
WOMEN EMPOWERMENT PROCESS IN INDIA: AN OVERVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Women empowerment is a process of advocating women's rights and opportunities in all the sphere of public demine. Else ware spreads its blooms in the label of women ideologies in different perspectives. Women ideological frameworks are incubated by socio-political and economic circumstances of the time of modern age. Women Feminist thinker's belonging to those Western democratic countries, strongly argued the empowerment of women in different aspects of their lives. Further that it is a model of process and phenomenon to enhancing the uplift of a women's, who are to be oppressed in the patriarchal model of social system. They was also influenced by the current ideologies of that times, such are sensitized the relevant societal problems of women. Worldwide the notion of feminist thought and movement incubated by this European spring like movement. Internal political responses, in many countries, somehow shape their feminist thought, ideologies and movement by this enlightenment of European context. Indian social system in the period of colonization, rejuvenate the sociological women's in the context of the western feminist thought. This empowerment journey, leads a social, political, and educational mobilization of a women in the period of freedom movement. Afterwards the Continuous Challenges, critiques and expansions of the feminist thought was rooted in the Indian feminist thought and movement. Major trends of such critique, is that enlightenment of women empowerment, in India is evolved in colonial context. Liberal ideas much advocated the women's rights. In the sphere of Political participation and representation this study critically examines and highlights persistent challenges while emphasizing the need for structural reforms and supportive policies to achieve gender-balanced political participation.

INTRODUCTION

Women's are major forces behind the sociological patterns of a society. They comprise nearly half of the total population. But the social position of women, in the sense of equal status comparatively with men, is to be considered as undermined. Modern societies considered Status of women as a sign of civilization. Participation and representation in all the sphere of public demine is to be discoursed. These considered as a key indicators and essential to build a healthy democratic system. India is a state of democratic country, continuously expands the democratic process, and since in the beginning of independences. It enhances the women empowerment process under the constitutional norms. "The Indian women has established equality with men in all walks of life and will never return to her former status of a painted doll, a child bearing machine or a mere hanger -on" (Mahatma Gandhi). Even in the present Indian social scenario, the situation of women undergoing to be discussed through the women empowerment process. For uplifting the women situations, political rights including participation and representation in law making bodies is helpful. Women participation, legal reforms and developmental aspects discourse to leads the process of enhancing women's participation and representation. Under the inclusiveness of the process of democratization women considered to be underrepresented in political institutions. The patterns of women's political participation and representation in Indian democratic systems, explores the socio-cultural, economic, and institutional

factors influencing their involvement. Analysis shows the need of structural reforms and supportive policies to enhancing women political participation and representation.

India the state of democratic country, continuously expands the democratic process and ideologies, since in the beginning of independence. It enhances the women empowerment process under the constitutional norms. Comprehend legal progressive reforms, developmental plans and programs of empowerment of women. 'Post-independence period marked a significant transformation in the status of Indian women due to state led reforms, expansion of education, and democratic participation' (Neera Desai: 1977, pp.198-205). In additional to this "independent India created institutional mechanisms such as constitutional values of equality and social justices challenged traditional patriarchal structures and expanded women's rights in public and political life"(Vina Mazumdar: 1994,pp 52-57). Thus it means women participation in the sphere of social and public sphere significantly expanded by the constitutional frame work. It will suggested by "independent India's democratic Framework expanded debates on equality, citizenship, and women's autonomy"(Menon,Nivedita:2012,pp.24-30)."Postcolonial constitutional democracy challenged patriarchal social structures and enabled women's rights discourse"(Chakravarti, Uma:2003,pp.11-18). Perhaps It leads two contradictory ideological views that, "The nationalist and postcolonial state reproduced many patriarchal assumptions instead of transforming gender relations fundamentally"(Kumkum Sangari,Sudesh Vaid:1989,pp.1-25). In the period of colonialism in India liberal principles much rooted the feminism. These works strongly checked whether the women empowerment is to be going in progressive manner or seriously arouses the discourse of liberal based principles advocate the right oriented process of women empowerment in post independence scenario.

The liberal principles bounded in the Indian constitution give the foundational framework for empowerment of women in India. 'Liberalism the principle emphasizes equality, liberty, justice, rights and constitutional protection against discrimination and focused on achieving equality through legal reforms, education, and democratic participation'(Tong, Rosemarie:2009). These principles remarkably influenced the framer of Indian constitution, especially in granting equal treatment to women after independence. "Women's movement in India challenged patriarchy, dowry violence, sexual harassment, and unequal political participation" (Kumar, Radha: 1993). Indian feminist thought and movement played a crucial role in shaping debates on gender justice, political participation, social reforms, and legal equality. Together feminist movement and constitutional liberalism created the basis for women's empowerment in modern India. Indian constitution preamble, fundamental Rights, directive Principles of state policy is the key component of liberal democratic ideals. The constitutional provisions equality before law under article 14 prohibits discrimination on grounds of sex under article 15, equal opportunity to all under article 16, protection of life and personal liberty under article 21. All these provisions became the constitutional framework for women empowerment and gender justice in India.

The foundational framework of these constitutional provisions can be traced to liberal political thought. It argues that all individuals possess equal moral worth and should enjoy equal civil and political rights. John Stuart mill criticized the patriarchal social structure and advocated the women's equality. Indian Social reformer and nationalist thinkers influenced by these liberal ideas. Prominent reformers like Raja ram Mohan Roy, Jyothirao Phule, Savithribai Phule, and B. R. Amedkar challenged the women related practices like sati, child marriage, caste oppression, denial of women education, and patriarchal norms. 'These women centric social reform movement prepared the platform for constitutional feminism and cultural nationalism in India. Social reforms offer was offers educational opportunities to the women group it was milestone factor in Indian feminism. It leads feminist movement in India and also gives theoretical frame works. Prominent women centric

transformations lead the women's education. Colonial Indian Social reformers promoted women's education within a framework of domestic femininity and cultural nationalism. Thereafter access a education enhances women political consciousness and eventually contributed to independent women's movement that exceeded the reformers original intentions' (Partha Chatterjee: 1993, pp.116-134).

Among the constitution makers, B.R. Ambedkar gives constitutional status to the women empowerment process. He argues that 'the progress of society could be measured through the progress achieved by women. He urges equal property rights, education, political representation and social dignity for women. Try to introducing the Hindu code bill aimed to provide women rights related to inheritance, divorce and marriage. Initially the bill faced opposition, later it influenced reforms in Hindu personal laws. Recent studies continue to recognize Ambedkar's constitutional contribution to women empowerment processes' (The Times of India: 2026). The independent feminist struggle in India evolved from welfare-oriented approaches to right-based and equality-centered movement. At the time of that feminist movements challenged patriarchy, domestic violence, dowry deaths, sexual harassment, caste oppression, and unequal political representation.

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Indian empowerment process cannot be understood only through constitutional provisions. Women movement and feminist thoughts also played a central role. Feminism in India emerged through multiple phases. Nineteenth century social reform movement considered as a first phase. It was first initiated through male reformer. During that time such social reformers focused on women's education, abolition of sati, widow remarriage, and eradicating child marriage. It enhances women participation in national movement against the colonial rules. This gives public and political space to women in India. Firstly the question is that why these Social reforms started women centric empowerment. ****

After independence, Indian feminist movement evolved from welfare oriented approaches to equality and right-based struggles. Women movements challenged domestic violence, patriarchy, sexual harassment, caste oppression, and unequal political representation. Primarily it focused on achieving equality through legal reforms, extending constitutional rights, and expansions of education opportunities and employment. Liberal feminist advocated that women's oppression could be reduced through equal opportunities within democratic institutions. 'Liberal feminisms emphasis on equal opportunity and legal reforms within existing democratic system but it fails to address the nature of patriarchal structure. Socialist and radical feminist advocate that women's inequality is rooted not only in unequal laws but also in the structure of family, labor, ownership of economic resources and sexuality. Emancipation of women's requires a transformation of socio-material relations (Hartmen, Heidi: 1979).

The independent women's movement of the 1970s and 1980s considered as a major turning point in Indian feminist politics. It extended as gender discrimination issues into national political discourse. Feminist debates concentric on bodily autonomy, state accountability, and women's security in public spaces. Movement also influenced judicial interpretations, legal reforms and political representation in lawmaking institutions.

Feminist movement and constitutional framework together contributed to women's empowerment in political, educational, and economic spheres. 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments provide reservation for women in PRIs. It enhances the women's political participation at grass root levels. Despite the constitutional reforms and feminist movement advocacy, significant challenges remain. Recent feminist scholars point out that, patriarchal norms and structure, caste discriminations, lack of economic resources, unequal wages, underrepresentation in politics, cultural barriers continue to restrain the women empowerment process. Feminist scholars argue that there is a huge gap between constitutional ideals and social realities. The state adopting women empowerment policies that sometimes fail to transform structural inequalities.

CONCLUSION

From the above analysis, the liberal principles became a foundational framework for Indian constitution. These provide the ideological way to the women's empowerment process of India. Constitutional guarantees created opportunities for women's participation in socio-political and economic life. Feminist thought and women movements were equally guided the women empowerment process. Recent feminist movement and thoughts advocate for substantive equality beyond formal constitutional rights. In these contexts women empowerment process not only led by the liberal principles even though it enlarges its newfangled in multidimensional angles. No doubt Feminist activism and constitutional liberalism continue to interact for reshaping the women empowerment process in India. Feminist movement continues to shape the broader process of democratization, social inclusion, and women's empowerment in India.

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