

WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN INDIA

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Abstract:

Political participation is the symbol of a democratic setup. Success and effectiveness of democracy mainly depend on the extent to which equal, effective and real participation is provided by the system to all its citizens. As women cover about half of the population, this section of society needs due consideration in the system and due part in process. Citizen's active participation in political activities in a democracy is vital and necessary because it provides legality to the system and also reinforces the democracy fabric. Democracy will fail in its objectives if women citizens lack equal opportunity to participate in the governmental decision-making process. They are to be equal partners in the nation-building and political development.

Political democracy involves at least a minimum of people's participation in the decision-making process. Citizens participation in political affairs is important because a situation which results in high participation by members of a group normally has higher potential for democracy. Palmer D Norman describes, Political Participation as the involvement of citizens in such political actions, which directly or indirectly impact the behaviour and actions of decision makers. It may be viewed as any "Voluntary action, successful or unsuccessful, organised or unorganised, occasional or continuous, employing legitimate or illegitimate methods, intended to influence the choice of public policies, the administration of public activities, or the choices of political leaders at any level of government, local or national".

Key words: *Political Participation, Democracy, Decision Making*

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Introduction:

Democratic thinkers have in overall linked liberty to the people by the process of political involvement, Participation is maximized 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 him 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 fact that women herself is a significant variable capable of defining the nature and scope of political participation and as an outcome the whole political system in turn.

The effort to assess and assess the level and extent of political participation of women becomes very much related as to the nature and working of the political system as a whole. It is mainly more valuable to political parties and political leaders due to the natural qualities of women such as honesty, affection and sense of duty. The mobilisation of women in large numbers weakened the bondage of traditional and encouraged them to grow an outlook on the wider socio-political problems.

When the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was accepted on 10th December, 1948, its Article 1, proclaimed that, "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights". Article 2 provides for equality of sexes. It states that, "every one is allowed to all the rights and freedoms without distinction of sex". It is measured as a clarion call for the reason of women empowerment. It Is not an argument for feminism. "Feminism is the political theory and practice that struggles to free all women: women of colour, working class women".

Objectives of the paper:

- To know about women participation in Indian Politics.
- To analyse the Variables of Political Participation.

Methodology:

This paper is totally based on the secondary data reviewed through related literature such as; paper, magazines, books and internet and journals on Women Empowerment and Political Participation.

The constitution of free India has guaranteed all its citizens justice, liberty, equality and dignity through several provisions like documents of fundamental rights

and directive principles. The constitution of India is the best in the world which has taken care of the underprivileged and the minorities. All our acts get their sanction from this constitution and any law which violates a provision of the constitution is declared unconstitutional.

The framers of the constitution realise that a true democracy needs not only equality but also justice. This view resulted in the Indian constitution, which not only grants equality to women but also empowers the state to adopt actions of positive discrimination in favour of women for defusing the cumulative socio-economic, educational and political disadvantages faced by them.

Several articles are unified in the constitution in order to materialise the chosen objective of equality and justice for the women in India. Besides the preamble, the articles of the constitution, which impose on our subject of equality are Article 14, 15, 16 under part III, Article 39, 42, 44 under part IV, Article 51-A(c) under part IV A and Article 246 under part XI are noteworthy.

Equal treatment to women in political life, to be meaningful and effective should start from the grassroots level. To provide training and exercise in the process of decision-making, the rural democratic organizations are the ideal structures to begin with. One of the goals of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act is to achieve this purpose. "The question of political empowerment of women in rural India has expected substantial significance recently because of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act. The amendment delivers reservation of seats and posts of chairperson for women in all grassroots level democratic institutions in the Countryside known as panchayats. This is a notable step of far reaching implications and significant consequences on the political process in rural India.

Modes of Political Participation:

The conceptualisation of political participation has been experiencing drastic variations. Such changes will have a direct influence upon different modes of political participation. Citizens can take part in different and alternative ways to influence the government and the political system. Until recently most review studies of political participation kept their enquiry to a relatively limited set of political acts. Most of them enquired whether a person had voted or not and some went on to ask about such

behaviour as presence at political meetings or rallies, working for a party, making a monetary involvement or seeking a public office.

However, these different ways of political participation be subject to on the types of citizens who participate, the way in which they act, the amount of pressure they can to exert and the structure's response towards their activities. Thus, political involvement is more than the vote and more than an activity in the electoral system. Verba and Nieconvened into 4 broad approaches of participation the different activities by which citizens can participate in politics, i.e., voting, campaign action, co-operative motion and citizen-initiated contacts. Milbrath and Goel enhance protest and communication to these modes stated by Verba and Nie, which relate those to the polity. They are also of the view that political performances could be hierarchically organised from the least hard to the most difficult, if a person performed a more difficult act, he was likely to perform those that are less difficult as well.

It is beneficial to consider political participation in a hierarchical sense, but it should also be born in mind that some heights of participation may be absent in some political systems. Not all political structure has elections or a form of voting, some systems strictly restrict or ban public meetings and protests, while others forbid the establishment of political parties and other types of political or quasi-political organisation, and so on. Clearing up the extent of political participation Michael Rush and Philip Althoff added that indifference, alienation and the use of violence vary clearly and noticeably from system to system, but keep on quite important factors in any examination of political participation.

Exploratory the modes of political participation Schonfeld has stated ten types of actions which include (1) Running for or Holding public or party offices, (2) Belonging to a party or other political organisation, (3) working in an election, (4) attending political meetings or rallies, (5) making financial contribution to a party or a candidate, (6) contacting a public official, (7) publicly expressing a political opinion to convince other, (8) partaking in political discussion, (9) voting, and (10) exposing oneself to political stimuli.

Political participation is the mother and politics is the child. The previous generates and regulates politics and from now is of greatest importance both for the

nation and the individual. The politics of the nation is strong-minded therefore, by political participation in all its processes.

Variables of Political Participation:

Political participation seems to be a composite phenomenon, a dependent variable that cruce upon many aspects such as the psychological, socio-economic and political, which make available orientation to individuals either positively or negatively.

➤ **Psychological Environment:**

Political participation leans towards to meet one's psychological desires of overcoming loneliness. It states to the degree to which citizens are concerned in and afraid about politics and public affairs. Psychological attachment of a person in the direction of political objects undoubtedly determines the extent and gravity of political participation.

In every society there are persons who are very much anxious and attracted in political affairs and as the same time there are persons who have no such concern and attention in political affairs. This variance may be due to the differences in their psychological defiance. In this condition it becomes clear that the former is more likely to be active in politics than the latter. Again, it is usually thought that men are psychologically more elaborate than women in politics as in their respective field of activity.

➤ **Socio-economic Environment:**

The socio-economic environment will have a straight influence upon political participation. Socio-economic variables consist of education, occupation, income, age, caste, religion, sex, family background, residence etc. "Political participation". Robert lane says, "is a function of age, sex, education and status". Thus normally, participation tends to be higher among improved educated, members of higher professional and income groups, middle aged, dominant ethnic and religious groups, people with political family circumstantial, settled residents, urban residents and members of voluntary associations. However, the connection between political participation and some of these socio-economic variables may vary from culture to culture in different political situations and their effect on political participation may not be stable.

➤ **Political Environment:**

The overall political environments do affect the complete process of political participation to a excessive extent. The political environment denotes to the nature of the party system, the electoral system, the means of publicity and campaign, the extent of modernisation and urbanisation, the influence of ideology the general consciousness of the people etc.

The political party is the most effective tool in facilitating political participation. The party bear a resemblance to the nation both in its symbolic force and in its capacity for exciting affection, devotion and sacrifice on the part of its members and supporters. The party also encourages its members to grow a feeling of belongingness. It has been detected that people, who united to a party vote more frequently than those who are not. Strongly devoted members are more active in political discussion and work.

The propaganda and election campaign denote to the efforts made by political parties to include the voters in the development of political participation. The campaign has its outcome on polarising party attachments, reinforcing candidate predilections and gaining votes. It is, in fact, a process of political education. A important characteristic of the relation of the individual to his political environment is his experience to the influence of propaganda.

Conclusion:

Political participation is the symbol of democracy and modernisation. In the outdated society government and politics are apprehensions of a narrow elite. There is positive relationship between urban dwelling and higher levels of women's political participation. It has been reasoned that urbanisation, united with other component development of social modernisation, would dilemma the citizens with new ties to the nation state and increase the level of political communication that leads to greater political awareness.

Ideology can affect political participation, positively or negatively. Normally, those who have strong in democratic ideology positively respond to political participation. On the other hand, persons having dislike for democratic ideology show little disposition for political participation.

Political participation is connected with political awareness i.e., concrete knowledge of political affairs. Awareness is highly associated with interest. In every society the number of citizens who can be pronounced as 'aware' is extremely small. Awareness marks both the quality and amount of participation. It is to be well-known that the three sets of variables are closely linked and combined. A change in any one of them can increase or decrease the level of political participation.

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