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Political Participation Of Women In India: With Special Reference To Madhya Pradesh

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Abstract:

Women are God's greatest gift to humanity. They are the power of creation. Today, women empowerment has gained importance on the global front. Women's empowerment is a worldwide issue, and discussions on women's political rights are at forefront of many formal and informal campaigns worldwide. For centuries, women were not treated equal to men in many ways, they were not allowed to own property, they did not have a share in the property of their parents, they had no voting rights, and they had no freedom to choose their work or job and so on. As now the women have come out of there dark days of oppression, there is need for strong movement to fight for the rights of women and to ensure that they got all the rights which men have or in other words a movement for the "Empowerment of Women". The present study examines the role and status of women in politics of Madhya Pradesh and their growing status with special focus of identifying the causes responsible for their marginal representation in the state politics.

Keywords: Women, Independence, politics, voting, participation.

Introduction

India is a complex country. We have, through centuries, developed various types of customs, traditions and practices. These customs and traditions, good as well as bad, have become a part of our society's collective consciousness. We worship female goddesses; we also give great importance to our mothers, daughters, sisters, wives and other female relatives or friends. But at the same time, Indians are also famous for treating their women badly both inside and outside their homes. Indian society consists of people belonging to almost all kinds of religious beliefs. In every religion women

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are given a special place and every religion teaches us to treat women with respect and dignity. During ancient period women held a high place of respect in the society, as mentioned in Rig-Veda and other scriptures. The Vedic era was the golden era so far as equilibrium of status and freedom between men and women, with rights of knowledge and freedom to marry is concerned. The Rig-Vedic women played significant role in family, society and even in political life. The position of women especially registered as gradual decline after the advent of Muslim rule in India.

The roots of the women's participation in politics can be traced back to the 19th century reform movement. This movement emerged as a result of conflict between the Indian bourgeoisies, trying to wrest control from the British. This class made attempts to reform it, mainly by campaigning against caste, polytheism, idolatry, animism, Purdah, child marriage and sati etc. Male social reforms who took up issues concerning women and started women's organization from the end of 19th century, first at the local and then at national level. In the years before independence the two main issues they took up were political rights and reform of personal laws. Women participation in the freedom struggle broadened the base of women's empowerment.

Independence inaugurated a new chapter in this history of the struggle for improving the status of Indian women. The Constitution of India juridically negated the premise of equality of women which lay at the heart of the Indian social system. The Constitution proclaimed the equal status of woman with man in every aspect. Provisions and initiatives were made in the Indian Constitution to provide equal rights and opportunities of socio-political development ad betterment of living for men and women; the Constitution also guarantees freedom to speech, personnel liberty to participate in every kind of welfare, social, economic and political activities to all Indian citizens.

Political Participation of Women in Madhya Pradesh

Madhya Pradesh (MP) is the Centre of India's Hindi heartland and yet its society and politics are decidedly different from the rest of India especially from the Hindi-speaking northern-states. Its vast expanses, its past and social makeup, which are indeed distinct, make its politics unique. If one has a general understanding of Indian politics as a whole, he or she may fail miserably to grasp the nuances of the politics of the state.

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The cooperation of women in legislative issues isn't another wonder. In antiquated circumstances amid early Vedic period women could move toward becoming individuals from Sabha and Samiti. However her position declined impressively in the later stage of Vedic age as she was not just denied the political rights yet was bound within the four dividers of the house. She confronted numerous imbalances also even was respected substandard compared to men. Madhya Pradesh has a long history of women rulers since 16th century. These include Rani Durgavati who ruled on the principality of Gondwana with its center at present day Jabalpur, Rani Ahilya Bai Holkar, who ruled over the Maratha portion of Malwa with its center at Indore and the four Begums of Bhopal who ruled over the second largest princely state in the country for over a century. The people liked them and considered them just or at least this is how they are depicted in the current extent folklore. All had the grasp over the administration. All were rather strong willed women who could overcome various palace intrigues and opposition from male kin and kith. All have been part of the folklore of the state and remembered in positive ways. Endeavors were made to enhance women's condition in the19th century by numerous social reformers and a slow change was seen thereafter. Numerous women took an interest in the battle for self-government too. However their interest stayed less in number.

After independence, women's participation in politics has increased and improved in the state of Madhya Pradesh. But, the impact is more visible in voting than in other political activities. Elections to the state legislative assembly were first held in 1951 when Madhya Pradesh became a Part 'c' of the Indian union. After the re-organization of the state in 1956, next election in assembly was held in 1957 and elections have been held at regular intervals in 1962, 1967, 1972, 1977, 1980, 1985, 1990, 1993, 1998, 2003, 2008, 2013 and 2018. Till date, 15 elections have been held in Madhya Pradesh.

After a long struggle the women might have got success at some fronts, but they are inadequate. Fortunately women are making best use of the opportunities they have got and are trying to remove the historical disparity they have faced.

Participation of Women in voting of Assembly Elections in Madhya Pradesh from (1951-2018)

The citizens of the democratic country have to right to participate in governing that country by means of voting. In a democracy, voting determines the sovereign will of the people. Participation of voters

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at the time of election indicates their involvement in the political process. More specifically, in the study of gender bias in political participation by analyzing women voter turnout in assembly of Madhya Pradesh, it was found out that there is a steady and sharp decline in the gender bias in voting over time. Today, in Madhya Pradesh women are increasingly engaging with politics as active political actors. Women in Madhya Pradesh are now voting in equal with men. Further, in the state elections which are held in 2013 and 2018, women voters are increased and witnessed a stark change in male and female voter turnout.

Women voters in State Assembly elections of Madhya Pradesh (1951-2018)

S.No	Year	Total no of women voters	No of women voters who cast their vote	Women percentage
01	1951	N.A	N.A	N.A
02	1957	N.A	N.A	N.A
03	1962	7859676	2284835	29.07
04	1967	9173832	3834399	41.80
05	1972	10368391	4600697	44.37
06	1977	11440339	4944937	43.22
07	1980	12579476	495533	39.39
08	1985	14351604	5941032	41.40
09	1990	18215748	8520649	46.78
10	1993	19482669	10199039	52.35
11	1998	21620554	11573313	53.53
12	2003	18139480	11271686	62.14
13	2008	17130236	11290419	65.91
14	2013	22064402	15465338	70.09
15	2018	24131467	17860401	74.01

Source: Election Commission of India

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Table indicates that the turnout of women as voters has increased very impressively and is like a silent revolution that has occurred over time. The above table shows that from the first general assembly lection, women's participation by way of voting has been growing but not steadily. It has shown that there was a constant rise from 29.07 percent in 1962 to 41.80 percent in 1967. In the following elections the women's percentage of voting kept on fluctuating. But it declined to 44.37 percent to 39.39 percent in 1980 and 41.40 percent in 1985. Women voting percentage increased in 1993, 1998, 2003 and 2008 respectively. In 2013 and 2018, there was a greater turnout of women votes' i.e., 70.09 and 74.01 percent but it remained lower in comparison to the male voting percentage (73.86 percent).

Participation of women in General Assembly Elections of Madhya Pradesh From 1951to 2018

S.No	Year	Contested women	Elected women
01	1951	N.A	02
02	1957	36	15
03	1962	40	15
04	1967	17	10
05	1972	30	0
06	1977	48	10
07	1980	50	18
08	1985	75	31
09	1990	153	11
10	1993	153	12
11	1998	181	26
12	2003	199	19
13	2008	226	25
14	2013	200	28
15	2018	250	21

Source: Election Commission of India.

The above table gives us an account of women participation in the Assembly Elections in Madhya Pradesh from 1951 to 2018. The number of participated women in General Assembly in Madhya Pradesh has changed from time to time. The lowest numbers of women in Assembly elections are seen in 1967, 1977, 1990 and 1993 while as the highest numbers of women are seen in 1985, 1998, 2008, 2013 and 2018. However, in every election except 1972, there were some elected women in assembly election in Madhya Pradesh. The table also

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depicts that number of women in assembly elections in Madhya Pradesh was always a matter of concern.

Political Participation of women from Madhya Pradesh in Lok Sabha Elections from (1951-2019)

In every Lok Sabha elections there were some women members from the State of Madhya Pradesh who contested from different parliament constituencies of the state. Only few of them were elected as the MP's from the state during this period.

S.No	Year	No. of seats	Women contestants	Elected women
01	1951	--	---	---
02	1957	27	08	03
03	1962	36	08	07
04	1967	37	12	04
05	1971	37	03	03
06	1977	40	01	---
07	1980	40	08	03
08	1984	40	10	02
09	1985	---	---	---
10	1989	40	20	03
11	1991	40	39	05
12	1992	---	--	----
13	1996	40	75	05
14	1998	40	28	04
15	1999	40	23	03
16	2004	29	30	02
17	2009	29	29	06
18	2014	29	37	05
19	2019	29	16	04

Source: Election Commission of India

The above table shows the number of women participants in the Lok Sabha election for Madhya Pradesh was always a matter of concern as very low number of women contested in there elections. This biggest number of contested woman was in 1996 Lok Sabha elections and lower number of contested women candidate was during 1977 elections. However, in every election except 1977, there were some elected women MP's from Madhya Pradesh. The largest number of elected woman was during 1962 and 2009 in these two elections 6 women were elected and in 1977 not a single women was elected however, there was only 1 women

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contestant in 1977 Lok Sabha elections from Madhya Pradesh. In 1957, 1962, 1967, 1971, 1989, 1991, 1996, 1998 and 2009 this was the highest number for a women in Madhya Pradesh to become Madhya Pradesh for Lok Sabha. In 2019, there are twenty nine seats in which 16 contested the election and only four women won.

Conclusion

Lastly, there is an urgent need to bridge the gender gap in the state because no society and civilization can move forward without the participation of its half population as well said by Swami Vivekananda, "there is no chance of the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved." Let's hope the state would also see a new era where women play more significant role and state rise new heights where there is no gender biased and male dominance. It is also desired that in the next elections of Lok Sabha and Assembly elections the women of the state are given their due share and blot on the state that it do not believe in empowering women gets washed away. As yet, very few women have ventured into that political space of Madhya Pradesh–and greater educational opportunities than in much of India.

Even though, the empowerment of women became one of the most important concerns of 21st century not only at national level but also at the international level. Government initiatives enough alone would not be to achieve this goal. Society must take initiative to build a climate in which women have full opportunities of self -decision making and participating in political life of the country with a sense of equality.

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