

Women's Reservation - The Perspective

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Abstract

The debate entering women's reservation in parliament and state's legislatures has been supported by almost all female Parliamentarians, monists and activists, but the perception of inferiority, which frustrated women's reservation in decision-making structures during as struggle for freedom dominates some feminist writers and leaders. The negative perceptions are grounded on several objective factors characterizing the political practices, prevalent political as well as the legacy with which the national struggle for freedom was closely linked up. In the early 20th century, with the entering the world capitalist order into a severe imperialist inner contradiction there arose need for social and cultural changes for carrying forward a new socio-economic order suited to the rule of finance capitalism. Owing to these pressing needs the colonial rulers in India initiated series of legislations amending the law relating to marriage, property, and inheritance right which eliminated some of the barriers restart their status in the families and participation in political activities. Women's participation in socio-cultural activities along with their increasing roles in the national movement shaped the political milieu in which women operated later on.

Keywords: Socio-cultural activities, Women's participation, Shetkari Mahila Aghadi (SMA)

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The today's women's movements and the manners in which they react to their demand for reservation of seats in India's legislative structures have been influenced by several factors that have come on fore on the wake of modernization. Particularly, under this era of globalization when Indian economy has been linked up with world imperialist economic order, a new political sense, which emphasizes on the individuality of men instead of collective wellbeing, women and their organizations have not been left without being affected by the new political ideology.

When the 81st constitutional amendment Bill was tabled in parliament in 1996 for discussion on the issue pertaining to 33 percent reservation of seats for women in the lower houses of Parliament and State's legislatures, the controversy extended itself to the era of early 20th century where women were mired in the question of caste and communal differences. But the question today has greater complexity than ever before following the condition which has placed women on a distinct place under the developed socio-economic order of today. Even in an era of highly developed technology and it's realized effect on women who have proved their abilities in every walk of life, social, economic and even physical exploitation of women have not come to an end. In the later part of 20th century there have been grown some divergent senses among them for demand for their empowerment, including political empowerment which, however, remained unresolved, to which sequel a just social order remained still beyond their reach. Nevertheless, the opponents of the Bill take the stand based on the pre-independence perception to this question which was concentrated on the inferiority of women and argue that separate reservation of seats for women opens up question like : whether women can be treated as a separate category over and above the socially and educationally backwardness characterizing the Indian society. Many questions related to the validities of women as a separate collective and class distinct from those classified on economic, social and educational backwardness were raised to justify that the reservation categorized on sex basis

was unjustified. Other arguments that came on for were related to the diffusion of interests and multiplicity of identities and entry of elite women in legislative bodies. One Madhu Kishwar has an argument which is distinct on the basis that it opines that as in India men politician who "tries to bad mouth women in public or opposes moves in favour of women's equality is strongly disapproved of. Hence compared to many parts of the world it is relatively easy to get legislation favouring women passed in India." But her perception does not command very much relevance as contended by Menon that bad mouthing women by men politician or other high ups may have been disastrous but in employment, public places, court trial the increasing violence's against women etc. seldom holds that men's gestures have been disapproved. The passing of legislation for reservation has other implications like enhancing power providing finances for schemes, get their support in election etc. and not for fear of social disapproval.

In its opposition there has been given an argument that the posing of a feminist legislation has to be located in the context of the compulsion of the ruling elites in order to understand the complex dynamics involved. For Keshwar the exclusion of women in Indian democracy is a Gandhian heritage which abnegates power as an appropriate area for women to contend for. Such a view may have been an element of truth but the idealization of the Indian women never corroborates with the social practices entering women's subordination, and the atrocities against women have increased commendably beyond imagination with scant remedies from the Instruments of state to match that mythical idealization. Keshwar and the Shetkari Mahila Aghadi (SMA) have opposed the Bill on the ground that it will induct female relatives of those in power beti brigade', SMA in an open letter to MPs opposed the Bill remarked that the initiatives to legislate the women's reservation had come from the creamy layer females who wanted to Parliament and legislative chambers of states in easy way. In arguments SMA cited the example of reservation of seats for w in Panchayati Raj institutions where female relatives of the male les occupied most of the seats reserved for women. It suggested modification in election procedure by introducing three seats constituencies what each voters having three votes of which one was to go to women.

Some of the groups support quota for OBC and Muslim women within the quota, but the leftist parties and organizations generally insist on the passing of the Bill as it has been placed before the parliament. But in their consciences once the Bill is endorsed as it is the quota for OBC and Muslim women or for any other demand for reservation within the 33 percent seats fixed for women, can be considered later on. However, there are some Muslim feminist organizations which believe that the quota of OBC and Muslim women will apparently divide females into OBC and Muslims, into a category which will segregate the Muslim women from the mainstream. This view has also been endorsed by some of the women organizations, individuals and parties which support the Bill in its present forms. Philips argues that the basis for recognition to women should be grounded only on basis of races, castes and religions. The Election Commission's proposal that all political parties should mutually agree to bring in election fray one-third women candidate to the entire number of seats each one of them contests. But the very rationality of the Commission's formula received mixed reactions, but the Left Parties denied to abide with this suggestion on the grow that it will only give women tickets to contest and comply with compulsion imposed but not to win the election. What the Central Election Commissioner Gile had proposed was based the practices common in Norway and Sweden where legislation mandatory provision for all political parties to allow 40 seats to who candidate on their electoral list was proposed which was complete by unilateral adoption by political parties to include women.

On another side there is opinion expressed by persons bike who assertively says that though this will not guarantee 33 percent reservation for women but, it will be a real move "towards real empowerment and in a way that will bring about total welfare of society." She pleaded for the introduction of the system of proportional representation, which, obviously, will initiate a new debate on complete overhauling of the entire election procedures followed by India till today, and till then the women's reservation Bill will be cold storage. Mazumdar argues: "without triple representation of women, in education, public employment and political representation, women's position will not change because the thousand years of social exclusion of the SCs has been redeemed by the triple reservation in education, employment and political representation, so it will be for women". To validate her arguments, she has cited various examples from enumerable sources to substantiate the fact that unless reservation for women is made for assuring their due share in political decision-making process, to liberate women from their traditional, social, economic and cultural seclusion will be a dream, to be never realized at all.

In the Constitution of India provisions for different types of reservation including seats reservation for Lok Sabha and State's Assemblies for scheduled castes and Scheduled Tribes, were made by the constitutional provision but

the same was never recognized for women. Rather all attempts done in this direction were discouraged under the arguments that development policies and their implementations would uplift the women status even to the extent of their active and sizeable participation in elected democratic institutions right from Lok Sabha to Panchayati Raj institution along with their liberation from social seclusion. Moreover, the experiences of more than five decades of India's independence are evidences that no appreciable scores have been made despite several launch pad for redressal of women's socio-economic constraints were floated and some successes have also been made in ameliorating certain difficulties specifically related to their day-to-day lives, but the sector that remained most neglected was their representation in elected democratic institutions. Political parties, irrespective of their ideologies, have their own women's wings and various declare programmes and agenda for boosting women politically, soc and economically but all of their commitments and solemn regarding their confessions, particularly their commitments to be women adequately in election fray by setting them as their da candidates have remained unfulfilled, as they are utterly miser preferring them as candidates for contesting elections. Neither he they occasioned women even they are not inferior to their counterparts, to be elected or nominated to the party's higher po constituted for decision-making.

The most surprising is the fact that even then that women in the several decades have amply demonstrated their abilities as independent voters, active campaigners as political activists' wise decision makers in selection of candidates and awarded decision- preferences, they have been denied political representation in proportion to their voting in elections either for State Assemblies or parliament.

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