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Empowering Women In Indian Politics: Their Journey And Impact

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Abstract:

Women participate far less than males in Indian politics, which is perceived by the public as being a male-dominated field. Politics is also a murky and dishonest game. Women feel they are not secure physically and mentally in the political arena. Even they are unable to make decisions about their own life. So, how can women manage the administrative sector? Nevertheless, the Indian government has introduced several political initiatives to get women to join. The government established measures to improve the status of women in society after the country gained independence (1947). Also, women were given greater influence by designating 33 percent of the seats on the short political sector's decision-making platform. Yet the reality is that women's political engagement is either below average or much below average. But we can see that such amazing women did not simply reign throughout India's political history. They continue to leave a mark on Indian politics and are remembered by the outside world. This research focuses on the contributions made by those women during and after India's Independence.

[**Keywords:** Women, Political Activity, India]

Introduction:

Politics and government are two sides of the same coin, and the advancement of an entire country depends on them. Similar efforts were made to build India by political parties following its independence. They developed several policies to free women from outdated orthodoxies with a particular focus on the advancement and empowerment of women. Without the advancement of women, Mahatma Gandhi underlined, a nation cannot advance. Several political parties began to set aside seats in the political arena for female lawmakers. Many women also directly participated during the time of India's freedom movement up to the present and showed their ability in the political arena.

Kakati, Karnataka, was the place of Rani Chennamma's birth in 1778. She received instruction in horseback riding, sword fighting, and archery beginning in her early years. She married Kittur Mallasarja Desai's king when she was fifteen years old. She lost her only son in 1824, after the death of her husband in 1816. The state was then incorporated into British Territory because it had no successor at the time. Although a battle ensued as a result of Rani's refusal to submit to British rule, Rani ultimately triumphed. After twelve days of fighting, the larger group of British soldiers surrounded the Kittur. She was eventually defeated and lived out the remainder of her days as a prisoner until her death in 1829. Here it does not end, The Queen of Awadh Begum Hazrat Mahal

was the first woman to struggle for Independence from the rule of the British East India Company. She was born into a poor household in Faizabad in 1820, and her parents sold her to royal agents when she was a little girl. She then joined the Royal Haram of Awadh as a Ganika. Following that, Wajid Ali Shah, the final monarch of Awadh, welcomed her as his begum. After giving birth to a son, she became known as Begum Hazrat Mahal. However, the East India Company demanded the King's capitulation in 1856 and gained control over Awadh. However, the Queen vehemently objected to it and rejected British rule over the Awadh. She took over the charges of Awadh with his minor son Birjis Qadar on 7 July 1857. Awadh was attacked by British military personnel once more, but this time she fought back and showed her promise as an effective leader. Unfortunately, she lost the battle and fled to Nepal rather than handing herself in to the British forces. Fighting against the British East India Company Continued with Rani Lakshmi Bai, Queen of Jhansi, who was the first woman to fight for her country during the liberation movement. She was born on November 18, 1835, in Kashi to a Maharashtrian family and was married to Raja Gangadhar Rao Newalkar in 1842. In 1853, the King and Queen adopted a child for their future ruler, and when British officials arrived to usurp the state from the queen, she cried out, "I never give my motherland." Following that, the liberation struggle began. On April 3, Sir Hugh Rose's force arrived, and the Queen decided to join Peshava. She tied her 12-year-old son Damodar to her back and rode towards the British blockade in the direction of Kalpi. On May 22, she attacked Kalpi with her sword, causing a setback for the British troops. On June 18, the British launched an all-out assault on Gwalior, but the Queen chose to breach the enemy's front and leave. Rani accepted a heroic death by refusing to allow British men to touch her body.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, women's participation in politics went one step forward, The Indian "Nightingale" Feminist, poet, politician, and the first female president and state governor, Sarojini Naidu, also made history. She was born in Hyderabad on February 13th, 1879. She received her education at King's College in London and Girton College in Cambridge. India commemorates "National Women's Day" on the anniversary of her birth in recognition of her contribution to the advancement of women in Indian society. She became the first woman to lead the Indian National Congress Party in 1925. Additionally, she took part in the 1942 Quit India movement. Between 1947 until 1949, she served as the first State Governor of the United Provinces, which included what is now Uttar Pradesh. In the same timeline, the younger sister of Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of independent India, and the daughter of Motilal Nehru, who served as his spokesperson, Sarup Kumari Nehru, was born on August 18, 1900. While she was born in Allahabad (Uttar Pradesh), her family was a wealthy Kashmiri Saraswat Brahmin. She had a tutorial education from an early age instead of traditional education or schooling. She entered politics in 1916 after attending a women's gathering on "Indian indentured laborers in South Africa." In the same year, she was influenced by Annie Besant and Sarojini Naidu in a congress assembly. She married Ranjit Pandit professionally; he was a barrister of Calcutta. After that, she adopted the name Vijayalakshmi Pandit. Prior to Independence, she was the first female cabinet minister. She served as the United Province's first ambassador upon independence from 15 September 1953 until 21 September 1954. University of Washington DC, presented Vijaya Lakshmi with an honorary Doctor of Laws degree, with the citation reading: "You were born to wealth and station, but... when you lifted up your voice on behalf of the dependent peoples of Africa... you made yourself the dear ambassador to the heart of millions of human beings who never saw your native land but who will henceforth love you and look towards you with hope" (Davar. P, 2022). In 1962, she was appointed as a governor of Maharashtra. She was also a representative of India in the UN Human Rights Commission. She passed away on December 1st, 1990. In this journey, we cannot forget that Bhikaiji Cama, also known as Bhikaiji Patel, was an Indian political leader and proponent of women's rights. 1907 during the International Socialist Conference in Stuttgart, Germany, she was credited for hoisting the nation's first flag. She was raised in a wealthy Parsi business family and was inspired by the Indian nationalist movement. 1885 she left for London and began working for the Indian National Congress. After the 1907 conference, she went on a lecture tour abroad to promote women's rights and incite resistance to British rule in India. In 1909, she moved to Paris, where she was detained by the French government during World War I. When she was 75 years old in 1935, she was given permission to return to India, where she passed away.

In the middle of the twentieth century, when India's freedom movement was the highest pick, we cannot neglect the women who fought equally for their country. At Ambala, now in Punjab, Sucheta Kripalani, a political activist, was born in June 1908. She started her work as a Constitutional History instructor at Banaras Hindu University in 1939 after completing her studies at Indraprastha College, Delhi University. Her political journey started in 1936 when she married a freedom fighter and Congress party Acharya Kripalani member. In 1938, she became a Congress Party Member and served as a secretary of the Foreign Department and Women Section. In addition, she was a member of the Constituent Assembly in 1946. She was chosen as the state's Chief Minister in 1962, making Uttar Pradesh the first state to have a female in that position. Aruna Ganguly was a freedom fighter, activist, and writer who was born on July 16, 1909, into a Hindu Brahmin household. She attended the Sacred Heart Convent in Lahore for her education and received her degree from All Saints College in Nainital. She married Muslim Asaf Ali in 1928; he belonged to the National Congress party. This marriage began her political involvement as an activist, freedom fighter, feminist, etc. She was detained in 1930 for participating in the salt satyagraha and again in 1932 for participating in the liberation movement. She raised her voice, protesting the mistreatment of Indian political leaders in the jail while she was there. Furthermore, nearly all of the movement's key figures were detained by British forces during the Quit Movement, which she led by hoisting an Indian flag. She once secretly contributed to the liberation struggle by distributing leaflets, "inquilab" periodicals, and radio. In 1958, she held the position of Delhi's first elected mayor. She was awarded the Padma Vibhushan in 1992 and Bharat Ratna in 1997 after her dismissal on 29th July 1996. Dr. Usha Mehta was born in 1920 in the hamlet of Saras, close to Surat (Gujarat). Since she met Gandhiji for the first time during his visit to the Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad, her involvement in India's liberation movement was distinct. She took on a Gandhian way of life and launched the Secret Congress Radio, a covert radio station that aired lectures by revolutionaries and other prominent personalities from all throughout India, as well as taped messages from Gandhiji and songs with patriotic lyrics. She received a four-year jail term after being detained in 1942 for taking part in the Quit India Movement. She participated actively in Gandhian ideology after being liberated in 1946. She received the Padma Vibhushan from the Union of India in 1998, and she passed away peacefully in 2000 at the age of 80. Captain Lakshmi was a women soldier of the Indian National Army (Azad Hind Fauz) and took over the charges of women's affairs and Rani of Jhansi Regiment. Professionally, she was a doctor and completed an MBBS degree from Madras Christian College in 1938. After that, she moved to Singapore (1940), learned about the Azad Hind Fauz, and gave nursing treatment to injured war prisoners. In 1943, Subhas Chandra Bose arrived in Singapore; as a soldier, he required males and females genders she reached to meet with Bose to enroll herself as a soldier of Azad Hind Fauz and became a captain of Rani of Jhansi Regiment (1943) and created a 1500 women soldiers' group. Captured by the British army during the Battle of Imphal in 1944, Captain Lakshmi was held captain for over a year (May 1945 to March 1946). In 1947, Captain Lakshmi Sahgal wed Prem Kumar Sahgal, and during the partition of India, she utilized her medical expertise to assist refugees. She joined the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and spoke on behalf of the party in the Rajya Sabha. In 1998, she received the Padma Vibhushan, and she passed away in 2012 at the age of 97.

After independence, we observed women politicians who were not good but surprised the nation with their potential and decision-making ability. Indira Gandhi served as India's first and only female prime minister up until this point. She was the daughter of former prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru and was born on November 19, 1917. She began participating in the battle for independence when she was a teenager. In 1930, she created the "Bal Charkha Sangh." She also organized the "Banar Sena" with youngsters to support the Congress Party during the anti-corporation movement. In 1942, she married Feroze Gandhi and gave birth to two children, Sanjay and Rajib Gandhi. 1955 she began working as a party employee; in 1959, she was elected party president. When she became a member of the Rajya Sabha in 1964, Laal Bahadur Shastri was the prime minister following the passing of Jawaharlal Nehru. She took over as party leader following the tragic passing of Laal Bahadur Shastri, she became the party leader, and in 1966 held the position of Prime Minister till 1977 and again from 1980 to 1984 until her death. Gandhi was accused of malfeasance by an opposition party during the 1971 Lok Sabha election. The Allahabad High Court declared that she could not serve as prime minister due to electoral malpractice. Gandhi disagreed with the decision, which led to opposition party protests. She proclaimed "The

State of Emergency" to take control of the circumstances, placing Gandhi and the Congress party in direct charge of the nation. When Gandhi called for elections in the year 1977, everything came to an end. Gandhi sent an army troop to the Golden Temple in 1984 to control the situation after extremists led by Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale took control of it to demand the establishment of a separate Sikh state (Standard, 2023). However, the situation got worse and many Sikhs passed away as a consequence, and the entire Sikh community was incensed. Gandhi was murdered on October 31st, 1984, by her own two Sikh bodyguards in retaliation for the events at the Golden Temple. A BBC poll awarded Indira Gandhi "Woman of the Millennium" in 1999 (Indira Gandhi, 2023). As a competitor and critic of Indira Gandhi, Maharani Gayatri Devi was born in London on May 23, 1919. She was of royal descent. Her mother, Indira Raje Gaekwar, was a princess of Baroda, while her father, Maharajah Jitendra Narayan Bhup, was the ruler of Koch Bihar in West Bengal. She had a regal upbringing and a strong enthusiasm for playing polo. St. Cyprian's in Eastbourne, England; Shantiniketan University (now known as Visva-Bharati), India; Brilliamount School in Lausanne, Switzerland; and the London College of Secretaries, where she completed her studies. She wed Sawai Man Singh Bahadur, the Maharaja of Jaipur, in 1940. She established the Maharani Gayatri Devi Public School for Girls in Jaipur, working tirelessly for the rights and development of women. She was no longer the monarch of Jaipur when the country became a Republic Democratic Nation after Independence; instead, she was designated the head symbol of the newly created state of Rajasthan. She began her political career in 1961 when she joined the Swatantra Party. She then declared her candidacy in the lower house of the Parliament (House of People) and began her campaign in a jeep. She received around 192,909 votes out of 250,272 in the election of 1962, setting the Guinness Book of World Records for her margin win in any election. (All about Gayatri Devi, the Beautiful Maharani of Jaipur Who Spent Five Months in Tihar Jail, n.d.). The alliance between the Rajasthan Swatantra Party and the Hindu Jan Sangh (People's Party) was relatively successful in the 1967 election, but Congress took control of state politics. Despite failing to win a seat in the state legislature, but she was re-elected to the national Parliament. She was a strong critic of the Congress I party and spent almost six months during the Emergency period (Deol, 2020). After that, she quit politics, served the common people as a socialist, and worked for women's emancipation. She passed away on July 29, 2009.

From the last of the twentieth century to the beginning of the twenty-first century, many successful women politicians. Three times, J. Jayalalithaa served as the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu (1991-96, 2002-06, 2011-2014). She was born in Mysore, Karnataka, into a Brahmin family. She lost her father when she was young and moved to Bangalore with her mother. She discontinued her studies after secondary school because of her monetary insufficiency. She has been in films since she was a little child, but after dropping her education, she started working in films professionally. From 1964 and 1980, she appeared in 130 films and enjoyed a fruitful film career. She collaborated on several movies with Maruthur Gopala Ramachandran, better known by his stage as MGR, who founded the AIADMK (All India Dravidian Progressive Federation) party in 1972. She joined the AIADMK party in 1982, and a year later, she was appointed as party secretary. She was allocated a seat in the Rajya Sabha in 1984. A few years after MGR's passing, she became a party leader. Her party won the assembly election in 1991, and she was elected chief minister of the Tamil Nadu state. She was involved in several problems, including approximately 40 corruption charges and her son's expensive marriage, and in 1996 she was arrested after a raid (Jayalalitha Jayaram, Indian Actress and Politician, 2023). Her party won the assembly election in 2001 once more, but she could not serve as chief minister since so many court hearings had already concluded. She holds the position of Chief Minister for the second time after the state High Court quickly drops the accusations. Unlike her previous term, she now works for the general populace. She reformed the administrative framework, prohibiting the sale of lottery tickets and tobacco products close to educational institutions, among other things. The party was badly defeated in the 2004 assembly election and turned into a small political party. But in 2011 party regained power and won the assembly election, but instead of J. Jayalalithaa O. Panneerselvam held the Position of Chief Minister because court cases against J. Jayalalithaa dragged on, and she accepted some of the charges; as a result, the court ordered four years of jail as a punishment. One of the most influential figures in Indian politics was Sushma Saraj. She was born into a middle-class family in Ambala, Haryana on February 14, 1952. At Chandigarh's Punjab University, she earned her degree. She began advocating in the Supreme Court of India in 1973. She started her political career in 1977 with the Janata party. In the state of Haryana, she was

twice elected to the legislative assembly (1977–1982 and 1987–1990). Additionally, she worked with the Haryana State Ministries of Education, Food, and Civil Supply and the Ministry of Labor and Employment (Sushma Swaraj | Biography, Education, & Family | Britannica, 2023). She joined the BJP (Bhartiya Janata Party) in 1984. She put much effort towards becoming general secretary. She failed to obtain a seat in Lok Sabha but earned a seat in Rajya Sabha in 1990. After six years, she finally secured a seat in Lok Sabha. She was the first woman who became a Chief Minister in Delhi for two months because BJP lost the 1998 Delhi Assembly Election. In 1999, she was beaten by Sonia Gandhi (Leader of the Congress party) for the Lok Sabha seat. However, in September 2000, she secured the seat because BJP led National Democratic Alliance. She served as the NDA's minister of information and broadcasting, as well as health and family welfare and parliamentary affairs, from September 2000 until May 2004 (Sushma Swaraj | Biography, Education, & Family | Britannica, 2023). She rose to the post of deputy leader of the opposition party in her third term in the Lok Sabha. She won the 2014 Lok Sabha election, and Prime Minister Modi nominated her to the position of External Affairs and Overseas Indian Affairs. For her outstanding work on behalf of Indians residing abroad, the honorary legislator was accorded the title of India's "best-loved" politician by the Wall Street Journal ("Sushma Swaraj's Birth Anniversary," 2023). Pratibha Patil, a politician and lawyer who served as India's first female president, was born on December 19, 1934, in Jalgaon, Maharashtra. At Moolji Jaitha College in Jalgaon, she earned her master's degree in political science and economics. She subsequently received a degree from Government Law College in Bombay with a law degree. As a Public Health and Social Welfare representative in Maharashtra's legislative assembly, she began her political career in 1962. She was elected to the Rajya Sabha in 1985, serving as deputy chairperson from 1986 to 1988. After that, she left politics but returned in 2004 as the governor of Rajasthan. Her name was floated in 2007 as a candidate for president of India. She was superseded after five years in July 2007 when she gained office. She takes pride in her remarkable record of never losing an election she ran in. She put much effort towards the cause of women's empowerment and privilege. She established schools for underprivileged children, framing and industrial training schools, hostels for working women, engineering institutions in remote areas, etc.

Indian society believes that politics belongs to a patriarchal society and that women cannot handle these complex mental gymnastics. However, the aforementioned female politicians are not just excellent leaders; their leadership abilities astounded the whole globe. Beginning in the British era, women contributed to their country and actively participated in each battle for independence. They exhibited bravery, love for their country, and patriotism, and this behavior did not end with pre-Independence. After India gained independence, women politicians propelled it into global politics. In International conferences, several women politicians effectively represented India. Women overcame their social boundaries and gender norms and led themselves forward with times and circumstances.

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