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WOMEN'S POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT AND INDIAN CONSTITUTION



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ABSTRACT:

The committees headed by Balvantrao Mehta (1957) and Tarvatlal Jain (1966) both had demanded the participation of women in the Panchayat Raj System. The constitutional corrections made in the article no 73 in the year 1992 had mentioned with the women been given an opportunity of 33% of the reservation. But due to indisciplinary liberalism it is seen that the women are not enough empowered into the political sector. The international survey conducted during the year 1998 reports that the political involvement of the women was only 14.8% and specifically in India the same was only 11.7% in the year 1996. ²

KEYWORDS: Women's Political Empowerment , 'International Women's Day', Indian Constitution.

INTRODUCTION:

1975, as has been celebrated as the 'International Women's Day', was the practical initiation of the obstacles and the queries faced by the Indian women. During this decade, they could not get the good and effective chance to fight the elections for MPs and MLAs too. But on the contrary, the women groups had right contribution for the same, it was because of the civil and the political literacy imbibed in them. In the year 1980, the case of Mathura Rape, there had been the made changes into the constitutional acts and were implemented as law in the year 1983. Just because of the pressures put in by the Women Groups for the Shabano case (1985) the law (Protection of Rights on Divorce Act) was accepted for Muslim women in the year 1986.

Indian Constitution has a commitment for every citizen against their Laws, Freedom and Equality. There is no any discrimination made for and against the gender, caste, religion, varn, pant, etc. when put before the Indian Constitution. The equality is the real follow through for this all. Even after having put in the Women's rights and their security into the Indian Constitution and that too after the 64 years of Independence, we are unworthy enough to specifically mandate the political uplift for them. The main motive behind women empowerment is for their overall progress through all the available sources. This will help them in exposing their potential, calibre, skills, decision makings and with this it will help them gaining social honour, economical, political and cultural knowhow too. We need to overtake the situation faced, either it be an obstacle or can be an opportunity. We need to expose and involve the women into political arena and with it we can also involve them in procedural law making and decision making at social angles. Ultimately all this will help them in empowering them.

The Historical background – Reservation for women

The ancient traditions followed in India refer women as Amba, Ambika, Ambalika, gargi, Apala, etc. Then is the 'Veda' period, they informs about Sita and Draupadi. But the then social administration and the male dominance over the society had a vivid effect on the women freedom and the empowerment. The contemporary legends Gautam Buddha and Bhagwan Mahavira had inspired freedom for the women. Buddhist nuns were properly following the equality compared to Buddhist monks. Then was the period of Raziya Begum, Meerabai, Noor Jahan, Queen Laxmibai, Queen Chennamma, Begum Hazarat who really had huge social impact with their greatness as winning and sacrificing warriors being woman. Women were always had the second stand at the priority level. The movements, with the reference of the western administration and traditional follow ups, run by the legends like Rajaram Mohan Roy, Keshavchandra Sen, Vishnushastri Pandit, Jyotiba Phule, Savitribai Phule, Maharishi Dhondo Keshav Karve, Pandita Ramabai and many more to count, helped for the women empowerment. During the period of the freedom fight in India, under the leadership of Mr M K Gandhi, the women, Annie Besant, Sarojini Nayadu, Kasturba Gandhi, Bhikaji Kama, Kalpana Datta, Aruna Asaf Ali, Rustam Satyavadi, Usha Mehta, Binudas had a vital role to play and were all successful in doing so. Parallel to the mentioned there were others also with the communist thoughts, women from Rashtriya Svayansevak Sangh (RSS) and the Dalit women who did play an important role in the Indian freedom fight.

1885, the year when Indian National Congress was established, Annie Besant, an Irish woman had major role in establishing so. But this session had very less participation from the women side. Charles Bradela, the British Counsellor, had written a letter to Pandita Ramabai reading the need of involving and make women count more for the next session conducted.³ Referring to this letter, Pandita Ramabai had tried well enough and made the presence of 10 women from Bombay and Bengal area for the Alahabad session in the year 1892. Dr Annie Besant was honoured with the chair of

President 'Swarajya Sangha' on 30th Dec, 1916 and with it she had also presided Calcutta Session of Indian National Congress in 1917. 1925, Congress Session at Kanpur, the Chairperson for the session was Mrs Sarojini Nayadu.

1919, Montague Chemsfurd had suggested the needed corrections to be made with the Indian responsible administration from the Law sector and the respective administrators to be increased. This was the time when Laxmibai Rajwade demanded for the women reservation.⁴ The 'Non-Cooperative Movement' held in the year 1920 had the varied and active participation from the women strata. The political Reservation for the women was then been demanded by the All India Women's Conference, Women Indian Association, National Council of Women's. 1927 was the year when for the first time women paying the limited taxes were given the right to vote.

1928, different women associations had demanded for the reservation orienting it to the right to vote. August 1928, according to Nehru committee for the basic rights, accordingly the changes were made for the gender equality as per the 19th demand. The 1st round table conference in the year 1930, Mrs Subbanarayan and Begum Shahnavaaz demanded different constituency for the women. As per the agreement signed in 1931 by National Congress Session, the bill for the basic rights was passed successfully. It was mentioned that no any gender discrimination shall be followed and the women shall be equally honoured on social basis and moreover women shall be liberal enough and active too in the political freedom. This all will no doubt help in building the great nation.⁵ 1933, National Congress Session organised at Calcutta was headed by Nili Sengupta. This all data make us aware that at the initial phase, even the national Congress had no any interest women being the part of political administration. Then after, because of Mr M K Gandhi, the women had more involvement for the then activities, the result was 54 women were elected in the elections held for the Law Ministry held in 1937. The delegates were from Indian National Congress, Communist and Rashtriya Svayamsevak Sangh (RSS).

Discussion and Debate on Women Empowerment in Constitutional Meeting

13th Dec, 1946, the constitutional meeting had some objectives related to people with Law & Social values to be followed within the limits of Law, Society, economy and politics.

Equality: quality and opportunity base, will consider equal before all the laws

Freedom: thoughts, expression, faith, dedication, devotion, occupation, association and action; inclusively with all the mentioned and are not affecting the social values, the freedom was granted.⁷

This Constitution meeting had the presence of Mrs Ammu Swaminathan, Mrs Dakshayani Velayughan, Mrs G Durgabai all from the Madras region (now Tamilnadu), then was Mrs Sucheta Kruplani, Begum Aizaz Rasul, Mrs Pournima Banerji all from West Bengal region, from the Madhyaprant & Berar was Rajkumari Amrut Kaur, from Aasam Rohini Kumar Choudhari, Mrs Ani Muskarin and Vijayalaxmi Pandit were from Travankor Cochin region, finally from Bombay region Mrs Hansa Mehta (She headed this Constitution Meeting as the head of All India Women Association).

15th Nov, 1948, the Constitution Meeting was headed by the Deputy President Dr H C Mukharjee. Prof K T Shah suggested the correction and asked Dr B R Ambedkar to read article no 31. This article reads: 1) for further needs the respective state will take the according to the need. 2) it will at least provide all the citizens else every single man or woman with their basic needs with all the equalities.

In accordance with the gain of equality for the women, Begum Aizaz rasul (United Muslim region) had delivered speech from 5th Nov 1948 to 9th Nov 1948 into the hall. She said, "It is really proud & satisfied feel today being a woman. From today on there will be no any gender discrimination.

The constitution had mentioned its proper read with respect to it being very clear & proper. I carry no any doubt that the final constitution will provide different opportunities with respect to gender equality".⁸

According to article no 31 and the Constitutional Article no 39, the agendas defined would as per the state, there will be follow up of the right to equality for the basic needs by the male female gender both. As per the article reading 'Equal', there was the suggestion of removing this word by Nasiruddin Ahmad. But Dr B R Ambedkar had opposed this and had justified it in the following way –

There had been many corrections made against this article. Nasiruddin Ahmad and Prof. K T Shah had suggested removing the word 'equality for male & female gender' from the same wherein I personally do not support. There should not be any grievance against it. The committee had deep study over this, moreover the way it has been mentioned with the language prospective, we have received the proposal from Prof. K T Shah.

With all the negation supporting, the hall had agreed to include article no 39 into the constitution, this signifies that, for the women empowerment the constitution committee was more keen and for all this the respected and visionary was none other than the father of Constitution Dr B R Ambedkar.

Inclusions for Women Empowerment into the Indian Constitution

26th Jan 1950, the implementation of the Indian Constitution was worked through and practical republic was the nation India. The Indian Constitution provides different rights as mentioned –

1. Article 14 suggests gender equality
2. Article 15 (1) suggests no discrimination due to caste, religion, creed, caste, gender and birthplace.
3. Article 15(3) reads that there will be no any obstacles from the nation to the state, if any changes are being made for the betterment of women and the children
4. Article 16 (1) (2) mentions that there will equality followed for the Public Service Scheme by an individual irrespective of its religion, caste, creed, gender, etc.
5. Article 21 compiles about the freedom of an individual under the limits of the laws mentioned.
6. Article 23 has mentioned keenly about the unethical women market
7. Article 32 overwhelms by taking over all the mentioned above. It reads, if there is any takeovers against the mentioned then the Constitution will take the charge
8. Article 226: there has been some rights reserved under the Supreme Court if in case some irrelevancy occurs during the follow up of the Constitutional Agendas.

Post Independence, Pt Jawaharlal Nehru was the 1st Prime Minister of India. He had more concentration on democratic decentralised vision and the implementation too. In the year 1952, Pt Jawaharlal Nehru ignited and led the Collective Development Programme. Pt Jawaharlal Nehru quotes, " we generally sit in our offices and think about the betterment of the common people and decide accordingly. But I think, why not give chance to those common people to think about their betterment and decide accordingly".⁹

For Women Empowerment there were different committees and associations had a vital role to play all led by the women and for the women like Social Welfare Board (1951), National Development Committee by Congress (1953), Balwantrao Mehta (1957) and National Service Committee (1958). Even this includes some women of the Communist thoughts too. This all was done to empower the existance of the women in the political sector.

Right since the 1st Public Elections held from 1952, we analyse that there had been less involvement of the women in this sector.

Table no 1: Lok Sabha Elections – the women leads

Sr No	Election Year	Lok Sabha	Members count	Male	Female	Female Percentage
1	1952	1 st	489	467	22	4.4
2	1957	2 nd	490	463	27	5.4
3	1962	3 rd	497	463	34	6.7
4	1967	4 th	520	489	31	5.9
5	1971	5 th	541	519	22	4.2
6	1977	6 th	541	522	19	3.4
7	1980	7 th	528	500	28	5.1
8	1984	8 th	519	475	44	8.1
9	1989	9 th	525	498	27	5.3
10	1991	10 th	543	504	39	7.1
11	1996	11 th	543	503	40	6.3
12	1998	12 th	543	500	43	7.94
13	1999	13 th	543	494	49	9.02
14	2004	14 th	543	498	45	8.28
15	2009	15 th	545	482	63	11.55
16	2014	16 th	543	421	61	11.23

Table No. 2: Member Count (Rajyasabha)

Sr No	Political Party	Male Candidates	Female candidates
1	Congress	61	09
2	B J P	41	14
3	Communist	13	01
4	B S P	13	00
5	S P	11	01

Ref. 'Daily Sakal' (30st Jan 2013)

Referring to the tables mentioned above we articulate that there had been an increase of around 11 female candidates comparing the public election in the year 1957 to 1962. But contrary to it the election in 1967 had decreased the same number by 5 counts. And then was the count of 22 candidates in the years 1971. Contemporarily mentioning the count was lessened by 8 candidates. National Congress had given an opportunity for 51 female candidates to fight public elections held in the year 1999 off which only 14 won the elections. Same year BJP had the 25 female candidates off which 12 could make. Year 2004, congress had 45 female candidates and only 12 were in the winners' list, BJP was with 30 numbers and 10 listed in. 15th Lok Sabha elections had 63 women MPs and Rajyasabha had 27.

The state of Maharashtra, so-called progressive state, generally focuses more about women empowerment and hierarchy; here the Vidhansabha elections counting to 288 members, there are

only 12 women count. Simultaneously the count is only 6 female MLAs in Vidhanparishad. The current status, considering the BJP-Shivsena government, reads the same as 12 and for Vidhansabha and Vidhanparishad respectively.

CONCLUSION

The corrections made in the article 73 from the Indian Constitution facilitated women with the political reservation ultimately that led to the law based political leadership. But owing to all this, nation of India yet doesn't think of the democratic values and doesn't even try to implement it. This reflects the women empowerment on the social, economical, political, etc. basis. This society of India being the male dominated one traditionally; it is needed that the women should expose broadly and think openly about the democratic values and try to concentrate on the same. For this it is must that they all should make them aware about education, health, social security, parliamentary democratic values, awareness programmes, political know how, etc. They should undergo the needed workshops, events, programmes and trainings. The women should focus more on the education sector. The women should be paid at the level the men are referring to their capabilities. The political parties should also need to work on the potential building for the political career of women. At the ultimatum male – female must accept the gender equality.

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