

---

## WOMEN IN PUNJAB POLITICS: AN ANALYTICAL OVERVIEW

*Author's Name: Shabnam  
Research Scholar of Political Science  
Punjabi University Patiala, Punjab.*

### Abstract

*This paper attempts to understand the concept of women's political participation in state government and their status in Punjab politics. Even though Punjab is a highly developed state in economic terms yet the condition of women here is not different than their counterparts in the world due to its strong patriarchal values. The efforts have been made to explore the status and their role in Punjab politics. Under 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> amendment of the Indian constitution, women have an opportunity to contest elections at the Panchayat level. The reservation in Panchayati Raj Institutions was a small step for upliftment of the women in the state like Punjab. So far as political participation is concerned, it is a process by which women participate in the functioning of Government. It is not merely right to vote but also includes their representation in politics, their involvement in decision making process of governance. The Indian Constitution is firmly, rounded in the principle of Liberty, Fraternity, Equality and Justice. But these provisions have not translated into the intended status for women in Country, be it in the economic or political front. While the political playing field in each state of India has its own particular features, one thing remains common to all. It is uneven and not conducive to women's participation.*

**Keywords:** Women, Participation, Politics, Punjab, Panchayati Raj, Empowerment.

### Review of Literature

**Kiran Saxena's, (2000) in his book "Women and Politics"**<sup>i</sup> deals with the factors for the subordinate position of women in politics and some of the factors that imprison women to reach the top arc block. She declared lack of support by family and male counterparts, incomplete access to information, restricted access to training, fear of achievement, marriage, motherhood preordination of the family over vocation and stereotype insight etc. as the main factors. The author reveals that women all over the world are not satisfied with this position and exploring the ways to come out from this imposes.

**Mridula Sharda, (2010) in her book "Evolution of Panchayati Raj in India From Traditional to Constitutionalize Panchayats"**<sup>ii</sup> deals with an important aspect of Indian politics that is the Panchayati Raj Institutions. Since Vedic times these were the most stable institutions in the field of governance. The fundamental basis of democracy is b decentralization of powers and association of people at all possible levels in the organization and management of civil and political affairs. In case of India, the concept of democratic decentralizations is not new to the society. It evolved through ages. In ancient India it grew according to the need of that society. People directly participated in the political affairs and they had effective control over the administration.

**Pamela Singh, (2007) in her book "Women's Participation in Panchayati Raj, Nature and Effectiveness"**,<sup>iii</sup> made a comprehensive study on the issues of women participation in Panchayati Raj Institution of Haryana. The study focused that the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment Act of the Constitution of the India has for the first time brought 33% rural women into the sphere of decision making. However only the increase is not enough, due to various factors as male dominance, cultural belief and values do not encourage women assertion. These factors have forced women play their traditional roles of dependent spouse, housewives and mother. Despite these restraints women members are able to participate in the Panchayati Raj Institutions and address the women issues in the local level.

**G.S. Mehta, (2002) in his study “Participation of Women in the Panchayati Raj System”<sup>iv</sup>** has examined various issues related to implementation pattern of reservation policy and its awareness among rural women, nature of socio-economic status of elected women, extent of participation of women pradhans and members in different activities and empowerment after elected as the representatives of PRIs.

**Evelin Hust, (2004) in the book “Women’s Political Representation and Empowerment”<sup>v</sup>** in India tries to capture the female and male sentiment on women’s acquired presence in local politics in India after the introduction of 73rd Amendment to the Indian Constitution in 1992. Traditionally, politics in Indian villages has been an exclusive male affair and women had hardly any presence in public affairs, but this situation seems to have changed now. It seems quite remarkable that India, which has been frequently labeled as a ‘developing’ or ‘backward’ state in respect of status of women, is at the forefront with regard to the inclusion of women into institutional political process. But practically, without doubt, women in the rural areas in most Indian states face challenging obstacles in the way of performing in politics due to structural discrimination, and this culturally ordained separation of the male and the female world has effectively debarred most women from becoming politically active.

**Javed Siddiqui in his book, “Democratic Decentralised Governance Issues and Challenges”<sup>vi</sup>** has examined that the decentralization is the policy of delegating decision-making authority down to the lower levels in an organization, relatively away from and lower in a central authority. A decentralized organization shows fewer tiers in the organizational structure, wider span of control, and a bottom-to-top flow of decision-making and flow of ideas. In a centralized organization, the decisions are made by top executives or on the basis of pre-set policies. These decisions or policies are then enforced several tiers of the organization after gradually broadening the span of control until it reaches the bottom tier.

### **Objectives**

1. To examine the status of women in Punjab.
2. To explore the role of women in freedom struggle in Punjab.
3. To examine the political Representation of women in legislative Assemblies.
4. To examine the hurdles in the path of women to take active participate in politics.
5. To study the status of women in politics after the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Amendment.
6. To examine the role of NGOs towards women empowerment.

### **Research Methodology**

For the completion of the present research paper, historical and descriptive methods are used. The present study has been complete with the help of both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources comprise the text of census. The secondary data has been collected from various books, journals, articles and newspaper etc.

### **Introduction**

People’s participation is closely related to democracy and the theory of representation. The success of democracy depends upon the extent of participation especially at local level, In their study of six Nations Almond and Verba observe “the citizen unlike the subject is an active participant in the political input process by which political decisions are made”. Political participation is the hall-mark of democracy and modernization. In the traditional society government and politics are concerns of a narrow elite. On the contrary the more

advanced nations have accepted the principle of active citizenship. The focus and nature of participation varies widely, social and economic modernization produces broadened participation, Huntington and Nelson defined political participation as the activity to provide citizens designed to influence Governmental decision making.<sup>vii</sup> India is a largest democracy in the world. Political participation helps the individual to be associated with the political system and the decision making process as such. Political participation includes all the political activities like participation in the election process as voters and candidates, in political parties as workers and in the decision making process as representatives and executives.<sup>viii</sup> Therefore, women's participation in decision-making process is vital for the betterment of their human right conditions. If real democracy has to be sustained, the women, comprising about half of the world's population have to be incorporated at different levels and different processes of decision-making. This fact was realized at the UN convention on the political rights of women in 1952. All congresses worldwide emphasized the need for political participation of women.<sup>ix</sup>

Punjab is a state in north India and has 13 seats in the Lok Sabha of which four are reserved for scheduled caste. Punjab also sends 7 members to the Rajya Sabha. There are 117 Assembly constituencies in the state and the last Assembly elections were held in 2017. There are a total of 2,04,75,053 eligible voters in Punjab, of which 1,08,52,972 are male, 96,21,574 female and 507 voters of the third gender. The state can be divided into 3 regions: Majha, Doaba, Malwa.<sup>x</sup>

The rivers mark the boundaries of these regions. In 1947, 13 out of 29 British district of Punjab in undivided India came of East Punjab, which was renamed Punjab (India) on 26 January 1950. In 1948, the former princely states were organized separately as Himachal Pradesh and PEPSU (Patiala and East Punjab States Union), the latter merging with Punjab in 1956. After ten years later (1966), the territory of Punjab was bifurcated into the linguistic states of Punjab (Punjabi speaking) and Haryana (Hindi speaking), with remaining hill areas going to Himachal Pradesh. As per census 2011, Sikh's are majority in Punjab state. Sikh constitutes 57.69% of Punjab population. Hindu plays important role in electoral of Punjab state forming significant 38.49% and Muslim around 1.93% of the total population.

There are many social and political movements which had played a significant role in changing the position of Punjab. Some social and political reform movements like Brahma Samaj (1863), the Singh Sabha Amritsar (1873) and the Arya Samaj, (1877). These movements were spread throughout the Punjab to major concern was the spread of education and were deeply interested in the upliftment of women through education.<sup>xi</sup>

After independence, in Indian constitution, there are provide many provisions for women to equally as men. In the preamble of the Indian Constitutions, in the Fundamental Duties and in the Directives Principles, the provisions of gender equally are enshrined in the Constitution of India. The Constitution of India guarantees adult franchise and provides full opportunities and framework for women to participate actively in politics.<sup>xii</sup>

### **Women in the National Movement**

Participation has been long recognized as a central theme of democratic governance where the citizens enjoy the right to participate in governance. Political participation of women is vital to ensure that women concerns and issues are integrated into decision-making process. However, the number of women in political decision bodies hideously low in both the Parliament and the State Legislatures. This situation of women has resulted in remaining inequalities and discrimination against women. Absence of adequate action, lack

of conducive environment in enabling the participation of women in state assemblies and parliaments has effect the disaffirmed the enjoyment and exercising the right to political participation and harmful the enjoyment of socio-economic rights. However participation is a process in which people involve themselves in the political process.

As women in freedom struggle, Kamala Devi tried to rouse the entire womanhood of the country to come forward to take their places in the society and in the body politics as an equal partner of man. She said, "The politics of the nation are the supreme need of humanity in its attempt to scale the ladder of freedom. No one sex can build up a nation. Women have her own unique contribution to make for the purpose of enriching life so that it may fulfill its own divine mission to perfection, so in the struggle for freedom they are destined to play their legitimate part and bear their share of the responsibility in breaking the chains that weigh heavily on people."<sup>xiii</sup>

The participation of the women in Punjab in the nationalist movement can be divided into five phases from 1901-10, 1911-20, 1921-30, 1931-40 and 1941- 47. Only important events are taken into account and women's participation is discussed. In the early years of 1900s that is from 1901-10, some of the women of Punjab mainly participated in the reformative works. They started their journals with emphasis on highlighting women issues. Bibi Harnam Kaur with her husband Bhai Takht Singh opened "Sikh Kanya Mahavidyalaya in Ferozpur in 1894 and in 1907, this institution started its educational journal 'Punjabi Bhain'."<sup>xiv</sup>

The partition of Bengal infused a new spirit of patriotism in the women of Punjab. And Punjabi nationalist welcomed the Bengali Swadeshi movement, the women in Punjab also stepped into the political arena.<sup>xv</sup> Thus, in the first decades from 190-10, there was a kind of participation of women in Punjab which was more or less passive in nature in political affairs, where women were more concerned with women's problems and evil customs. Education was foremost on their list, followed by child marriage and the problems of widows and dowry.

The second decade from 1911-20 witnessed many ups and downs in the involvement of women in the political sphere of Punjab. The most important event of the decade was the first World War (1914-18). It brought about crucial change in the political life and socio-economic conditions of India.<sup>xvi</sup>

It was Gandhi who gave a new direction, strength and inspiration to the freedom movement and drew into it women in large numbers. With his experience of South Africa behind him he was aware of the potentialities of women as passive resisters.<sup>xvii</sup> Thus, in the decade 1911-20, women of Punjab became active participation in the politics. The immediate factor which led to this participation was the Jallianwala Bagh Tragedy of 1919. From 1914- 18, some were either pro British or against British. Entry of Gandhi gave a fillip to this involvement but the Rowlatt Act and the Amritsar massacre set the stage for the active participation of women.<sup>xviii</sup>

The Jallianwala Bagh Massacre of 13<sup>th</sup> April 1919 had a great catalytic effect upon the political attitude of the people, especially on the women.<sup>xix</sup> Further, Jallianwala Bagh massacre and the Martial law acted as a stimulant or catalyst of women's consciousness in Punjab and in the whole of India. This incident motivated women of Punjab to participate directly in the nationalist struggle for freedom. Women got active in Non-cooperation movement of Gandhi from 1920-22 on his call. Later the incidents of 1919 in Punjab led the government to announce the Hunter Committee in connection with the Punjab government's doing under the martial law.<sup>xx</sup> So during this time M.K. Gandhi made

acquaintance with the women of the Punjab and this led the women's participation in the next movement of Non-Cooperation.<sup>xxi</sup> M. K. Gandhi on 1<sup>st</sup> August 1920 gave the signal for the non-cooperation campaign.<sup>xxii</sup> A large number of Punjabi Women also participated in the Non-Cooperation Movement. Gandhi's non-violent programme of spinning – weaving, Khadi, boycott of foreign cloth, removal of untouchability and promotion of promotion of communal harmony give women immense opportunities to show their caliber.<sup>xxiii</sup> During the decade 1921-30, the women of Punjab participated in the non-violent Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-22). They held meetings, led the processions, boycotted foreign good, adopted the slogan of Swadeshi and indulged in the picketing of foreign cloth shops and liquor shops. The participation of women in large numbers proved beyond doubt, the freedom movement was in the process of becoming a mass movement. 'Sarla Devi Chaudhrani, Smt. Parvati Devi of Kamalia, Smt. Puran Devi, Smt. Gauran Devi Mrs. Duni Chand, Smt. Chand Bhai, Smt. Lal Devi, Kumari Lajjvanti and Lado Rani Zutshi were the names of few women who participated in this movement. This participation was a sort of training programme for the future Satyagraha programmes of 1930-34 and 1940-42.'<sup>xxiv</sup> By this time women were members and some were even leaders of the student associations, peasant movement and labor union like Lado Rani Zutshi, Shah Nawaz and others the presence of women in the various movements of the day was a significant of the anti-British movement during the war their election to legislative seats and their appointment to positions of power and authority.<sup>xxv</sup> In Punjab Lado Rani Zutshi was the leader of the Student Association of Lahore, Begum Shah Nawaz and Lekhwati Jain were related to the Legislative Council of Punjab, Sarladevi was directly in linked with Gandhi's working. And Rajkumari Amrit Kaur was an active member of All Indian Women's Conference and she always wanted her organization to work for political gains.<sup>xxvi</sup> In Punjab, Satyagraha was initiated by Mian Ifikhar-ud-din, President, Punjab Provincial Congress Committee on 25<sup>th</sup> November, 1940 and he went to visit Gandhi in Wardha.<sup>xxvii</sup> Bibi Raghbir Kaur, member of the Legislative assembly Punjab started Satyagraha on 8<sup>th</sup> December 1940.<sup>xxviii</sup> Amar Kaur (wife of Mohan Lal advocate of Gurdaspur, who renounced his practice in 1921 and entered public life) offered Satyagraha at Kasur in Lahore district and was arrested and later released in September 1942.<sup>xxix</sup> Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur along with Rameshwari Nehru and Aruna Asaf Ali, representing the All India Women's conference appealed to the government to settle the problem of India's political demand of independence and quit India.<sup>xxx</sup> The women of Punjab organised spontaneous hartals and demonstrations in several cities of the province to protest against the Britishers. The last seven years from 1941 to 1947 were those when the women of Punjab province came forward and fought alongside men and suffered the same consequences as the men suffered. These activist women were so caught up in this struggle, that they ignored gender issues or put them aside until independence, the women of Punjab were given credit to their deeds as Rajkumari Amrit Kaur of Kapurthala, Punjab was appointed as the first women health minister of the free Independent India.

### **Women in Electoral Politics**

Within the framework of democratic polity, our laws, development policies, plans and programmes have aimed at women's advancement in different spheres. Therefore, Political participation has been long recognized as a central theme of democratic governance where the citizens enjoy the right to participate in governance. Political participation of women is vital to ensure that women concerns and issues are integrated into decision-making process. Latest studies have exposed a miserable scenario regarding political participation

of women in Punjab, whether as legislators or as a voters. As far as representation of women in Rajya Sabha is concerned, only one women representation has been the Rajya Sabha from the State. On the other side, in the State Legislative Assembly (SLA), the representation of women has never exceeded the 7.43 percent achieved as long as 1957. Out of general election conducted so far, no women representative was elected to the Lok Sabha (LS) in four of elections. Further, another important indicator of political participation, viz., as voters as legislators are given below.

**Representation of Women from Punjab in Lok Sabha since 1967**

Year	Total no. of Candidate	No. of Women Candidate	No. of Seats	No. of Successful Women Candidates
1967	75	3	13	2
1971	83	2	13	0
1977	79	1	13	0
1980	146	3	13	2
1984	74	5	13	1
1989	227	12	13	3
1992	81	4	13	2
1996	259	17	13	1
1998	102	9	13	1
1999	120	14	13	2
2004	132	10	13	2
2009	218	13	13	4
2014	253	20	13	1
2019	278	24	13	2

Source: Election Commission of India

The above table shows the representation of women from Punjab in Lok Sabha election since 1967. The women won election from as various as 13 Lok Sabha seats from Punjab. No doubt 17 and 20 women contested in 1996 and 2014 elections respectively but merely one each could win the election. In 2019, recently Lok Sabha election 24 women contested election from Punjab but only 2 women win election so far behind reality. However, in 2004 election, maximum 4 women ever could win Lok Sabha election out of 13. However the constitution provides the reservation for women in politics, but the number of women in politics has not been increased at decision making bodies. There are various factors such as patriarchy mind set society, psychology factors, socio-economic and cultural factors which are creating hurdles in the path of women to entry into politics.

**Representation of Women in Punjab Legislative Assembly Since 1967**

Year	Total no. of Candidate	No. of women candidate	No. of Seats	No. of successful women candidates
1967	602	8	104	1
1969	471	8	104	0
1972	468	14	104	7
1977	682	18	117	3

1980	722	19	117	7
1985	857	33	117	4
1992	557	22	117	6
1997	693	52	117	8
2002	923	71	117	8
2007	1073	56	117	8
2012	1078	93	117	16
2017	1145	81	117	6

Source: Election Commission of India

In the above table clearly shows that the various State Assemblies of Punjab the difference between the percentage of men and women candidates is very clear. In comparison to men the number of women candidates is very less in number and their success rate also has been insignificant.

As per the overview of above table shows, the representation of women legislators in various States Assembly election is almost unsubstantial as compared with the men legislators. It is clearly mention from the figure of the ten continuously state assemblies (1967-2007) that the women representation never exceeded from 6.84 percent in Punjab Vidhan Sabha. However, in 1969 no one single women legislator was elected. On the basis of given table, it can be asserted that women, who are at least half of the population, have found very less representation in the male dominated Vidhan Sabha of Punjab.

**Voting Tendency during Different Punjab Legislative Assembly Election**

Year	Poll percentage of Men	Poll Percentage of Women
1967	73.47	68.50
1969	74.54	69.61
1972	70.36	66.64
1977	66.82	63.65
1980	65.64	62.80
1985	68.20	66.72
1992	25.72	21.59
1997	69.51	67.84
2002	65.92	64.27
2007	75.36	75.47
2012	77.58	78.90
2017	78.5	79.2

Source: Election Commission of India

The table reveals that poll percentage of women as voters in Punjab in various legislative assembly elections is far better in comparison to the total number of women candidates and representatives in the State Assembly. Although, the recent years have witnessed an increase in female voters but it has not been accompanied by changes of similar magnitude in the number of women occupying decision making position. No doubt today, there is considerable increase in the percentage of women as voters. The participation of women is always equal to men. But the political participation (as a whole) of the women are not equal to men and so they are still not able to get a share equivalent to men in organization that required decision making.

For the above data, we can conclude that though women's constitutes half of the world population. But they are less or under representation in politics as their counterparts. However the constitution of India provided the special provision to strengthen the status of women in society. But at ground level women's position have remaining deteriorated in state politics. After the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Amendment the participation of women has increased at grass root level politics as compared to state level politics.

### **73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment**

PRIs can be the first step for political empowerment of women as the confidence and understanding of polity can allow them to participate in elections to state legislatures and Parliament paving the way from 'Panchayat to Parliament'. It is only beginning of a journey towards empowerment. It is Local self government is regarded as an integral part of democracy. The institution of local self government was thought of as an instrument to bring decentralization. Participation at grassroots level also translates the dream of Gandhiji into reality. *My idea of village swaraj is that it is a complete republic independent of its neighbours for vital wants and yet interdependent for many others in which dependence is necessary. Here there is perfect democracy based upon individual judgement.*<sup>xxxii</sup> According to Lord James Bryce the practice of local self government is the best guarantee for the success of democracy. No democratic foundation will have sound footing without grass root involvement. Local self government is not only a form of administration but also a democratic way of life.<sup>xxxiii</sup> Panchayati Raj Institutions were conceived by the Constitution of India as bedrock of self governance. Part IV of Indian constitution underlines the idea of self governance. Article 243G of the Constitution of India provides that the State/ Union Territories may by law, endow the Panchayats with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as institution of self-government and to prepare plans for economic development and social justice and their implementation including those in relation to matters listed in the 11<sup>th</sup> schedule.

The Indian system of local self government comprise of two sub system-rural local bodies (Panchayati Raj) and urban local bodies-(municipal corporations, municipalities, town area committees and cantonment boards).<sup>xxxiii</sup> Both this sub systems are run by popularly elected representatives of the inhabitants of the villages, towns and districts respectively. The rural people are governed by Panchayati Raj Institutions. It is a three tier organic structure, comprising of gram panchayat at the village (gaon) level, Panchayat Samiti at the block (taluka) level and Zilla Parishad at the district (Zilla) level.

However, the 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act was a significant step towards opening up the space for women's political participation and acknowledging their role in the development of their villages. Thus, for the first time, in the history of this country, one million women were elected to various tiers of Panchayats.<sup>xxxiv</sup> 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment gave constitutional status to Participation Raj Institutions. It made obligatory on the part of all states to provide for the three-tier Panchayati Raj Systems. The Amendment provides 33 percent seats reservation for women in all three-tier of Panchayati Raj Institutions. Bihar Panchayati Raj Act 2006 provides 50 percent reservation for women. This Act is a significant measure. It has been widely perceived a crucial step for empowerment women and raised hopes for their increased participation in local decision making structure.<sup>xxxv</sup> At local level, women participation as an elected representation is high primarily because of the reservation introduced for women as per the 73<sup>rd</sup> amendment in the Indian constitutions.



The Constitution of India grants universal suffrage to both men and women with equal rights to participate in electoral competition, but the existing societal value system, the private-public divide in terms of domain identification and male preponderance in political institutions restrict women from exercising their electoral rights and a fair participation in electoral competition. These factors also act as key barriers and obstacles in women's active participation in the Indian electoral system and in the larger issues of women's advancement as a whole. There have been strong roadblocks and obstacles to women's entry into politics and a backlash of violence to keep them away from electoral politics. The absence of affirmative action for 33% reservation of seats for Indian women at state legislature and Parliament is having a negative impact on women's share in the institutions of representations. However, treating women as a blanket category for the benefits of reservation would further complicate the issue of women's representation and participation in India's electoral competition. For, such benefit would largely be appropriated by those women who belong to the upper stratum of society or to those already having a political background. Hence, women from the lower economic strata, backward castes and marginalized groups would get further excluded from contesting elections and sharing political power. The key barrier that restrict women's proactive participation in the electoral process, that need to be addressed on a priority basis, apart from affirmative action, are more representation of women in political parties, including them in the decision-making bodies and providing them key cabinet berths in government at the central and state level. Women should be promoted and encouraged by the concerned efforts of government in partnership with civil society for enhanced and quality participation in formal politics. An increased political participation by women in all sphere of political life and electoral competition in particular will not only ensure political life and electoral competition in particular will not only ensure political party and equality with men, but would also serve the larger issues concerning women, i.e, upliftment and empowerment of Indian women.

### **Role of NGOs Towards Women Empowerment**

The concept of NGOs developed in India only after independence. The NGOs have played a vital role towards the development of rural India since 1970s. Women empowerment has been the primary focus for both government and most NGO's. Voluntary action promoted by NGOs engaged in development play a significant role towards rural development which is dependent upon the active participation of the volunteers through Non-Government Organizations (NGO). The various roles of NGOs towards women empowerment are described as educating the rural women, supplementation of government efforts, building various model and experiment, promoting rural leadership representing the rural women and providing effective & efficient training to rural women.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

At national level, there have so many NGOs are working towards the empowerment of women such as SEWA, Snehalaya, NEN: North East Network, Azad Foundation, CREA, and Centre for Social Research, Vimochana, Swaniti, MAKAM (Mahila Kisan Adhikaar Manch) and Janodaya.<sup>xxxvii</sup> These organizations fighting for women's empowerment in India are providing important support to all types of women in need all across the country. But the situation of women has been far from satisfactory.

### **Current Status of Women's Political Participation**

The Indian women marginalization from electoral participation stems mainly from political party competition, as national political parties and regional parties in the states

discriminate not only in terms of seat allotments in the electoral fray, but also in the party rank and file of command. This could be attributed to a large extent to the party competition structure in the Indian subcontinent that is encumbered by inherent male dominance and patriarchal mindset that excludes women from the electoral process. In the contrast to the poor allotment rates of seats to women by political parties in the electoral process and marginalization within the party structure, female electoral participation as voters has been a notable upsurge in the elections. Therefore, participation of women in politics is a much discussed issue with a wide range of opinions and differing views. Women's status is affected by relations in the family, class, status, and the ideology of the social group to which they belong. It is inherited through historical institutions and culture. The social relations of gender as well as class relations are part of a historical inheritance. Among the ideologies underlying our inheritance is, that of patriarchy. Literally 'power of the father' and indicating male supremacy, it is understood variously as 'a symbolic male principle' governing social and gender relations, an institutional structure of male domination, or an ideology based on the power of men.<sup>xxxviii</sup> No doubt today, there is considerable increase in the percentage of women as voters. The participation of women as voters is almost equal to men. But the political participation (as a whole) of the women is not equal to men and so they are still not able to get a share equivalent to men in organization that required decision making. Still politics is dominated by men at every level of participation and women have not been regarded as significant part of the political arena. The representation of women as policy formulators and decision makers in legislative bodies is very low. In legislative bodies women have been demanding more space but most nations in the world have failed in providing due space as well as representation to women in their political system. Therefore, at local to global level, leadership and participation of the women in the political field are always compromised. Women are always underrepresented in leading positions, whether in civil services, academia, elected offices or private sectors. Such kind of situation prevails despite their abilities and capabilities which have been proved as leaders and their right of participating at par with men in democratic governance.

Despite women constituting half the world's population, but they are less or underrepresentation at membership of national parliaments globally. Such descriptive or numerical under-representation can have consequences for substantive representation of women's interests. Moreover, having more women in elected office has been shown to lead to broader societal benefits such as better infant mortality rates, better education and low corruption. Women in rural India also face significant mobility restrictions while women in our urban India often forgo important opportunities due to concerns about safety. All of these factors, together with education, household wealth and religious or caste, can explain approximately 69% of the gender gap in electoral political participation. This suggested that improving women's knowledge, self-confidence, voice and mobility can have significant effects of their political participation.<sup>xxxix</sup>

In spite of reservation for women, effective participation in Panchayati Raj institution has failed due to misuse and manipulation by local power brokers. Also ignorance of women about their rights and procedures and about their potential and responsibilities has kept them far behind men in the local bodies. It is very doubtful that mere increase in number of reserved seats for women in local bodies is likely to increase participation of women. Unless structural changes are brought about, a sincere effort is made to educate women and the power structures existing in rural areas are neutralized, nothing much can

be achieved. Therefore, the institution of Panchayati Raj was meant for decentralization of people at the grass-root level for transforming the society into a just and integrated one. Theoretically women were not ignored and given due recognition for involvement at all levels. However, it is never ascertained whether or not women were really benefitting. Therefore, there is need to empower women to enhance their quality of participation. This can be achieved through training besides of course the literacy educational programmes. Mahatma Gandhi believed that full and balanced development of the nation and establishment of a just society is possible only when women participate actively and full in the political deliberations of the nation.

## REFERENCES

- <sup>i</sup> Saxena, K. (2000). *Women and Politics*, New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House.
- <sup>ii</sup> Sharda, M. (2010). *Evolution of Panchayati Raj in India From Traditional to Constitutionalize Panchayats*, New Delhi: Kanishka Publishers.
- <sup>iii</sup> Single, P. (2007). *Women's Participation in Panchayati Raj: Nature and Effectiveness, A Northan Indian Perspective*, New Delhi: Rawat Publications.
- <sup>iv</sup> Mehta, G.S. (2002). *Participation of Women in The Panchayati Raj System*, Kanika Publishers, Distributors.
- <sup>v</sup> Hust, E. (2004). *Women's Political Representation and Empowerment in India: A Million Indiras Now?*, Manohar Publishers.
- <sup>vi</sup> Siddiqui, Javed. (2013). *Democratic Decentralised Governance Issues And Challenge*, New Delhi: Cyber Tech Publications.
- <sup>vii</sup> Kalpna Roy, (2012). *Women in Indian Politics*, Rajat Publications. P.67-69.
- <sup>viii</sup> Dhaneswar Baishya, (2016). "Political Participation of Women of Assam with Special Reference to Nalbari District", *International Research Journal of Interdisciplinary & Multidisciplinary Studies (IRJIMS)*. Vol. II. p. 87-88.
- <sup>ix</sup> Sinha Niroj, (2006). *Women in Indian Politics*, Gyan Publishing House. p.111.
- <sup>x</sup> <http://www.news18.com/lok-sabha-elections-2019/punjab/#>
- <sup>xi</sup> *Human Development Report 2004*
- <sup>xii</sup> Chadha Anuradha, (2014). "Political Participation of Women: A Case Study in India". *International Journal of Sustainable Development*. ISSN 1923-6654, p. 98
- <sup>xiii</sup> *The People, Lahore*, 19 December, 1929, p.370-371.
- <sup>xiv</sup> Sen, S.P. (ed), (1972). *Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. I (A-D), Calcutta, Institute of Historical studies, Calcutta, p.289-290.
- <sup>xv</sup> Kaur, M. *Role of Women in Freedom Movement, 1857-1947*, p.98.
- <sup>xvi</sup> Sarkar, S. (1983). *Modern India: 1885-1947*, Madras, Macmillan India Press, p.147.
- <sup>xvii</sup> Basu, A. "The Role of Women in the India Struggle for Freedom" in B.R. Nanda (ed), *From Purdah to Modernity*, p.20.
- <sup>xviii</sup> Report of the Constitution appointed by the Punjab Sub-committee of the Indian National Congress, Lahore, 1920, p.20.
- <sup>xix</sup> Nina Puri, (1985). *Political Elite and Society in the Punjab*, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, p.158.
- <sup>xx</sup> M.K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, p.361.
- <sup>xxi</sup> Collected Work of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol, 16, p.261.
- <sup>xxii</sup> Chaudhary, D. L. *Violence in the Freedom Movement of Punjab*, p.77.
- <sup>xxiii</sup> Verma, M. The Role of Women in Freedom Movement in Punjab, p.48.
- <sup>xxiv</sup> *Ibid.*, p.60,61.
- <sup>xxv</sup> Geraldine Forbes, *Women in Modern India*, p.203.
- <sup>xxvi</sup> Kaur, M. *Role of Women in the Freedom Movement*, p.210.
- <sup>xxvii</sup> *The Tribune*, 24 Nov., 1940, p. 7.
- <sup>xxviii</sup> *Ibid*, 29 November, 1940, p. 1.
- <sup>xxix</sup> *Ibid*, Lahore, 30 September, 1940, p.9.
- <sup>xxx</sup> *The Tribune*, 17 August, 1942, p.1.
- <sup>xxxi</sup> Vansat Desai, *Panchayati Raj: Power to People*, Himalaya Publishing House, Bombay, 1990, p.330.35.
- <sup>xxxii</sup> Muttalab and Khan, *Theory of Local Government*, Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1982, P. 15.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Ibid., p.5.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> Renu Kumari & Siya Ram Singh. (2007). *Study on the participation of Women in Panchayati Raj Institutions in Bihar*. Gyan Publisher. p. 34.

<sup>xxxv</sup> S.P. Singh, (2008). *Democracy in India Challenges and Prospects*. New Delhi: Axis books Publisher. p.110.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> P. Narumugi & J. Lalitha Kumar, (2017). Role of NGOs Towards Women Empowerment, *IJARIE*, Vol-3 Issue-4. p.759.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> <http://www.shethepeople.tv/drafts/10-ngos-working-womens-empowerment-know>

<sup>xxxviii</sup> Kumari Leela, (1947-1992) "*Development, Patriarchy, and Politics: Indian Women in the Political Process*", p.4-5.

<sup>xxxix</sup> <http://voxeu.org/article/getting-more-women-politics-evidence-india>