



Opportunities for Women in Political Development Since Post-Independent Period of India

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Introduction:

The development of any social system depends on the equal opportunities for men and women in that social system. Like men, women are also an integral part of the social system and women's contribution in building society and nation has always been there. Therefore, recognizing the inner strength and empowerment of women is essential for every system. The position of women in the ancient Indian social system was respectable and venerable and women were seen working in many fields along with men. But as the time went by and foreign invasion started in India, the issue of protection of women came to the fore. Consequently, hairdressing, the curtain system came and remained, and the place of women remained confined to the confines of the home.

In the pre-independence period of India, social reformers such as Rajaram Mohan Rai, Savitriai Phule, Maharshi Dhondo Keshav Karve etc. have created a movement of women's liberation by creating awareness among women through education and eradicating the undesirable stereotypes and limited position of women in the society. Therefore, the political socialization and empowerment of women in modern times can be seen through these social events. After the independence of India, from the point of view of social integration, the work of contributing political development along with social development by providing women ample opportunities in the social and political sphere by making proper use of women's power began.

Political Development:

In the context of political development, through the study of terms like social development, political participation, modernization etc. is necessary to underline. Along with this, it is also necessary to underline concepts like individuals or individual groups and the nature of their political participation and opportunities grounded for them in the process of political development. There are aspects of development like social development, cultural development, economic development, educational development, and political development.



The term political development was not familiar in traditional political science. But after the Second World War, when the identity of the 'The Third World' emerged, small nations tried to achieve development through political development. From this it can be seen that in the process of political development many factors like state building national building are important. Alfred Diamond has said that the process of political development is also important in solving social problems.

Many people have many opinions regarding the concept of political development. Because most people think that modernization and political development are the same concepts. But Apter, the sociologist, therefore considered modernization as part of the process of development. Therefore, Samuel Huntington in his book, 'Political Order in Changing Societies,' considers expansion of political participation and institutions as factors of political development and suggests that political stability will not come without institutionalization. (Whora and Palshikar- 1987)

'Political development is the understanding or adaptation of traditional or old patterns of life to new needs or demands and cultural transmission.' (Devgaonkar- 2001)

This definition of political development perfectly fits the opportunities of women in the process of political development. Further, Robert Ward explains the concept of political modernization and says that 'the ability of political system to plan and implement policies of equal opportunity for political participation, the diversification of structure, and the preparation of a form of political progress are included in the process of political modernization.' (Srinivasan and Surap-2018)

In short, through Robert Ward's concept of political modernization, social structure cannot be created until the sense of unity in the society or the equal opportunity of all elements and participation in political development is not created. Therefore, offering equal opportunities for women in political development became the need of the society and roots of political participation of women in India started.

Political Participation of Women in Political Development:

Political participation is an important tool for giving and taking away popular consent in a democratic polity. Through democracy, the people are directly involved in politics. Voting, campaigning for a candidate, joining a party, collecting election funds, participating in political debates, expressing one's opinion through public speaks, or becoming a pressure group, and the various political acts of participation in governance. Many of these actions involve political participation. Therefore, social thinkers like Emerson and Clifford says that 'the greater the participation of conscious citizens in the day-to-day governance, the greater the political



development and the society can also develop from that point of view. When voting rights are given to the people, the decision-making process is largely decentralized to the grassroots of society. It is because people are directly involved in governance here. Therefore, political participation of all factors of society is essential in the process of political development.

It is equally important to understand the opportunities given to women or the representation they have received in parliamentary elections when considering the opportunities for women in the process of political development after the independence. It is because a parliamentary election is the highest place in India and the participation of women in it is seen from that point of view.

After Independence India adopted democratic system of governance. Indian Constitution was formed and Article 14, 15, 16 guarantees equality in all walks of life. It offers equal opportunities to all as it prohibits discrimination on the ground of caste, religion, sex, color, place of birth and race. Along with this, there is provision for women and responsibilities of citizen India in the Article 51A (e). Although the principle of equality and women's empowerment are suggested in the measures in accordance with many article of the Constitution of India, the response to the women's leadership in Parliamentary elections and in terms political empowerment is steady. In the general elections of 1952, women representatives in parliament was 4.9% (22), while in 17th Lok Sabha elections, 2019, this number approached to 78 i.e. 14.94%. According to the report of United Nations in 2017, India ranked at lowly 148th in women 'Parliamentary Position Category' and at 88th position in 'women at ministerial position Category'. 'The parliament currently has 11.8% women representation and state assembly has only 9% even though women empowerment has become a catchphrase in every Government policy.

In a research study of Gharade and More, from the first Lok Sabha elections (1952) to the Fifteenth Lok Sabha elections (2009), the number of women's parliamentary representation is increased by one percent in every Lok Sabha elections in between. In the 2019 elections, however, this increase is almost three percent (14.94%) compared to 2014 elections (11.80%). It means that the representation number of women in the 2019 elections is relatively increased.

In the political development of a developing country like India, many difficulties can be seen in the political opportunities of women. The first major problem among these is stereotypes or what it is called artificial barriers. It is said from this point of view that the structure of Indian society is basically based on patriarchal point of view. That is the position of women in a male dominated culture and the decision-making power they have. Even though



they are represented to some extent, it also reflects their decision-making capacity, and the opportunity they get in making decision.

Nikhil Rampal (2019) in his article published in India Today has stated that ‘from the financial point of view of politicians in politics, i.e. from the point of view of receiving funding, most of the politicians accept funding from the co-operative sector in large measure. Therefore, compared to men, women may not be able to get the funding they need to contest elections or conduct elections campaigns. So they contest elections based on whatever financial support they get from their families and as a result they cannot succeed due to lack of funding.

Illiteracy rate among the women is another challenge for women to adjust with the opportunities they receive for their political empowerment. The census results of 2011 reveals 64.46 percent literacy rate of female in India. Though this literacy rate is increasing significantly since the last decade of 20th century, this low rate lefts its impact on women’s empowerment and due to which they find less opportunities in political arena.

Even though the political parties do not have as much opportunity as they want in the third tier of the Panchayat Raj system, Gram Panchayat, from a political point of view, the political life of every person starts from this Panchayat Raj system. And so the principle that we should choose our own representatives is seen as a great opportunity in these elections. In order to develop the concept of self-governance at the rural level, the 73rd and 74 Amendments to the Indian Constitution provided 33% reservation for women in the Panchayat Raj system. Later, however, this was further increased as 50% reservation for them. It also provides reservation for Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribe women on a large scale so that women can participate in politics and by which political development in the country can function.

Conclusion:

Thus through this article, the researcher has studied the political opportunities of women and the opportunities of political development from the point of view of mutual factors and public participation within. It is hoped that the principle of equal opportunity for women as well as men in public participation should be fully followed. From the point of view of democracy, India has set itself as an example before the world, but form the point of view of women’s political participation and in comparison with the neighbouring countries, the representation of women in India is low. The Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha are the most important houses of the country and the representation of women in both these houses is very less. Although there has been an increase in their number in the house, this increase is very slow. Countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, China, Afghanistan etc. have a high portion



of female representatives in their parliament house. Therefore, from the point of view of political development, it is very important to have institutional reform for increasing the number of women's representation. Political mobilization should be done as much as possible for them.

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