

LOW PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN INDIAN POLITICS: CAUSES AND SOME REMEDIES

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ABSTRACT

In a democracy, it is crucial for members of all societal segments to participate in politics. Democracy cannot function properly without this mechanism, and it becomes unfinished. Women's political engagement is currently a dismal reality in the Indian political system. In numerous domains, Indian women have demonstrated their excellence and merit; nonetheless, their participation in politics is unsatisfactory. Since the first general Lok Sabha election in 1952 till the 17th general Lok Sabha election in 2019, the situation has remained unchanged. This essay looks at the reasons why Indian women don't participate in politics as much as they could.

KEY WORDS: Democracy, political participation, women politics, Gender discrimination

INTRODUCTION

In a democratic political system, political participation refers to the involvement of individuals at different levels of activities. Everyone from all walks of life should be able to join without facing any kind of discrimination. Every democratic nation in the globe strives to provide equal status and position for all people in all spheres of life because of this. Regarding this issue, India is not an exception. However, the male-to-female ratio in Indian democracy is a very disheartening issue when it comes to political engagement. In addition to the fact that Indian women stay out of politics, it is also true that political interests keep them out of politics. Women continue to be underrepresented and under participated in Indian society, where they are viewed as second-class or weaker members of the population. The primary causes of it are the negative consequences of the patriarchal social structure and the ignorance of women regarding politics. Women's limited political participation in India is further hampered by a number of issues, which will be covered later. After a long time of independence for our country, the scenario has not changed yet about women's political participation. Day by day, the participation of women in Indian politics increases, but it is not so satisfactory till now. The government of India passed the

73rd and 74th constitutional amendment acts to increase women's political participation in local self- government bodies and introduce various initiatives, but it became vain due to various reasons. Theoretically, women's presence in political activities is active, but practically it became a disappointing matter. Most of the time, the guardians of the female voters influence them about casting their votes. Even an elected woman Gram panchayat pradhan became a prophet in politics when her husband influenced her about all political matters, and most of the time, she had just to sign in the resolution books.

However, compared to the ancient Vedic and medieval periods, women's status and situation were not worse. Women held better social positions than men throughout the Vedic era. We have discovered a number of female administrators during the medieval era who were actively involved in politics, such as Sultana Razia, Chand Bibi, Nuraan, Tara Bai, Rani Ahalya Bai, and others. Indian women showed their strong involvement in politics even during the colonial era. Mahatma Gandhi started the Indian national struggle against British colonial rule, in which Swarna Kumari Devi, Kadambini Ganguly, Anne Besant, Sarojini Naidu, Kamala Nehru, Aruna Asaf Ali, and others actively took part. Matangini Hazra and Pritilata Waddedar gave their lives in the Indian liberation struggle.

WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS IN LOK SABHA ELECTIONS IN INDIA:

Sl .no	Lok Sabha Election	Total seats	Women Candidates	Elected	Percentage (%)
1.	1952	441	51	22	4.9
2.	1957	500	70	27	5.4
3.	1962	503	68	34	6.7
4.	1967	523	66	31	5.9
5.	1971	521	86	22	4.2
6.	1977	544	70	19	3.4
7.	1980	544	142	28	5.1

8.	1984	544	159	44	8.1
9.	1989	525	189	27	5.3
10.	1991	534	195	39	6.7
11.	1996	540	191	39	7.1
12.	1998	543	167	43	7.9
13.	1999	543	250	57	10.5
14.	2004	543	350	44	8.1
15.	2009	543	556	59	10.8
16.	2014	543	636	61	11.23
17.	2019	543	724	78	14.0

Source: Lok Sabha website//www.parliament of india.nic.in

CAUSES OF LOW PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN INDIAN POLITICS:

There are several reasons which are responsible for low participation of Indian women in politics. These are discussed below one by one:

Patriarchal social system: The patriarchal social structure is one of the main reasons why Indian women participate in politics at low rates. This social structure perpetuates the notion that males are superior to women and gives them the majority of the authority. Without a question, males dominate women in our patriarchal culture. Almost everywhere in our society, patriarchy is used. Because of this, women are unable to have the right opportunities to advance both in socioeconomic and political spheres. Politics and political activities are of no interest to them.

Excessive household work: Another factor contributing to women's low political engagement is excessive domestic work. A woman is an essential member of a family as a wife, mother, and sister. They don't have any free time to join in politics because they are too busy with domestic

chores. For the benefit of their family, they provide free service day and night. It is, in fact, a significant obstacle to entering politics.

Gender discrimination: One of the main causes of women's poor participation in India is gender discrimination. Due to their patriarchal social structure, the majority of Indian women were unable to take an active role in politics. Regarding this issue, they encounter numerous obstacles from our society. Despite having the same rights as men under the Indian constitution, our society nevertheless views them as second-class people. However, we do not observe this in reality. We frequently witness this kind of injustice. Virat Kohli, a male member of the Indian cricket team, receives a higher income than Mitali Raj, a female cricket player. Consequently, this issue has a greater or lesser impact on our society.

Illiteracy: The majority of individuals in our nation are illiterate, which is a truth. Additionally, the vast majority of them fall into the feminine category. Because they lack the necessary knowledge, they are unable to comprehend politics and political issues, and they clearly have no interest in politics, which is why they shun or attempt to avoid it.

Lack of confidence: It is yet another factor contributing to the low level of female political participation in India. The majority of Indian women spend much of their time with their families at home, and they have little experience with daily political activity. They consequently avoided politics and grew anxious about political activity. Then, their weakness is a lack of confidence.

Social and Religious barrier: Social and religious restrictions are a major factor in Indian women's poor political engagement. Women in our patriarchal culture are required to follow a variety of social norms. In addition, there are religious barriers that prevent them from advancing politically. For religious reasons, Muslim women tend to stay out of politics more than Hindu women, especially in Indian society.

Sexual Violence: Another significant obstacle to women's political participation is violence, particularly sexual violence. These days, politics has been associated with violence and has turned into a game to gain power. Political Newspaper headlines often include crimes like rape, murder, violence, and sabotage. Additionally, women's political participation is declining as a result of this growing trend. Women naturally desire to stay out of politics.

Economic dependency on male: It is yet another significant factor contributing to the low level of female political participation in India. The majority of women in Indian society rely on their male family members for financial support. As a result of their weakness in economic dependency, they were unable to make independent political judgments.

Political apathy: Many opine that political activities are an extra headache for the women.

Political meetings, political routine work, regular visits to the constituency, speaking at public meetings, political clashes, etc., are not adjusted to a woman's life with her family. Political apathy compels them to avoid politics.

Lack of political awareness: One of the main causes of women's poor political participation in India is a lack of political understanding. The majority of Indian women are preoccupied with family and domestic duties and lack political awareness. They don't care about politics. Instead of watching politics, they would rather watch TV shows.

Malnutrition: The low level of political participation among Indian women is a significant concern. Indian women are, in fact, physically frail. According to a UNA report, 50% of Asian and African women are undernourished or have serious illnesses. Their lack of physical health makes it extremely difficult for them to engage in political activities. Many people believe that Indian women don't give a damn about their husbands' or kids' health and instead serve them big servings of food.

Motherhood: This is a significant obstacle to entering politics. Motherhood, according to many, is a social concept that has been forced upon women. One of the greatest joys of being a woman is becoming a mother. As a result, they naturally avoided politics and got occupied with this kind of wonderful labour, such as childcare, nursing, housework, etc.

Remedies: Some remedies can be taken to stop these types of problems. These are given below one by one:

Spread of education: Education is an important instrument which can stop it. Spread of education increases the rational thinking of people and it can reduce gender discrimination among the people. No doubt it is an important remedy to stop low participation of women in politics.

Abolish gender discrimination: In Indian politics, gender discrimination is a significant problem. Due to the patriarchal nature of Indian society, it is common for men to have greater privileges in all areas of life. Establishing a national political awareness program is crucial to halting this kind of issue. In this approach, the issue of women's poor involvement can be lessened.

Family support: One of the most important initiatives to stop this type of problem is to get family support. Most of the women do not get family support to participate in electoral politics. In this case they cannot get their family support. Due to maintaining their family status they avoid politics and discourage their female family members to avoid politics.

Bold administration: This kind of issue is easily resolved by bold administration. Elections and violence are synonymous these days. Election-related crimes include violence, booth jams, corruption, criminalization of politics, and election tampering. Women avoid politics as a result. The only way to prevent this kind of issue is by aggressive and proactive administration. Women may become engaged in politics if the government adopts a firm stance and takes the required steps to lessen election-related violence.

Make Economic self-sufficiency: Making women economically independent is a key step in addressing the issue of their limited political participation. The majority of Indian women are housewives who rely on their husbands' earnings. Because of their financial dependence, they are therefore forced to abide with their husbands' judgments. This project has the potential to mitigate this issue.

CONCLUSION

Finally, it can be argued that there are a number of factors contributing to India's low female political involvement rate, and that Indian women encounter numerous obstacles when trying to engage in political activity. However, it is also true that Indian women leaders, such as Sarojini Naidu, Smt. Indira Gandhi, Mayawati, Jayalalitha, Smt. Mamata Banerjee, and others, demonstrated an active involvement in politics. They took an active part in politics and were important to the political history of India. Regarding this issue, there is no question.

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