



Nature of women political participation in India and European union

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Abstract

This paper examines the nature of the Women political participation in India and European Union using various indicators like Democracy, Women political participation, and equality. Globally women's political participation is behind the men. The beginning of the twentieth century observed transformations in nearly every phase of the daily activities of women, from the household to the public spheres. The emergence of the women's associations to protests for equal freedom and rights, and to increase of female specialists changes the old patriarchal societal across the world. The status of the Women's India has seen many ups and downs since the ancient times. The women are neglected at family, community and societal levels and living as an oppressed class. In the post independent India the status of women regained its strength and participating in almost all types of economic activities, voting better governance and also in active politics. In European Union, Gender equality since the inclusion of Article 119 on equal pay in the Treaty of Rome 1957 has been as issue in the EU but has since widened to the recognition of equality between women and men as a fundamental principle of democracy for the whole European Union. In European Union gender equality is present both in gender specific policies, such as women's participation in the labour market, sexual harassment and reconciliation of work and family, as well as informing the basic principles and functioning of the EU institutions.

Keywords: political participation, gender equality, women political participation in India, European union

Introduction

Indian democracy was a largest democracy in the global world. It implies equality for all human being, irrespective of gender, caste, religions etc. Democracy is a political system based on representative government, people participation in the political process, freedoms for citizens, transparency of political acts and process in general. Democracy encourages to people to take part in electing people representations in the country. Election affords the people the opportunity to express themselves by electing their representatives. The political participation is another notion of the democracy. Political participation can loosely define as citizens activities affecting politics. "According to Greek politicians and Scholar Pericles stressed the unique character of democracy by emphasizing the role of ordinary citizens in political affairs"^[1].

Political Participation

Political participation "affords citizens in a democracy an opportunity to communicate information to government officials about their concerns and preferences to put pressure on them to respond"^[2]. It means people have right to choose the democratic government and right to express their views and attitudes towards almost everything happening in the public sphere. Political participation "derives from the freedom to speak out, assemble and associate; the ability to take part in the conduct of public affairs; and the opportunity to register as a candidate, to campaign, to be elected and to hold office at all levels of government. Under international standards, men and women have an equal right to participate fully in all aspects of the political process. In practical context, however, it is often harder for women to exercise this right. In

post-conflict countries there are frequently extra barriers to women's participation, and special care is required to ensure their rights are respected in this regard". Political participation its includes following types^[3];

- Voting;
- Working in and contributing to electoral campaigns and organizations;
- Contacting government officials;
- Attending protests, marches, or demonstration;
- Working informally with the others to solve some community problem;
- Serving without pay on local elected and appointed boards'
- Being active politically through the intermediation of voluntary associations;
- Contributing money to people causes in response to mail solicitations;

As we see there is a clear structure of political activities undertaken by citizens in the India. Through the political participation, people have to voting in the easiest way to participate in political life.

Women political participation in India

Women's leadership and effective participation in India is increasingly on the development agenda of government, bilateral and multilateral agencies, and non-governmental organizations, including Women's rights groups. According to United Nation development programme supports "gender responsiveness of political institutions and facilities women's access to opportunities and skills to exercise their political

rights, participate in decision-making. Exercise leadership, and contribute to development process” [4]. UNDP does by [5]

- Promoting women’s participation as voters and candidates in electoral process through training of women candidates, awareness campaigns and promoting gender parity in electoral management bodies;
- Promoting the use of temporary special measures, including gender quotas;
- Facilitating the inclusion of women and women’s organized and networks in constitution-making process, and helping to address gender discriminatory clauses in constitutions;
- Supporting women’s coalitions in political parties and representative bodies;
- Encouraging political parties to remove all barriers to the participation of women develop their capacity to analyses issues from a gender perspective and adopt policies and or quotas to promote women’s participation at all levels of decision-making;
- Promoting coalition building and networking among women representatives and decision making;
- Supporting gender mainstreaming in parliament’s through induction training for Member of Parliament (MP) on gender issues, mainstreaming gender impact reviews into parliamentary committee work, gender analysis of proposed laws, gender –sensitive budgeting, support for cross-party women’s caucuses, and women’s mentoring programme.

Women political participation has been considered a major measure of Women’s empowerment. Globally, through histories of the world we have records of very few regents, sovereigns, and active agents in nobility who were women. “Liberalism thinker John Stuart Mill had advocated women’s participation in governance by the struggle for women suffrage in the self-avowed liberal west very well illustrates the entrenched nature of patriarchal resistance to Women’s empowerment” [6].

The participation of women in political sphere is integral to empowerment of women and to build a gender equality in society as well as to speed up the process of national development, Women’s political empowerment is premised on three fundamental and non-negotiable principles.

- The equality between the men and Women;
- To development of potentials women’s rights;
- Self-determination and self-representation of the Women’s rights

As per the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendment act in 1991 to provisional for 33 present reserved seats in Gram panchyath in our country came to being. In the starting of the women participation is very less but still the situation was changing more number women are participated in the elections. “The average of women representation in panchyath raj across the country is 36.54 percent [7]. However, a few states have gone beyond the mandated 33 percent and provided more reservation for women

Women in India compare to Loka Sabha, Panchyath raj institutions representations much better. As per the Ministry of Panchyath Rrj, in 2008 “the Gram Panchyath had 37.8 percent

women members, the intermediate Panchyath 37 percent women members. The total representation of women in all three tires of the Pacnyath amounted to 36.87 percent. This seems to be result of Article 243 D of the India Constitution, mandating at least 1/3rd of the seats in all tires of the Panchyat. A further amendment to the Article was proposed in 2009, increasing 50 percent but was not passed” [8].

Women have, however, not found adequate representation in the Lok Sabha.” The percentage of the elected women in Loka Sabha only 4.4 percent in 1952, in 2014 Loka Sabha election 11.41 percent women are elected. The Rajya Sabha does not fare much better, with 29 women members comprising 11.9% of the total membership in 2014. Both national and regional parties are following the policy of exclusion of women in allotting seats. The reasons for not giving tickets to women candidates at the national and state level are based on the perception that they lack the win ability factor” [9].

According to India Economic survey report 2018, says “that more representation of women in decision making process in the country, their political participation has been low despite them accounting for 49 percent of the population. The survey for 2017-18 in parliament said factors such as domestic responsibilities, prevailing cultural attitudes regarding roles of women in society and lack of support from family were among main reasons that prevented them from entering politics. In a country like India with around 49 percent of women in the population, the political participation of women has been low it noted. The survey said there are developing countries like Rwanda which has more than 60 percent women representative in parliament in 2017” [10].

Women political participation in European union

The European Union firmly supports gender equality and empowerment of Women World Wide working towards the removal of the obstacles as legislation, social norms and gender stereotypes to ensure that we give voice and participation to increase girls’ and women agency in social, economic, political and civil life,

Gender equality in all areas of life is a “fundamental right and value of the European Union enshrined in policy since the Treaty of Rome in 1956. Yet more than fifty years on, there remains a persistent under representation of women in politics across Europe. With the 2009 European elections looming it is time to raise awareness of this democratic deficit and take action to promote change.

On October 2015 the EU adopted the Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment: Transforming live of Girls and Women through EU external relations. This renewed gender action plan focuses on taking action and transforming lives through four essential areas [11].

- Ensuring girls and women’s physical and psychological integrity;
- Promoting the economic and social rights/empowerment of girls and women;
- Strengthening girl’s and women’s voice and participation
- Shifting the European Commission services and the European External Action Services institutional culture to more effectively deliver on EU commitments

Political participation in European politics is one of the key

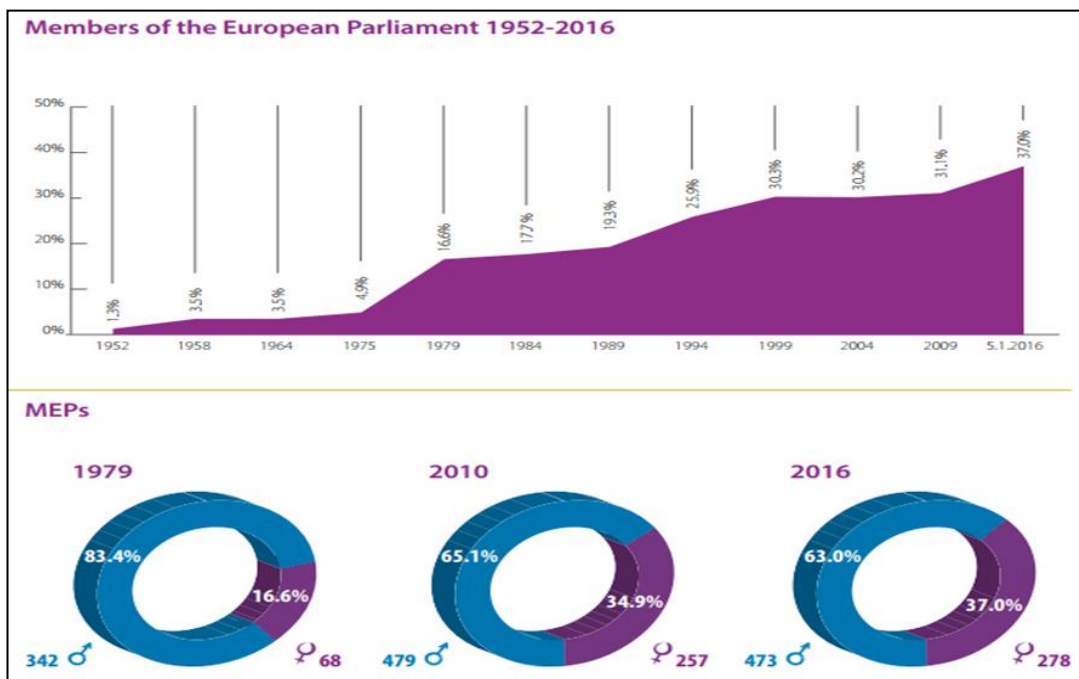
points as “the representative democracies of nation states are said to transform into participatory democracies at the supranational level through the principle of representation remains as one of the fundamental democratic characteristics. But the thing is that the participation is mainly understood as a process connected with the representative bodies like the European Parliament, the European Council, and the Council of ministers, which are accountable to national parliaments, elected by their citizens” [12]. It was written in the draft of the European Constitution “these mechanisms give every citizen the right to participate in the democratic life of the EU. So the basic point of participation in this sense is voting. Actually, it happens this way because within the EU the nation states so matter because they are more significant, more developed in political sense than the EU as a political structure or system still being under changes- so all the citizen participation actually takes place at the nation-state level, not at the EU-level” [13].

The European commission identified equality in decision making one of the priority areas for action in its 2006 Roadmap for "equality between men and Women" [14]. According to the Road map for equality between men and Women, “the European Commission set out a strategy for accelerate in progress towards gender equality within the European Union and noted that a European parliament has been an important partner in progress of Women participation. Within the European parliament, it is certainly true that the representation of women has increased significantly from a little below 17 percent at the time of the first direct elections in 1979 [15].

Moreover, progress has not been steady but concentrated in

two major steps forward at the elections of 1994, when the proportion of women members of the European parliament increased around 20 percent to 26 percent, and again in 1999 this was increased 30 percent” [16]. The extent of female Member of European Parliament’s towards the “end of the seventh parliamentary term remains at 35.8 percent, which is higher than it was in 20103. More prominent representation of ladies in the European Parliament expands the level of law based representation of women in the European parliament expands the level of law based representation of EU nations and helps Parliament to accomplish gender mainstreaming all the more adequately, whether in the connection of EU related enactment also, approaches all in all or inside of its own inner structure and bodies, including Secretariat” [17].

As well as the increased percentage of women elected to the European Parliament, there have been changes regarding the number of women in decision-making posts in the eighth parliamentary term compared with the seventh. “The number of women Vice Presidents has risen from three in the 2009 parliamentary election and presently out of 14 vice presidents five are women Vice Presidents” [18]. The percentage of women in the European Parliament increased once more in 2016 elections. European member countries like “Malta, Finland, Ireland and Croatia have more women member of the European parliaments than male member of the European parliament. The number for Austria, Estonia, Latvia, Sweden, are exactly equal. The EU member states, the percentage of women in the European Parliament in now higher than in the national parliaments, with the exceptions of Germany, Belgium, Denmark, Portugal, Poland, Lithuania and Cyprus” [19].



Sources: European Parliament Statics

Fig 1

Conclusion

This paper has sought to illuminate the nature and extent of Women’s political participation in India and European Union.

It was focusing both on parliamentary politics and Women empowerment through the political representation. The extension of Women formal political representation positions

is one of most glaring government issues in the last century. In spite of the fact that women gained consistent political ground, considerable national level variety exists in example of development and change. The political participation was correlation between the political system and level of women participation on political life. The most important this is what the institutional design is, whether it is originally democratic, being under reformation or democracy like a decoration for authoritarian system. The Indian model of the democracy is strong and but less political participation, but European Union have gave representation to women and also more importance to gender equality.

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