

Empowerment of Women in Politics Through Education; An Incentive to Gender Equality-An Analysis

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Abstract: India's projected population in 2021 is 136.3 Crore with 48.6% female population. The provisions of the 73rd and 74th Amendment Acts reserved seats at the local level of government and ensured remarkable political empowerment of women at the grassroots. The National Policy for the Empowerment of Women (2001) and the Report on the Status of Women in India (2015) emphasized the need for women's reservation in the Parliament and State Assemblies. With a larger number of women participating is a greater likelihood of policy decisions and legislative actions that reflect and address the diverse needs of women across the country. When women see themselves represented in decision-making bodies, it encourages, thereby contributing to a more diverse and representative political leadership. This dream can be better achieved only with educated women. Education equips women with the necessary skills and knowledge to navigate various challenges effectively, transforming their social status from being dependent to independent contributors to society. Educated individuals are better positioned to make informed decisions, and seize opportunities, thereby leading more fulfilling lives. The empowerment of women through education has a transformative effect on entire societies, driving progress and prosperity. Indeed, women's empowerment is a crucial aspect of societal progress, and education plays a pivotal role in fostering it.

This paper advocates for a holistic approach to promoting women's participation in politics, highlighting the importance of education as a fundamental enabler of women's empowerment. Without proper education and support mechanisms in place, political reservation for women may be perceived as a mere token gesture rather than a meaningful step towards gender equality.

Keywords: Education, Political Reservation, Political Empowerment, Gender equality

INTRODUCTION

India is the country that has the highest population in the world. In that women population is equal to the men. Empowerment of women includes equal participation of women in all spheres along with men. Empowerment of women is completely based on education. Education is considered a basic requirement for change, which is responsible for national development. Education is the first step towards empowerment and the most crucial factor in the overall development of an individual as well as a Nation. Education is an effective instrument for the social, economic development of a nation and national integration, it enables a woman to understand their social, political, legal, and all other rights and become economically independent, and acquire a voice in the affairs of the family, society, community as well as nation at a whole. The year 2001 was declared as "women's empowerment year" It is considered significant throughout our world because the empowerment of women is very much essential for the achievement of sustainable development, which formulated policies for bringing equality between males and females. Through the development of an idea of women's empowerment here, the core concept of improvement is the idea of power which involves a multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives, it is an active and multi-diamond process that enables the woman to realize their full identity and powers in all sphere of life.

Pinto in his book "Women Power: Technical Education and Development"¹ identified the objectives of education for women, are Decision-making ability: the ability to weigh and arrive at a

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¹ Benedicta Flossy Pinto, "Woman Power: Technical Education & Development", (The University of

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valid and honest personal judgment; Truth-seeking: a respect for and a reliance upon observable evidence vouched for by reliable groups; Skills of living: the ability to use those tools and machines which have wide application in one's society; Communication: the ability to convey to others orally in writing, graphically, or otherwise, information, opinions, and conclusions; Adaptation to change: an awareness that knowledge, society, and social values are all changing and the ability to change oneself to maintain harmony with the environment; Aesthetic awareness: a recognition of beauty in the natural world, in the arts and human relationships; Commitment to society: a knowledge of the different elements of social relationships and the ability to practice social skills, enabling individuals to interact maturely with one another and with the environment.

The empowerment process is one, where women begin to re-examine their lives critically and collectively. It enables women to look at old problems in new dimensions, analyze their environment and situation, and recognize their strengths and self-image. The empowerment process enables women to access new information and knowledge, acquire new skills, and initiate action to gain greater control over various resources. Empowerment is not merely a change of mindset by a power demonstration of that change which the world around is forced to acknowledge. Armed with their growing strength, women begin to assert their right to control resources, including their bodies, and participate equally in decisions within the family, community, and society.

Political Empowerment of Women in Ancient India

In patriarchal society almost everywhere, a son was valued more than the daughter. The birth of a girl was generally an unwelcome event, according to them daughters had no fighting value, by giving birth to sons they contributed indirectly to the fighting strength and efficiency of their community. The same was the situation during the Vedic Period. The Atharva Veda contains charms and rituals to ensure the birth of a son in preference to that of a daughter. but the cultured parents were often as anxious for daughters as they were for the sons, for them daughter was regarded as the family's pride. In the 3rd century B.C., girls could remain unmarried till the age of 16 years, and this period was used for the education of girls. Educated ladies naturally played an important role in household

management. Girls of ruling families were provided the administrative and military training.

Political Empowerment and International Development

At the international level political empowerment of women underwent drastic challenges. During the French Revolution even though individual liberty got its new dimension and equality was recognized, absolute monarchy, and autocracy were opposed and in the name of liberty nationalism and representative government got its identity. The Napoleon Code of 1804 abolished democracy but provided voting rights only to the men who held the lands not to women and others. In 1815 after the establishment of the liberal government adult franchise did not get its complete identity because only a few who owned the property were allowed to elect their representative and this right was not confirmed to women and other persons.

A British philosopher and women's rights advocate *Mary Wollstonecraft* (1759–1797), wrote a book on the political rights of women in 1792, titled “A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects”,² in the first chapter with regarding the right of women she writes that “the natural rights are given by God, for one segment society to denied them another segment is sin”.³ In connection with women's right to education, Wollstonecraft maintains that they are human beings deserving of the same fundamental rights as men. Instead of viewing women as ornaments to society or property to be traded in marriage, she argues that ‘women ought to have an education commensurate with their position in society, claiming that women are essential to the nation because they educate her children and because they could be "companions" to their husbands, rather than mere wives.’⁴ She further argues that “women who succumb to sensibility are "blown about by every momentary gust of feeling"; because these women are "the prey of their senses", they cannot think rationally. Not only do they do harm to themselves but they also do harm to all of civilization: these are not women who can refine civilization – these are women who will destroy it.” Arguments of *Mary Wollstonecraft* not only throw light on the position of women at that time but also give the path for what needs to be done for the political development of women, she never claims for gender equality because before God Men and Women were equal and they should be subject to same moral laws.

² Wollstonecraft, *Vindications*, 43–44.

³ Taylor, 105–106; Kelly, 107

⁴ Wollstonecraft, *Vindications*, 126, 146; Taylor, 105–106; 118–120.

She calls on men's groups to come forward, to initiate changes in the political and social rights of women, because she is suffering from a lack of education.⁵

In America, the National suffrage organisations were established in 1869 for recognition of women suffrage. Two associations in America boosts the movement are National American Women Suffrage Association under the leadership of Anthony and the Women's Christian Temperance Union which was the largest women's organization at that time. 1870 in America and filed lawsuits for suffrage and they succeeded in voting in 1872. But in *Minor v. Happersett*⁶ case in 1875 the Supreme Court of America ruled against women's suffrage this led to the campaign for an amendment to the US Constitution. Much of the movement energy however went towards working for suffrage on State by State basis these efforts included pursuing office-holding rights separately. As a result, the right to vote was established in various States and localities, sometimes on a limited basis, and in 1920 the 19th Amendment to the Constitution United States provided recognition of suffrage.

Political Empowerment After Independence

The women's movement in India had been fighting for suffrage since 1917. It continued with the making of the Constitution of India. In December 1946, a constituent assembly was formed to debate and draft a constitution for independent India. It took place over two years, 11 months and 17 days. It was an extraordinary project—an experiment that would determine the ability of a country to govern itself. Among the 299 members of the Constituent Assembly, 15 were women, they were freedom fighters, lawyers, reformists, suffragettes, and politicians. Many belonged to women's organizations and had participated in feminist movements since 1917. who had either been voted or chosen to represent their provinces, who left their mark on the making of the republic. The assembly provided them a platform to assert their equality and craft a politically balanced republic, they raised their voice for minority rights, against reservation, and for an independent judiciary.

India attained independence, its Constitution guaranteed equal status for men and women in all

political, social and economic spheres. The preamble of the Constitution and objects narrated by it, Part III of the Constitution guarantees the fundamental rights of men and women such as Arts 14, 15,16,17,19,21,23,24,29,30 and 32. The Directive Principles of State Policy Arts 39, 40, 41,45,46 ensure economic empowerment by providing for equal pay for equal work by both men and women, humane conditions of work, and maternity relief. Any Indian citizen who is registered as a voter and is over 25, can contest elections to the lower house of Parliament (Lok Sabha) or the state legislative assemblies; for the upper house (Rajya Sabha) the minimum age is 30. Articles 325 and 326 of the Constitution guarantee political equality and voting rights. And newly added part IX and IXA Panchayat Raj and Municipalities emphasis on women representation in the governance with 50% reservation.

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LITERACY RATE IN INDIA

| S.No | Year | Person | Male | Female |
|------|------|--------|------|--------|
|------|------|--------|------|--------|

⁵ Wollstonecraft, *Vindications*, 135.

⁶ 88 U.S. (21 Wall.) 162 (1875)

| | | | | |
|----|------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1 | 1901 | 5.3 | 9.8 | 0.7 |
| 2 | 1911 | 5.9 | 10.6 | 1.1 |
| 3 | 1921 | 7.2 | 12.2 | 1.8 |
| 4 | 1931 | 9.5 | 15.6 | 2.9 |
| 5 | 1941 | 16.1 | 24.9 | 7.3 |
| 6 | 1951 | 16.7 | 24.9 | 7.3 |
| 7 | 1961 | 33.63 | 42.43 | 19.37 |
| 8 | 1971 | 51.15 | 58.82 | 38.39 |
| 9 | 1981 | 60.25 | 67.32 | 50.51 |
| 10 | 1991 | 73.02 | 78.99 | 65.46 |
| 11 | 2001 | 75.85 | 80.33 | 54.16 |
| 12 | 2011 | 74.98 | 82.14 | 64.63 |
| 13 | 2021 | 77.70 | 84.70 | 70.30 |

1. Political Empowerment and the Latest Development

Women's Representation in the Lok Sabha⁷

| S.No | Year of election | No of women's representation | Percentage of women representation |
|------|------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 | 1951 | 22 | 5 |
| 2 | 1957 | 22 | 5 |
| 3 | 1961 | 31 | 6 |
| 4 | 1967 | 29 | 6 |
| 5 | 1971 | 28 | 5 |
| 6 | 1977 | 19 | 4 |
| 7 | 1980 | 28 | 5 |
| 8 | 1984 | 43 | 8 |
| 9 | 1989 | 29 | 6 |
| 10 | 1991 | 39 | 7 |
| 11 | 1996 | 40 | 7 |
| 12 | 1998 | 43 | 8 |
| 13 | 1999 | 49 | 9 |
| 14 | 2004 | 45 | 8 |
| 15 | 2009 | 59 | 11 |
| 16 | 2014 | 66 | 12 |
| 17 | 2019 | 78 | 14 |

Women's Representation in the Rajya Sabha⁸

| S.No | Year of Election | No of women representation | Percentage of women representation |
|------|------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 | 1952 | 15 | 6.9 |
| 2 | 1954 | 17 | 7.8 |
| 3 | 1956 | 20 | 8.6 |
| 4 | 1958 | 22 | 9.5 |
| 5 | 1960 | 24 | 10.2 |
| 6 | 1962 | 18 | 7.2 |
| 7 | 1964 | 21 | 8.9 |
| 8 | 1966 | 23 | 9.8 |

⁷ Election Commission of India

⁸ Election Commission of India

| | | | |
|----|------|----|------|
| 10 | 1968 | 22 | 9.6 |
| 11 | 1970 | 14 | 5.8 |
| 12 | 1972 | 18 | 7.4 |
| 13 | 1974 | 18 | 7.5 |
| 14 | 1976 | 24 | 10.1 |
| 15 | 1978 | 25 | 10.2 |
| 16 | 1980 | 29 | 12 |
| 17 | 1982 | 24 | 10.1 |
| 18 | 1984 | 24 | 10.3 |
| 19 | 1986 | 28 | 10.8 |
| 20 | 1988 | 25 | 10.5 |
| 21 | 1990 | 24 | 10.3 |
| 22 | 1992 | 17 | 7.2 |
| 23 | 1994 | 20 | 8.3 |
| 24 | 1996 | 19 | 7.8 |
| 25 | 1998 | 19 | 7.7 |
| 26 | 2000 | 22 | 9 |
| 27 | 2002 | 25 | 10.2 |
| 28 | 2004 | 28 | 11.4 |
| 29 | 2006 | 25 | 10.2 |
| 30 | 2008 | 24 | 9.8 |
| 31 | 2010 | 27 | 11 |
| 32 | 2012 | 26 | 10.6 |
| 33 | 2014 | 31 | 12.7 |
| 34 | 2016 | 27 | 11 |
| 35 | 2018 | 28 | 11.4 |
| 36 | 2020 | 25 | 10.2 |

CONCLUSION

Healthy, safe, educated, empowered women transform families, communities, and countries. There is a need to realize women's empowerment firstly we will try to minimize the literacy gap between men and women, and give priority to educating women. Our former president Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam rightly says, "Empowering women is a pre-requisite for creating a good nation, when women are empowered, the society with stability is assured. Empowerment of women is essential as their thought and their value systems lead to the development of a good family and ultimately a good nation". If a woman is aware of her rights, of herself, if her self-esteem is high, then she is empowered. But again when a woman is empowered, it does not necessarily mean that another individual becomes powerless or less powerful. On the contrary, if a woman is empowered, her competencies towards decision-making will surely influence her family's and neighbor's behavior. Empowerment of women, therefore, needs to get utmost priority in any national planning process. As Swami Vivekananda said, "All nations have attained greatness by paying proper

respect to women. That country and that nation which do not respect women have never become great, nor will ever be in future". The countries which realized the importance of empowering their women developed fast educating their women and involving them in the decision-making process of social and economic development.