

Political Participation Of Women: An Analysis

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Abstract

The fundamental characteristic of democracy is the equal involvement of men and women in politics. But in the twenty-first century, women's political participation is extremely low in almost all the countries in the world. The majority of parliaments continue to have an average of 25.1% women, dominated by men and women MPs are frequently underrepresented in the decision-making bodies. If women play no meaningful role in the decision-making process, it is only a partial democracy. Full and equal political involvement for women is a fundamental human right and a sign of substantial benefits for society and democratic integrity. The quickest method seems to be quotas to ensure that men and women participate equally in politics. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act of India provides 33% reservation of seats for women in local elected bodies. As a result, the proportion of women representatives has significantly increased. In recent years, this has led to more women taking part in making decisions at lower levels.

Keywords: Political Participation, Gender Equality, Women Empowerment, Quotas, Panchayati Raj.

Introduction

Half of the world's population is made up of women. It is believed that women's participation should be increased in political systems as they constitute half of the population, and where both men and women are legally allowed to run for office same as men. If only half of its population is actually served by democracy, the demographic is still underrepresented in politics. Absence from the political process means that half of the population's issues will go unheard and cannot be fully considered or addressed because their opinions are not given enough weight for political system integration. If women do not participate in politics, democracy is only partially successful at all levels. Therefore, equal political participation for women is necessary.

Political Participation is a fundamental human right, a test of the democratic process, and it yields genuine benefits to the society. Participating in politics is the only way that women's interests can be represented and given a platform to speak. Given that women make up 50% of the population, women must enter politics in order to ensure a stable political system and the wellbeing of the populace. In order to move ahead, participate actively in politics. Without women's active engagement and participation, a nation cannot advance. Their inaction will actually slow down the nation. Sadly, women were not involved in politics in any of the countries and were not given the proper share of power in the structure. Males predominate in the population. only in power structures for generations, harming their interests and reducing them to total reliance on males to make all decisions. They can influence decisions by actively participating in politics.

Fuller comprehension of the issues women encountered in the decision-making process could result. society. This could only be accomplished if more women came forward to reveal their own faults. Participation in politics would significantly impact things if it came from men. The situation might become more complicated when women hold positions of authority. substantially more improvement

"The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, signed in 1979 and which has been recognised by 189 nations worldwide, continues to be the best tool for safeguarding the rights of women and making sure that the equality principle is reflected in law between males and females." A "bill of rights for women" has been called for, and governments are obligated to ensure that women have the same opportunities and rights as men in a variety of fields (Plan International, 2020 p. 13).

Despite the fact that more women than ever are elected to parliaments worldwide, the road to equality is still very far off, and present development is moving far too slowly. Most legislatures are still extremely male-dominated, and some don't even have any female MPs. even in areas with women Glass ceilings are more prevalent and frequently remain in place. women campaigning There are several problems in elections, such as dealing with prejudice or cultural ideas that restrict women's role in society, juggling personal, family, and professional obligations, and obtaining assistance money for campaigns and contributions from political parties. They might also experience violence, harassment, and intimidation. even preventing certain women from standing for office, thereby leaving men in positions of authority. If there is political will and sufficient legal and policy frameworks, change is feasible for a place to give women and men an equal playing field. Policies that are increasing the representation of women on party platforms and candidate lists, including electoral reforms or the creation of transient

special measures like quotas. It's essential to undertake activities designed to alter mindsets and create an atmosphere that is favourable to more women serving in parliaments (IPU, 2019).

Objective and Research Methodology

The study is based on secondary data, which were collected from books and published

reports of IPU, UN, and other government publications, journals, websites, etc.

The Study has the following objectives:

- To examine the political participation of women in the global context, in the Indian

context as well as in the Manipuri context.

- To analyse the role of Manipuri women in the socio-economic and political spheres of the state.
- To examine the importance of quotas as a tool for the political empowerment of women.

Political Participation

Participating in politics is more than just exercising one's right to vote; it also entails power sharing, shared decision-making, and shared policy-making at all levels of state government (Nagaraj, 2011, p. 47). The health of the populace's opinion and their active involvement are essential for a democratic system to succeed. In other words, individuals need to be aware of social and political issues and actively engage with the organisations working to address them.

Without the public's active involvement and awareness, a small group of entrenched interests will inevitably control the political landscape and use the nation's resources for

their own selfish gain. People who are passive and secluded will inevitably suffer. Therefore, it is essential that every demographic sector stay attentive in order to defend its interests and pursue inclusion in the power structure. (Andrew Heywood, 2002, p.76) People who get involved in politics learn more about the world, improve their skills, and grow as people.

The idea of women participating in politics encompasses a wide range of civic duties that have an impact on politics, such as voting, supporting political causes, interacting with legislators, sharing political thoughts and opinions with others, and other similar activities. However, participating in any organised activity that has an impact on or aims to have an impact on these power relations can be seen as political participation. A. Kumar (2006) writes that it broadly refers to "actions by those not formally entitled to make decisions, these efforts being primarily aimed to affect the attitudes and behaviour of those who have the ability to make decisions."

Numerous Indian women have demonstrated their aptitude in a variety of sectors, including education, science and technology, arts and culture, games and sports, fashion technology, and national security. The role of women in politics, however, needs improvement. Their participation in the decision-making process at the national, state, and municipal levels is inadequate (Thaneswar Lahon et al., 2013, p. 42).

Men tend to dominate in politics due to their historical evolutionary heritage, innate propensity, cultural standards, and imposed societal constraints. Due to the belief that women are naturally weak on both a physical and cerebral level, women have been denied their rightful place in social, cultural, and political issues. Women have never been given the opportunity to contribute fully and legally to the growth of society. Their interests were hampered by the centuries-long exclusivity of men in the power system, which left them

totally dependent on men. They were ostracised, thus they were not visible in politics (G.S. Pande, 2001, p. 2).

Women, who make up roughly half of India's population, have thus far played a very small role in political institutions' decision-making processes. Women's reservation in a male-dominated political system that has thus far refused to give them a place is likely to eliminate the imbalance and provide them a chance for political training and mobilisation on a far wider scale than before. The seating allocation for women in PRIs give them the chance to express their frustrations and take an active part in the formal political system that addresses social and economic issues. Two key goals of the Constitution, many provisions for women are there in order to protect them from society's pervasive exploitative social practices and to provide them with opportunities that will improve their social standing. The second results in the empowerment of women, whereas the first results in their freedom. Despite more than 50 years of experimenting, the lack of public engagement, particularly among women, in Panchayati Raj institutions has remained a serious issue for those who want to see democratic traditions strengthen. The main causes of the issue include widespread illiteracy and ignorance, as well as socio structural barriers that exclude people from the spotlight. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment, which reserved 33 percent of seats for women, encouraged many more women to hold executive posts in PRIs. This reflects a significant change in how women participate in making decisions.

In the long term, sharing power with women will also benefit men rather than the other way around. The 20th century was really the one that brought about a period of dramatic transformation.

Political influence can be used to eliminate social and economic injustice as well as inequality. But only when women actively

participate in politics on par with men will this be achievable. Participation is measured by voter turnout, the number of women running for office, and the number of people who actually win (Seema Kumari, 2003, p. 39).

The Indian Constitution guarantees equal political rights to men and women regardless of race, religion, caste, or community so that both can participate in politics equally and help make India a perfect democracy. It demonstrates unequivocally that there are currently no legal barriers prohibiting women from gaining equal rights in the political sphere. But it is difficult for a woman to get involved in politics and fulfil her important function in the heavily patriarchal Indian society. Women's political participation and role are still not as big as they are in other fields (Thaneswar Lahon and Deva Kumar, 2013, p. 42).

The majority of political parties in India now see women's participation in politics as one of their top priorities. However, efforts to turn this objective into a tangible reality have largely failed. This is primarily due to the lack of conceptual clarity regarding the issue's sincere commitment. It is important to realise that the equal participation of men and women in decision-making in all areas is a must for the success of any such project.

For successful democracy, political participation must be effective and meaningful, and it must include political representation (Lakshmi Narasaiah, 2001). Gender inequality in the nation is caused by the low involvement of women in politics and other elected authorities. So, India needs to change its political system in order to close the gap between men and women and give women real power.

IPU-UN Women reports that the average percentage of women in parliaments worldwide is 25.1%, indicating that they are overwhelmingly male and that women MPs frequently do not have equal representation in

top roles or on decision-making bodies. Political commitment is required, along with an examination of institutional and social impediments that prevent equal representation and involvement for women, in order to break with established patterns and make room for more women.

In addition to being an outrageous violation of women's civil and human rights, violence against them in politics poses a serious threat to democracy and long-term development. The 2020 International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women is an opportunity to increase public awareness of the danger of gender-based violence against women who are in politics, as well as any concrete policy solutions or remedies that have been identified by organisations working in this area.

Political Empowerment of Women

Participation in politics leads to political empowerment. Political empowerment encompasses all forms of collective action taken against any kind of injustice in addition to integration into official political institutions and channels. It extends to the acknowledgement and assertion of the "human" rights of minorities and covers much more than merely the "legal" rights. Political empowerment attempts to uphold an individual's political rights, and its justification resides in the person's commitment to and sense of belonging to the system rather than in his or her estrangement from it. Through his or her awareness, involvement, group identification, and collective action—which again leads to knowledge of the individual—the person is to be empowered. It moves in cycles and follows a circular course. The person finds out what his or her rights are and then takes part in politics.

The adage "women are the mother of a civilization and the success of a society depends upon the development of its women" is one of the most common. A mother's empowerment affects the entire family and eventually the

entire society. Empowerment is more than just a concept.

Women's empowerment is the process of enhancing their social, political, spiritual, or economic power. Additionally, it entails fostering self-assurance in one's abilities. All these realisations that the advancement of any economy is impossible unless and until women are empowered have led to numerous policies, plans, programmes, and Acts to empower them (Suchitra Das, 2014).

Women who are empowered have more freedom and influence over their lives. When women are strong enough to fight against and change their lower status in society, they become agents of their own growth and can make their own plans.

The statement that "women are the mother of a society and the progress of a society depends upon the development of women" is one that is frequently heard. A mother's empowerment affects the entire family and eventually the entire society. not just a behavior; empowerment is also a mindset. Women's empowerment is the process of enhancing their social, political, spiritual, or economic power. Additionally, it entails fostering self-assurance in one's abilities.

All these realisations that the advancement of any economy is impossible unless and until women are empowered have led to a multitude of policies, plans, programmes, and Acts to empower them. Women's participation is considered crucial in the social, economic, and political spheres. History shows that women have always participated in politics in India, but the number of their participation is very low (Suchitra Das, 2014).

Women's political participation at the local, state, and federal levels is crucial for both their own empowerment and the interests of the country as a whole. Women should have an equal voice at all levels of government and the

decision-making process because they are also citizens of the nation. Women's empowerment at the grassroots level may be seen in the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments of India, which introduced the reservation of one-third seats for women in Panchayats and Municipal Councils. This has led to a rise in the number of women participating in lower levels of decision-making in recent years. Therefore, the allocation of seats to women in local political organisations is a significant step toward the political empowerment of Indian women.

A democratic system that includes a majority of women voters but so little female representation among elected political leaders looks fundamentally flawed from a standpoint of simple justice.

Women are likely to be empowered by the presence of women in elected positions. This viewpoint is eloquently expressed by Barbara Burrell: Women in positions of authority serve as role models for other women, strengthening their sense of belonging to the system and their capacity to affect it. The election of women to public office is significant for the overall perception of women as being involved and heard. The majority of female elected officials are committed to seeing that other women follow in their footsteps, and they actively mentor and support other female candidates. As a result, it is very important to pay attention to how gender plays a role in the election process, and in particular, how many women are elected officials, because this has implications for raising the standard of political representation. More laws and policies reflecting women's rights, the welfare of children and families, health care, and education would probably result from the election of more women to government. More women being elected could also result in policies that are influenced by a larger spectrum of viewpoints and contributors. Last but not least, electing more women would probably result in greater political empowerment for other women.

Status of Women in Manipur

Manipur is a special place because of the uniqueness of its women. Women possess all of the grace, elegance, and beauty—in addition to other noteworthy traits. These ladies have a reputation for being courageous, bold, patient, and diligent (R.K. Helen, 20). The fact that these women have the courage to combat social evil, spark revolution, and defend the interests of the homeland in the event that a war breaks out is more noteworthy. Here, revolution includes both war and social revolution (G.K. Gosh et al. 1997). The ancient religious writings from Manipur's early history provide enough evidence of their distinctive traits and the part they played in the development and stabilization of society. From this fact, it can be concluded that Manipur's women have had a high status and played a significant part in society since a very early time (R.K. Helen).

Compared to women living in other regions of India, Manipuri women have a different status in society. In Manipur, women are more mobile and visible than men.

Comparing with women from various communities across the nation, women in this area have more privileges than other women because there aren't as many strict customs like purdah, dowry, and sati that are common in other parts of India (Salam Irene, 2014). S.K. Bhuyan correctly notes that "Manipuri women have been enjoying a freedom that their sisters in India failed to achieve" in this regard. They were not bound to the four walls of their home; they were free to walk out and engage in small-scale trades, primarily using their own handmade goods. They weave delicate, long-lasting textures with the most appealing colour combinations. The Manipuris do not shut up their ladies as is the habit in most regions of India, according to Mrs. Grimwood, since they are much more enlightened and intelligent as a result. In his book *The Gazetteer of Manipur*, E.W. Dun noted that Manipuri women are extremely hardworking and handle the majority

of the heavy tasks in the countryside. There aren't many ladies in India who are as hardworking as Manipuri women (Reena Laitonjam, 2013). Thus, it is accurate to say that Manipuri women contributed significantly to society in every area.

Socio-Economic and Political Status of the Manipuri Women

Socio- Political Status of the Manipuri Women

Women in Manipur had demonstrated their power to bring about justice in the state since the early days. Women are present in many spheres of life. Women have never been separated from the rest of Manipuri society because they work together to keep their homes and the community as a whole friendly. This should not change.

On a socio-political level, Manipuri women's place in society can be attributed to the effort they put in to eradicate drug and alcohol consumption in the nation's capital. Nisha-bandh and Meira-Paibi, two women's movements, are instances of women actively participating in eradicating social ills in our society. The first and second Nupi-lans, which occurred in 1904 and 1939, respectively, are stark examples of Manipuri women's collective uprising against governmental injustice and inhumane religious dogmas under colonial control. The two movements have changed a lot about what Manipuri women can do and how they can help with social and political changes.

Economic Status of the Manipuri Women

The idea of solidarity is fairly strong among women's groups in Manipur. This is frequently observed in conventional cooperative systems, women's markets, and other cooperative forms. community activity, which appears to maintain and perpetuate a social order. The collective work pattern of women has been deeply

ingrained by traditional and conventional value systems, which is frequently expressed in the way that visitors from outside Manipur never leave without applauding the tenacious nature of Manipuri women. "It would be difficult to find a more hardworking lady in India than the Manipuri woman," Mr. Brown said in his statistical account of Manipur in 1871. This statement still holds true today, notwithstanding a little difference between women living in more developed and less developed areas. It is the separation between rural and urban populations that causes this.

In his book *The Gazetteer of Manipur*, E.W. Dun noted that Manipuri women are extremely hardworking and handle the majority of the heavy tasks in the countryside. It would be challenging to locate Indian women who are more hardworking than the Manipuri women.

Manipur's women are widely known for their contribution to the economy. Manipuri women make a significant economic contribution. They have been present everywhere, whether in the organised or unorganised sector. Even outside of the state, people like the Manipuri women's handicrafts and woven goods.

In reality, women work in a variety of occupations, including weaving, raising silkworms, embroidering, making pottery, and fishing, and they contribute more to agriculture than men do.

It should be highlighted that in every country where women support their family's economy, they must hold a higher social and economic standing than those societies where they do not (G.K. Ghosh et al.). As recent events have repeatedly demonstrated, the contributions made by our women are a very significant and critical aspect in promoting the general public's socioeconomic position. There are plenty of excellent instances that show how highly the ladies of the land are regarded by the Manipuris. The traditions represent women as the mother figures of society.

Women's markets or Ema Keithels are just two examples of how this form of special consideration for women has been demonstrated (Priyadarshini M. Gangte, 2015, p. 159). The main commercial hub in Manipur is the Ema Keithel, or Ema Market. One of the biggest markets in the nation is run entirely by women. No other region of the globe has a market like this one, where women are the only ones selling goods. Ema Market serves as the hub of all significant socioeconomic activities carried out by women. It is more than just a location of business.

They had demonstrated their power to bring about justice in the state since the early days. Women in Manipur are present in many spheres of life. As co-partners in maintaining a friendly environment in their homes and the community as a whole, women have never been segregated from Manipuri society and must continue to be so. Visitors from outside Manipur never left without appreciating the strong work ethic of Manipuri women. Even today, despite a slight disparity between women living in more developed and less developed areas, Mr. Brown's 1871 statistical account of Manipur states that "it would be impossible to find a more industrious lady in India than the Manipur". It is the separation between rural and urban populations that causes this. In his book *The Gazetteer of Manipur*, E.W. Dun noted that Manipuri women are extremely hardworking and handle the majority of the heavy tasks in the countryside. It would be challenging to locate Indian women who are more hardworking than the Manipuri women.

In spite of all these contributions to the wellbeing of Manipuri society, women do not receive their fair share of political power. Additionally, there are still aspects of male dominance over women's freedom and rights in our culture. The first step toward empowering Manipuri women politically, which ultimately results in the empowerment of women socially and economically, is the inclusion of women in local elected authorities. Increasing the number

of women running for office in local elected bodies is also necessary. At the moment, the easiest approach to increasing the representation of women in local elected bodies seems to be through reservation.

Conclusion:

To conclude, we can say that after the 73rd and 74th Amendment Acts were passed, participation of women in politics significantly increased. The quickest approach to increase the representation of women in local elected bodies appears to be through quotas. The first step toward women's participation in politics at all levels of political institutions—municipal, state, national, and international—is at the local level.

Increasing the number of women serving in Municipal elected positions will support political empowerment for women, which will ultimately result in the social and economic empowerment of women. Additionally, achieving gender equality in society is essential. Women may gain equal status with males, better rights and advantages, and better opportunities and avenues in all aspects of life by actively participating in politics.

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