

Political Participation of Women in India: Though the Window of 2017 Punjab Assembly Election

*Dilpreet Singh**

Abstract

When the universal declaration of Human Rights was adopted on 10th December 1948, its Article 1 proclaimed that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights." Article 2 provided for equality in sexes. It states that, "everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms without the distinction of sex." It is considered a clarion call for the cause of women empowerment and assimilation. Further, UN convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, which is considered as the Human Rights Bill of Women came into being in 1979. It upholds the following rights of women. 1) Their right to vote in all General Elections and Referendums and be elected to General Assemblies. 2) Their right to participate in the formulation and implementation of governmental politics and to hold public offices. 3) Their right to participate in the non-governmental and socio political organizations. Indian constitution also gives equal status to women with men without any distinction of caste, creed, language, state, religion, region, color etc to participate in the political process with men. In order to boost their participation in politics, there has been 73rd and 74th amendment in the constitution reserving 33% (now 50%) seats in Panchayati Raj institutions and urban local self-government. An attempt was also made to allow 33% reservation for women in State Assemblies and Lok Sabha. Said bill has been passed by Rajya Sabha and is pending of Lok Sabha where certain MP's are not in its favor due to bias against women and their male domination and ego. A women is no longer enslaved within the four walls of the house and she is free to get education, do job, do business or trade, can become a doctor, engineer, pilot, go to space, become CM, PM, President of the country, take part in games, national and international pares. India has had many women as state Chief Ministers, Governors, Prime Minister, Ambassador on account of their self-confidence and strong will power. She has expelled men in many fields not only in India but in the international for as well. There are, however, some people with narrow thinking and orthodox mentality who don't want that women should lead in politics. Some men don't want her to participate in political process or be exposed to public view. Clock is giving her open invitation to come and increase her political participation.

Keywords: *Women, Political, Participation, Parties, Rights, Elections, Parties*

Introduction

India occupies the pride place of being the largest democracy in the world and that too under the parliamentary form of government. The entire credit for her emergence to this coveted position goes to the people of India and none else. Indian people have weathered the anti-India rule by Britishers for 300 years when our economy, our culture, our religions setup were destroyed by the Britishers to enrich the British Empire. Prior to British rule, Indian people faced onslaught from the

* Research Scholar, Department of Political Science, Punjabi University, Patiala

Mughals, right from Babur to Bahadur Shah Zafar. People of India are hardworking, tolerant and farsighted that in spite of such long drawn sufferings, India has emerged as a great force to reckon with.

As on today, the real democracy exists in India if one analyzes the participative spirit of people in elections held to Lok Sabha, legislative assemblies, metros and municipal corporations and at Panchayati Raj institutions. There is no monopoly of one party rule like China or bi-party system like UK, or USA, no theocracy like Iran, no dictatorship like North Korea. The political system here has been multiparty political system most of the times, each party trying hard to win the elections either on its own or in alliance with others. The results of 2014 Lok Sabha elections, 2015 Delhi election, 2017 UP, Punjab legislative elections & even in same year DMC elections have proved that no party can take anything for granted and only the mandate given by the people was respected.

Forty nine percentage of India's population consist of by women who also rule roost and don't lag behind the men in any field. During ancient times, she had been a symbol of life, strength, purity, patience and sacrifice. "In Vedic period women enjoyed freedom in political, social, educational activities and they were treated as the embodiments of goddess of wealth, strength and wisdom." Women played active role to guide & assist their husband kings in the administration. According to Manu "where women are neglected all rites and ceremonies are fruitless and that family quickly perishes, but where women don't grieve that family always prospers. During Rig Vedic period they participated in political activities and deliberations of vidhatha and sabha along with men. However their status got set back and she becomes a puppet in the hands of men. During Mughal and British period their position became wickedest in the history of the country. But later during reform movements like, Arya Samaj, Rama Krishna Mission, Prarthana Samaj etc. encouraged social service for women, educational and reform activities to bring social change for women uplift.

Mahatma Gandhi inspired Indian women to enter the open field of politics. He said, "In the non-violent struggle, women have an advantage over men, for women are in any way superior to men in their religious devotion. Silent and dignified service is the badge of her sex. Women are sacrifice personified. When she does anything in the right spirit, she moves mountains." Political participation of women has been a controversial matter in Indian in view of some negative thinking people who are narrow minded and biased against the feminine gender, when there is no encouragement or motivation to the women from home side, they are not coming forward to participate in politics in large number. It is mostly the subject matter of talk in public that why there is low political participation of women and how to improve it. It is the observation of UNO that women constitute "world's largest excluded category." According to Usha Narayanan, "for the attainment of true democratic spirit, better political participation should be ensured. In the struggle for gender justice, political participation constitutes the first and the foremost step in that direction."

Political participation

Political participation refers to those voluntary activities of member of a society in the selection of rulers and formation of public policy. Political participation is a basic ingredient of every

political system. Participation helps the individual to be effective and associates him with the political system. Higher the rate and levels, the more varied the forms of political participation. The international encyclopedia of social science defined political participation as the principal means by which consent is granted or withdrawn in a democracy and rulers are made accountable to the ruled. Political participation signifies such proceedings like voting, seeking information, discussing and proselytizing, attending meetings, contribute financially and communicating with representatives, some of the scholars have remarked that political participation of citizens is the distinguishing mark of modern states. High levels of political participation are usually associated with democracy which is beneficial both to the individual and to the society. Political participation has been considered as a sine qua non of democracy. Political participation has been characterized as a civic duty, as a sign of political health and the best method of ensuring that one's private interests are not neglected. By involving maximum people in the matters of state, political participation brings stability and order by reinforcing the legitimacy of political authority.

Political participation applies to the activities of people from all levels of political system. It is those action of private citizens by which they seek to influence or support government and politics. According to Almond and Powell, "political participation is the involvement of the members of the society in the decision making process of the system." Mc Closky defines "political participation implies those voluntary activities by which members of a society share in the selection of rulers directly or indirectly, in the formulation of public policy. Citizen participation in political affair is important because a situation which results in high participation by members of a group normally has higher potential for democracy. Citizens do not participate equally or in the same manner in any political process. The political culture of a society influences the nature of politics participation individuals.

Channels of political participation

Many channels are open for the citizens to political participation and influence the government and political system. Political participation is not confined to voting only. There are four main broad ways of political participation according to Verba and Nie i.e voting, campaign activity, cooperative activity and citizen initiated contacts.

While analysis the modes of political participation, Schmitter has mentioned ten types of activities which include 1) Running for or holding public or party politics 2) Belonging to a party or other political organization 3) Working in an election 4) Attending political meetings or rallies 5) Making financial contribution to a party or a candidate 6) Contacting a public official 7) publically expressing a political opinion to convince other 8) Partaking in political discussion 9) Voting 10) Exposing oneself to political stimulates.

Variables of political participation.

Political participation is a complex phenomenon and it depends when the following variables:-

1. Psychological environment
2. Socio-economic environment

3. Political environment

Women and political participation in India:-

The process of political participation in India has already been started after the 73rd amendment in the constitution there by providing 33 percent reservation for women in the panchayati Raj institutions. Similarly 74th Amendment provided for 33% reservation, for women elected local bodies in the urban areas, which has now been extended up to 50% at all aforesaid levels in Indian Democratic system. But in actual practice, it seems to be a mockery owing to discriminatory socio-cultural values against the women. Hence, they are excluded from the preview of mainstream. This is a gender paradox which is a dilemma for women in administrative state. There is illiteracy, exploitation, crime, domestic violence and harassment against women. Male dominated political systems which do not allow women to rise and take their due position in the politics. Women also suffer from lack of general awareness, social and political obstacles. When they share 49% of total population, why don't they have 49% members in Lok Sabha and state Assemblies? After long drawn efforts, a bill to provide for women reservation to the extent of 33% was passed by Rajya Sabha but it is lying heading in Lok Sabha since long due to the reason that several MP's from various political parties do not want to give due share to women. In India all the citizens male or female have the right to vote and contest the election. While women have started venturing out to cast their vote but large number of them are not prepared to contest the elections. The reasons found are low family background, lack of political awareness and male dominated political system in India. Nature has also given weaker frame to women and this weakness may excite tenderness and gratify the arrogant pride of man. While women have entered every area of activity e.g. education, science, technology, medical line, bureaucracy and above all in armed forces, but they need to break the shackles of bondage in political field. We find that women like Golda Meirof Isreal, Srimavo Bhandaranaike & Chandrika Kumar Tunga of Sri Lanka, Smt. Indira Gandhi, Smt. Pribha Patel, Queen Elizabeth of UK & on Margret Tharacher of UK, Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan, Seikh Haseena & Khalida Jia of Bangladesh, Aung sang Suiki of Myanmar have done wonders in political field. Even if the act is not passed in Lok Sabha, they should compel the political parties to allot them sufficient tickets for Lok Sabha and state Assemblies. It is not a question of competition between men or women or male ego, it is a matter of taking female counterparts together on the political ladder. According to the data of representation of women in Lok Sabha from 1952 Lok Sabha elections to 2014, the minimum Numbers of women representatives have been 22 in 1952 and maximum 61 in 2014. It is a good sign of political awakening in the women. The percentage of victorious women has been minimum 3.4% in 1977 and maximum 11.2% in 2014.

Position of women MLA is in Punjab Assembly.

During 2012 assembly elections 93 women from different political parties had contested and in out of them 14 had won. Maximum six women each of SAD and Congress returned home victorious in comparison to two of BJP and none of the People's Party of Punjab. During the elections held 2017, out of 117 assembly elections 81 women contents had fought to election out of which total six won the election i.e. 3 from AAP and 3 from the Congress party. With the large number of girls getting

education and political awareness, the no. of women contestants will surely increase in the years to come for more political participation. They seemed quite passionate to join active political participation in view of the keen interest being shown by them during election campaign, canvassing, addressing the voters in the villages & cities, wooing the voters with their skill of oratory and participating in mass movements against injustice and oppression.

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