
Social Equality and Social Justice for Women

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Social equality means abolition of all kind of discrimination based upon caste, creed, religion, race, language, education, sex etc. **Social justice** means availability of equal social opportunities for the development of personality to all people in society, without any discrimination on the basis of caste, colour, sex or race. The issue of social justice is associated with social equality and social rights and these are dependent on economic equality and rights. Social justice can be made available only in a social system where the exploitation of man by man is absent.

Problems Gender refers to distinctions between males and females in terms of their social role and status. There is a difference between sex and gender. Gender highlights social and cultural differences between women and men, while **sex** denotes biological differences such as reproductive function etc. Sex is a biological fact whereas gender is a socio-cultural construct. When physical difference between men and women are used as a tool to discriminate with women in social and political affair, comparison to men then, it is called gender discrimination. Gender equity means abolition of this irrational and unreasonable discrimination between men and women. Gender is common term whereas gender discrimination is meant only for women, because females are almost all times victims of gender discrimination.

Natural inequalities are those that emerge between people as a result of their different capabilities and talents. These kinds of inequalities are different from socially produced inequalities which emerge as a consequence of inequalities of opportunity or the exploitation of one groups in a society by others. We are born with natural inequalities because of different abilities. **Social inequalities** are created by society. Natural inequalities are natural, inborn, acceptable and can not be altered. Whereas social inequality are man made, wrong, and unacceptable because it results in discrimination and exploitation.

Boys and girls are brought up to believe that the main responsibility of women is housework and bringing up children. This is reflected in **sexual division of labour** in most families: women do all work inside the home such as cooking, cleaning, washing clothes, tailoring, looking after children etc., and men do do all the work outside the home. But work of women is not valued and does not get recognition. The result of this division of labour is that although women constitute half of the humanity, their role in public life, specially politics, is minimal in almost all societies. In India despite parties like TMC, INC, BSP, AIDMK are headed by women but womens' representation is very low in politics in general and particularly in Parliament as compared to countries like Rwanda, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal, Finland, UK, USA etc.

If we are still taking, discussing and debating about social equality and social justice for women then it means that current situation is not favorable for them as well as for us. I believe that root cause of all problems in this world is ignorance and therefore only through right type of education we can fix this problem. We do not need protection and security of women but education for them. Wrong grooming of young boys by their parents results in less respect for women. Still girls are seen as unwanted and burdensome. Therefore it is the need of the hour that parents and society should not raise sons in a way in which they are indoctrinated with a sense of superiority and privilege. Young men should also actively involved in their schools and communities in advocating women's equality rights.

It is a naked truth that thousands of women specially from socially, economically and educationally backward have been raped and are being raped everyday. Men hurt, abuse and destroy the image of women. This situation is similar in everywhere in the world. Women exists only for satisfying the lust of men and doing the all hateful duties of kitchen and house. We often say that we are civilized being but when we observe the behavior of men and condition of women then one question directly comes in our mind that, Are men really civilized? Men are worse than wolf and hyena. Women are easy prey to the wolves in the human jungle.

We have heard many times a rapist saying that "she asked for it", therefore she was raped. But problem here is that this is also the mentality of our society as well. We all are aware about questions such as "What dress she was wearing?" "Why was she out

alone?” “What was a girl like her doing in that place?”. Some people think that women should wear decent dress and co-education should be stopped in order to eradicate rape. This is sheer nonsense. Currently gender insecurity is touching its highest stage. Crimes against are increasing at an alarming rate. Women are not safe even inside the four walls of their homes because of domestic violence, dowry deaths and marital rape. We have to accept the fact that we failed very badly for achieving United Nations’ Millennium and Sustainable Development Goals related to women and girls.

There are so many cases like Bilkis Bano, Kausarbi, the Shakti Mill rape case, Nirbhaya, Unnao rape case, Hyderabad rape case, Hathras gang rape case etc. that have raised many questions about the miserable condition of women in our country. It is cruel irony that a loving father or brother becomes killer of his own daughter or sister breaks the unwritten and timeworn rules of male domination. What honour could possibly be gained from the killing of a beloved family member? What is it then that drives men to such acts of abnormal behavior. Women’s organizations have been agitating against sexual violence and violence against women. The question that has been raised is: “Do women have the freedom to live as they wish?” Despite the law Pre-Conception and Pre Natal Diagnostic Technique (PC-PNDT) Act 1994 female foeticide and female infanticide is still prevalent in our so called humanitarian society.

In India, traditionally Hindu women had no right on land and property. Various Dharmashastra and Smriti did not recognize women’s right to land and property. After independence, Hindu Succession Act 1956 was passed, this act gave Hindu women right to paternal property but still she was deprived of her share in a cultivable land. This act of 1956 was amended in the year 2005, through this amendment now women are given right on land also. But these provisions are on paper only. In actual practice still women are deprived of land and property rights. Due to absence of uniform civil code, Muslim women are governed under Muslim Personal Law which does not give Muslim women rights on land and property. Why it is that despite constituting almost 50% population of our country, womens’ participation and representaion is vey low in almost all major field specially in politics? Inspite of half of the population is female but why still only 33% reservation is given in Panchayat and Municipalities? Why 33% reservation Bill in State Assemбалies and Parliament is not come into existence? And

lastly when all the reservation for women will be 50% equal to their population proportion?

Data

- India ranks 113 out of 135 on the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index.
- According to India's 2011 Census, the sex ratio for children under six was 914 females to 1000 males a disturbing decline from 933 in 2001. Data also show that since 1901 sex ratio is decreasing decade by decade.
- The ranking of Indian women in economic empowerment is 0.03, whereas 1.0 means equality. This a dangerous state of affairs for any society.
- The result of 2011 census reveals that literacy rate in the country is 74.04 percent, 82.14 for males and 65.46 for females.
- The percentage of elected women members in Lok Sabha has touched 12% of total its total strength for the first time in 2014 and 15% in 2019 (78MPs) . Women's share in State Assemblies is less than 10%.
- It has been estimated by a report of UNO, that two thirds of married Indian women are victims of domestic violence. About 70% of women in age group 15 to 40 years are victims of rape, abuse, and similar such instance.

Are we not aware about different different inhuman practices and violence against women like girl child abuse, wife beating and battering, mental abuse, female foeticide and infanticide, witch hunting, rape, molestation, eve-teasing, wage differentials, sexual harassment at work place, child marriage, ban on woman education, sati, tonsuring of widows and ban on widow remarriage, honour killing etc. Women being a human deserve equal rights and freedom like men so that they can live their life as they want. Women should not try to be like men. They should always remember that they are not like men but they are separate but equal to men. Whether you admit it or not man is responsible for suppression of women.

Causes of Gender Discrimination and Injustice

- i. Educational backwardness

- ii. Low income
- iii. Unemployment
- iv. Religious beliefs
- v. Caste and races
- vi. Culture and customs
- vii. On the name of family history
- viii. Society
- ix. Family situation and attitudes

We need to think that women are dignified individuals. She is equal to men in her intellectual, educational, emotional and physical functions. Criminality can be prevented or cured by right knowledge, by changes in education and in social conditions. It is a sad reality that none of us are ready to take up the issue if it does not concern us. We helplessly say, "What we can do?". The world is indeed a dangerous place in these uncertain and fearful times but we can not let our fear get the best of us. We must aspire for changing ourselves and this world so that it can become a better place for women.

Solutions

In order to see how women can get social equality and social justice, it is essential to ask what holds them back from gaining equality and justice which is their natural right. There are many reasons why women seriously lag behind men, particularly in developing country. If we observe and analyse we will find that most common reason for such a bad unequal situation of women is lack of education for women because of so many reasons like discrimination by parents among boys and girls, early age marriage, dowry system etc. There is a saying in English "The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world." Mothers greatly influence the life of their children. It is very true that education will help women to make their parents, husbands and children happy. Hence it is very vital that women should be educated. Therefore it is said empowering a woman is empowering a half of the human race because they represent a half of the population. To fight against the darkness of inequality and injustice against women we need the torch of education.

Women Empowerment is a global issue and discussion on women's political rights are at the forefront of many formal and informal campaigns worldwide. We have to do

something more to help girls get into schools. Mother's level of education have profound impact on a child's future because mothers are the first instructors to their children. Education is a key for women empowerment because it enables them to fight the challenges, to confront their traditional role and to change their lives as well as to change the life of those girls who are not born yet. The importance of education in women's life is not only restricted to only their future development but it will result in development of other women, to their families, to society, to the country and in the end to the world as a whole India can not become a developed and superpower country in the real sense of the term unless and until its women are not empowered. Because women constitute almost 50% population and our society and country will be paralyze if we continuously neglect women's development and empowerment. We should think that empowerment of women are our religious duty.

Educating a women creates a vital opportunity for the social and economic development of India. Women in rural and urban areas should be given access to good opportunities so that they can bring about positive social change and contribute to the growth of the country. It will also improve the quality of her life as well as her entire family. An educated women will definitely support and guide her children for education. Education for women plays a important role in empowerment of women. Education would empower women to know and ask for their rights. It would empower them to fight against discrimination and their right of equal treatment. It would enable them to take decisions and accept the responsibilities of those decisions. It would give economic power to them and results in economic growth of the country. It will help in reduction of maternal and infant mortality. Lastly, education will create the opportunities for women to actively participate politics, administration and governance.

The **Indian Constitution** is the best example of the modern concept of equality and justice related to women because of the following reasons Article 14 states that the State can not deny to its citizens 'equality before the law' and 'equal protection of law' Article 15 states that State has also been prohibited from discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth. Article 16 conferred that equality of men and women in status and opportunities in political, social and economic areas. Article 23 provides right against human trafficking in the form of: selling and buying

of women, men and children, Prostitution, Devadasis and Slavery In Article 39 (a) emphasis that the citizens men and women equally have the right to an adequate means of livelihood and in Article 39 (d) it says that state should secure equal pay for equal work. Article 51 A (e) states any practice derogatory to dignity of women should be renounced by every citizen as a fundamental duty and (k) Provide opportunities for education to his child or ward between age of six to fourteen years of age.

Feminism

Feminism is a political doctrine of equal rights for women and men. Feminists are those men and women who believe that many of the inequalities we see in society between are neither natural nor necessary and can be altered so that both women and men can lead free and equal lives. According to feminists, inequality between men and women in society is the result of patriarchy. This system refers to a social, economic, and cultural system that values men more than women and gives men more power over women. Patriarchy is based on the view that men and women are unequal by nature and that this differences justifies womens' unequal position in society. Feminists contend that all forms of gender inequalities can and should be eliminated. Simone de beaviour, Sandra Harding, Mary Wollstonecraft, Kate Millett, J.S. Mill, Harriet Martineau, Harriet Taylor, Elisabeth Candy Stanson, Betty Friendan, Carol Gilligan etc advocated equal rights of women.

Women's Movement

Women and girls now have the right to study and go to study and go to school. There are other spheres like legal reforms, violence, health were the situation has improved as compared to nineteenth century. These changes have not happened automatically. Women, men and girls both individually and collectively struggled to bring about these changes. This struggle is known as the Womens' Movement. Mahtma Jyoiba Phule, Savitribai Phule, Rajaram Mohan Roy, Mahtma Gandhi, Bharatna Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, Pandita Ramabai, Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, Maharshi Dhondu Keshav Karve, etc. were fought for the causes of women in some or other way in nineteenth and twentieth century.

Suggestions

Proper health and education facilities for women Thinking of society should be changed Socialization process should be changed because they discriminate with women

Economic empowerment of women Political empowerment of women Progressive laws in favour of women and its effective implementation Role of NGOs should be encouraged Male identification of women should be rejected. In India various attempts have been taken for women empowerment.

- x. Bengal Sati Regulation Act 1829 and similar Anti Sati Law in Bombay and Madras during pre-independence period
- xi. Hindu Widow Remarriage Act 1856
- xii. Special Marriage Act, 1954: Minimum marriageable age of girl decided as 18 years.
- xiii. Hindu Succession Act, 1956: This act provided women's right in ancestral property.
- xiv. Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961: Dowry is a punishable offence.
- xv. Maternity Benefit Act 1967 and 2017: paid leave for 26 weeks for pregnant lady worker.
- xvi. The Equal Remuneration Act 1976: equal wages should be paid to men and women for equal work.
- xvii. Sati Prevention Act, 1987: Punishable offence ban
- xviii. Criminal Law Act 1983: Prevented some form of domestic violence.
- xix. In 1990, National Commission for Women was formed.
- xx. In 1993, Rashtriya Mahila Kosha was created with purpose to provide women easy loan and economic assistance.
- xxi. 2001, year declared as 'Women Empowerment Year' in India by GOI
- xxii. 73rd and 74th Amendment Act 1992: 1/3rd seats made reserved in Panchayat Raj and Municipalities for Women.
- xxiii. Domestic Violence Act 2005 was passed which bans domestic violence.

Denying women opportunities to realize their potential is a waste of human capital and a bar to economic development. While certain development indicators show that their quality of life is improving but the pace of change is heartbreakingly slow

National Policy for Women

A National Policy for the Empowerment of Women as adopted in 2001. The goal of the policy is to trying about the advancement, development and empowerment of women. Following are the few objectives of the policy:

- i. Creating an environment through positive economic and social policies for full development of women to enable them to realize their full potential.
- ii. Enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by women on equal basis with men in all spheres- political, economic, social, cultural, and civil.
- iii. Equal access to participation and decision making of women in social, political and economic life of the nation.
- iv. Equal access to women to health care, quality education at all levels, career and vocational guidance, employment, equal remuneration, occupational health and safety, social security and public office etc.
- v. Strengthening legal systems aimed at elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.
- vi. Changing societal attitudes and community practices by active participation and involvement of both men and women.
- vii. Elimination of discrimination and all forms of violence against women and the girl child.

I would like to conclude this paper by quoting Mahatma Gandhi “Woman is the companion of man, gifted with equal mental capacities. She has the right to participate in very minutest detail in the activities of man and she has an equal right of freedom and liberty with him.”

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The Altering Role of Women in an Altering Society

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Abstract

An Indian woman had special expectations. The moment after independence the moment equality of men and women was accepted in the constitution marked a great landmark in the life of the Indian woman. In India today, women have a proud place. While the inequality of men and a woman has started from the anuvadic era itself. While in the middle Ages, the position of women went down further. There were also differences in the behavior and treatment of men and women. After the arrival of the British, the liberal ideology rejected such inequality in the society and embraced individual equality and freedom. In ancient times, women in rural and urban communities in India stayed away from any economic activities outside the home, whereas in the present day, due to the altering role status within the altering times, today women have been able to fulfill their role very well.

Keywords: Women, altering role, altering society

The Altering Role of Women in an Altering Society

With the passage of time in the structure of the society there is a decline in social relations, changes in customs and culture. All these are the result of changes in social institutions, ideas, values, technology and other fruitful of human interaction.

Like other relationships in the structure of society, the relationship between men and women is a fixed form assumes. Women adapt themselves in every society according to the social, economic and cultural background. Every society expects certain types of duties from women. According to the words of Jawaharlal Nehru, what is the position of women in the society is the crux of any society's progress? To maintain the stability

and progress of the society, what contribution a woman has to make is also determined by the custom or tradition of the society.

An Indian woman had special expectations. The moment after independence the moment equality of men and women was accepted in the constitution marked a great landmark in the life of the Indian woman. In India today, women have a proud place. A woman has become a full authority of freedom and equality. Where women have proved weak, they have been supported by society and the state. Women have been given rights. Some special provisions have also been made for this. Women have got special rights in every sphere of life. The inequality she suffered in the past is no longer the case simply because she is a woman. Due to this change, women are beginning to be freed from the shackles of their traditional limitations, although the value of equality in every social relationship has not yet received social acceptance.

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"The status of women in India is an example of both (physical and non-physical) the apparent gap between the social system and the law of the constitutional society. This is theoretically possible for a woman but in practice it is not possible due to Women have to face many problems in their life. In this male dominated society structure of ours, even though a woman is the mother of a man, the same woman is grossly insulted and neglected. Even though she is respected and respected as a mother, she is never respected as a daughter.

In this way, the foundation of women's problems lies in the past social system. If we look into the past in this matter, it will be seen that in the ancient times, i.e. in the Vedic era, along with men, women also received education and did the work of education. It was women like Lopamudra, Visvadhara and Ghosha who created the richas of the Rigveda. During this time a woman used to choose her partner in her own way.

While the inequality of men and a woman has started from the Anuvadic era itself. During this time, there was a feeling of sorrow after the birth of a daughter. A daughter or a woman in a family does not have to be under the domination of a man. Women's freedom was taken away. Even in the field of marriage, the position of women was lowered.

While in the middle Ages, the position of women went down further. There were also differences in the behavior and treatment of men and women. This type of woman's place was not until the beginning of the 19th century that women did not have their own independent personality.

After the arrival of the British, the liberal ideology rejected such inequality in the society and embraced individual equality and freedom.

Education was not widely accepted until the 19th century, but then Indian social reformers, the British government and Christian missionaries made great efforts. Social reformers saw the root of women's dependence in economic dependence, so they trained women, prepared teachers and made women financially self-sufficient, besides leaving the four walls of the home and starting businesses. A woman also began to think about her role and her status. The process of women's emancipation, which began during the British era, accelerated in independent India.

A downward trend in female education is observed. Every woman did not consider education as a means of economic independence but wanted social respect in her time of need.

Thus, women have been involved in some economic activity since ancient times. Earlier, while men worked in the forest, women were engaged in many activities like housework, animal husbandry, textile weaving, child rearing, etc. Apart from this, she

also helped in the agricultural work in the production of grains. Many things are made from bamboo. Even doing this kind of work, this work of a woman was not considered as work because she was not paid, so the man did not understand the economic value of the woman.

In rural and urban communities in India, women stayed away from any economic activities outside the home and it was always considered a matter of prestige, even today there are many regions and castes in India. Women are not allowed to do economic activity outside it. The families of these women consider housework and child rearing to be her domain. Our leaders have also described housework and motherhood as the most important areas of work for women.

Our former President Shri Rajendra Prasad has said that home work is more important than offices and factories. Women's freedom means that they should take all the responsibility of physical, moral and mental as well as character building of the next generation.

Former President Dr. Radhakrishnan, in the pages of the report of the National Committee on Women's Education, said that homemaking is and will continue to be the supreme profession of women but she should not limit her world to this one field. Bonding of business to a working woman At home, playing the role of a homemaker Bonding of time to keep everyone happy Social bonding. A businesswoman gets bored due to social events etc. On the other hand a housewife always thinks that a businesswoman is financially independent. He has his own thinking; he gets respect in the society. Thus, both women become jealous of each other. As a result, women cannot breathe a sigh of relief or contentment, being the enemy of women.

Nowadays, when a woman engages in economic activity, she benefits personally but more than that, her family benefits. Her place in the society changes and her abilities, skills and abilities benefit the society, while on the other hand giving importance to the family, practical, childcare, professional role of women? He feels the confusion of the matter. Feels like such a role conflict. Can such a role not be played out in conflict situations?

After independence, in today's modern era, many factors (equality, freedom, education, urbanization, modernization, communication media, and laws) have led to changes in the status of women.

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Women's Participation in Indian Politics and Reservation Bill: Gender Perspective

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(Abstract)

The Constitution of India is based on the principles of equality and guarantees equality before law and equal protection to all its citizens. It not only guarantees fundamental rights and freedoms, but also prohibits discrimination on the basis of religion, race, caste, sex, and place of birth. However, these rights have remained demure and have not been translated into de facto rights. As such, women have been denied social, economic, civil and political rights in many spheres. An important area where women have been inadequately represented is in the political sphere. Articles 325 and 326 of the Constitution of India guarantees political equality, equal right to participation in political activities and right to vote respectively. While the latter has been accessed, exercised and enjoyed by a large number of women, the former i.e., right to equal political participation is still a distant dream. Lack of space for participation in political bodies has not only resulted in their presence in meager numbers in these decision making bodies but also in the neglect of their issues and experiences in policy making. Women's participation in politics and in the policy making sphere has increased significantly over the years throughout the world. Recent developments in feminist politics in India indicate growing concern with under-representation of women in elected and decision-making bodies, as well as with the view that some form of reservation or affirmative action is needed to redress existing gender imbalances. The understanding of affirmative action or, in the Indian case, reservation, includes notions such as equality of opportunity, social justice, positive or protective discrimination, compensatory discrimination, and so on. Arguments for reservation have been advanced because gender balanced representation is expected to alter development priorities, perspectives, and concerns. The current demand for parliamentary representation of women is built around several arguments and equal opportunity for participation in decision-making is one of them.

Keywords: constitution, empowerment, politics, reservation bill, women

1. Introduction

In the course of human civilization progress, women have played a significant role equal to men. In spite of significant contribution, still women are considered as inferior entity in the society. The situation of women is not much developed in India. Even today they have been suffering with gender discrimination and social-economic and political

deprivation in every sphere of life because of dominance of patriarchal society. Before independence, due to lack of access for education to women and other social inhibition and restriction, the women were not much educated and they had limited participation in the decision making process of governance. After the independence in India, with the growing awareness, promotion of child education and other support facilities, the percentage of educated women increased and the contribution of women in every sector of economy got visible. This shows the remarkable achievement of women empowerment. Empowerment of women in all spheres and in particularly the political sphere is crucial for their advancement and for the foundation of gender equal society. It is central to the goals of equality, development and peace. The Indian democracy which is more than half a century old has entered the next century. But a large mass of women are kept out of political arena still. There can be no true democracy, or no true people's participation in governance and development without equal participation of men and women at different levels of decision making. Participation of women in political life is integral to the advancement of women.

2. Women's quota Bill

The women's quota (108th Constitutional Amendment) Bill providing for a one-third women's reservation at the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies has been hanging fire for some time and has now been put in cold storage. Feminist views on the government, democracy, and conceptions of political equality and involvement have demonstrated that without institutional processes to guarantee women's involvement in political structures, women will not be able to cross formidable obstacles to their entrance into active electoral politics.¹ Democratization and representative institutions also provide the framework for political activity, while setting the terminology for citizen participation. Inequalities that describe the idea of political equity as a feature of our social structure are an important component of every democratic agenda. The women's movement's platform encompasses an entire array of issues ranging from the redistribution of resources to the redistribution of time and obligations in the household, to improvements to the electoral process and to parliamentary democracy. The social agenda embedded in the desire for women's political representation and the wider struggle for equality also threatens democratic institutions. The democratization phase

has been opposed by shifting patterns of wealth, caste and gender ties, which follow their different and sometimes conflicting interests. A guarantee of equal status and opportunities was the strongest attraction in a liberal democracy.² The major challenge in attaining these objectives was nevertheless the social and political systems and other hegemonic activity in a multicultural and stratified society. The enduring dilemma in a liberal democracy was the relation between the concept of political freedom and actual social and economic differences. The basic values of democracy are constantly being questioned by a cultural and ethnic diverse population (equality, social justice). People's demonstrations were important in the transition of democracy and in portraying democracy itself.³ The Women's Reservation Act or the Constitution (108th Amendment) Bill, 2008, is a lapsed act in the Indian Parliament aiming to change the Indian Constitution by reserving 33 percent of all seats for women in the Lower House of Parliament of India, the Lok Sabha, and in all state legislatures. The seats were to be distributed in turn and would have been determined by drawing lots so that a seat would be retained only once in three successive general elections. The bill was adopted on 9 March 2010 by Rajya Sabha. Nevertheless, the Lok Sabha never voted on the motion. The bill was repealed in 2014 after the 15th Lok Sabha.⁴ The Bill that gives women 33 percent quota will not only empower women but in many respects alter India's social structure. This Legislation is ground-breaking and is in making a quiet change. We have to welcome this as a law. While women continue to be largely outside the national public space following long years of democratic politics. Their existence here, given the natural barriers that encourage men while debarring women, is mostly symbolic and exists. This is because women's roles tend to be relegated to the private sphere consciously and subconsciously, as men are given public roles. It has been established that giving women rights not only helps women but also helps the family and the community.⁵ More and more women whose inherent potential was long subdued are firmly stepping out of their domestic confinement and venturing into the traditionally male dominated realm of politics. The term 'politics' as universally accepted denotes 'an exercise of power'⁶ wielded to make policies, take decisions and ensures an effective control over the governmental machinery. But in recent years, women all over the world have managed to induct into the political fold issues like rape, sexual harassment, violence against women etc. by drawing the attention of official agencies and arousing

public consciousness. For example, in the USA women popularized the slogan 'personal is political' and vehemently (passionately) opposed the discrimination between public affairs and private issues of women like violence, rape etc. problems that had long been considered of a private nature and where women were expected to be discreet and secretive.⁷ Women's political participation and representation at decision - making level are two different issues. Participation is necessary, but an insufficient condition for representation, because representation does not flow automatically from participation. Women all over the world have participated widely in political movements in times of crisis but, once the crisis is over, they are relegated again to the domestic arena. Women's active participation in local bodies is creating a paradigm. The buzz word today is "Women can do it" which is proved very emphatically by various luminaries in different walks of life. Empowerment is a process that enhances the ability of disadvantaged (power less) individuals and groups to challenge and change (in their favor) existing power relationship that place them in subordinate economic, social and political positions. In this context the reservation of women has empowered women in great numbers, especially at the grass root level. Although women have taken an unprecedented active role in the political events around the world in the last decade, their participation in politics and governance continues to be limited. They continue to be relegated to the backseat of politics and remain unable to meaningfully influence policy and decision - making notwithstanding their roles as legislators, chief executives and top administrators.

3. History

The movement for women's suffrage began in the early 1900s in response to a national movement for suffrage, even though vast majority of neither men nor women had a right to vote the British colonial rule before 1947. After Indian independence from Britain, the Indian Constitution in 1950 officially granted women and men suffrage. Prior to universal suffrage, provincial legislatures had granted women the right to vote. Madras was the first to grant women's suffrage in 1921, but only to those men and women who owned land property according to British administration's records.⁸ The rights granted in response to the movement towards suffrage were limited to qualifications of literacy and property ownership, including property ownership of husbands.⁹ This excluded vast

majority of Indian women and men from voting, because they were poor. This changed in 1950 when universal suffrage was granted to all adult Indian citizens. In 1950, universal suffrage granted voting rights to all women. This is enshrined in Article 326 in their constitution. India is a parliamentary system with two houses: Lok Sabha (lower house) and Rajya Sabha (upper house). Rates of participation among women in 1962 were 46.63% for Lok Sabha elections and rose to a high in 1984 of 58.60%. Male turnout during that same period was 63.31% in 1962 and 68.18% in 1984. The gap between men and women voters has narrowed over time with a difference of 16.7% in 1962 to 4.4% in 2009.¹⁰ Voter turnout for national elections in the past 50 years has remained stagnant with turnout ranging between 50 and 60%. State elections have seen a growing trend in women's participation, and in some cases women's turnout is exceeding male turnout.¹¹ Increased turnout of women was reported for the 2012 Vidhan Sabha elections (legislative/state assemblies) with states such as Uttar Pradesh reporting 58.82% to 60.29% turnout. In the 2013 assembly elections, women's overall turnout was reported to be 47.4%, and male turnout was 52.5%. Indian states of Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Kerala, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Daman and Diu, and Puducherry all reported higher turnouts among women than men in 2013.¹² Increased participation is occurring in both rich and poor states in India. The sex ratio of voters has improved from 715 female voters for every 1,000 male voters in the 1960s to 883 female voters in the 2000s.¹³ The Election Commission of India (ECI) has sought to increase voter turnout by cleaning up electoral rolls and removing missing or deceased members. Voter outreach has included door-to-door voter registration, and in 2014 elections, voters will be issued a photo id with polling station information to increase voter turnout.¹⁴ Increased voter turnout in India is also partially due to the women voters. ECI has sought to encourage voter registration among women and participation through education and outreach on college and university campuses. Growing participation has also been attributed to increased security at polling stations.¹⁵

4. Women in politics

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.¹⁶ 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 ministry for many decades. The Constitution of India establishes a parliamentary system of government, and guarantees its citizens the right to be elected, freedom of speech, freedom to assemble and form associations, and vote.¹⁷ The Constitution of India attempts to remove gender inequalities by banning discrimination based on sex and class, prohibiting human trafficking and forced labor, and reserving elected positions for women. The Government of India directed state and local governments to promote equality by class and gender including equal pay and free legal aid, humane working conditions and maternity relief, rights to work and education, and raising the standard of living. Women were substantially involved in the Indian independence movement in the early 20th century and advocated for independence from Britain. Independence brought gender equality in the form of constitutional rights, but historically women's political participation has remained low.¹⁸ 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 center of their agenda. The INC regained power in 2004 with the help of women's participation.¹⁹ The INC has increased women's participation by instituting a 33% quota for women in all levels of the party. In 1966 India choosed the first lady prime minister and Indira Gandhi became the first lady prime minister of India. In June 2009, the INC nominated a Meira Kumar 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.²⁰ 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.²¹ 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%.²² Women only govern four of India's political parties. From 1970-1980, 4.3% of candidates and 70% of electoral races had no women candidates at all.²³ As of 2013, it has been reported of the members of parliament 11% were women in Lok Sabha and 10.6% in Rajya Sabha.²⁴ There are many other women who served and serves India as a good politician like J.Jaylalithaa, Sushma Swaraj, Mamta Banerjee, Mayabati and many others.

There are four important debates in the narrative on the question of political participation of women both at the global level as well as in India, one debate tries look at the women's participation as part of "empowering women" particularly as political categories.²⁵ Second debate tries to argue that voting rights or suffrage will remain as symbolism or "political tokenism"²⁶ rather than actualizing participation in traditional societies such as India, Iran etc and the third debate looks at suffrage as essential component for creating egalitarian society and final debate argue that political participation especially through "quota" or reservation not necessarily leads to social emancipation of women, as women are still without property rights and that gender bias still operates at the large level.²⁷ In fact women's participation has given rise to different discourses or perspectives too. One of the perspectives is known as Incrementalist Perspective.²⁸ It believes that gender equality is a phased phenomenon. According to this discourse gender equality develops gradually, step wise and as a concerted effort where state intervention may assist in moving equality in the high direction. Although this particular discourse has been contested by large number of women's movement on the ground that such a trend would definitely go against the spirit of achieving gender equality in short span- it might take hundreds of years to achieve gender equality in politics. In any political system, right from the developed to the developing countries,

presence of women is very low compared to men. In many countries women had to wage long battles to get right to vote. Today the percentage of women as voters has increased considerably, but their political participation is not equal to men and therefore women are unable to get an equal share in organization that require decision making. Women have not been regarded as significant part of the political arena. Politics at every level of participation is dominated by men. The omission of women from positions of power seriously affects the ability to challenge the subordination of women in all its manifestation. Women have to be in politics and power to participate as women and to change the very nature of that power which excludes them. Women who consist of almost half of the population need to be represented significantly in decision making bodies. Otherwise the goal of development cannot be achieved. Gender equity is very essential for the progress of any society.

5. Constitutional safeguards

The Constitution of India not only grants equality to women but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women for neutralizing the cumulative socio economic, education and political disadvantages faced by them.

- Equality before law for women (Article 14)
- The State not to discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them (Article 15)
- The State to make any special provision in favour of women and children (Article 15 (3))
- Equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State (Article 16).
- The State to direct its policy towards securing for men and women equally the right to an adequate means of livelihood (Article 39(a)); and equal pay for equal work for both men and women (Article39(d))
- To promote justice, on a basis of equal opportunity and to provide free legal aid by suitable legislation or scheme or in any other way to ensure that opportunities for

securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities (Article 39 A)

- The State to make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief (Article 42)
- The State to promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and to protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation (Article 46)
- The State to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people (Article 47)
- To promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India and to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women (Article 51(A) (e))
- Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat (Article 243 D(3))
- Not less than one- third of the total number of offices of Chairpersons in the Panchayats at each level to be reserved for women (Article 243 D (4))
- Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Municipality to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Municipality (Article 243 T (3))
- Reservation of offices of Chairpersons in Municipalities for the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and women in such manner as the legislature of a State may by law provide (Article 243 T (4)).

6. Facts and figures:

Leadership and political participation Women in parliaments

- Only 24.3 per cent of all national parliamentarians were women as of February 2019, a slow increase from 11.3 per cent in 1995.²⁹
- As of June 2019, 11 women are serving as Head of State and 12 are serving as Head of Government.³⁰
- Rwanda has the highest number of women parliamentarians worldwide, where, women have won 61.3 per cent of seats in the lower house.³¹
- Globally, there are 27 States in which women account for less than 10 per cent of parliamentarians in single or lower houses, as of February 2019, including 3 chambers with no women at all.³²
- Wide variations remain in the average percentages of women parliamentarians in each region. As of February 2019, these were (single, lower and upper houses combined): Nordic countries, 42.5 per cent; Americas, 30.6 per cent; Europe including Nordic countries, 28.6 per cent; Europe excluding Nordic countries, 27.2 per cent; sub-Saharan Africa, 23.9 per cent; Asia, 19.8 per cent; Arab States, 19 per cent; and the Pacific, 16.3 per cent.³³ Other domains of government.
- As of January 2019, only 20.7 per cent of government ministers were women; the five most commonly held portfolios by women ministers are: Social Affairs; followed by Family/Children/Youth/Elderly/Disabled; Environment/Natural Resources/Energy; Employment/Labour/Vocational Training; and Trade/Industry.³⁴
- In 103 countries and areas with relevant data, women's representation in elected local deliberative bodies varied from less than 1 per cent to close to parity, at 50 per cent, with a median of 26 per cent.³⁵
- Women's representation in local governments can make a difference. Research on panchayats (local councils) in India discovered that the number of drinking water projects in areas with women-led councils was 62 per cent higher than in those with men-led councils.³⁶ In Norway, a direct causal relationship between the presence of women in municipal councils and childcare coverage was found.³⁷

There is established and growing evidence that women's leadership in political decision-making processes improves them. Women demonstrate political leadership by working

across party lines through parliamentary women's caucuses - even in the most politically combative environments - and by championing issues of gender equality, such as the elimination of gender-based violence, parental leave and childcare, pensions, gender-equality laws and electoral reform.³⁸

Uma Chakravathy argues that the traditional work on the status of women in India existed entirely within the context of Hinduism and is pre-occupied with religious and legal questions. The social position of women in public assemblies and their right to education is neglected. Traditional writers were concerned with the status of women within the family and primarily in the relationship of wives to husbands. Secondly, the position of women is based entirely on the Brahmanical sources that reflect the precepts of Brahmanas rather than the cultural practices of the people.³⁹ Women's interests and priorities are said to be neglected in a male dominated parliament and their presence is expected to make a qualitative difference in increasing the empathy for their concerns. These arguments are countered by those who do not see women as a collectivity or who consider it is not only women who can best represent women's interests. Linking reservation questions to equal opportunity and social justice for women as a disadvantaged group has given rise to an inconclusive debate on the criteria for determining backwardness. Does it open the door to equal opportunity; does it realize social justice, and does it alter power relations? Many of these dilemmas apparent in the reservation debate have profound implications for political theory and practice and for the attempts by the women's movement to give a new meaning and dimension to the slogan "political empowerment of women."

7. Conclusion

The increase in the number of women in legislature definitely will not bring overnight changes in the status of women. It is foolishness to think that it will solve the entire problems faced by women and bring equality immediately. It is also true that powerful women leaders in our politics have failed to do much to the women in India. The 73rd and 74th Amendment to the Constitution of India with 33.33% reservation for women has given opportunity for the entry of large number of socially marginalized category such as women to enter into the domain of local institution and their performance is very encouraging. In the year 2006, more than 10.5 lacs women were elected to the local

institutions. These reservations or quota brought quantitative changes, facilitated women to be represented in local governments and deserved to be hailed as major achievement in the empowerment of women. Success stories of women in local governments indicate the qualitative changes that are coming forth. Increment list perspective would enable qualitative change in the performance of women in politics and governance. It would provide a way to bring a sense of equality in gender. The Women's Reservation Bill's trajectory in India was characterized by a high war drama with phrases repeated many points over and over without agreement. As a consequence, women's empowerment has lost the whole problem. No doubt, the Bill of Reservation was one of the most controversial pieces of legislation ever presented in any house of the Indian Parliament. This is noteworthy as one of the rare instances in which the three major national parties-Bharatiya Janata Party, Congress, and the Left — have formed a political consensus. The passage of the Rajya Sabha Women's reservation bill is not only a warm movement for India but also an impetus for women's empowerment throughout the world. One of the problems, for example, with the Lok Sabha approval, is that of the legislation. This matter is urgently needed, as the challenge of enforcing the law based on rights—food, education, safety, sanitation and supply of water, clean energy, demographic change, and jobs-will definitely be increased and incorporated by women. Women's active engagement in local self-governing bodies demonstrates that many women are good leaders and spend more time and effort in them. Improved women's political participation will help them fight the violence, inequality, and disparities they face. Women's organizations need to be constructive and put pressure on the government to implement the bill. Men should also make room for women in the decision-making process without any prejudice, apart from all of these, the key issues related to the policy of reservation must also be discussed with dispassion. In India, which is a male dominant society, women's quotas will definitely act as a catalyst for change. It can only start to change, but progress will come if society changes its attitude towards women. Women's political empowerment is seen as an effective and necessary weapon to eradicate gender inequality and discrimination. The foregoing analysis reveals that gender quota increases women's representation. 'Quota' has been used as a tool for incorporating women's inclusion in decision-making bodies. But it is depending on the socio-political context of a country. There is a commonness regarding „quota“

that for and against arguments that quota are still surprisingly similar from country to country. However, Indian context has demonstrated that ‘quota’ for women’s reservation includes more women in local self-governing bodies but at the same time they are excluded by the male-dominated political power structure. Even elected women representatives are still silent spectators in the sociopolitical order. It is noteworthy that women’s reservation failed to remove some essential barriers like the local electoral campaign financing, the many imbalances between family life and politics, difficulties in attending meetings, etc. Positively speaking, women’s reservations have the potential to kick-start other processes of empowerment of women. In other words, women’s political representation can be considered as precondition for women’s empowerment. It is also believed that more women’s access will enhance the quality of politics. Previously, politics is said to be specifically male domain in Indian socio-political milieu. Now, it is expected that women’s political participation is complemented to less dirty and less corrupt politics especially in the democratic countries like India. There is also a link between women’s political empowerment and democracy. As S. Hassim (2003) observes that existing norms of citizenship are not only gendered, but ‘classed’, ‘raced’, and ‘sexualized’. However, women’s reservation through „quota“ may be reconstructed our society and opened up new opportunities for making a gender-inclusive society in near future.

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