

A STUDY ON ROLE OF WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN INDIAN POLITICS

Dr.B.Venkateswara Reddy

Lecturer

SR&BGNR Government Degree College

Khammam.

Abstract

In a democratic country, no one should be discriminated on the basis of caste, race, religion, sex or place of birth in accessing positions of power. But, marginalized groups of the Indian masses have been excluded for centuries. Because of the adoption of universal adult franchise and reservations, it is expected that there is scope for the rise of new political elites from these sections. This paper explores whether the above measures resulted in emergence of political elites from weaker sections and if so to what extent they are comparable to elites drawn from other sections. The role of political parties to encourage more women to join in political activities are also negligible. Strengthening women's rights and removing hurdles to political participation are crucial to achieve women empowerment and gender equality

Introduction

Women have the right to participate in political process and it shows positive impact on progress of the nation, state, society, family and individual personality. It is observed that increase in women's political participation and leadership leads to development of the society. It also affects the performance of political process and tends to move towards more inclusiveness, egalitarian, responsible, and democratic in nature. The real political participation of women is need for a liable democracy; it helps in expanding the scope of democratic norms and improves the prospects for enduring development. This is not only a demand of simple justice or democracy, but a necessary condition for women's existence in politics. Participation of women into politics and decision-making structures can change the policies, vision and structure of institutions. The women facing numerous challenges to participate in the political process due to the gender discrimination, lack of support and inadequate resources.

The term 'political participation' has a very wide meaning. It is not only related to 'Right to Vote', but simultaneously relates to participation in: decision-making process, political activism, political consciousness, etc. Women in India participate in voting, run for public offices and political parties at lower levels more than men. Political activism and voting are the strongest areas of women's political participation. To combat gender inequality in politics, the Indian Government has instituted reservations for seats in local governments. Women turnout during India's parliamentary general elections was 65.63%, compared to 67.09% turnout for men. India ranks 20th from the bottom in terms of representation of women in Parliament. Women have held the posts of president and prime minister in India, as well as chief ministers of various states. Indian voters have elected women to numerous state legislative assemblies and national parliament for many decades.

India has a multi-party system with the 7 registered parties at the national level. The three largest parties in India are the Indian National Congress (INC), the Bharatiya Janata

Party (BJP), and the Communist Party of India (CPI). Political parties have increased outreach among women voters as India's party system has become more competitive. This has included the creation of women's wings in the largest parties. The BJP's wing is the BJP Mahila Morcha, the INC's wing is All India Mahila Congress, and the CPI's wing is the National Federation of Indian Women.

Women's involvement in political parties is tied to the increasing demand for equal rights. The INC held power until the 1990s. As the INC moved away from welfare politics, other parties arose to challenge the INC using poverty as the centre of their agenda. The INC regained power in 2004 with the help of women's participation. The INC has increased women's participation by instituting a 33% quota for women in all levels of the party. In June 2009, the INC nominated a woman to become first speaker of Lok Sabha, and also supported the election of Pratibha Patil, India's first female president. Women were involved in the early establishment of the BJP. The BJP has encouraged greater representation of women by developing women's leadership programs, financial assistance for women candidates, and implementing a 33% reservation for women in party leadership positions. BJP has received women's support by focusing on issues such as the Uniform Civil Code to extend equal rights to women and men regardless of religion. They have also spoken out against violence against Indian women. The CPI has also supported gender inequality issues including addressing issues of violence Nikita Ekta Ullu through the National Federation of Indian Women.

Women's participation in political parties remained low in the 1990s with 10-12% membership consisting of women. Indian women have also taken the initiative to form their own political parties, and in 2007, the United Women Front party was created, and has advocated for increasing the reservation of seats for women in parliament to 50%.

Literature Review

V.B. Athreya and K.S. Rajeshwari (1998) explore the socio-economic and political background of women Panchayat leaders and they conducted work on "Women Participation in Panchayati Raj: A Case Study from Tamil Nadu". And they revealed that political background and family support are important factors for women to enter the public arena. Poornima and Vasulu (1999), in their study on Panchayat Raj found that Panchayati Raj institutions as grass-root democratic governance institutions are a necessary, but not sufficient condition in the transformation to a better social order and that, transformation facilitating women's participation through reservation is the first and important step.

Palanithurai, G (2002) probes into the problems faced by the elected women representatives when they manage the local body institutions. In his article 'Impediments to Empowerment of Women: Experiences of Elected Women Representatives in Panchayats in Tamil Nadu' has brought to light the ways and means by which the problems can be tackled, what the needs of the leaders and how they can be met by external agencies.

A. Celine Rani (2002) found in his work that the socio-economic status is a significant factor in determining the emergence of rural women leaders. Different categories of leaders have been identified. This reflects the condition in Tamil Nadu.

Importance of Women's participation in India

Women all over the world are overwhelmingly concerned with the issue of gender equality through women's empowerment. The results are periodically assessed in world conferences, of which we have had four since the Mexico Conference, the last one being in

Beijing in July 1995. In the intervening period, national and international conferences deliberated on women's issues including gender equality.

In terms of constitutional, legal and administrative measures as well as enabling support to improve the working and living conditions of women, many initiatives were taken since 1947. Prominent among them are the constitutional mandates for gender equality and justice, enactment of very many new laws and amendment of existing laws to protect and promote the interests of women, setting up of women-specific administrative and economic structures like separate Women and Child Development Department at the union and State Government levels, constitution of the National Commission for Women and also Commissions for Women in several States, State Women Development Corporations, orientation in plan strategy to include women specific and women related programmes, launching of special schemes like Rashtriya Mahila Kosh, Indira Mahila Yojana and Mahila Samridhi Yojana and the foremost among them all, the provision to reserve for women, one-third number of seats to be filled by direct election in Panchayats and urban local bodies and also offices in specified rural and urban local self-government institutions, initiating introduction of the 81st Constitution (amendment) Bill for reservation of seats in Lok Sabha and State Legislatures.

Women in decision-making process:

In the empowerment route, participation of women in decision making at all levels has special significance, especially in a democratic set-up. It is unfortunate that some countries in the world have yet to confer full voting rights to women.

The empowerment of women and the achievement of equality should not be considered in-isolation. The realization of these goals is the only way to build a harmonious, just and balanced society. Let us pledge ourselves to actively pursue the essential requisites for the good of humanity.

Empowerment of Women Through Various International and National Agencies

Poverty eradication assumes great significance in this context. Poverty eradication and empowerment of women are now at the centre stage of development.

A nation can ill afford to leave behind half of its population in its march towards progress and prosperity.

Equality between women and men is a condition for social justice and is also a necessary and fundamental requisite for equality, development and peace.

Bapu's concern for women

Mahatma Gandhi, who was instrumental in bringing hundreds of thousands of women out of their homes to fight in the freedom struggle, did not equate legal equality of sexes with equality of occupations. He believed that there was a basic difference in the roles and functions of men and women but they were complementary. He further asserted that they were not inferior to men and those men and women were equal in law. The amelioration in the condition of women was a necessary precondition to the regeneration of Indian society. So he mobilized women into the national movement, apart from working for their emancipation.

Representation of women in governance

In the annals of evolution of local self-government in the country, June 1, 1993

occupies a prime place. It was on that day a constitutional status to municipal administration in India was accorded by bringing into force the Constitution (Seventy-Fourth Amendment) act. 1992. It is well known that earlier the Constitution did not make local self-government in urban areas a specific constitutional mandate. While the Directive Principles of State Policy refers to village panchayats, there was no specific reference to municipalities except implicitly in entry 5 of the State List which places the subject of local self-government as a responsibility of the States.

Urbanization is a natural consequence of the economic changes that take place in a country.

Empowerment through grass roots democracy

Everything must start from the beginning. So also, is the case with progress and development for these to be meaningful.

Moreover, it must involve both men and women, from the lowest possible levels - grass roots level, as we often refer to them, to enable their total involvement and participation. Unless we the people help ourselves and thereby strengthen the hands of the nation towards peace, plenty and prosperity, there can be no future at all for this nation nor for the suffering millions. While eradication and total abolition of poverty, illiteracy and disease must be the main plank for us to commence our programmes and policies, what needs to be worked out is the modus operandi for successful implementation of these schemes and programmes. In any of the multi-pronged phases involving integrated rural development with its composite, package of potable water, housing, fuel and electricity, health, education and introduction of innovative appropriate technologies, all of them perforce have to deeply involve committed villagers of both the sexes.

Then and then alone can we see the beginning of great future for this great nation with its grand manpower of skilled, trained competent band of administrators and scientists. We do not have a dearth of either technologies or people to transmit these technologies to the relevant strata of society, making them the beneficiaries of the fruits of a grand endeavour. The lacunae must be identified and the gaps filled without any further delay in order to enable both the village and urban level populations subsisting at village on the fringes of big metropolitan cities.

To this end we must set up task forces involving as many people at various levels, as possible including recently retired officers of the Government to enrich the programmes with their excellent experience. While men at all levels must be drafted into these schemes, since women form often more than 50% of any population be it rural or urban or even semi-urban, success will be assured to most programmes by their active involvement and achievement. But many of the women are either hesitant or even reluctant to enter these programmes' although several of them have already been drafted into them by various processes, of mediation, awareness of their own potential and actual gains for themselves individuals as well as for the whole family and village at large. Despite lack of formal education, many of these women have a native intelligence quotient rather of a high order and are able to master the three R's (i.e., reading, writing and arithmetic) rather rapidly. particularly the arithmetic part of it including cornuting, etc., of accounts. Better roads and commuting facilities, lighting, availability of fuel for cooking, will free them from unnecessary drudgery of long and arduous chores, and make them available for work for society, village and the nation.

- **Address Violence against Women in Politics**

Violence against women in politics is a significant barrier to their effective representation. Steps such as raising awareness, creating safe environment etc, should be taken to address this issue and ensure the safety and security of women in politics.

- **Address Social and Cultural Barriers**

Women's effective representation in politics can be hindered by social and cultural barriers such as patriarchy and gender norms. These issues should be addressed through campaigns, education and awareness programs, and social reform initiatives like Beti Bachan, Beti Padaavo Scheme **and** Sukanya Samridhi Yojana.

- **Provide Support for Work-Life Balance**

Many women face challenges in balancing their political responsibilities with their family and personal lives. Providing support for work-life balance, such as flexible schedules, childcare, and parental leave, can help to address this issue.

Recently, Kerala government announced to grant menstrual leave for female students in all state universities under the Department of Higher Education.

- **Increase Visibility and Recognition**

Women in politics should be given greater visibility and recognition for their accomplishments.

This can help to inspire other women to get involved in politics and to create a culture of greater gender equality in politics.

Right from the inception of the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly, women as legislators have played a significant role. In the year 1956, when the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly was constituted by unifying Andhra and Hyderabad Legislative Assemblies, there were eleven elected women members in the House.

As the years progressed, the number of elected women members in the Andhra Pradesh Legislature kept steadily increasing. At present there are 4 women MLCs and 14 women MLAs, representing various constituencies of the state of Andhra Pradesh.

To give special thrust to the welfare of women and to focus on alleviation of their problems, the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly constituted the Committee on Welfare of Women and Children in the year 1993.

The year 1999, the Eleventh Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly unanimously elected Mrs. K. Prathibha Bharathi as the Speaker of the House. She was the first Woman Speaker of Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly.

The Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly has taken up several new initiatives like providing Zero Hour opportunity to all the women legislators on the occasion of international women's day.

The 13th Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly has given a new dimension to the theme of Common Wealth Parliamentary Association by felicitating eight women from different walks of life as 'Agents of Change' in recognition of their exemplary service to the society with commitment and passion.

Conclusion

The "benefit of women's political participation" is that it attracts more women

candidates in politics. Women and girls can consider it as an opportunity to take politics as a career option and serve the nation. The women candidates also attract more female voters. Women's political participation is their fundamental right. Therefore, women's political participation provides global acclamation to the country in meeting general diversity. Another benefit is that female politician also promotes leadership. The role of decision-making allotted to them also solves the humanitarian crisis. participation of women creates a balance in the gender gap and encourages more women to participate. This boosts their skills and encourages active participation. Women's representation in politics can be increased by encouraging and supporting local women leaders. This can be achieved through mentorship programs and other support initiatives.

References:

- 1) V.B. Athreya and K.S. Rajeshwari, (1998), "Women Participation in Panchayati Raj: A Case Study from Tamil Nadu", M. S. Swaminathan Foundation, Chennai.
- 2) Poornima and Vasulu (1999), "conducted a study of women in Panchayati Raj".
- 3) Palanithurai, G (2002), "Impediments to Empowerment of Women: Experiences of Elected Women Representatives in Panchayats in Tamil Nadu, The Indian Journal of Political Science, Vol.63:No1.
- 4) A. Celine Rani (2002), "Emerging Pattern of Rural Women Leadership in India", Kalpaz Publications, New Delhi.