



## WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS AND LEGISLATION

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### ABSTRACT :

*Through the world the issue of women 's representation in legislation has emerged as one of the key issues to determine the level and extent of their empowerment. The issue of women 's participation in political decision making assumes importance inlaying the late twentieth century. India has been trying to reserve 33 percent of the seats in the federal and state legislation for women.*

**KEYWORDS :** *issue of women 's representation , political decision making , Political Science.*

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE:-

1. Manpreet Kour Brar, Research Scholar, Department of Political Science, Punjab University, Patiala, India published a paper title as "Political Participation and Representation of Women in State Assemblies in the international Journal of Behavioral Social and movement Sciences."
2. PIB Government of India 1998 Focused on participation of women in national elections from 1952 to 2004 in report of CSDS Data Unit.
3. Vidyut Bhagvat, Gender in Social History: A Collection for teachers published by Krantijyoti Savitribai Phule Women's Studies Centre, University of Pune, August, 2005.
4. Women's Representation in Legislatures- An alternative to Government Bill for Women's Reservation by Forum for Democratic Reforms analyzed in details about participation of women in legislation and politics.
5. Women's Representation in Legislatures published by forum for democratic Reforms Liksatta, Hyderabad Lokayan Delhi and CSDS Delhi Manushi, New Delhi- This forum give an alternative to the Government Bill for women's Reservation. Dr. Jayprakash Narayan, Dhirubhai Seth, Yogendra Yadav and Madhu, Kishwar worked in this issue.
6. Mrs. Minal Mhatre (Research fellow) has done case study of women's political participation in Maharashtra. This study work published by Centre for the study of Society an Secularism, Santacruz, East, Mumbai in Jan. 2009.

### METHODOLOGY:-

Researcher has taken information from published books, online journals (referred), and online publications as a secondary data.

### OBJECTIVE:-

The main objective of this research papers to focus on political empowerment of women in India.

Throughout the world the issue of women's representation in legislation has emerged as one of the key issue to determine the level and extent of their empowerment. Political participation is halls mark of democracy and modernization nature, success and effectively of a democracy largely depends upon the extent to which equal, effective and actual participation is provided by the system to all its citizen. A woman comprise about half of the population of the world so this segment of society cannot be ignored but requires a special attention.

Since independence Indian women have be exposed to the political processes and are showing increasing awareness about not only lack of rights but also their utility. A majority of illiterate rural women are also politically sensitive and aware of the various issues confronting them. Women get easily mobilized in the political processes by the political parties who approach women very often for party issues any for short term goals by winning elections but not for long term goals of bringing about social changes and gender equality in political power sharing.

The issue of women's participation in political decision making assumed importance only in the late twentieth century. It is now on the international agenda and permitting many regional and national plans of action. The United Nations adopted the Convention on the Political Rights of Women in 1952. The worldwide concern for women's participation was noticed in 1975 when the United Nations declared 1975-1985 as the Women Development Decade and adopted resolutions accordingly. In 1975, the World Plan of Action, adopted at the First World Conference on Women held in Mexico City, put forward various suggestions for the recruitment, nomination and promotion of women in various branches of government, public bodies, trade unions and pressure groups.<sup>[1]</sup>

The issue of women's political empowerment gained momentum in the global

Debate for women's rights at the time of the Fourth World Conference on Women. Held at Beijing in 1995. As signatory to the Beijing Declaration of 1995 and the subsequent UN Resolution, India is obliged to take necessary steps to achieve gender quality and assist women's unfettered participation in all political and developmental activities. It is in keeping with the so international obligations and demand from the country's women that India has been trying to reserve 33 percent of the seats in the federal and State legislatures for women. However, the Women's Reservation Bill, first introduced in the Lok Sabha in 1996, is yet to become a law; and women continue to wage an unsuccessful battle against male domination of the political scene.

The gender aspect of Modern India is mainly structures by the nationalist discourse in the pre-independence period. Gender was considers as an important element in the transitional stage from the colonial the nationalist discourse. After independence it was planes that in free India the fundamental rights and duties will safeguard the interest of women.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. The Beijing Declaration, a landmark event that focused on political empowerment of women and consequently, on the issue of women's reservation, has received international recognition and the consensus that establishment of quotas for women's political participation was legitimate and practical. A 1995 report of the United Nations Development Programme held that 30 Percent would be the minimum presentation required for women as a group to exert a meaning full influence in legislative assemblies.

These developments show the concern express at the global level on the denial of equal rights to women and their mobility to achieve equal participation along with men.

If India is concerned, women have played a significant role in the growth and development of parliamentary democracy of India. During Promulgations of the constitution in 1950 women were brought at per with men and given equal rights to participate in the political process and since the constitutional recognition of this equality more and more women have came forward to participate in electoral politics but the number of women in parliament and state legislative assemblies is marginal.

The 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment made one-third reservation for women in all village, block and district level bodies; in the posts of chairperson and vice-chairperson across all these institutions; and in the seats reserved for SC and ST in each body according to their proportion in the population. The 74<sup>th</sup> Amendment extended similar provisions to municipal corporations, municipal councils and the local councils.

Under the terms of both amendments, the seats allocated to women were to be chosen by direct election and rotate across district every five-year election cycle.

It is often noticed that the suitable representation of women in legislative remain distant dreams, excluding their representation in the local self-government institutions. Since independence the position of women in politics has always been marginal in India. Women's participation in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha has not come up to even 10 percent although we had 14 general elections since 1952.

**TABLE - I**

Year	Lok Sabha			Rajya Sabha		
	Seats	Women MPs	% of Women MPs	Seats	Women MPs	% of Women MPs
1952	499	22	4.41	219	16	7.31
1957	500	27	5.40	237	18	7.59
1962	503	34	6.76	238	18	7.56
1967	523	31	5.93	240	20	8.33
1971	521	22	4.22	243	17	7.00
1977	544	19	3.49	244	25	10.25
1980	544	28	5.15	244	24	9.84
1984	544	44	8.09	244	28	11.48
1989	517	27	5.22	245	24	9.80
1991	544	39	7.17	245	38	15.51
1996	543	39	7.18	223	19	8.52
1998	543	43	7.92	245	15	6.12
1999	543	49	9.02	245	19	7.76
2004	543	45	8.28	245	DNA	DNA
2009	543	58	10.68	245	22	8.98
<b>Average</b>	<b>530</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>6.59</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>21.00</b>	<b>9.00</b>

Source: CSDS Data Unit

The pattern of participation by women in the national elections is provided in the following table.

Year	Voting % of men	Voting % of women	Total Seats Contested By women	Seats won by women	% Seat won of contested seats	Total Seats	% of women members
1952	53	37.1	51	23	45.09	499	4.40
1957	56	38.77	70	27	38.57	500	5.40
1962	62.10	46.63	68	35	51.47	503	6.70
1967	66.70	55.48	66	31	48.43	523	5.90
1971	69.70	49.15	86	22	27.50	521	4.20
1977	65.62	54.96	70	19	25.70	544	3.40

1980	57.69	51.22	42	28	19.70	544	5.14
1984	63.61	68.17	421	159	28.30	544	7.90
1989	70.90	439.90	189	28	14.80	525	5.30
1991	52.56	47.42	307	33	10.75	503	6.60

Source: PIB, Government of India, 1998

All these trends indicate that women's representation in politics requires special consideration and cannot be left to the forces that presently dominate political parties and government. Today, even the best of our female parliamentarians feel sidelined and powerless within their respective parties. The few women in leadership positions have not been able to courage the entry of greater number of women in electoral and party politics, and are an ineffective minority within their own respective political groupings.

The very same male party leaders who compete with each other in announcing their support of special reservations for women have shown little willingness to include women in party decision-making, or even to help create a conducive atmosphere for women's participation in their own organizations. In fact, women's marginalization is even more pronounced in the day-to-day function in go almost all political parties than in the Lok Sabha. Therefore, it is urgently required that we take special measures to enhance women's political participation in ways that help the influence decision-making at all level so for society and polity. Our democracy will remain seriously flawed if it fails to yield adequate space to women.

#### SCENARIO IN MAHARASHTRA:-

- Women politicians of Maharashtra have proved that they are no less than the male politicians in this respect. We cite a few examples.
- Kesarbai Kshirsagar (OBC) has been a Member of the Parliament for 10 years, apart from being a Member of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly.
- Chandrika Premji Kenia one time cricketer and lawyer by training, has been described in the media as the "ace defector". She was a Congress Member of the Maharashtra Assembly from 1985-86 and Minister of State for Education in the S. B. Chavan ministry from 1986 to 1988.
- Dr. Shalinitai Patil, wife of late Vasantdada Patil, the strong man of Maharashtra had joined Congress Party on the demise of her husband, got elected to the Assembly and was made the Revenue Minister.
- Suryakanta Patil (NCP) was originally with the INC and began her political career in 1971 as President of the District Congress Committee (women's wing) Nanded and General Secretary of District Youth Congress (1972-74). A Municipal Councilor of Nanded during 1980, she was elected to the Maharashtra Assembly (1980-1985). She was elected to Rajya Sabha during 1986-91. She contested and got elected to the 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha as a Congress (I) candidate.
- Dr. Vimal Nandkumar Mundada was first elected in 1990 as a BJP nominee. In 1994, Vimal Mundada, elected from a reserved seat, was the only woman Minister. Re-elected on BJP ticket in 1995, she later parted ways with BJP and joined NCP to be reelected in 1999 and 2004. Dr. Vimal Mundada is made the Cabinet Minister for Public Works (Public Undertakings).
- In 1988, Rajni Patil was BJP's Member of Parliament from Beed.
- Kalpana Ramesh Narhire (Shiv Sena), Member, Maharashtra Legislative Assembly two times (1995 to 2004).
- Prabha Rao (Congress) began her political innings as the President of the District Central Co-operative Bank. In 1972, she was elected MLA from Deoli constituency, which returned her five more times. She spent a total of nearly 22 years as a member of the Assembly

(1972 to 1990 and 1995 to 1999). She was elected to the Lok Sabha from Wardha constituency in 1999, but lost in 2004. Prabha Rao has handled several Ministries in the State Government. She was also the Chairperson of the Maharashtra State Commission for Women (1993-1995).

- Rekha P. Khedekar (BJPMLA from Chikhli in Buldhana district) is the wife of Purushottam K hedekar an Executive Engineer with the State PWD.
- Ranjana Subhashrao Kul contested a by-election on NCP ticket following the death of her husband Shbhash Kul. According to Sharad Pawar, she has proved to be a beneficent legislator.
- Chandrakanta Goyal is the wife of Late Ved Prakash Goyal, BJP, former Union Minister of Shipping (2001-03) and Treasurer of BJP.
- Dr. Shobha Dinesh Bachhav, MLA from Nashik and Minister of State for Public Health and Family Welfare, Food and Civil Supplies and Consumer Protection, has been the Mayor of Nashik Municipal Corporation, which was the first to ban the use of plastic bags thinner than 20-25 microns from 1 July, 1999.
- Nirmala Samant Prabhavalkar, who was denied ticket at the 1999 elections, was 'compensated' with the post of Chairperson of Maharashtra Women's Commission.
- Seema Yerpede, who sought Congress ticket for Nagpur West constituency, contended that her 15 years of "relentless" party work would stand harangued steady.
- An Advocate by profession, Rajanitai Shankarrao Satav founded the Jagruti Mahila Mandal in Kalamnuri in 1976 and started mahila mandals in every village. She was elected MLA in 1980 on Congress ticket from Kalamnuri and held the position of Deputy Minister for Health, Law and Justice, Social Welfare and Cultural Affairs during 1982-1985. She was re-elected to the Assembly from Kalamnuri and worked as Minister of State, during the period 1991-1994 she was the Vice President, MPCC. Satav was the founder member of the State Women's Commission (1993). At the 1994 elections she was elected MLA from Parbhani.

The National Alliance of Women (NAWO) have voiced their uppermost concerns in achieving their ends by strategically lobbying with all political parties, regardless of their ideology, to commit. Their efforts qualitatively and quantitatively to the cause of women. The NAWO Manifesto demanded to need for political, economic, social, violence against women, and media reforms to be addressed. All the major political parties in the country had unanimously in their election manifestos stated that the 33 percent reservation for women introduced at the local level of governance be extended to the upper echelons of governance.

Prior to the 13<sup>th</sup> general elections, the National Women's Groups under the aegis of the National Commission for Women Political Core Group met the Chief Election Commissioner with a request that the Commission may ask all the political parties to allot more tickets to women. They also suggested that recognition of political parties by the Election Commission be linked to this requirement. They also suggested that with a view to enabling women to contest elections, the Commission may place a list ceiling on the election expenditure.

In so far as educating women on political participation as candidates is concerned, the Mahila Rajsatta Andolan (MRA) /RSCD, a Campaign for Women in Governance evolved in March 2000 with a view of empowering Women and strengthening their participation in political processes through Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) works in over 25 districts of Maharashtra.

The idea of reserving seats to women was mooted by former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi as early as in the late 1980's. In 1988, the National Perspective Plan for women was introduced at all levels of elective bodies. Women's group insisted that reservation be restricted to the Panchayat level to encourage grassroots participation in politics. The consensus around this demand resulted in the adaptation of the 73<sup>rd</sup> amendments to the Indian Constitution in 1993. In 1995, the question of quotas was raised again, but this time the focus was on reservation of Women in Parliament.

The 85<sup>th</sup> Constitutions Amendment Bill introducing in Loksabha in December 1999 includes the following key provisions -

1. One third of all seats in the Loksabha and the Vidhan Sabhas shall be reserved for women.
2. Such Reservation shall also apply in case of seats reserved for scheduled castes and Scheduled Tribes.
3. There shall be rotation of seats so reserved for women.
4. Such rotation shall be determined by draw of lots in such a manner that a seat shall be reserved only once in a block of three general elections.

The latest development which is taking place is that, the Women's Reservation Bill ensuring 33 percent reservation has been passed by Rajyasabha on 9<sup>th</sup> March, 2010. But, till then 2012 the Women reservation Bill (108 amendment Bill 2008) is not yet passed due to differences among political parties in Loksabha. The general feeling among the women members as well as in Indian society is that the issue has been hanging fire for too long. The purpose of the bill is to just ensure entry into the highest decision making bodies of the country but also a positive step towards gender justice and social reforms. The need of the hour is that the government should bring legislation before the Parliament with a consensus among political parties without diluting the real spirit. Unless there is a reservation, women will find it difficult to get elected in large numbers.

Currently, in Parliament there are 58 (10.7%) women legislators out of 543 Legislators in the Loksabha and 23 (9.5%) out of total of 243 in the Rajyasabha. A recent World Bank Development Report titled 'Gender Equality and Development' emphasized the importance of political and economic empowerment of women as a contribution to sustainable growth and responsible government.

But it is in depth analysis can show us its own limitations such as-

Instead of merely including women in the present political process that is only at the local level a fundamental critic of patriarchy and its manifestation in the public and private domains is also needed for the genuine empowerment and representation of women. Most of the elected women out of 30 percent are from dominant caste who came out of their homes only by the permission of their heads. Whenever women from lower caste have been empowered for the Sarpanch post have faced a lot of resistance from other male members of the upper castes.

This is also true that at political level only a microscopic minority of women, at the helm of affairs can affect the change in the life of women. It is the economic and social empowerment of women that need to be given greater importance.

#### **CONCLUSION:-**

Women's movement in India is confronting with new challenges and variegates complexities in the wake of 21<sup>st</sup> century. The women questions in India is constructed by various factors. In the Indian context structures of caste, class and religion have stratified Indian men, thus generating inequality amongst them and dividing women along these lines too. When the issue of equality was raised under the banner of "we, the women", the oppressed lower caste women were also included in the statistics.

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