



A RESEARCH REVIEW OF WOMEN STRUGGLE FOR PARTICIPATION IN POLITY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the struggle of Indian women to participate in politics. All humans are born free and equal in dignity and rights, and everyone is entitled to all rights and liberties without regard to race, colour, gender, sexual orientation, religion, place of birth, or any other status. However, it is deplorable that women have been relegated to a subordinate position in almost every society. To combat various forms of women's subjugation and to enhance their status, women's participation in political decision-making is deemed inevitable. Gender equality is essential for women's participation in the institutional strengthening of democracy. The initial stages of women's political participation in India can be traced back to the early social reforms of the nineteenth century, and it has undergone numerous phases since then. In the early decades of the 20th century, multiple women's organisations worked to enhance the social, educational, economic, and political status of women. During the liberation movement, Mahatma Gandhi gave a significant increase in women's participation. Women have obtained limited suffrage rights. However, following the conclusion of the freedom movement and the country's attainment of independence, the majority of those who participated in the liberation struggle reverted to their traditional roles and ceased participating in political activities. As stated previously, the political participation of women in India could be better compared to that of males. In India, the limited number of women with decision-making authority always come from urban and affluent backgrounds. Women's representation in the Indian Parliament falls far short of expectations. Women have been demanding more territory in legislative entities.

Keywords: *Women in Politics Participation, Women Political Struggle, Decision Making Powers.*

INTRODUCTION

In general, political parties play a crucial role in promoting women's participation in democratic institutions. They have shown an interest in women's issues in recent decades. Members of political parties frequently establish support groups for various issues and demographics, such as youth wings, student wings, and women's wings. Youth wings and women's wings are the most prevalent auxiliary organisations in political parties around the globe. In addition to providing financial assistance, the members of these sections carry out a variety of programmes and offer support to the parties. Through elections, members of these branches or organisations are also represented in the legislature. Frequently, these organisations are permitted to submit their own delegates to national conventions and are sometimes even represented on national executive committees. Women's wings are essential to women's political participation, as they frequently serve as the primary entry point for women to engage in political activities. These organisations support women who compete for an office or pursue senior leadership positions within the party. In addition, they influence the agenda of the party regarding women's policies.

Even in a divisive environment, political party subsidiaries and parliamentary bodies play a crucial role in advancing women's political representation and leadership. Through political parties and their women's branches, democratic activities are possible. They bring together strangers who share the same beliefs, passions, and aspirations. As a result of the need to win elections, political parties do not typically accord women, including those within their own party branches, the respect they deserve when contesting elections. If political parties support equitable representation of women in party leadership and decision-making structures and create opportunities to establish a women's network that connects women from political parties and civil society organisations, then women's participation in politics and political activities will undoubtedly increase. Even though the main political parties in India have taken some measures to increase the participation of women in politics, these are still only half-hearted efforts.

The Role of Women

Women's obligations also include the adoption of policies and special measures to provide financial assistance to women during campaigns and while in public office. They play a crucial role by granting women equal access to public funds and by establishing special financing networks for women candidates of any political party. For women to succeed in politics, they allocated funds for training and skill development, discussion forums, and lobbying platforms. Women have been a part of politics for a very long time, and they play a major role in any political context. They function as party recruiters and are the party's most effective vote-getters. They address issues that affect women on a daily basis and assist them in becoming independent. In addition, they conduct empowerment programmes and leadership and training seminars. They encourage women to achieve economic independence. In addition, they mobilise people from all walks of life and their communities to participate in diverse activities, such as voting and participating in national processes. The women's sections are responsible for campaigning for their respective political parties and are staunch supporters of women's rights. In many political parties where women are at the vanguard of the decision-making process, women hold executive committee leadership positions and dispatch their own

delegates to national conventions. Women's wings also maintain a degree of independence. This distance from the party's central leadership will allow members of the women's wing to feel secure bringing up initially controversial or unsettling issues.

Since India's colonial era, women with and without the right to vote have participated in politics. The revolution was supported by the labour, words, and sacrifices of women. A chronological and thematic overview of women's rights and women's participation in electoral competition begins with the Swadeshi movement in Bengal (1905–08), which marked the beginning of Indian women's participation in nationalist activities and brought the issue of women's suffrage and voting rights to the forefront. Forbes (1979) notes, in tracing the origins of the women's suffrage movement in India, that the insistence of organised women to be regarded as equals with men arose not from Indian women's perceptions of their own needs but from the influence of certain British women. Women and men were officially granted the right to vote by the Indian Constitution of 1950, which granted independence from Britain. Provincial legislatures had accorded women the right to vote before universal suffrage. In 1962, 46.63 percent of women participated in elections for the Lok Sabha; by 1984, that number had risen to 58.60 percent. In the same period, male participation was 63.31 percent in 1962 and 68.81 percent in 1984. In the 1990s, women comprised between 10 and 12 percent of political party membership.

Hurdles in Political Participation

In many nations, women's rights are protected by law, and there are no formal legal barriers to women's participation in election processes. In reality, however, there are frequently formidable barriers to women's political participation. Despite the fact that the Constitution of India grants universal suffrage with equal rights to men and women, existing societal values, the private-public divide in terms of domain identification, and male predominance in political institutions create barriers for women to exercise their electoral rights and participate equally in elections. Consideration of women's participation in politics is met with a number of significant obstacles.

In a number of countries there is opposition to women's political participation because prevalent gender norms cast doubt on women's leadership abilities. Women may be underrepresented in politics, for instance, due to the perception that they are less qualified or lack sufficient leadership skills. Insufficient financial resources can also substantially impede women's political participation. Frequently, women lack access to political party funding and financial resources for their election campaigns and must pay for their own advertising. The prevalence of violence and sexual discrimination against women at the grassroots level of political parties makes their participation hazardous. In addition to male camaraderie and persistently stereotypical attitudes towards women, discrimination against women can also result from male bonding and attitudes. In India, for instance, women's participation as candidates in national and state elections has decreased because it is difficult for women to establish a footing in the political arena without the patronage of influential males.

In the political arena, it is essential to examine how women are perceived and how their masculine counterparts approach the issue of gender. In the Indian political climate, it is extremely difficult to be a female politician. A small number of women enter the realm of politics, and when they do, in addition to the responsibilities that come with it, they face a barrage of discriminatory and misogynistic remarks. Indian politics is characterised by a highly uneven playing field. As a "dress code," female politicians are always expected to wear sarees, salwar kameez, or conceal their tresses, and are frequently criticised if they do not. Two female lawmakers were mocked on social media in 2019 for wearing "western clothes" and appearing "vulgar." While our society openly accepts Kamala Harris and her high heels, Mahua Mitra's branded handbags and cosmetics are anticipated to diminish her political standing.

In a democracy, women's participation in the political exercise is essential. Women, who make up nearly half of the population, carry out admirable acts. The population has not been denied as a result of disproportionate participation in all aspects of society and politics. In spite of significant progress in the majority of countries, including India, there is still an imbalance, a pervasive gender imbalance, and the plight of women in society. If half of the population is denied their fair share, democracy is only half-functioning. Women are underrepresented not only in government but also in political parties in modern democracies. Any democratic system, as opposed to dictatorship. Women, who make up nearly half of the world's population, have been denied equal participation in social, economic, and political spheres for far too long. In contemporary democracies, women are underrepresented not only in government institutions but also in political parties. In a democracy, as opposed to an authoritarian regime, the power resides with the people, who elect representatives by exercising their franchise; thus, elections are central to the democratic process and serve as an expression of the will of the people. In the upcoming era, women's fight for political participation visibility will not cease anytime soon. Never has it been questioned whether women can lead as effectively as males. Women have always been leaders, and they will continue to be leaders, particularly when circumstances are difficult and their communities are in need. Despite having much less political participation, women leaders have done their best for their countries, and they deserve equal political participation.

The low number of women who seek for office is due to the absence of support provided by political parties to women. Parties primarily utilise women as electors, campaigners, and supporters. Female candidates are excluded from the distribution of tickets based on their 'winnability' and inability to generate resources. Attempts are made by the women's branches of political parties to raise pro-women issues. However, coordination is lacking between the women's sections and their parent organisations. Given that the respective party leadership hand-selects the office-bearers of these women's sections, they are unable to oppose any party policy. Women's wings have been unsuccessful in convincing political parties to meet their demand for adequate representation of women within the parties. The government must take action to surmount these obstacles. The first stage could be implementing more effective strategies to increase women's overall literacy. In order to educate rural women about their rights, current economic conditions, potential solutions, etc., special campaigns and seminars can be organised in rural areas. Parties can

campaign in these areas and explain their policies and benefits in vernacular so that women can make an informed, uninfluenced voting decision. They should encourage women to come forward and discuss the societal issues they confront on a daily basis, and solicit their thoughts on potential solutions. Women from lower categories should not only be encouraged to vote, but also to run for local office.

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