

Women's Participation in Indian Politics: A Review

Chand Adhikary

Research Scholar, Dept. of Political Science
Bankura University, Bankura, West Bengal

Abstract: This study discusses the recent political participation of women participation of Indian Politics. The importance of women's suffrage as the first step in women's political participation is discussed and also the participation in Gram Panchayati Raj system is discussed. The main reason for that was all those conditions in terms of franchise. As a result, the women of the marginal society could not be a part of politics in politics. The dynamics and its impact on women's participation in politics after the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments are discussed. The influence of women in the social and political spheres through reservation is discussed. This study also discussed the rate of political representation of women in the Lok Sabha. How to increase women's participation in elections and some other obstacles to empowerment are discussed in the present day.

Keywords: Political Participation, Panchayati Raj, Reservation, Empowerment, Representation

I. INTRODUCTION

It is said that politics is for power and power is politics. Because politics plays an important role in determining the internal and external ideals and policies of the country. It activates a system in society. And in a democratic political system, every person is given the opportunity to express their own opinions and participate in the political system. Therefore, in order to build a developed political system within a country, everyone, regardless of gender, should be given the opportunity to participate in political activities. Since the establishment of the patriarchal society in our world, both men and women did not have the opportunity to participate in political activities, starting from the political system, in this case, male dominance prevailed. The name of the prominent feminist theorist Mary Wollstonecraft is notable for changing this type of system. Because she was the first to demand that women should be given the opportunity to participate in domestic politics. Since then, feminist philosophy has formulated various programs to establish an equal society, the main goal of which was to establish women in an equal position with men in the political system. Because politics is the only way through which it is possible to achieve and establish power. And women have repeatedly proven that women are equal to men in the political process. Just as we find evidence in history of how important the role of women was in the Indian freedom struggle. But even then, it must be said that even today, women in India, the largest democratic country in the world, are socially backward(Bandyopadhyaya, 2009, p. 9). The deeper the patriarchy has expanded, the longer the reluctance to participate in women has been prolonged. Therefore, feminists want to increase the representation of women in the political system and process, in the interest of their empowerment and in the interest of expanding the scope of democracy in the country. According to feminists, the success of democracy requires a change in the leadership structure(Chakrborty, 2008, p. 297).

Women's right to vote in the pre-independence phase:

The first stage of women's political rights was the recognition of suffrage. And along with the whole world, women in our country were given the right to vote in British India. The 1919 Rule of India Act recognized the suffrage of women, which was implemented in 1929. Although at that time women were given franchise under three conditions namely one. Women must be married, two. Women should be entitled to property and three. Women should be educated. 3 lakh 15 thousand women had the right to vote. Later, the 1935 Act reserved seats for women in the Federal Council and the State Council(Bandyopadhyaya, 2009, p. 124). The data proves that women's entry into politics was at the hands of the



British government in the pre-independence phase. Women's right to vote was recognized but not universality. The main reason for that was all those conditions in terms of franchise. As a result, the women of the marginal society could not be a part of politics in politics.

Position of women in independent India:

Equality has been established in all areas of India from the days of the Indian Constitution came into effect after independence. The basic rights of all, regardless of male and female, have been protected. But no system of participation in the political process was taken yet. As a result of which women have long been known as franchise by political rights, it is not that women were not represented. But it was so insignificant that it is not possible to analyze the whole with it. That is because the women who participated in political activities at that time used to revolve at the highest levels of society, even economically all those families were prosperous. Women from the lower strata of society were deprived of the right to directly participate in politics for a long time. Although the fundamental rights of the Indian Constitution, the establishment of equal rights for all irrespective of men and women was said from the beginning. However, it was not possible to establish political equality. So, after independence, women's participation in Indian politics changed from a public welfare perspective to the outlook of development, which we find in the first five-year plan adopted in the policy of the first five-year plan, where women's empowerment was recognized as a central issue(Mandal, 2010, p. 2). Even the Balwant Roy Mehta Committee (1957) spoke of women's participation in local autonomy(Hust, 2004). Later, the 73rd 74th Constitution Amendment played an important role in accelerating the process of women's participation in political activities. So, this Constitution Amendment Act was important because activating the political process in the same way gave importance to the political empowerment of women. Therefore, this amendment law is a milestone in the expansion of grassroots politics. This amendment Act reserved one-third of the seats for women just as seats were reserved for Scheduled Castes and Tribes. However, this reservation has been made 50 percent in several states including West Bengal. That is, half of the number of seats allocated in a panchayat is reserved for women. An important step that can be said to be reviewed for the purpose of totality. But in the real context, the extent to which women's activism has increased in rural politics is unquestionable. Because even today the word 'B-Kalam' is quite relevant in our village politics. Many blame the patriarchal system for such a situation, because patriarchy has helped a lot to sustain such a system. However, the 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendments have given the opportunity to the women of marginalized societies in the local politics of India to participate in the political process is very relevant(Datta, 2003).

Representation of Women and Men in Lok Sabha:

Lok Sabha is the lower house of the Indian legislature, which we all know as the House of Representatives. The representatives in this Lok Sabha are elected by the direct vote of the people. Therefore, the representation of this House of Representatives is important to the people. The elections to this Lok Sabha are held every five years, in which the entire Indian people participate. The ratio of women to men in this house plays a very important role in the political empowerment of women and how important their role is in the politicization of women. It is particularly important to review it.

PERSONS CONTESTING AND ELECTED IN VARIOUS LOK SABHA ELECTION

SL NO	YEAR	Numbers of Seats available for Election	Total Numbers of Contesting	TOTAL MALE COTESTING	ELECTED MALE CONTESTING	ELECTED (%) MALE	TOTAL Female CONTESTING	ELECTED Female	ELECTED (%) Female
1	1952	489	1874	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	1957	494	1518	1473	467	31.7	45	27	60.0
3	1962	494	1985	1915	459	24.0	70	35	50.0



4	1967	520	2369	2302	490	21.3	67	30	44.8
5	1971	520	2784	2698	499	18.5	86	21	24.4
6	1977	542	2439	2369	523	22.1	70	19	27.1
7	1980	542	4620	4478	514	11.5	142	28	19.7
8	1984	542	5574	5406	500	9.2	164	42	25.6
9	1989	529	6160	5962	502	8.4	198	27	13.6
10	1991	521	8699	8374	484	5.8	325	37	11.5
11	1996	543	13952	13353	503	3.8	599	40	6.7
12	1998	543	4750	4476	500	11.2	274	43	15.5
13	1999	543	5155	4859	494	10.2	296	52	17.6
14	2004	543	5435	5080	498	9.8	355	45	12.2
15	2009	543	8070	7514	484	6.4	556	59	10.6
16	2014	543	8251	7583	481	6.3	668	62	9.3
17	2019	543	8054	7322	465	6.4	726	78	14.4
18	2024	543	8360	7560	469	6.2	797	74	13.6

Source: *Women and Men in India: A Statistical Compilation of Gender related Indicators in India*. 2022. P. 161. 24th Issue Ministry of Statistics & Program Implementation. Government of India. New Delhi & Election Commission of India.

Analyzing the above data, it can be said that as long as women have been expanding, their participation in politics and political activities has increased. Most women are being given the right to vote, the rate of women's representation has also increased day by day, but it has not become equal to that of men. If analyzed on a percentage basis, it is much less than that of men. That is, in most cases, it can be observed that men are represented more. Which is clearly evident from the above data. However, one thing must be admitted that although women have contested the election in fewer numbers than men, women's representatives have won more than men.

So now the subject of review is what percentage of women candidates are winning or participating in the Lok Sabha elections. Even more important is how much political power they are able to wield. But before going into that, it should be noted that one of the main reasons for the paucity of women among election candidates seems to be their lack of financial stability, not their lack of qualifications. The candidate has to bear a large part of the huge amount of money that is spent on each candidate. It is natural for women to lag behind in elections due to money and corruption. And this is largely because it is not easy for women to become election candidates unless they come from a well-connected family with close connections to politics for a long time or are long-time active workers of a political party. Many times, despite women having sufficient political awareness and interest, it is not possible for them to work as close political workers for a long time, mainly due to family reasons (Bandyopadhyaya, 2009, p. 127). Yet, women who are participating in political contests or becoming MPs, in most cases, it can be observed that they are in high socio-economic and political positions or are somehow related to political leadership through family lines. In many cases, politically conscious women have been observed to play a representative role, but their number is so insignificant that it is impossible to judge the overall analysis or make a complete review.

73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments and Women's Participation:

The Indian government had established the democratic system as a comprehensive system for the entire country from the very beginning. The plan of decentralization that it had adopted to establish that democratic system in a well-organized manner at the grassroots level was given constitutional recognition by the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments in 1992. Among the areas in which this constitutional amendment became important, one notable one was ensuring the political participation of women. The decentralized system, which established equality as well as gave an opportunity to participate to those who were considered marginalized in the rural society till now, has become very important in the context of Indian politics. Since then, we have crossed three decades, today local autonomy has been established in the entire country. Even several reforms have been made in the local governance system. The reservation



system for women has been increased from one-third to 50 percent in several states today. It has become much more important to make a system work. The grassroots democratic system has become more egalitarian. Women's political empowerment has become more relevant. The rate of women's political representation has increased. The Panchayat system itself has brought about a revolutionary change in the leadership structure as women are included in decision-making positions. The work of self-help groups in education, public health and the like has given rise to a new light in the Panchayat(Chakrborty, 2008, p. 308).

In the last three decades, many researchers have studied the participation of women in the Panchayat system and have expressed different opinions. The research shows that most of the elected members of the Gram Panchayat are newly literate and cannot play a proper role in the management of the Panchayat. According to them, the rule of rotation of all reserved seats along with other obstacles to the empowerment of women at the Panchayat level acts as one of the obstacles(Datta, 2003).

Also, various studies have revealed that ordinary women in the village can discuss their family problems and physical problems with the elected women members without hesitation. Along with this, they can also exchange views with the women of the village about the various facilities and amenities of the Panchayat. Therefore, their awareness has increased a lot through the opportunity to participate in local autonomy(Chakrborty, 2008, p. 312). As a result, in addition to increasing the political consciousness of women, they have become aware of the various projects allocated for them. They have been able to provide protection to women from domestic violence. Which can be called a positive aspect of the expansion of the polities of the democratic system. However, if we review the reality that can be observed in most cases, the opinion of Mathew George & Nayek Ramesh Chandra can be mentioned. According to their opinion: "A convenient way to retain power in the hands of traditionally powerful is to put up proxy candidates in accordance with the letter of the law but keep the control in the hands of the dominant castes, landlords always men. Men are the main actors in words reserved for women or in panchayat even where the sarpanches are women"(George & Nayek, 1996).

Obstacles of Women political empowerment:

A lot of research has been done on women's empowerment, political participation and political consciousness, and it is happening even today. The reason for this is that women's political empowerment has not been completed yet. It is still an obstacle in the path of development. Most of the research claims patriarchy in this case, but this claim is not wrong, because I also think that such an unequal society has been established by this patriarchy. But the question is not that place, the question is in the context of political consciousness. Because in many cases it can be observed that the argument of dependence and various claims are made about the increase in women's political consciousness or activity. But have we ever reviewed in the personal sphere how progressive the men of the society were in establishing an equal political society or how much they accept the involvement of these women in political activities. Because most men are still not willing to accept it. In this case, the mentality of personal dominance and the tendency to suppress work with the patriarchal mentality. Therefore, just as we need to review how ready women are to review women's political participation, someone needs to review the opinions of men. But if full development is not possible, discussion and criticism will continue and society will continue as it is. Both need to be properly prepared. Otherwise, the way things are going, the way they are going, and the grassroots level family system will be established as an alternative. The reason for this is that we have already witnessed the full establishment of the process at the national and state levels in Indian politics. It is developing today at the grassroots level; in most cases the wife of the man who leads politics is elected to represent him. What is more important is that even today in Indian society, women live in an unhealthy environment where insecurity, poverty, illiteracy, casteism, belief in orthodox doctrines, and backwardness prevail(Mandal, 2010). Therefore, the first thing is to create a cultural political environment along with a democratic process. Otherwise, this debate will continue.

II. CONCLUSION

India has been practicing the process of women's political participation in various ways for decades to establish equal rights in practice. On the one hand, it has created and implemented various laws to increase protection, similarly, it has

Copyright to IJARSCTwww.ijarsct.co.in**DOI: 10.48175/IJARSCT-31011**

101



adopted various projects and implemented them in a structural manner at all levels of society. Therefore, one thing can be said that a path has been created for the political participation process to be successful in our country as well as the whole world. Overall, it has been able to present itself as progressive in the court of the world. Despite this, due to the prevalence of several superstitious mindsets in our society, the process of women's political participation is still facing obstacles. Which we find in the writings of Swati Bhattacharya and Tilottama Majumdar. Therefore, we still have thousands of miles to cover, the foundation has barely been laid. More determination is needed for the overall development of humanity. Only then will the shadow of patriarchal or male dominance be forced to give way to progress. And a civil society will be successfully established, and even the country will soon reach the goal of development.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Bandyopadhyaya, K. (2009). *Rajneeti O Narieeshakti*. Progressive Publishers.
- [2]. Chakrborty, B. (2008). *Paschimbanger Panchayat Byabasthar Ruprekha*. Kolkata, West Bengal, India: Progressive Publishers.
- [3]. Datta, P. (2003). *Women In Panchayat West Bengal - An Exploratory Study*. Dasgupta and Company.
- [4]. George, M., & Nayek, R. C. (1996, July 6). Panchayat at Work: What it means for the Oppressed. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 1765-1771.
- [5]. Hust, E. (2004). *Women's Political Representation and Empowerment in India: A Million Indiras Now*. New Delhi, India: Manohar Publisher & Distributors.
- [6]. Mandal, K. C. (2010). *Empowerment of Women and Panchayati Raj: Experience from West Bengal*. Kolkata, West Bengal, India: Levant Books.