

## **Women and politics participation in India**

Dr. Manjula Devappa  
Dept/ women's studies  
KSAWU VIJAYAPURA

Democracy implies equality for all human persons, men and women. As against this basic notion of democracy what is normally seen is that women are disqualified from different walks of life, more visibly in Politics. The U.N. observes that women constitute "world's biggest excluded category". For the accomplishment of true democratic spirit shall be ensured better political participation. "In the move violently for gender justice", Usha Narayanan argues, "political participation constitutes the first and foremost step in that direction.". Equal treatment to women in political life, to be meaningful and effective should start from the grassroots level. To provide training and practice in the process of decision-making, the rural democratic institutions are the ideal structures to begin with. One of the aims of the 73 Constitutional Amendment Act is to accomplish this purpose?. "The question of political empowerment of women in rural India has assumed considerable significance recently because of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act. The amendment provides reservation of seats and posts of chairperson for women in all grassroots level democratic institutions in the countryside known as panchayats. This is a significant step of far reaching implications and significant repercussion on the political process in rural India.

The present study is concerned not with political participation in general, but it is only a micro-level study concerned with political participation of women that too at the working class levels of political implementation. Participation of women in Panchayati Raj institutions has been an area of much interest in India. Participation in the local government institutions has been viewed as essential in promoting women's perception and development at the local level as well as in training them for participation in the wider politics. Democratic thinkers have in general linked liberty to the people by the process of political participation. Participation is maximised in local government because, "local institutions are to liberty what primary schools are to science; they put it within people's reach; they teach people to appreciate its peaceful enjoyment and accustom them to make use of it". Karl Marx stood in favour of mass participation in the process. To have political participation by the masses is at once a process of education and of building up of a capacity for governing the new society. It is a fact that

woman herself is an important variable capable of influencing the nature and scope of political participation and as a result the whole political system in turn. The attempt to assess and evaluate the level and extent of political participation of women becomes very much relevant as to the nature and functioning of the political system as a whole. It is particularly more beneficial to political parties and political leaders due to the natural qualities of women such as honesty, friendliness and sense of duty. The mobilisation of women in large numbers destabilized the bondage of institution and expectant them to develop a perspective on the wider socio-political problems.

When the widespread Declaration of Human Rights was adopted on 10 December, 1948, its Article 1, proclaimed that, "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. Provided for equality of sexes. It states that, "every one is entitled to all the rights and freedoms without distinction of sex." It is considered as a clarion call for the cause of women empowerment. It is not an disagreement for feminism. "Feminism is the political theory and rehearsal that struggle to free all women: women of colour, working class women."4th Milbrath and Goel observed that it is a tradition in almost all societies that politics is mainly an affair of men and that women should fall in line with them politically. The changes brought modern industrial societies are eroding this sex difference but the impact of tradition is still visible. Men tend to be more psychologically involved in politics than women.

The U.N. Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women which is considered as the Human Rights Bill of Women (CEDAW) came into being in 1979. This treaty upholds the following rights of women, (1). Their right to vote in all general elections and referendums and to be elected to general assemblies, (2) their right to participate in the formulation and implementation of governmental policies and to hold public offices and, (3) their right to participate in non-governmental and socio-political Discrimination against women, says Henry Chafe, finds in the deep rooted structure of society, in the roles women play and in a sexual division of labour which restricted females primarily to the domestic sphere of life." Therefore, it is argued that only substantial social changes capable of demolishing the structural basis regarding the traditional views of male and female roles are necessary to modify the existing trends in the political participation of men and women." The political participation so the political performance of human beings just like any other aspects of human behaviour takes place in a given

socio-cultural setting. It implies that the political contribution is pretentious by social structure, economic development and his taxicab factors joining jointly. The political behaviour of Muslim women should be unwritten in the Islamic perspective. It is observed that Islamic has given equal status in matters of religion and religious explanation to men and women but politically they are unequal ones Marcia Lee believe that, lack of female participation in politics stems from three factors, namely, children at home, faro ' sex discrimination and perceptions of women that convinced things are not proper to do."The generally accepted sex - role socialization process is considered to be beneficial to males in the field of political participation although women may be paying attentiveness in politics.

<b>S. No</b>	<b>year</b>	<b>Total No of seats</b>	<b>No. of women member</b>	<b>perce ntage</b>	<b>Women Minister s</b>
1	1952	499	22	4.4	3
2	1957	500	27	5.4	3
3	1962	503	34	6.7	5
4	1967	523	31	5.9	5
5	1971	521	22	4.2	3
6	1977	544	19	3.4	2
7		544	28	5.1	8

	1980				
8	1984	544	44	8.1	5
9	1989	529	28	5.3	1
10	1991	543	36	7.0	5
11	1996	541	40	7.4	5
12	1998	545	44	8.0	4
13	1999	543	48	8.8	9
14	2004	543	45	8.1	10
15	2009	543	59	10.9	9
16	2014	543	61	11.2	7

Source: **Election Commission of India**

shows that in the first Lok Sabha, out of 499 seats, there were 22(4.40%) women members elected to the house in 1952. In the succeeding elections their number fluctuated. It was in 1984 that the highest number of women members, ie.44 (8.1%) out of 544 members entered the Lok Sabha. But this tendency was not seen in the following elections. Their number was only 28 (5.30%) in 1989

and greater than before to 39(7.1%) in 1991. That women's share in voting is not properly reflected in their overall demonstration in the highest law-making body of the country is a fact which should be taken into account while discussing women's political participation.

even though the homoeerotic position established to women in the pre and post Aryan period and in the Vedic times, that too in a substantive and unavoidable compartment, made requisite on society by the tenets of religion and observance, women of later period spanning among the middle and modern ages have been denied their rightful place of honour owing to a variety of reasons both religious and commonplace. Indian society, a vortex of immeasurable caste and mutual combinations, has paid scant regards for the education and welfare of women culminating in child wedding, sati, ban on widow marriage, and divorce, to name a few atrocities on them. It is a pity that the rulers never tried to wind somebody up the orthodox religious beliefs by initiating reform, which would enhance the prestige and status of women. Even the few women who hobnobbed with Mahatma Gandhi and the frontline leaders of the freedom movement were from rich and educated milieu and did not represent the backward and downtrodden womenfolk of India subjected to all kinds of exploitations and tortures. The leaders of both pre and post independent India paid nothing but lip service to the upliftment of women in various walks of life together with equitable representation in the legislature, both at the midpoint and in the states, with the result that even now women do not enjoy pride of place in the power centres of legislation, administration and party leadership. It is to be viewed with concern that NGOs which played an overriding role in social reform elsewhere in the world with astonishing achievement, have not paid due concentration in India to the cause of women's political participation and empowerment which would have malformed the face of its management, political culture and sense of values significantly for the better.

#### References

1. Usha Narayanan, "Women's Political Empowerment: Imperatives and Challenges", *Mainstream*, April 10.
2. Prabhat Datta, *Major Issues in the Development Debate: Lessons in Empowerment from India*, Kanishka Publishers, New Delhi, 1998.
3. S.R. Bakshi, *Empowerment of Women and Politics of Reservation*, Book Enclave, Jaipur, 2002.
4. *International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences* Vol.12, New York, 1968.

5. Hari Hara Das, Introduction to Political Sociology, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1997.
6. K. Seshadri, Political Linkages and Rural Development, National Publishing House. New Delhi, 1976.
7. Lester W. Milbrath, M.L. Goel, Political Participation: How and Why Do People Get Involved in Politics, Rand McNally, Chicago.
8. G.A. Almond, G.B. Powell Jr., Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach, Amerind Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1975.
9. Robert E. Dowse, Political Sociology, John Wiley and Sons, London, 1972.
10. Sidney Verba, Norman H. Nie, Participation in America: Political Democracy and Social Equality, Harper Row, New York, 1972.
11. Norman D. Palmer, Elections and Political Development: The South Asian Experience, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1976.
12. Seymour Martin Lipset, Political Man, Arnold Heinemann, New Delhi, 1973.