
A PERSPECTIVE ON RESERVATION FOR WOMEN IN POLITICS IN INDIA

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"A Nation would not March forward, if the women are left behind"- Swami Vivekanand

Abstract: India is a democratic country. The people choose their representative to form a government. The citizens include both men and women. To choose a good responsible representative both men and women participation is necessary. Here when we say a good responsible representative then it might be a men representative or a women representative. In India we see that women participate in election by casting their votes but we see less number of women participation in contesting election compared to men participants/candidates.

Our Indian Constitution ensures right to equality. Women are considered equal to that of men in all aspects. Now a day we see women in all sphere of life such as education, technology, civil services, space and politics and have reservation to some extent.

Reservation in Indian Law is a form of affirmative action whereby a percentage of seats are reserved in the public sector, Union and State government departments and in all public and private educational institutions, except in religious or linguistic minority, for socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or the scheduled castes and tribes who were inadequately represented in these services and institutions. Similarly the reservation for women in politics is necessary. As women is considered as socially, educationally and economically backward class of a society.

The issue of 33% reservation for women in Central and State Legislative is an issue erupted since time to time. The idea of making a legal provision for reserving seats for women in the Parliament and State Assemblies came into being during Rajeev Gandhi's tenure as the Prime Minister of India when the Panchayati Raj Act, 1992 (73rd and 74th Constitution Amendment) came into effect granting not less than 33% reservation to women in the Panchayat Raj Institutions or local bodies. At grassroots level i.e. in Panchayats 33% of reservation for women is provided but reservation in Loksabha election is not provided.

Historical Perspective: The roots of women's participation in politics can be traced back to the nineteenth century reform movement. The Swadeshi movement in Bengal (1905-08) marked the beginning of women's participation in nationalist activities. The political reservation or quotas for women in parliament and in state assemblies in India has to be seen in its historical context, as it more than seventy years old.

The perceived threat of the colonial regime to indigenous tradition and values, influenced the debate on women's roles during the pre-

Independence period. India's colonial experience and the manner in which men played an important role in the social reform movement, and later in the nationalist movement, in focusing on the women's question, influenced the logic and strategies of the women's movement to a considerable extent. The right to representation symbolized to many at the time an entry point into the all male-world of decision-making.

It was women's large scale participation in the civil disobedience movement, rather than any radical notion of gender equality, that tilted the balance in favour of political equality in the Constituent Assembly debates. In the first Lok Sabha of independent India, only 43 women contested and 14 were elected. Of the 216 women, who contested about 3000 assembly seats, only 82 were elected. During fifties and sixties, several laws were passed, promising a better deal to women. Nonetheless, as an indication of how little is known about this period, some scholars have called it the "silent year" of the women's movement.

Though, the foundation for political participation of women was laid down during the nationalist movement, there was no follow up or concerted effort to broaden the political base by incorporating women into political arena has declined since independence.

Political reservation for women: Nature has not endowed individuals with the same talents or physical and intellectual attributed. However, we cannot remove nature inequality but we can reduce and eliminate the man-made inequalities. The Indian Constitution aim achieving legal equality and doing justice to all.

Panchayat Raj is not a new concept to India. Panchayats have been a part of rural culture heritage of India. From time immemorial, Panchayats have enjoyed the confidence of the people.

Political power is considered as 'resource'. It is argued that once lower classes are given power they can play a significant role in bringing about modern changes regardless of their low socio-economic status. There are others who argue that even though lower class people are given a greater access to political power, they are not likely bring about any changes due to their low class status. It is also held that the policy of reservation will be utilized more by the economically well-off than by the poor.

Prior to 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendments, only the State of Karnataka had reservation for women in institutions of local self-governance. The Janata Party Government in Karnataka in 1985 passed a Bill to Implement 25 percent reservation for women in local elections. This spurred a national debate on the issues of reservation for women in several other states.

The government of India, noting the low participation of women in politics; acknowledged the recommendations of the Committee for Status of Women Report, 1974, and drawing from the pioneering experience of Karnataka which provided reservation for women in its two tier Panchayat Raj System (institution of local self-governance) in the year 1983, adopted an affirmative action for providing reservation for women in these institutions in these institutions in the year 1993.

The 73rd Amendment of the Constitution of India in 1992 introduced a new political initiative to empower women. The Constitution Amendment Act 1992, Article 243D reads; Not less than one third of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat shall be reserved for Women (SCs and STs) and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a panchayat.

With the introduction of reservation or quota system in the Panchayat Raj institutions a great beginning has been made in the direction of legislative empowerment of women and it is hoped that along with women's empowerment through collective voicing and participation in the development stream, it should go a long way in the real empowerment of women...

The issue of quotas is contentious for at least two sets of reasons. First relates to the lack of genuine

commitment in the political parties to increasing women's representation. There are ways in which political parties may effectively circumvent the quota by, for instance, putting up candidates in constituencies where the party is weak and unlikely to win anyway, or treating the quota as a ceiling rather than a minimum to be improved upon, or nominating women candidates who will be pliable because they are dependent on the male party leadership.

The Women's Reservation Bill, or The Constitution 108th Amendment Bill, proposes 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies for 15 years. The Bill was introduced in the Parliament in 1996, and subsequently in 1999, 2003, 2005, 2008 and 2010. It was finally passed by the Rajya Sabha in 2010, but is [was] pending in the Lok Sabha. With the dissolution of the... Lok Sabha, the Bill was lapsed and...had re- introduced in 2012.

The introduction of the Bill will increase women's participation and lead to women's empowerment. However, the Bill has still not been passed. Opposition to the Bill includes fears of marginalization of men by elitist women and of socially and economically backward classes. Suggestions have also been made to instead mandatorily increase the number of women contested.

Conclusion: Since the independence we see women in political sphere. It may be seen inspite of all measures women have not received her share of political space. Political democracy in the passage of time has marginalized women from the decision-making scene. If any segment of society has been left being in the development process the welfare state has to be back into the mainstream, and here comes the question introduction of policy of reservation.

Increasing women's political participation and representation in Indian politics requires electoral and parliamentary reforms. Engaging more Indian women voters has been mentioned already. The number of women standing for elections also needs to increase. For the moment, reservation seems to be the fastest way of increasing the numbers of women contestants elected.

Hence woman needs reservation in political sphere.

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