



An Analysis of Women's Empowerment in Indian Politics

^{*1}Syed Manuaruz Zaman

^{*1}Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Hiralal Bhakat College, West Bengal, India.

Abstract

Ancient Indian women held high social status and excellent health, with significant roles in education, marriage, family life, caste, gender, religion, and culture. They worked as teachers, helped in farming, and participated in religious rituals with their husbands. During the Buddhist period, women's condition improved slightly. This study examines women's representation in Indian politics, challenges faced, and their impact on policy-making and governance. It highlights the need for increased grassroots participation, education, training, and legal reform. Success stories of women leaders serve as role models, emphasizing the need for addressing gender inequality and creating an inclusive environment for women in Indian politics.

Keywords: Women politics, representation, empowerment, government, ancient.

Introduction

Women have played the most important role in the Indian social structure. Certainly, in Rigvedic India, women had a high social status and an excellent standard of living. Even women were allowed to reach higher levels of intellectual and spiritual achievement but, after enjoying a limited and dignified role in Rigvedic society, women faced discrimination during education and other rights and privileges in the later Vedas. Indian culture does not believe that they are now witnessing a significant revolution for women. Women's voices are becoming more prominent in legislatures, courts, and public spaces. The Indian constitution has always given women equal rights to men, unlike in the West, where women have had to struggle for more than a century for their basic rights such as the right to vote. Women in contemporary Indian society preserve or diminish their ancient and medieval status in terms of equality, education, marriage and family life, caste and gender, religion and culture. The purpose of this essay is to provide awareness and insight into the roles and times women faced. The essay will enable us to imagine how women participated in the social, religious, economic and domestic spheres in ancient times. The role of women in politics is of deep significance and subject of study in the context of India, which is known for the richness of the country's culture, diversity and naming this surround around democratic governance. Participation of women in Indian politics. Challenges, opportunities and emerging trends that have shaped the landscape of women's political representation in India.

Furthermore, the study will present a contemporary assessment of the current status of women in Indian politics, providing insights into recent trends, achievements and

ongoing struggles.

Status of Women in Indian Society

India's women's status has improved over time, but society still lacks virtue. Women were respected as devies, enjoying freedom, participation in social gatherings, and equal rights in religious, public, and educational spheres. They owned property, performed sacrifices, and attended public meetings. However, later beliefs and rituals favored sons over daughters, with daughters inheriting personal property and performing funerals and shraddha. Women's freedom and participation in various branches of education were also emphasized.

After the Mughal Empire's fall, British rule transformed India's economic and social structure. Despite unprogressive living standards for women, social evils like child marriage and widow remarriage were controlled by reformers like Rajaram Mohan Roy and Vidyasagar Act. Women like Vikaji Kama, Dr. Annie Besant, and Sarojini Naidu played significant roles in India's freedom struggle.

Status of Women in 21st Century:

Women control their destiny, and are treated differently by society. Today in the same nation, society and culture men live in, they are deprived of their basic human rights and ridiculed by patriarchal society; As a result they have not yet achieved their status. Since then they have not left their four walls

Women-Present Status of Indian Society:

What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world but loses his soul? Unfortunately, the vast majority of Indian women

citizens experience the same freedom-disparity that Indian women have. When brief research data are used, the consequences of favoring male children over female children are surprising, disturbing, and still prevalent in all regions and among people in all regions. Usually common. Is it the country of genocide? The question arises. Does not any girl child in our culturally and spiritually enlightened country have the right to a peaceful birth and a dignified child? While the country prides itself on family values, how many of us are actually "killed to give birth to women in balanced families of sons?" Ultimately, how we manage one family relationship will ultimately affect other family relationships. One of the basic institutions of civilization is marriage. The main element of national development is the family unit which forms the society. An unhappy, unbalanced family and its children will create an unstable and chaotic society.

Historical Background of Women in Indian Politics:

The historical background of women's politics in India is a complex and multifaceted narrative spanning centuries, marked by significant milestones, movements and gradual progress towards greater inclusion and representation. To understand the current status of women in Indian politics, it is essential to explore the historical context:

- **Pre-Independence Era (Ancient and Medieval India):** Women played a major role in governance and administration in ancient and medieval India. Examples include the likes of Rani Padmini and Rani Durgavati. But these were the exception rather than the norm, and women's political participation was limited.
- **Post-Independence Period (After 1947):** After independence in 1947, India adopted a democratic constitution that guaranteed equality for all citizens regardless of gender. Women's suffrage expanded and women began to participate in electoral politics. In 1952, the first general elections were held in India and several women were elected to the Constituent Assembly.
- **Reserved for Women:** With a view to women's representation in political office, Bharat introduced reservation policies at the local level in the form of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). The 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments in 1992 mandated that one-third of the seats in the reconstituted bodies be reserved for local rural and urban women.
- **Challenges and Gender Inequality:** Despite progress, women in Indian politics face numerous challenges including patriarchal attitudes, violence and equal access to resources and opportunities. Gender gap in political participation persisted.
- **Contemporary Developments:** In recent years, there has been a growing awareness of the need for greater participation of women in politics. Some states have experimented with increasing reservation quotas and women have taken leadership roles in major political parties.

Representation and Participation:

Women's representation and participation in Indian politics is an important aspect of the wider discourse on gender equality and democratic governance. This part of the analytical study sheds light on the dynamics, challenges, opportunities and emerging trends of women's representation and participation in Indian politics.

- **Numerical Representation:** Despite progress over the years, the numerical representation of women in Indian

politics is still below gender parity

- **Conservation Policy:** An important step in increasing the representation of women is the introduction of reservation policies. As mentioned earlier, the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments mandated—in Panchayatiraj Institutions (PRIs) and restored areas for women.
- **Challenges and Obstacles:** Women in Indian politics face numerous challenges including social norms, patriarchy, political violence and unequal access to resources. Women are often seen as "proxy" candidates for male family members and face harassment and discrimination within political parties and during campaigns.
- **Women's Movement and Advocacy:** Various women's movements and civil society organizations continue to advocate for gender equality in politics. These groups raise awareness, provide training and support to female candidates, and push for policy changes that promote women's political participation.
- **Media and Public Perception:** The role of mass media in shaping public perception about women's politics is significant. Positive media coverage can motivate women to interpolate and challenge gender stereotypes. However, negative, or biased, reporting can reinforce existing biases and discourage women from participating.
- **Youth and Emerging Trends:** Young women are on the rise in politics, especially at the local level. This influx of new talent brings new perspectives and energy to the political arena, potentially reshaping the landscape of women's participation for years to come.

Correction Policy

Reservation policies are an important and transformative element of women's participation in Indian politics. These policies were introduced to address the historical under-representation of women in political leadership roles. In this section of the analytical study, we discuss the reservation policies for women in Indian politics, their impact and ongoing debates around them.

- **Positive Impact at Local Level:** The reservation policy for women in PRIs has several positive outcomes. It has significantly increased the number of women elected as sarpanches (village heads) and members of local governing bodies. This increased representation has resulted in greater attention to the issues of women, children and marginalized communities in local governance.
- **Empowerment of Women:** Conservation policies at the local level have empowered women who were previously excluded from political decision-making ethos given them a platforms to voice their concerns, participate in development initiatives and challenge traditional power structures.

Impact of Women's Politics:

The impact of women's politics in India is multifaceted and spans multiple dimensions of governance, policymaking and social transformation.

This part of the analytical study examines the impact and consequences of women's participation in Indian politics.

- **Gender-specific Policy:** Women in politics often advocate for policies that address gender-specific issues such as health care, education, and violence against women. Their presence in decision-making bodies can lead to the prioritization of these concerns.

Legal Implications

- **Pro-Women Act:** Women legislators have played an important role in enacting and passing laws aimed at protecting women's rights and promoting gender equality. These include laws dealing with issues such as dowry, domestic violence and sexual harassment.
- **Local Governance and Grassroots Influence:** Better service delivery: Women leaders in local governance often focus on improving basic services such as health care, sanitation and education, which can have a direct impact on the quality of life in their communities.
- **Promoting Civic Engagement:** Women leaders encourage civic engagement and participation, inspiring more women to be involved in community decision-making processes.

Challenges and Obstacles

Women's political participation in India has been significantly affected by both historical and contemporary challenges and barriers. This part of the analytical study explores these challenges and barriers, which have limited women's entry and advancement in the political arena.

- **Patriarchal Norms and Stereotypes**

Traditional Gender Roles: Deep-rooted patriarchal norms dictate women's primarily domestic roles, making it difficult to enter male-dominated arenas of politics.

Stereotypes: Stereotypes about women's power, leadership and decision-making abilities persist, undermining their credibility as political leaders.

- **Violence and Harassment:**

Physical Threat: Women politicians often face physical threats and violence, including assault and vandalism, which deters them from active political participation.

Verbal Abuse: Verbal abuse, character assassination, and derogatory comments are commonly used as tools to silence women in politics.

- **Lack of Access to Resources:**

Financial Constraints: Women often lack access to the financial resources needed for political campaigns, such as fundraising networks and campaign financing.

Educational Discrimination: Gender inequality limits women's access to educational information and knowledge, which affects their ability to engage in informed political discourse.

- **Family and Social Pressures:**

Balancing Family and Politics: Women find it challenging to balance family responsibilities with a political career, which prioritizes family pressures.

Social Stigma: Decisions in interpolity can be accompanied by social stigma, as women who challenge traditional gender can face backlash from their communities.

- **Lack of representation in political parties:**

Less Representation in Party Leadership: Women are often underrepresented in leadership positions of political parties, making it difficult to secure party tickets and nominations.

Limited Decision Making Capacity: Within political parties, women may have limited influence in shaping party policy and strategy.

- **Election Challenge:**

Electoral Violence: Elections in India can be marred by violence and intimidation, which disproportionately affects

women candidates.

Winner-takes-all System: A "winner-take-all" electoral system may discourage women from entering politics because they may perceive it as a high-profile, winner-take-all environment.

- **Conservation Policy and Tokenism:**

Token Representation: Some critics argue that reservation policies can lead to tokenism, where women elected through reservation may not have real decision-making power or be taken seriously by their male counterparts.

Limited Scope: Conservation policies have primarily been implemented at the local level, leaving politics with limited gender diversity at the state and national levels.

- **Media bias and Misrepresentation:**

Biased Reporting: The media sometimes portrays women politicians in a negative light, focusing on their looks and personal lives rather than their policies and abilities.

Lack of Coverage: Female politicians may have less media coverage than their male counterparts, making it harder to build a public profile.

- **Intersectionality and caste-based discrimination:**

Race and Class Barriers: Women from marginalized communities often face complex discrimination due to their gender and caste or class background, limiting their political opportunities.

Empowerment of Women in Politics:

Empowering women in politics is India's important endeavor that includes a multi-pronged approach to address the challenges and barriers women face in the political arena. This section of analytical study explores strategies and initiatives for women's empowerment in Indian politics.

- **Educational Empowerment:**

Promotion of Girls' Education: Encourage education for girls and women to increase their knowledge, skills and confidence and for their more efficient and informed political participation.

- **Financial Aid and Resources:**

Access to Funds: Facilitating access to campaign finance and financial resources for women candidates, especially candidates from marginalized backgrounds.

Training and Capacity Building: To organize training programs and workshops to enhance political and leadership skills of women interested in politics.

- **Research and Data Collection:**

Collect Information: Collect and analyze data on barriers to women's political participation, representation, and better informed policy and program design.

Research and Study: Conducting research and studies on the influence of women in politics, demonstrating their contribution to governance and social development.

Success

- **Indira Gandhi:** Indira Gandhi was the first woman to serve as Prime Minister of India. He held the post for four terms, making him one of the most influential political figures in Indian history. His leadership at crucial moments like the Bangladesh War of Independence had a lasting impact on Indian politics.

- **Pratibha Patil:** Pratibha Patil Sevadas was the first woman President of India from 2007 to 2012. The election to the country's highest constitutional office is an important milestone for women in Indian politics.
- **Mamata Banerjee:** Mamata Banerjee is the Chief Minister of West Bengal and founder of the All India Trinamool Congress (AITC). His leadership is an important influence in state politics, and he is known for his grassroots activism
- **Sushma Swaraj:** Sushma Swaraj was a prominent leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and served as the External Affairs Minister of India. He was known for his diplomatic skills and ability to connect with people inside and outside India.
- **Mayawati:** Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) leader Mayawati has served multiple terms as the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh.
- **Jayalalithaa:** J. Jayalalithaa, also known as "Ammma", was a charismatic leader and actress who served as the versatile Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. His leadership was characterized by a strong focus on welfare programs and infrastructure development
- **Nirmala Sitharaman:** Nirmala Sitharaman is the Finance Minister of India and a prominent member of the BJP. He was instrumental in shaping India's economic policies and is known for his leadership in finance and commerce.
- **Smriti Irani:** Smriti Irani, a former television actress, is a senior BJP leader who has held notable ministerial portfolios including Minister of Textiles and Minister of Women and Child Development. He is known for his active role in politics and governance.
- **Maneka Gandhi:** Maneka Gandhi, a member of the Nehru-Gandhi family, has held various ministerial posts in various governments. He is known for his work in animal welfare and environmental protection.
- **Poonam Mahajan:** Poonam Mahajan is a prominent young leader of BJP Panda MP. She actively worked to involve youth and women in politics and effectively represented her constituency.
- **Nandini is satisfied:** Nandini Tripti is the first woman Chief Minister of Odisha. Hertenure has been characterized by a focus on social welfare and development programs.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the status of women in India has improved significantly in recent years, but there is still a long way to go. It is imperative to recognize the achievements so far and continue to work for a more just and equitable society for women. By addressing the challenges faced by women in India and promoting gender equality, we can ensure that women can contribute to all aspects of life and the country's development. Achieving gender equality in politics is not only a matter of justice and democracy, but also important to the functioning of governance and the particular needs and perspectives of citizens regardless of gender.

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