She has pinpointed the variables underlying political behaviour, as also the socialization, role orientation and psychological involvement of women in politics.

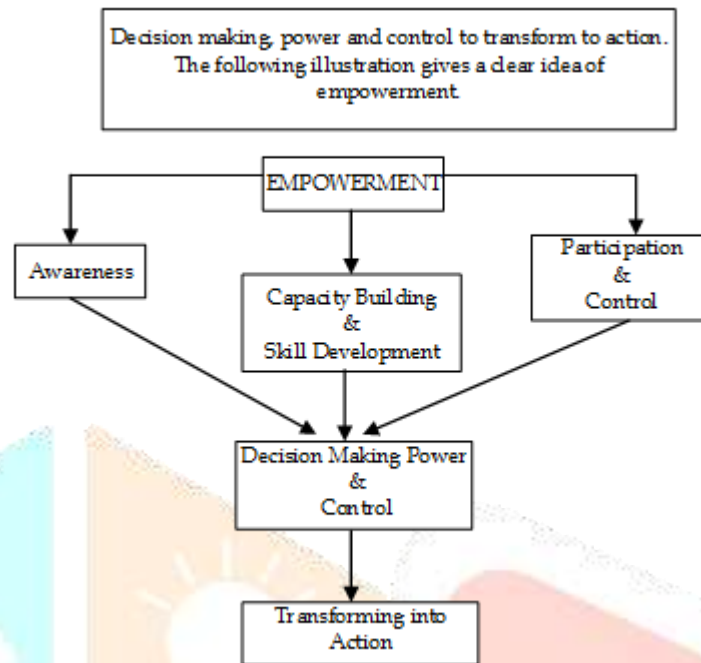
IV. EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN: A GENERAL UNDERSTANDING

Karl Marilee (1995), focuses on three aspects, which results in empowerment. These are:

1. Awareness
2. Capacity building and skill development
3. Participation and control.

This means awareness about women's situation, discrimination rights and opportunities capacity building and skill development with the ability to plan, to make decisions, organize, manage and carry out activities and deal with people and institution in the world around them. This involves participation and control in distant making power at home community and Society. This leads to action

which brings greater equality between men and women. In short empowerment is a process of acquiring awareness and capacity building to greater participation, to the greater decision, making power and control and to transform to action. The following illustration gives a clear idea of empowerment:



V.1 Woman’s role in Politics in India : A historical Perspective

In India, the beginning of the 19th century ushered in a new era in the history of women's emancipation. The impact of British rule, capitalist economy, and modern western culture produced here a great awakening - especially in Bengal-which sought, among other things, to end social oppression perpetrated on women. A new life was brought to the movement for the emancipation of women, when the stream of the social reform movement merged with the struggle for political independence of the country. After the achievement of independence, women have been given equal legal and constitutional status with men, still their position has not changed. One study shows that the nationalist movement gave women access to revolutionary political activity and responsibility. But as no national commitment to women's emancipation was developed or propagated after independence, women were once again forced back into a secondary and subordinate position . Women in the post-independence era represented only 4-5% of percent of numbers in the representative body which gradually rose to 11.2 % in year 2014 . This poor representation in the Union Parliament is surely an eye-opener and gives opportunity to rethink the reasons for such scant presence of women and to overhaul the political culture in the nation.

IV.II Women in parliament in 2013 - Report by Inter-parliamentary Union:-

The inter-parliamentary union is an international organization of parliament and works for the establishment of representative democracies. Countries are ranked by the IPU based on percentage of women in lower house of parliament. The top three countries in 2013 analysis were Rwanda, Andorra and Cuba. India was ranked 108th among 188 countries covered in the annual analysis on statistics of women members of parliament conducted by thr IPU. India fared poorly even when compared with her immediate neighbors. In South Asian region Nepal ranked at 24 led the pack followed by China (55) and Pakistan (66).

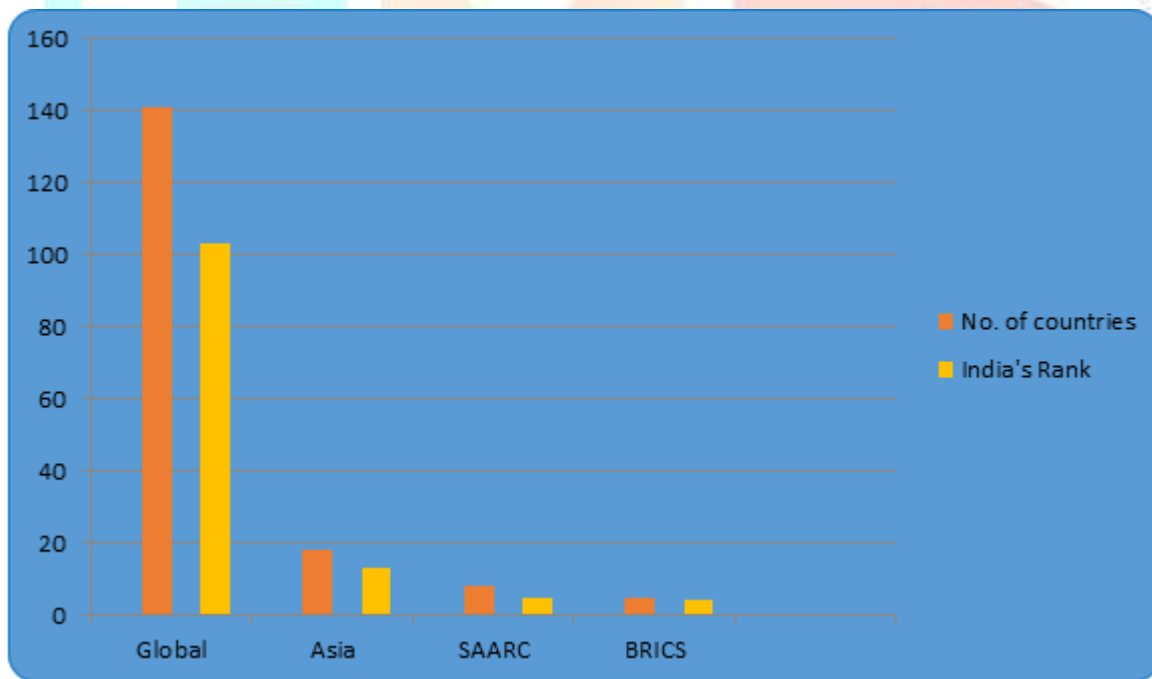
Country	Women in Lower House (%)	Global Rank
Nepal	33.2	24
China	23.4	55

Pakistan	20.7	66
Bangladesh	19.7	71
India	11.0	108
Sri Lanka	5.8	131

Source: Times of India, 26 November,2013

IV.III India's position in terms of woman's participation in politics at various regional forums:

Region	Rank
Global	103 out of 141
Asia	13 out of 18
SAARC	5 out of 8
BRICS	4 out of 5



Source: Women in Parliament 2013- Inter-Parliamentary Union

The Global average for women in parliament stands at 22.4%. There India got 103rd place out of 141 countries with a mere 12% representation. Within Asia, India is that at the 13th position out of 18 countries. Of the 8 SAARC countries, India's position is ignominious 5th. Nepal with 27.7% women MPs, Pakistan and Bangladesh at 20% each ensure much better representation for women in their parliaments.

There is some catching up to do for India within the region to ensure gender equity in the highest elected body of the country. When SAARC offered no solace, we decided to look at the BRICS, the emerging power pack of Brazil Russia India China and South Africa. India here stands 4th among these countries with only Brazil with mere 9% women, that fares worse than us.

IV.IV India's position in the world:

We looked at data on women in national Parliaments (directly elected power house) across the world from the inter parliamentary Union, an international organization of parliaments, to situate India's position on this yardstick. The findings while busting popular myths about many countries also show us the mirror about how far we lag behind in giving women the level playing field to be part of the political decision-making process.

IV.V timeline analysis of Representation of women in Parliament at various regional levels:

Year	2017			2007			1997		
	India	Asia	World	India	Asia	World	India	Asia	World
Single House or Lower House	11.8%	19.7%	23.4%	9.1%	16.9%	17.9%	7.2%	9.7%	11.7%
Upper House or Senate	11.1%	16.0%	22.9%	9.9%	14.8%	16.7%	7.8%	9.9%	9.8%
Both Houses combined	11.5%	19.4%	23.3%	9.3%	16.7%	17.7%	7.3%	9.7%	11.3%

Source: Archive of Statistical data on the percentage of women in National Parliament.

According to Women in Parliament reports of inter-parliamentary union ,in year 1997 India stood at 62nd place among 177 countries .In year 2007, India's rank was 107 out of 188 countries. In the year 2017, India's rank further declined to 149 in 193 countries.

Among the neighboring countries Sri Lanka stood at 75th place , Pakistan at 95th place , Bhutan at 96th place , Nepal at 87th place whereas India stood at 62nd place according to the report released on 31st December, 1997 by IPO.

As per the report released on 9th November 2013, Nepal scored highest rank out of south Asian countries grabbing 47th place out of 193 countries. China's rank was 73rd whereas Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh scored 73rd, 90th,53rd rank respectively. In the same report India secured 149th rank out of 193 countries. These reports exhibit sorry state of Indian women in politics.

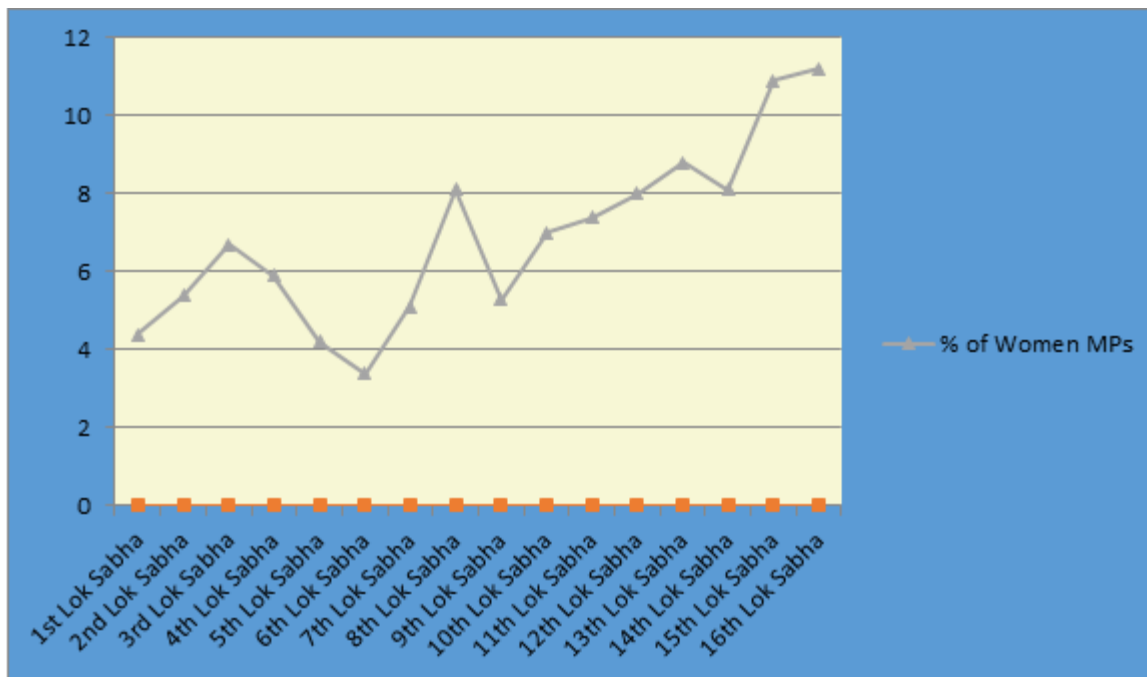
IV.VI An overview of women representation from 1st Lok Sabha to 16th Lok Sabha :-

Representation of women in Lok sabha (1952-2014)

Lok Sabha	Total No. of seats	No. of women members who won	% of the total
I- 1952	489	22	4.4

II- 1957	494	24	5.4
III - 1962	494	34	6.7
IV - 1967	523	31	5.9
V- 1971	521	22	4.2
VI- 1977	544	19	3.4
VII- 1980	544	28	5.1
VIII- 1984	544	44	8.1
IX - 1989	529	28	5.3
X - 1991	509	36	7.0
XI - 1996	541	40	7.4
XII - 1998	545	44	8.0
XIII - 1999	543	48	8.8
XIV - 2004	543	45	8.1
XV - 2009	543	59	10.9
XIV - 2014	543	61	11.2

Source : Election Commission of India



In Lok Sabha, their representation has increased from 22 seats in 1952 elections to 61 seats in 2014. A phenomenal increase of 36% points. However, gender disparity remains acute as 9 out of the 10 parliamentary representatives in the Lok Sabha are men. In 1952 out of 489 seats 45 women contested and 22 of them were elected which made 4.5% of total candidates. In 1991 out of 543 seats, 326 contested, 37 elected which turned out to be 7.10% of total members. In 2004 out of 543 seats, women contested on 355 and 45 were elected. In 2009 women participation rose to 9%. In 2014 the 16th Lok Sabha will have record number of 61 women leaders as compared to 59 women MP selected during the previous general elections. However, the figure is far cry from the 33% mark that Women's Reservation Bill seeks to implement women leaders account for just 11% of the parliament members.

The national election studies have advanced their observations regarding the nature of woman's vote in Indian election. One of them is regarding to a participatory upsurge among women along with other marginalized groups in the 1990s. At the all India level there is a remarkable closing out the gender gap between men and women voters (Men at 67% and women at 66% at all India level. However, an analysis of the success rate of women candidates as compared to men reveal that it has been higher in the last three general elections the highest being 9% in 14th Lok Sabha.

V. NEED FOR WOMAN'S POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT:

"As long as women of India do not take part in public life, there is no salvation for the country"

Mahatma Gandhi

The marginalization of women in electoral politics is deeply embedded in the party system and imbalanced gender power relations in the main political differentiation in India. They continue to be discriminated against not all the in the terms of seat allotments to contest elections but also within the rank and file of major political parties. It becomes imperative in this context to review the participation of women in the various steps of elections to find out why it continues to remain uneven and distorted even after 6 decades of Independence. Global endeavors to uplift woman's position in politics.

VI. UN'S WORK ON WOMAN'S POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT:

UN Agencies like United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and United Nations Development fund for women (UNFEM) and other NGO's invest in programs that focus on following:

- strategically build the capacity of women

- build a democratic system to encourage women's political empowerment
- Improving literacy
- training future women leaders
- helping women into all levels of government
- ensuring that legislation is gender sensitive.

Also, certain guidelines have been laid down by UNDP which are as follows:

- Increase the number of women in public offices
- Enhance women's leadership by helping to reform electoral processes, change political parties and strengthen parliaments, judiciaries and the civil services.
- Strengthen women's organization ability to advocate and implement projects and promote women's rights
- Promote judicial reforms to ensure equal legal protection to poor woman.
- Ensure the essential public services like health and education benefit poor women and men, girls and boys equitably.
- Promote the ratification, implementation and reporting of women in international and regional instruments such as Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).
- Reduce gender-based violence.

UNFEM supports women efforts to change discriminatory laws, address violation of human rights and war crimes and eliminate the injustice stemming from political economic and social inequalities.

VII. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS:

For the past few decades women have made significant strides in girls education mental health and Labour force participation and in politics. In the past 20 years women have doubled their Global numbers in parliament from 11% to 22%. 17% of ministers globally a woman and 2015 there are there were 18 women as head of state of government. Women's participation in politics is socially transformative. Research shows that women in politics raise the issues which are overlooked by others which may range from Women reservation in Parliament to girl's education .It has been observed that where women are not able to participate in peace process the chance of reaching an agreements is more likely to get delayed by at 15 years. Realizing this concept, the central and state governments in India have prepared plans and programs for empowering women. It needs to be realized that the goal of gender equality is possible through empowering women politically. In India in 1952 women constituted 4.4% of Lok Sabha members and now account for around 11% but it is still below the world average of 20%. This meager representation may be attributed to policy of exclusion of women in allotting seats by both national and regional parties. Hence a systemic overhaul of election process awaits India.

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