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A Review Study on Women's Political Participation in India

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ABSTRACT

One of the most important measures of social justice, gender equality, and democratic inclusivity is women's political engagement. Despite progressive laws and constitutional safeguards, women in India still remain underrepresented in political institutions and decision-making processes. This review study examines current literature, policy papers, and empirical research from various eras and areas to analyze the status, trends, drivers, and obstacles of women's political involvement in India. It shows how women's participation has gradually increased, especially at the local level following the adoption of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments, which provided women with reservations in Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies. Millions of women now have the opportunity to participate in local government due to these policies, boosting their profile and enabling more leadership roles in community development. However, representation at higher levels, such as Parliament and state legislatures, remains very low. Women's effective participation continues to be limited by a range of institutional, sociocultural, and economic barriers. Patriarchal norms, gender stereotypes, limited access to resources and education, lack of political training, financial obstacles, safety concerns, and household responsibilities hinder women's entry into and ongoing involvement in politics. Women legislators often face proxy representation, where decision-making is influenced by male family members. Nevertheless, women's movements, urbanization, media exposure, rising literacy rates, and government policies are progressively allowing women to develop independent political identities.

Keywords: *Urbanization, Political, Governance, Democratisation, Social, Institutional.*

INTRODUCTION

A key component of a democratic society is women's political engagement, which reflects the degree to which women are active in governance and decision-making. In India, one of the biggest democracies in the world, women's active involvement in politics is crucial to social justice, gender equality, and inclusive growth. Despite making up about half of the population, women have historically had little participation in political organizations and leadership roles because of ingrained institutional, sociocultural, and economic hurdles. Men and women have been granted equal political rights, including the ability to vote and run for office, under the Indian Constitution since the country's independence. To increase women's involvement in governance, a number of legal and policy approaches have been proposed over time. A major turning point in grassroots democratisation was the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments (1992–1993), which required reservations for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies. Millions of women have been able to enter public life and participate to local administration and community development because to these measures, especially those from underprivileged and rural backgrounds.



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Despite these successes, women's representation in state legislatures and Parliament remains relatively low. Their effective participation, however, is still hindered by various issues such as gender discrimination, patriarchal social norms, limited access to financial and educational resources, lack of political training, safety concerns, and the pressures of both personal and professional responsibilities. Insufficient support, few opportunities for leadership roles, and tokenistic inclusion are some of the structural challenges female leaders often face within political parties.

At the same time, women's political consciousness and activism have grown as a result of shifting socioeconomic situations, increasing literacy rates, urbanization, media exposure, and the expansion of women's movements. Women's participation in political processes, both as voters and as candidates, has been further encouraged by the achievements of well-known female leaders and the growth of self-help groups, civil society organizations, and advocacy networks. The goal of this review study is to analyze the corpus of research on women's political engagement in India, with an emphasis on its trends, causes, obstacles, and results at various levels of government. The review attempts to pinpoint knowledge gaps and emphasize the elements that support or impede women's successful participation in politics by combining the results of earlier research. Designing actions and policies that support gender-inclusive governance and fortify India's democratic institutions requires an understanding of these processes.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Sambalaxmi T (2024) In the past several years, there has been a growing awareness of the importance of the participation of tribal women in local administration, which has become a significant problem. Throughout the course of history, these women have been subjected to a variety of types of marginalization and discrimination, which have significantly impeded their ability to fully participate in the decision-making process. In response to the increased emphasis placed on women's rights and gender equality, there have been efforts made to improve the role that indigenous women play in the governance of their communities. These individuals' participation guarantees that their opinions are taken into consideration during the formulation and execution of policies, as well as that their voices are heard. As an additional benefit, the engagement of tribal women encourages increased accountability, openness, and responsiveness to the requirements of groups that are previously marginalized. Women from tribal communities frequently confront severe social, cultural, and economic restrictions that restrict their ability to participate in local governance, notwithstanding the progress that has been made. Examples of these obstacles include insufficient educational opportunities, restricted access to resources, restrictive cultural norms, and discrimination based on gender and ethnicity. As a consequence of this, tribal women are usually excluded from decision-making processes, which leads to their viewpoints being underrepresented in the outcomes of policy decisions. Increasing the number of indigenous women who are involved in the governance of their communities has been the focus of recent initiatives. In spite of this, gaining equal representation for women who belong to tribal communities continues to be a difficult objective, which is the main focus of this study.

Karia Dhruvi (2024) In our modern day, we defend the concepts of equality and justice as fundamental characteristics. In spite of this, there has been a disproportionate amount of progress made in terms of the representation of women in politics around the world. When it comes to entering political arenas, women continue to face tremendous obstacles, regardless of whether they are in the peaceful nooks of rural areas



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or in urban areas. The bustling streets of metropolitan areas or the communities nearby. The persistence of discriminatory laws, cultural norms, and structural biases all work together to make it more difficult for women to realize their full potential as leaders and agents of change. The United Nations Women's Organization estimates that it will take 130 years to establish gender equality in the highest positions of power if things stay as they are as they are. Starting from the time of the colonial era, women have been actively participating in politics, both with and without the right to vote. In spite of the fact that they have been active in both supporting and opposing the revolution by their words, actions, and labor, it is alarming that they are underrepresented in the political landscape of today. Consequently, the purpose of this study is to analyze women's political leadership in both the lower and upper houses of parliament, as well as the percentage of women voters across the country and women's political awareness. This will be accomplished through the utilization of qualitative research methodology.

Dulhunty Annabel (2024) In spite of the fact that a substantial amount of research has been conducted to investigate the effects of self-help groups (SHGs) on women, insufficient attention has been devoted to the intricate relationship that exists between SHGs and politics, which extends beyond the concept of political "awareness." This study, which is based on qualitative research conducted on the ground in West Bengal, demonstrates that the relationship between politics and self-help groups (SHGs) is extremely complicated. This is due to the fact that political activity in SHGs can lead to conflict and division among communities, but it also has the potential to offer women opportunities that are not available anywhere else. This article makes the argument that politics is essential to comprehending the functioning of self-help groups (SHGs), specifically the manner in which political exclusion through SHGs contributes to the escalation of ostracism and conflict within communities. It does so by drawing on theories of social exclusion and feminist literature on the public/private binary relationship.

Babu Swati Sinha (2024) Achieving gender equality and fostering women's empowerment is the focus of Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Concerns pertaining to the social, economic, and political empowerment of women are essential to each of the 17 goals, given that women make up fifty percent of the total population. The government of the The Self-Help Group (SHG) model was first established by India in its Ninth Five Year Plan (1997–2002) as a major strategy for the empowerment of women. Since that time, the SHG model has developed into one of the most extensive and rapidly expanding microfinance programs in the emerging globe of developing countries. The purpose of this study is to investigate the operation of self-help groups (SHGs) as well as the perceptions of SHG group members regarding their empowerment in terms of education, economics, social issues, and political issues. The research was conducted in Surulia village, which is located in the Purulia District of West Bengal. One hundred members of the SHG participated in the study. Eighty-two percent of respondents agreed that their reading and writing skills had improved as a result of their participation in the SHGs. Ninety percent of women agreed that their family income had increased as a result of their participation in the SHGs, and forty-six percent of women reported that they had become more knowledgeable about women's rights regarding property. These women's political empowerment has not significantly improved as a result of their participation in SHGs, despite the fact that these achievements have been achieved.



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Miah Nur Alam (2024) If women are left behind, a nation will not be able to move forward toward its goals. Swami Vivekananda is the name. When it comes to the political engagement of the people in the country, democratic decentralization plays a critically significant role. Consequently, it affords the opportunity for men and women in a state and in a country to take part in the political system. " The political engagement of men and women from all groups is also crucial for the achievement of democratic decentralization, which is the opposite of what is being discussed here. The women's political participation in the state of West Bengal is the primary topic of discussion in this article. There are a number of reasons why women in this state do not have a high level of political consciousness, and we are aware of this fact. However, with regard to the growth of the state and the nation, their political consciousness is absolutely necessary. In this paper, I investigate a number of factors that contribute to the low level of concern that women have for their participation in political processes, as well as some potential solutions, particularly with regard to the state of West Bengal.

Suresh Babu Thummaluru (2023) Assessing women's participation in politics is a necessary first step in having a fruitful discussion about gender equality. Social justice, independence, and feminism are just a few examples of non-traditional political movements in which women have participated throughout history. However, because they are underrepresented in traditional electoral politics, they still confront substantial obstacles to rising to positions of political leadership. Several factors contribute to the low level of engagement, including the criminalization of politics, cultural and patriarchal limits, financial challenges, the high cost of entering electoral politics, and the negative social esteem associated with female political activity. It is essential to consider the socio-cultural context while discussing women's political participation. Prior to 1991, the emphasis was on women's development; however, with the advent of economic liberalization and meritocracy, the emphasis moved to women's empowerment. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act was pivotal in the fight for gender equality at the grassroots level. When it comes to advancing women's political equality, NGOs and feminist groups must keep working together. Legislative safeguards are insufficient; advocacy organizations and citizens alike should do more to assist women in developing the political savvy and social capital necessary to win elections. There has been a lack of public support for women's empowerment efforts, even as economic liberalization has paved the way for more women to hold positions of authority. Allocating reserved seats can be a first step in increasing the representation of women in parliament. However, in order for more people to get involved in politics, the state and society must collaborate to eliminate social and psychological barriers.

CONCLUSION

Considerable progress has been made in increasing women's participation in democratic processes, especially at the grassroots level, according to a study of the literature on women's political participation in India. Millions of women have been allowed to enter historically male-dominated political spheres thanks to constitutional provisions, legal protections, and policy efforts, most notably the reservation of seats for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies. This has strengthened local participatory democracy, increased awareness of social welfare issues, and increased visibility of women in governance. The assessment also shows that women are still disproportionately underrepresented in higher levels of political decision-making, such as state legislatures and Parliament. Women's admission



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and success in mainstream politics are nevertheless hampered by structural barriers within political parties, budgetary limitations, restricted access to leadership training and education, and enduring patriarchal standards. Women representatives frequently deal with issues like lack of autonomy, proxy participation, discrimination based on gender, and the difficulty of juggling public and domestic duties.

Women's political participation is significantly shaped by sociocultural influences. Active engagement is frequently discouraged by social attitudes regarding women leaders, mobility limitations, safety concerns, and traditional gender roles. The review also identifies positive trends that have improved political awareness and confidence among women in various parts of the nation, such as increased literacy rates, economic empowerment, media exposure, and the growing influence of women's movements and civil society organizations. The results imply that merely increasing numerical representation is not enough for effective involvement; institutional support, capacity training, and a supportive atmosphere that gives women actual decision-making power are all necessary. Meaningful inclusion requires strengthening women's leadership abilities, offering financial and logistical support, guaranteeing internal democracy inside political parties, and advocating for gender-sensitive legislation.

In conclusion, women's political participation in India has changed from being marginal to increasing, but there are still significant obstacles in the way of attaining gender parity and meaningful empowerment. To guarantee that women may completely and successfully engage in governance, a comprehensive strategy incorporating legal reforms, educational development, socioeconomic empowerment, and attitude change is required. In addition to being a question of equality, increasing women's participation in politics is essential for inclusive development, responsive policymaking, and the strengthening of democratic principles in India. The analysis comes to the conclusion that there are still large disparities in attaining gender parity in political representation and influence, despite notable advancements, particularly at the municipal level. Comprehensive strategies, such as capacity building, institutional and financial assistance, gender-sensitive legislation, leadership development, and societal attitude change, are needed to increase women's political engagement. Increasing women's active participation in governance is crucial for India's democratic institutions, responsive policies, and inclusive growth.

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