



Women Participations in Education and Politics: A Twenty First Century Scenario

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Abstract:

A society is almost like an androgynous taxi where the equal presence of men and women keeps the journey moving. A woman can define her presence best by equally accessing the quality education. She extends her social participation portfolio by stepping her feet on politics. The picture of women participations, in India, both in education and politics, after Independence, has gone through a remarkable course of changes. Since British are driven away, women condition in general has really made a notable departure with the initiation undertaken by welfare governmental policies. Various policies and measures are adapted by governmental bodies to empower women condition. This article intends to study the participation of women in education both as learner and as educators. This investigation further aims to study the women participation in Indian political contexts.

Key Words: Women Participations, Education, Politics, Women Empowerment

I. Introduction:

India is embellished with manpower resources. This manpower can be empowered and enlightened through the ace employment of education. Inequalities and poverty can be eradicated through education, hence considered an important tool in the process of personal and national growth. Gender equality being a moral imperative focuses into being fair and provide equity. Interestingly enough, this often incorporates numerous social, political, and cultural proportions and dimensions. Twentieth Century has observed significant changes and progress in various countries round the globe making compelling progress moving towards gender equality in employment, education and entrepreneurship. Talking about the major dimensions, education plays a key role in the political participation of women which is positive and directly related to each other.

II. Implications of Education:

Education helps to enable women to affirm their rights, authority and to win emancipation. It enables women to reflect on their own. Hence, education is a tool of freeing women from the habitual captivity and willingness to be led and taught by men. It can be rightly said that, education is very much related to determine presence of the second gender in politics. Higher education level in Women interests them to participate further in various and divergent modes in politics, which tends to be rather greater than those equipped with low or no education. Education makes women to take part actively in political debate,

discussions and presenting opinions than those who are deprived of education. Thus there is a gravity of formal education, which should be significantly correlated with participation in politics for both men and women. Education is an authoritative predictor and regulator of political participation. Education complements factors upholding political commitment, such as key to soaring jobs providing contacts and resources enhancing political access and activity to various non-political associations, for instance religious establishments or charitable organizations which can be considered a recruitment criterion for political activity. Interestingly enough, there is relationship and at the same time difference between educational level in women and their delegation in formal politics and their active participation in different political activities.

III. Hindrance to Active Politics:

Active politics is hindered owing to illiteracy. The educated strata of the society thus provide a different realm, while the less educated or the uneducated are considered passive citizens, whose political activities are limited only to the ballot box. Women participating in the political arena are often more polished in terms of education compared to the male counterparts. Education crops up to be a very consequential agency in importing a favourable and positive change reflecting into the political status of women. This concludes itself into bringing its recipients into such a domain which is self-reliant, better informed and metamorphoses an individual intellectually and culturally rich. Women with education are considered to be more aware and appreciative about women's rights extending to duties leading to the political mainstream. This aptly grants to rear their apprehension about women's coerced condition by themselves and their competence to contrive with political questions and to bid explanations. It broadens the outlook and their awareness and expedites their interpretations of the world around. Women's outlook has been enduring to a massive extent owing to the modern education. The values cherished by them under the leverage of lures are withstanding a profound metamorphosis. To be more specific, a recent idea of womanhood is cropping up in India, which interestingly stands at bitter odds opposing the traditional concept where women only devote and confine themselves into the household realm.

The 21st Century has a completely different scenario in this mechanism. A woman reigns not only as the household manager but also devotes an active participation in public domain. Education enforces and initiates to resolve inequalities betwixt the sexes. Thereafter, education promotes exceptional implications for dynamic changes in perception of women in politics, most importantly in developing societies like India. Our aspiration is to analyse whether education functionally affects the modes, levels and extent of women participation in politics.

IV. Women Participation:

Women in India and their status have been subjected to many changes if we scroll the past few centuries. History of women in India is eventful. From achieving equal status to men during the ancient times travelling through very low count during the medieval era, to the advancement of the rights of equality by our reformers, the history actually has been progressive. Modern India has witnessed women adorning high positions which include that of the Prime Minister, President, Chief Ministers, Leader of Opposition, Speaker of the Lok Sabha, etc. The amplification of women in politics, though presumed to be actualised through acknowledging alacrity, is still questionable and contested. In spite of the notion that the women who constitute approximately 50% of gross world population contribute to a substantially abridged presence in the elected political institutions.

Apparently Universal Adult Franchise is incommensurate to overcome structural barriers that retard female propinquity in political chairs. Thereafter, in spite of the numerical strength, the second gender is still a minority while we talk about the power positions. Indian women have been a major part in every Indian election, with the constitution of India providing for Universal Adult Suffrage (Article 326). Women have always been highly visible participants and candidates, serving in both the houses of parliaments, in the state legislatures, Chief Ministers of states, Governors and provided devoted services at the national level. In spite of the achievements made by chosen elites, women have been under represented as a whole throughout India including both elected and appointed positions; the women are engaged and appointed with minimal power within the parties, with very less participations in elections as voters and candidates with much limited frequency than that of men.

The difficulty women's political participation is that very often it is measured in terms of the numbers of women found in formal active politics, which is an extremely crude measure and is made even more so by the tryst to restrict it to the actual amount of women present in the central legislative house. The logic behind employing this effort has to do with easy convenience. Significant data lacks on the exact number of women participating in local governments and various other sub-national elected bodies around the world. Apparently there are such wide variations in the systems of governance for sub-national communities and public bodies that they are hardly comparable.

V. History of Women Participation in Politics:

We can glorify women participation in history- a massive participation in India's nationalist movement is well established and known and, to be specific, one can date back to 1905 when women freedom fighters displayed immense valour in combating the British. Interestingly enough, mass participation of women in the movement was recognized and spotted in 1939 during the Civil Disobedience Movement and in 1942 with the massive outbreak of the India Movement. During this phase, thousands of women nationalists courted arrest. Women participated as courier distributing literature, where they risked imprisonment, police repression and even capital punishment during the revolutionary movement. *Nari Bahini*, a women volunteer force which was constituted to guard villages at night. Hence the role of 'education' embracing political participation has always been very well recognized. Looking at the demographic attributes and research such as income, sex, age, occupation, place of residence, religion, caste, etc. education has proved itself to have the strongest aftermath on political behaviour. A well educated person is studied to be more active politically, as they have a more calculative, critical, analytical and broader approach as compared to the less educated in terms of their political participation.

VI. Women as Voters and Candidates:

Casting vote has both, an immense clout and proneness and has impact for mobilizing and equalizing women. Yet, it is noticed that casting vote crave the least initiative and internal encouragement. A number of women consider the day of casting their vote as a needed break from their monotonous and weary routine. They actually do not appear to possess a notion to why one would vote for a particular candidate. Though participation of women in the political mechanism has remarkably heightened both in the elections and as per their willingness to voice their innate views on issues which concern their life, but regretfully, their competence in producing an impression on the political operation has been imperceptible owing to the meagre attention and recognition paid to their political mobilization and education by both women's organizations and political parties, see

women voters as accessories of their male counterpart. There is also no consequential increase in the number of women contesting in parliamentary elections over the years. Political parties display utter reluctance to field and canvas women candidates. The soaring cost of election canvassing is another restraint to female candidates in contesting for elections. These turn to be an important factor in a rising penchant among the women to fight elections as independent candidates.

VII. Women's Participation in the Lower Tiers:

The task of party workers seems to be peripheral. The influence of women education on who impact their voting choices is not very coherent, as there is no distinguished pattern across educational levels. Vladimir Lenin pens down the compelling need to take concrete measures to include women and focus them into lead positions and thereafter by giving them one third reservation into politics in the third tier of the Government, the Panchayati-Raj. The constitutional amendment provides 1/3rd representation for women candidates in elected bodies at the same time reservation of 1/3rd of the offices of chairpersons if provided ought to have far-fetched results in Indian socio-political life. Women participation in Panchayats has been perceived as a stride towards equality. The committee on Panchayati Raj institutions (1978) provides recommendation for the reservation of 2 seats for women to contest for Panchayats. Unfortunately Panchayats has not brought any perceptible changes on the women participation through Co-option, since it is performed only in letter and documentations and not exposed in spirit, only through which women could get involved in the activities of the Panchayat. There are different patterns of political behaviour appearing from different regions which shows contrasting accords which are influenced, by inter woven and akin factors like the cultural norms, their economic position, social status of women and above all, the regional outlook towards the participation of women in the wider society. This becomes the most concentrated representation of women in Panchayats which highlights the grass-root level of the empowerment of women.

VIII. The Notables:

Masuma Begum, who later on became the Minister of Social Welfare, Durgabai, a veteran Gandhian, Radhabai Subbarayan, who was appointed as a delegate to the first Round Table Conference, Renuka Ray, veteran social worker; Rajkumari Amrit Kaur became Union Health Minister in 1947. Vijayalakshmi Pandit was selected as a delegate to the UN and was appointed as ambassador to the erstwhile USSR in 1947 and later as ambassador to the US. She was also elected as president of the United Nations General Assembly in 1953. Sucheta Kriplani became the general secretary of Congress in 1959, labour minister of Uttar Pradesh in 1962 and subsequently Chief Minister of United Province in from 1963 to 1967. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act(s) looks effective in this context. Interestingly enough, the percentage of women participating in various levels and domains of political exercises has increased considerably, yet women are still represented limitedly in decision making and government positions. Some of the illustrious women leaders in India are Indira Gandhi, Vasundhara Raje Scindia, Sonia Gandhi, Susma Swaraj, Sindhu Joyand, Mamta Benerji, Menaka Ganghi etc. The country witnessed its first ever women President, Pratibha Patil in the year 2007. Gandhiji's dream of incorporating women in politics has been accomplished only in qualitative terms but unfortunately not in quantitative terms. It displays the determination and strength of women in administration, ruling and handling a situation or an issue. We, as a part of the society know the strength, will power and determination of women, but however is not willing to utilize, recognize or allow women to actualize their power. Women in ancient times were kept away from politics,

exceptions overlooked. It was only with the freedom struggle during the 19th and 20th centuries unlocked the door to achieve a public place for women. This enabled a number of women to asset space into the formal politics of the post- Independent India. It's now appropriate time is ripe to encash more space for more women to participate in formal politics.

IX. The Constitutional Provisions and Problems during Practice:

The 73th Constitution Amendment Act, 1992 came into effect from 24 April 1993, and located the establishment of a strong and vibrant Panchayat institutions in our country. 73rd Amendment in 1993 is important since it provided with 33% reservation to women, who leap forward to accept challenges. 73rd Amendment itself is a landmark and a revolutionary step in the history of women's development and progress, as now women could participate in making decisions and in the political process and progress of the country at least from the grass-root level. This was a crucial achievement. The women participation in the Zilla Panchayat meetings or conferences is also an epiphany. If a woman desired to raise any issue, she prefers to vent out about it to the *Adhyaksha* or the *Upadhyaksha* only after the meeting, after the male members of the Panchayat would be leaving the event. Keeping 'social distance' during the presence of the male and the relative uncertainty and inexperience as to what 'they' say would be recognised or not. Most of the women members and candidates did not visit the Zilla Parishad offices when strictly needed or when attending meetings. It is also seen that occasionally the men counterparts escorted the women and also accompanied them in places of importance, prompting them to speak. It is here, where the uneducated women participants lag behind men.

The state can be well speculated by India's sex ratio. In around five decades ranging between 1951 and 2001 census, the scenario has depreciated significantly, resulting into an account for every 1000 males there are only 933 females at present. What's worse is that of the child sex ratio, which numbers girls for even lower than 927 for every 1,000 boys in the 0-6 age group. The discrimination here starts from the foetus and restores in the form and design of the neglect of the child, whether in terms of its education or nutrition. Combating such a scenario, it is really surprising that only few women are actually able to push up to leadership positions. Again, reservation for women in the parliament has been long tardy and does not seem to be the only measure to divert the fortune of the women in the country.

X. Protest and participation in recent times:

The Chipko movement that came up during the 1970s was one such example of success achieved by the women executing a full-fledged movement in India, as women protested against deforestation. The Narmada Bachao Andolan has shed ample focus on the environmental issues lead by activists Medha Patkar and author Arundhati Roy. Medha Patkar has organised several fasts and *Satyagrahas* during the movement and had been jailed several times for the same. Since November 2020, the farmers in India are widely protesting around Delhi against the Farmer's Bill. Interestingly enough, women belonging to the agricultural background, even the very homely women are actively seen in the protest areas, voicing and strengthening the movement to abolish the Farm Laws. It can be evenly said that there must be some progress and enlightenment in their political participation and behaviour. Hence, the movement turns out to be much more vocal and resolute. Women participation has been very active and encouraging mass protests in recent times from the movement in JNU, to anti-CAA protests. The transformation is not

only grand but bold too, since women have been fighting 'petty battles' strictly under the household realms for centuries. Recently, women from all creeds, casts, religions or social status occupy the streets which was at a time considered 'unsafe and ungraceful' for them. Women are now vocal and their presence bolsters the protests, as they too now combat the lathi charges, imprisonment and forceful resistance to move off from the tract of political domain.

Women all over the world have participated widely in political movements in times of crisis but, once the crisis is over, they are relegated again to the domestic arena. Women's active participation in local bodies is creating a paradigm. While the Indian constitution is one of the most progressive in the world and guarantees equal rights for men and women, Indian women are still waiting anxiously for their dreams of equality to be translated into reality. Political power is perhaps the strongest tool to eradicate inequality.

XI. Initiatives of the Political Parties:

None of our political parties are interested in providing the required push to the much needed women's reservation bill. The reason lies that they might be scared that men might lose their supremacy and power in the parliament and what becomes difficult is to handle their fragile egos. The position of women in Indian society is impregnated with contradictions. Women are still lag on the margins of the political mechanism and participation turns to be ambiguous to many of them inspite of their privilege to vote, contesting election and even occupying a few seats of role and influence. The second gender needs to be educated which would bring them into the crude area of politics. The third tier can be called the representative of self government. Education performs the role of speeding up in equalizing notions of castes and classes to exercise on equal plans with representative owning, influence, traditionally upper status and castes. Participation of Women in politics and their representation at the level of decision making levels are completely two different notions, in theory and practice. Participation is a necessity but conditions are insufficient for embodiment because it does not conclude automatically from participation.

XII. Conclusion:

Education is recognised universally as an axis basic of human resource. Education has a role in contributing to the growth of economy and its impression on life expectancy, population control, improving nutritional status, infant mortality and strengthen civil institutions are all well recognised. We are now rolling into a new transitional century. The major challenge hailing before us at present is not to just to voice about the creating awareness on gender equality, but to initiate the mechanism of metamorphosing societies to move away from gender discrimination. Very little has been said and done on improving the plight of women. Hence women must be made self-dependant. Here it is also debated that unless and until there is a steady and stable increase in literacy among the rural women and they are economically dependent, the 73rd Amendment of the Indian Constitution has no meaning.

The reservation for women in the Panchayats has not only an eye opener and allowed their entry into the national politics in a moderate number but also provoked an interest towards the political activities. Their association and political participation have opened new perspective for them. Working for women's development through their participation in setting the agenda for their own and others development and to make this agenda a success requires immediate attention. This can certainly lead to women's empowerment. There is thus, a dialectical relationship and close interaction between women's empowerment on the

one hand and their role in politics and decision making on the other hand. A set of strategies and actions that would take care of the deficiencies and empower women in multiple ways and help them play the political role effectively can be evolved. Such participation would lead to a qualitative change.

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