

IMPACT OF DIGITALISATION ON WOMAN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN INDIA

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Abstract:

Feminism has been considered as a movement or ideology demanding the equality in the social, economic and political status of women where women are subordinated in the patriarchal society and the world. To reduce marginalization of women in Indian politics is part of this feminist consciousness. Women has realized to uplift their status in this status-quoist male hierarchies, their political participation is a need. Men usually hold power in all the important institutions in society, fact is that women are deprived of access to such power. With the coming of digital revolution, women has get this opportunity to feel social inclusiveness by actively participation in functioning of Indian political system.

Keywords: Feminism, Women Political participation, Digitalization, Women Empowerment

Introduction:

The classical definitions of political participation denote; “those voluntary activities by which members of a society share in the selection of rules and, directly or indirectly, in the formation of public policy”. Women, who constitute nearly half of the total global population have been denied for too long, equal participation in all areas of life including social, economic and political although there is considerable improvement, yet in most of the countries including India, there is wide spread gender imbalance and women’s voice in society is not what it should be. Participation in politics is the preservation of Indian values of democracy and equality in all spheres. The Indian constitution, the world’s biggest democracy, provides equal rights and opportunities to its entire people, regardless of caste, creed, religion, or gender. Women’s equality with men has become a worldwide phenomenon including equal political participation. Political participation includes effective participation in the electoral process as voters, candidates, journalists, content writers, electoral administrators or civil society representatives, among other capacities. Also, the participation at all levels, their representation in parliament and national government, participation in local governments, participation as voters and electors and finally women’s political opinion for their political system. So, share of women in the political arena is crucial for modernising our society as well. Now, Digital India is providing the huge platform to women for active involvement especially

the tool of Social Media.

Digitalisation no doubt is emerging as a powerful weapon for the upliftment of Indian women. Focus on digital literacy, digital services, technological advancement, use of social media, importance on ICT and AI tools in various sector as for strengthening programmatic activities has led to overall development. The process of digitalisation especially after the post Covid period, has become inter-disciplinary approach, as technological languages have become need for every sector and sections of society whether academics, economic, political, social, infrastructural, international etc. Technological languages can become languages of empowerment for these women especially in political fields where our infrastructural buildings of political institutions are also getting revolutionised and digitalised.

Section of Indian women are using social media to engage in political say, as well social media is playing an even more effective role in facilitating a dialogue between governments and their citizens. With the use to new media a women from any corner of country, can have the knowledge that what is going in our electoral politics, which kind of public policy is running in our democratic buildings, is there any change in the patterns of administration by ruling government, which political leader is thinking about welfare of females, in next election whom they should vote etc. Despite lack of data in many areas, evidence shows that women are still under-represented at all levels in politics and decision-making. Male dominated barriers are among the major hurdle foreg. they use twitter or share their problems through social media. Although these women face lots of criticism too and counter arguments from male members of society which become so discouraging for them. Due to this defamation many women prefer to remain silent on many prominent socio-political and economic issues.

Now further we will cover the various aspects that how actually process of digitalisation is enhancing the role of women in politics and will try to cover the various aspects of their participation including the impact of Social Media. We will also try to cover the negative aspects which women are facing and some measures to handle them. We will look over a proper amalgamation of Digital India and its role in advancing the women political participation.

Section snippets

Media is called as fourth pillar of Indian democracy. It helps the political society in various ways as helps in framing the voting behavior of the public, represents the policies and propagandas of government, critically analyses the working of the government etc. It gains momentum in its functioning especially during the electoral process foreg. Opinion

polls. Its functioning directly influences the political sphere as many party leaders connect the people through it. The debates, speeches, discussion contribute to increase knowledge about contemporary political society foreg. Program 'Mann ki Baat'. According to opinion article in Firstpost, "Mann Ki Baat,' as a radio programme, has a significant influence on Indian women as it provides them with a platform to discuss social issues affecting them." But sometimes, mass media present negative and minimizing images of women, contributing to their exclusion from the political sphere. Traditional media was not able to cover the women especially from rural and semi-urban areas and many section were left touched. In era of Digital India, internet and ICT tools has become the basic need for everyone. Every family these days have access to the social media platform as well as other applications helping them to be updated. Women from any corner of country can trace the functioning of government with applications such as inshorts, youtube and also social media platforms. The representation of women leaders in traditional media was highlighted as one of the obstacles to gender parity. Social media have altered the communications landscape for every sector, including politics. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram have transformed the way politicians interact with citizens, and vice versa. Accordingly, more than 85% of female legislators use social media to communicate with their constituents. It is, however, important to highlight that women in political parties which they perceive to be offering more opportunities to women engage 35% more than do their peers who face more inequalities within their parties. Social media is also encouraging and facilitating the work of many female lawmakers. According to a 2013 European Parliament study, new media has a potential positive impact on women's empowerment, allowing them to "network with other women, create on line selves which build confidence, appeal to other women and peers through styles and issues that are directly relevant and attractive, and provide alternative power basis which might be of interest to mainstream politicians." The affordability and accessibility of social media has provided an online space to their voices. The skills and knowledge of digital world has helped women to strengthen their communication strategies in various aspects for development of political society as they participate indirectly in planning, building, executing and training mechanism of government foreg.in campaigning and involvement in non-governmental organisations. Unfortunately, social media have also brought new risks for them, the patriarchal and stereotypical society feel this kind of political participation as against their values. Many try to curb those voices in many ways such as increasing attacks and very limited restrictions to harassment, defamation and threats. Almost 50% of the respondents – from every country, background, age, position and party – to a survey have received insulting or threatening comments about women's ability and role. Women's independent and active use of social media is viewed as a threat to prevailing gender social norms, especially those pertaining to sexuality, resulting in

household, considering them as technophobic and social controls on women's use of mobile phones (Kovacs, 2017). So, the need our hour is that these digital facilities as such make women as 'new makers' in politics, and not create new structures of exploitation. Women's political and electoral rights are crucial to ensure sustainable environment for girls' and young women's political activism. Several types of violence needed to be addressed effectively and awareness with codes of conduct should be used for protecting female legislators when they interact with public online.

Digitalisation and awareness will also help women in becoming members of political parties. Political parties are gatekeepers of democratic system, so equal membership should be offered to men as well women. Sometimes it is observed, ideology of the major political parties hesitates, to nominate females as member, considering them academically and politically weak in country's issues. But having skills of ICT they can acquire effective stake hold over political issues as every political structure and functioning of government is getting digitalised. As even our new parliament is digitally settled, women having skills can get the more opportunity in participating in parliament as well as state legislatures. Gender equality in governmental bodies will also lead to realisation of political rights of LGBTQIA people.

In recent times female voter turnout has increased, as the seven out of eight states that went to the polls in 2022. Various forms of digital expression such as blogging, facebook, twitter, online videos, podcasts, amplify women's voices and increase their self-esteem. Clearly, more gender-balanced access to technology has great positive potential.

Digitalisation will encourage women to pursue career in politics it will help them to overcome traditional barriers of underrepresentation. Their political advancement will also help them to tackle get out of their 'pre-determined roles' and 'biological determinism'. May be in the near future some more technology will be developed to help them in treating differences produced by nature and culture.

Smriti Irani, Minister for Woman and Children Development of India, speak in UN, said that about 123 million girls are enrolled in programmes that promote science and technology education in schools, while other initiatives seek to train rural women and those from marginalized segments of society to use mobile phones and other critical tools. Unlike much of the world, her country enjoys near-parity in men and women's engagement in STEM. Outlining a variety of Government initiatives in that area, she cited an online campaign aimed at celebrating women who have carved out niches for themselves in science and technology — "STEM Stars".

So to conclude women political participation is a fundamental for gender equality and a successful democracy. Tools of digitalisation is providing and will create more facilities for women's direct engagement in public decision-making and is a means of ensuring better accountability to women.

Brief Literature Review

Kanta Katariya and Mahesh Pariyar (2019) in their book “Women’s Political Participation in India” presents that in the modern era, especially in the last four decades or so, the topic of women's empowerment has taken on enormous importance all over the world. It is gaining traction or rising every day. The rise of liberal philosophy, the collapse of totalitarianism, the advancement of technology, the birth of a new idea of human rights, people’s concern about a borderless world, and other reasons have all contributed to its development. Women’s empowerment has become a fashionable buzzword in every part of the globe today.

Sonia Bathla (1998)⁶⁸ in her book “Women, Democracy, and Media” denotes that the gendered implications of political communication, as well as the way the news media covers problems that affect women, is a more recent concern. As media is a powerful channel of information, sometimes it can be seen that women politicians may be under-represented in news pre and post elections. The author examines the workings of what she refers to as ‘Brahmanical hegemony,’ or the Indian urban elite’s deeply established cultural orientation. As a result, women’s issues have been relegated to the private realm, making them irrelevant to democratic debates. This book emphasises the importance of confronting this mindset for dialogues on women’s issues in India to take place in future.

Research Objectives

- To promote gender equality throughout the electoral process with help of digital media tools and also making electoral arrangements more digitalise.
- To find how to make media platforms gender sensitive so women can actively involve in political process.
- To help in raising awareness and preventing women to suffer from online abuse and violence.
- To explore what types of platforms, technological tools and skills can women prefer to use them for political participation and also to find the factors that influence women’s participation in political issues on social media.

Hypothesis

Digital media enhancing women participation in Politics.

Research Methodology

The proposed topic will be based on theoretical, empirical, analytical, exploratory and descriptive methods of research. The sample of women will be divided into two strata, the one who know about Digital India and its positive impact on women political participation and the other who have no idea about it. With the former group female section of the families will be asked that how they manage to learn these new skills and how they are participation in public and decision-making process, the method here will sort of Non-Probability Sampling. Then from the later strata with Simple Random sampling a structured questionnaire will be conducted to know about the basic reasons that why they are unable to get access of ICT tools and their underrepresentation in political fields. The mode of data collection is of both nature i.e. Qualitative and Quantitative method. Through qualitative all the aspects of physical, emotional, patriarchal, economical, sociological and psychological barriers will be covered. And through quantitative all factual analysis will be recorded for statistical representation. The methodology will include flexibility depending upon the situations of sample.

Conclusion

Feminism is a holistic approach linked to women's advancement in social and patriarchal world. With the changing nature of society women need technological advancement too with equal importance. But less awareness, less digital literacy and patriarchal norms, causing this digitalisation a new threat to Indian feminism. In India, women have become liberated from many social inequalities and injustices after a long struggle. Digitalisation will help their social, personal and cultural transformation. They can participate in all levels of governance in wider ranges. Social media is able to modify public about women political participation and also have upgraded it. The roadblocks of underrepresentation covering the cyber security, patriarchal mindset, less availability or anything else needed to be addressed. Overall in the upcoming future political society women will get greater visibility and recognition.

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