



WOMEN LEADERSHIP IN CONTEMPORARY INDIAN ADMINISTRATIVE POLITICS

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Abstract

Women leadership empowerment includes the socio-cultural development which is closely related with the political empowerment, a large number of participations, education, decision making roles, health, family, in short, all sphere of life and genuine social empowerment are very much required in our society. The emergence of organized women's engagements in formal politics, women's political participation, the moral potential of leadership, and the development and promotion of moral or ethical leadership in organizations. The purpose of this research paper is to gain a deeper understanding of women's participation as a political leader, the leadership styles of men and women, the nature of the public sphere institutions in which women participate, and women's political representation in contemporary Indian Politics.

Keywords: Women Leadership, Women Representation, Political Participation, Unrest Politics, Women Organisation.

Introduction

Statement of Problem

“Life is not easy for any of us. But what of that? We must have perseverance and above all confidence in ourselves. We must believe that we are gifted for something and that this thing must be attained.”

**– Marie Skłodowska-Curie
Feminist Lady**

At present, India has just 59 women members out of 545 members in the Lok Sabha, (lower house). In the Rajya Sabha (the upper house), there are only 21 female MPs out of the 233 members. India lags behind other Asian countries, such as Pakistan, China, and Bangladesh. Even African countries, such as Rwanda and Mozambique have more representation with 56.7% and 34.8%. In comparison to the national scenario, the Panchayati Raj, the fundamental of rural government, has brought in many more women leaders and participants. States like Karnataka had made women part of rural politics way before the Constitution made it mandatory. Other states, such as Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand have crossed 50 per cent seats in the panchayat for women. The primary reason why women have not been able to play a significant role at the national level in Indian politics is because of dynastic rule. Women politicians struggle to find a better position in their party hierarchies.

It is interesting that Indian women leaders attained a clear leadership position only after they set up their own parties (Mayawati, Jayalalitha, Mamata Banerjee) and through the support of their husband or family or dynasty rule (Sonia Gandhi, Vasundhara Raje Scindia, Mehbooba Mufti, Sheila Dixit, Rabri Devi). Another major problem faced by Indian women in politics is implicit acceptance by the party rank, especially by males. The irony we face is that political parties create a hullabaloo over increasing the participation of women to 33 per cent by making reservations for them. But when it comes to giving election tickets to women leaders, they are rarely the first choice. The problem that women in Indian politics face is that even if reservations are made for women politicians, they are not included in party policies. That fact defeats the entire exercise of creating reservations for women. The country's ruling Congress party is led by a woman leader and has been pushing hard for reservation for women. But the Congress party itself does not include more than 10 per cent of women members. The situation of women in Indian politics will not improve till we have made significant changes in the mindset and ideology of the Indian people.

Considerable research attention has focused on women's political engagement, the presence of more women in leadership positions, women's potential performance in top elected office, and women's emergence in leadership. The mainstay of the paper is formed by an analysis of the inroads of women into positions of power and authority, social change in women's roles and opportunities, the importance of women's organizations to democratic politics, and the increase in the number of women decision-makers. The theory that we shall seek to elaborate here puts considerable emphasis on women's behavior within gendered institutions, the substantive representation of women, organizational changes designed to improve women's access to and success in leadership roles, women's access to leadership roles, and the benefits and contributions of women functioning together with men in the exercise of leadership. This paper seeks to fill a gap in the current literature by examining the emergence of organized women's movements, women's experiences of politics, realities of women's electoral representation, differing perceptions of women's leadership effectiveness, and women's leadership characteristics. Coir analysis complements the growing literature the effect of political



participation by women on democratic political systems, organized women's struggles for access to powerful institutions, women's participation and success as leaders, and the purpose and content of leader subordinate relationships.

Participation of Women and Challenges

This paper attempts to investigate the conceptual and material bases of women's historic exclusion from the formal arena of politics; analyze strategies adopted around the world to promote women's political participation/representation; identify internal and external conditions and factors that facilitate or hinder the creation of an enabling environment for women's political empowerment; and finally draw policy recommendations for the national and international actors. The development context of women's political participation at the community and national levels will be reviewed for nuanced understanding of the nature of women's participation and their share in development processes and outcomes. With an increasing recognition among international community of women's historic exclusion from structures of power, a global commitment has been made to redress gender imbalance in politics. Women's enhanced participation in governance structures is viewed as the key to redress gender inequalities in societies. The global debate on the promotion of women's political participation/representation has been surrounded by intrinsic and instrumentalist argument. The former argues for equal participation of women in politics from the human rights perspective. Women constitute half of the world population and therefore, it is only fair that they should have equal participation and representation in world democracies. Instrumentalist argument pushed for women's greater participation on the essentialist ground that men and women are different. Women have different vision and concepts of politics owing to their sex and their gender roles as mothers. Therefore, it is assumed that women in politics will bring a special caring focus and female values to politics. There is an extensive research literature produced in support of the varied rationale or theoretical approaches to women's inclusion in politics. However, without debating the merit and demerit of various approaches, this paper is grounded in the broad agreement that proponents of varied approaches have arrived at - women must be included in politics. The challenge facing all advocates of gender equality in politics today is the wide gap between shared values reflected in the national and international policies and practices. Before identifying the key strategies for the promotion of women's political participation and the vital elements in the enabling environment for women's political empowerment, we need to strive for a deeper understanding of the structural imperatives of a society in which women's political participation is instituted. Women's historic exclusion from political structures and processes is the result of multiple structural, functional and personal factors that vary in different social contexts across countries. However, beyond these specificities of national and local contexts, there is a generic issue in women's political participation that relates to the wider context of national and international politics, liberal democracy and development. It is, therefore, imperative to critically review these constructs and decode the gendered nature of Democracy as well as Development, which poses limitations on women's effective political participation. The elements of enabling environment for women's participation in politics and development cannot be discussed and identified without putting the current development and political paradigms under scrutiny.

Women Leadership

Women representation and focuses on the demographic composition of elected institutions: a numerical assessment is a crucial first step for understanding legislative behavior (women can begin the process of representing substantive interests when they are present), the municipal level of government is more accessible to women, the relationship between level of government and women's representation is not necessarily straightforward (women face an uphill climb in terms of achieving gender parity, regardless of level of government), and plurality electoral systems may disadvantage women because they tend to be more candidate centered. Chandler states that women have slowly emerged in top executive positions: women bring to the exercise of leadership an arsenal of strengths. Women in top corporate positions have redefined the rules of business and leadership (the increase of female leaders has produced new approaches to the exercise of leadership). "Although women have moved into more managerial positions, they still have not emerged into the top executive leadership positions nor do they earn salaries commensurate with those of men for the same jobs." Weimann tests the stereotype of male communicative dominance in the context of dealing with bureaucracy, examining the responses of male and female officials of various bureaucratic organizations to different persuasive appeals activated by male and female clients.

Political status of women can be defined as the degree of equality and freedom enjoyed by women in sharing of power and in the value given by society to the role of women. Women's political background show that they are far away from the equal status along with men. Equal status is not enjoyed by women and men anywhere in this world and there is difference in the opportunities available for them. In the power hierarchy, women remain at the lowest level and are powerless which is due to their illiteracy, lack of awareness, lack of information and knowledge about markets and skills. Without women's political empowerment and active political participation in decision making processes, women's life-situation cannot be altered. The two major forces which acted as catalysts in the achievements of political equality of women were the national movement and the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. During the early Vedic period, women were educated, civilized, enjoyed equal rights to men and they had high status in the society. But this high status of women started to deteriorate with the advent of the sutra period (600-300 B.C). During the Sangam age, the women of Tamil Nadu were treated well and they enjoyed high status in the society. Tolkappiyam clearly tells the status of women during the Sangam period.



The status of women under the Pallavas, imperial Cholas and pandyas was high but the education imparted to women was different when it is compared to men.

The rise of Indian women as panchayat leaders is a spectacular achievement given that India has one of the worst records with respect to the way it treats the female sex. Malnourished, suppressed, uneducated, violated and discriminated against, Indian women have the odds stacked against them. Even birth is a hurdle, thanks to widespread female infanticide in rural areas. But for every Saroja who will be married at 13 because her mother, a devadasi (prostitute) in Chikanahalli Village, Karnataka, cannot afford to pay a dowry, there is a Lakshmi, who is serving her second-term as the panchayat leader of Kadinamala village in Kotagiri district. There is a Kenchamma of Nereleke gram panchayat in rural Karnataka, who survived life threats during her two terms as council leader. An illiterate Dalit, Kenchamma could not read or write. Perhaps as a result of her personal travails, she made sure that she brought education to all the children in her village, including a disabled child. Talking to these women is a lesson in humility. Instead of the outrage and anger that urban feminist's project, these women panchayat leaders speak with clear-minded realism about opportunities and costs. For many women, attending a panchayat meeting means sacrificing a day's wage. It means assuming leadership for the first time in their lives and then subsuming it at home to serve in-laws and husband. For Kenchamma, it meant leaving her one-year-old son to other caregivers while she learned the ropes of politics.

Women in Legislature

In independent India, women entered the parliament and their participation has been extended to the legislative deliberations also. Women have been active participants in the voting process. In the 1952 general elections, women's participation was minimal as the percentage of voting was only 37.1. But it had interestingly moved up to 58.17% in 1984, but declined to 47.30 in 1991. In 1952 women's membership in Lok Sabha was only 4.4 percent, but in 1984, it moved to 7.9 percent. Thus, the increase in the percent of women members is not significant. In 1991, women membership in the Lok Sabha is only 6.6 percent. It declined in 1989 to 5.3 percent. The situation compelled women's organisations to agitate for the 30 percent reservation in the state legislatures and in parliament. This is also due to the reason that support from 40 the political parties are not encouraging. Not only in the 65 parliament, even in the central cabinet, are very few positions held by women. Mrs. Gandhi's cabinet only one woman, other than her, was a cabinet minister during the entire period of her leadership.

The absence of women in adequate numbers in the cabinet is a reflection of the strength of women members in the parliament. In spite of limited membership of women in parliament, they have duly participated in its proceedings. J.K. Chopra's Study makes clear that in the four decades during 1952-1989, women parliamentarians introduced in all about 150 bills. Out of these 110 were introduced in the Lok Sabha and 40 bills in the Hajya Sabha. In the Seventh Lok Sabha, the maximum number of bills introduced by women were 35. And in the Fourth Lok Sabha, women introduced only two bills. It is to be noted that women introduced bills specifically concerning women. General issues were not taken 42 up by them, at the bills' introduction stage. The prominent women, who took initiative in introducing the bills in parliament include Raj Kumari AmrithaKour, SuchetraKripalini, Durga Bai, Deshmukh, RenuChakravarthi, Indira Gandhi, Parvathi Krishnan, Rukmini Devi Arundale, Tarakeswari Sinha, Suseela Nayyar, Sarojini Mahishi, Nandini Satpathy, Margaret Alva, Geeta Mukherji, Pramila Dandavathy, Sheila Kaul, NazmaHeptulla and MohishiniKidway. The women who introduced the bills, belong to the upper strata of the society.

Women Representation

They had political affiliations of their families or association with the national movement. Even the younger generations started showing keen 44 interest in politics. During I and II Lok Sabhas, women raised in the Lok Sabha issues mostly connected with the partition of the country. During that period, women who were dynamic and keen participants in discussion were AmrithaKour, Durgabai, Deshmukh, SuchetraKripalini and Farvathi Krishnan. In the III LOJJ Sabha, women from South and West Bengal were more active. In the IV Lok Sabha, participation of women was very difficult due to problems of strength of the majority party. In the V Lok Sabha, national emergency had become a setback to women candidates - Again popularity of women legislators gained in the VII Lok Sabha and 45 they have contributed considerably in discussions. Women were under represented in the Upper House and Key positions were rarely held by them. In each decade, a marginal number of key positions were occupied by women. After a long gap, it is Jayalalitha, who is holding an important position at the state level, i.e., Chief Ministership in Tamil Nadu. Due to her initiative and charismatic leadership, she continues to hold the position. That is why, towards women's development, their voice is to be 46 introduced in the larger decision-making process. 67 Women's representation in the state legislatures in India emerged from 1935 onwards') By 1940 there were 80 women members in / mt-7 the state and provincial legislatures. Dr. Muthu Lakshrol Reddy was identified as the first woman to secure nomination to Madras Legislative Assembly. Kamala Devi Chotopadhyaya contested for the Madras Legislature but lost. Ammanna Raja was elected as Deputy Speaker in the Madras Legislative Assembly. She held the position with high dignity and proved her capabilities and subsequently got elected to Rajya Sabha after independence. In 1946 Rukmini Lakshmiipathi became not only a member of the legislature but was also inducted as minister in the Prakasham Ministry. After



independence, women like Nandini Satpathy in Orissa; Suseela Gopalan and Gouri in Kerala; Jayalalitha in Tamil Nadu; RodaMisthi, Sarojini Pulla Reddy, Sada Laxmi in Andhra Pradesh; Yasoda Devi, Kamala Beniwall, Girija Vyas and Sumitra Singh in Rajasthan emerged as powerful women in their respective 49 legislative assemblies. They proved their abilities and among them Jayalalitha, Suchitra Kripalini and Nandini Satpathy could handle the highest power and authority of Chief Ministership at the state level.

The above are some of the examples to suggest that eminent women have been present in state legislatures. Women can contest and participate if 30 percent of reservation policy is properly implemented. In India women dominate the election scenario, but disappear after elections. Women generally participate in election adopting certain campaign techniques. In the elections for parliament and state assemblies, women mainly carry-on propaganda through door-to-door campaign. Election rallies are also attended by them. In India, there are some charismatic women leaders. Indira Gandhi and Jaya Lalitha are the best examples in this context. In four parliamentary elections and assembly elections since her entry into politics, Indira Gandhi was leading the election campaign. She used to attract the Indian masses in the public meetings. Her charisma and economic programs secured for the Congress 51.3% votes and 441 seats in 1971 elections. In the general elections of 1967, the Congress party lost elections in nearly half of the states and returned to parliament with a simple majority. To overcome the political situation, she tried to manage the crisis by the slogan "GaribiHatao". She tried to delink the elections to the parliament from those of the state assemblies. In 1971, she had become India's only national personality by calling the first midterm parliamentary elections before the full five years of the Lok Sabha had been completed and 1971 elections were conducted in the name of plebiscite about the single issue of who should be the leader. The state assembly 52 elections in 1972 provided similar opportunities. It was a success for the crisis management of Indira Gandhi. In 1977, Indira Gandhi had to face the surprise defeat but for her emergency 69 excesses. She had utilised the media in 1980 and campaign process became centralised. Usually, electoral campaign in India have been highly personalised affairs. During the elections, she toured extensively on the road and gained 351 seats to Congress in 1980, securing absolute majority in the parliament. It was considered as a Second Indira Wave, the first taking place in 1971-72 elections. However, in 1971 and 1977, Indira Gandhi fought the elections adopting socialist oriented programme with the objective of 'GaribiHatao'. She converted the elections and the government from 1971 to 1977 as one woman show.

Conclusions

This study establishes the fact that the evidence on the features and pathways of women's voice, access to decision-making and leadership in formal political spaces and in contesting and redefining the terms of the political settlement. We separate these issues into three sub-themes: 1. Women's role in negotiating peace processes and constitutional reform in post-conflict and transition settings; 2. the trajectories of women's voice and leadership in political parties; and (3) the impact of electoral systems and quotas on women's presence and influence in political life. It is important to stress that the three sub-themes are closely interconnected and interact in complex ways, including in how they shape opportunities for women activists and gender advocates to challenge and redefine the terms of the political settlement. For each sub-theme we reflect on the evidence base in terms of the nature and quality of the evidence, areas of convergence or contestation, and gaps in the literature. The ongoing experiments and experiences thus clearly suggest that periodical training, orientation and sensitization help the emerging women leaders to perform the assigned role much better way. When the women leaders respond to the socio-political challenges in society, they are to be supported by organizations and institutions, which are working for political empowerment of women. Whenever such interventions are made, the achievements of the women leaders are substantial and impressive that strengthens decentralised governance.

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