

## Democracy and Women Participation in Politics – Issues and Challenges

**S. Kandasamy**

Associate Professor, Department Of Public Policy, Law And Governance, Central University Of Rajasthan, Bandarsindri-305817, Ajmer, Rajasthan, India

### Abstract

Meaning of Democracy – Democracy as a way of life and Democracy as a system of Government – Origination of idea of democracy from Greek – Experimented in Athens – Development of Democracy – American Revolution – Advantages of Democracy – Criticism on Democracy.

Political participation of women in different regions of Globe – Overall participation of women in politics is hardly ten percent of the population – Many hurdles exist to women in allowing them to participate in politics – Status of women is a main cause preventing them from entering into politics.

Initiatives arise for political participation of women at International level – United Nations Charter, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Convention on Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women – all promote women in participation in politics.

At national level, Constitution of India, promotes women and encourage them in political participation- Constitution 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Amendments promote women participation at local level – Reservations to women are also made in legislative and parliamentary elections.

But, still there are many challenges to women for their active participation in politics – There is requirement of reformation in political structure and continuous effort of the society as a whole to achieve equal participation of women in politics.

**KEYWORDS:** Democracy, Political Participation, Civil Rights, Political Rights, Discrimination, Legislative Mandate.

### Introduction:

Democracy- in a narrow meaning a form of government only but in broad meaning it's a way of life – involvement and empowerment of all. There is a distinction between democracy as a way of life and democracy as a system of government. Though the two were closely related, the idea of democracy in the former sense, Democracy, "a wider and fuller idea than can be exemplified in the state even at its best. To be realized it must affect all modes of human association, the family, the school, industry, religion. And even as far as political arrangements are concerned, governmental institutions are but a mechanism for securing to ideal channels of effective operation." As such, democracy was an inherently participatory ideal and the "realist" proposal for democracy with a limited degree of self-government was for Dewey a contradiction in terms. "Whatever his weaknesses as a political theorist- Democracy were not so much a political matter for Dewey as it was a quality inherent in each individual. While this idea did not go over well with Dewey's contemporaries, he stood fast in his conviction that "humanity cannot be content with a good that is procured from without, however high and otherwise complete that good." The way for

individuals to realize the democracy "in their own hearts" was through community. As Dewey wrote, "it is through has association that man has acquired his individuality and it is through association that he exercises it. The theory which sets the individual over and against society, of necessity contradicts itself."

### **History of Democracy:**

The idea of democracy originated from ancient Greeks which is a combination of the words demos (people) and krates (rule). Ancient Greece, about 2500 years ago developed a system of decision making different from that of autocratic methods. Athens was the first state to allow ordinary citizens to approach government office and the courts.

People were eligible to vote and take part in the Assembly proceedings which formulated the law for governance. Even though the democracy originated from Athens, in modern sense of democracy there were differences. In Athens democracy, women were not allowed to participate and also foreigners, slaves and freed slaves. Further, for right to vote, both the parents, should be the citizens of Athens. It was a democracy in the limited sense but it was the foundation for modern democracy.

It was experimented in the city of Athens in which all the citizens participated instead of only a small elite group or king and his men. Democracy is basically a system in which people decide the issues. Now the term is used in the context of form of government in which all citizens have right to vote. The principles of democracy is equally applicable to all other institutions with in the state like that of institutions, companies, universities, legislatures etc. In a democracy, people's views and opinions prevail and influence the government policies and decisions.

### **Democracy in Middle Ages:**

This is also known as Dark Ages which was the period from the fall of Roman Empire (476 AD) to the fall of Constantinople (1453 AD). The influence of democracy was much less during this period. But the influence of Christianity was much more during this period. This led to understanding of many democratic ideas among people. The basis of Christianity is that all men are created equal. At the same time another form of government emerged during this period. This system was known as feudalism which has idea of rights to certain categories and that rights were protected by the courts.

During this period in England, King was having total control over his subject but in 1215 Magna Carta gave some rights to the people from King John and thereby reduces the power of king, and people became powerful. Magna Carta contained 63 clauses and promised the people to access to courts and powers were given to Catholic Church in England instead of King. This Charter became an important legal document and paved way for democracy thought which were incorporated in many constitutions around the world including the Australian Constitution.

### **American Revolution:**

American President Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence in 1776 for which the ideas were taken from two popular philosophers Jean Jacques Rousseau and John Locke who outlined freedom and equality. This document enhanced the idea of democracy and mad America to follow the path of democracy. Modern Democracy is the evolution of wars, decolonisation, economic necessities and revolutions. It is rated that democracy is the standard form of society for governance of the state. In all other forms of governance people have less voice and participation in governance process and representation.

When the population of States were less, the system of direct participation in democratic system worked well. But when the population increased enormously it

became impossible all the people to participate directly. So the system of representative democracy developed in which people elected their representatives through the system of elections and the representatives acted on behalf of them in the respective state organs. In this system, the political parties began to play the key role and powerful. First the representatives are selected by the political parties and then they are put before the people for election. The people instead of giving importance to the individual capability and quality of the contestant, give importance to the political party and the ideology of the party. Here, the objective of representative democracy itself is defeated and people are unable to make the real choice.

#### **Advantages of Democracy:**

Throughout the history, democracy was the exception. But now the trend has changed. Among the world countries, around sixty per cent are following democracy. In democracy, all citizens are given the right to vote and participate in political process. Internal conflict is less. Government has its limitation and oppression becomes less. Governance is in accordance with law and law is predetermined by the competent authorities where the people's representatives are the component of the authority. Democracy leads to less internal violence, less chance of war and more peace to the people. People can know the actions and decisions of government and the resources can be used effectively for the benefits of the people. If the performance of the government is not up to the mark, the people are given a chance to change the government according to their will and choice.

#### **Criticism on Democracy:**

Democracy, is defined, basically as government in which the supreme power is vested in the people. In some forms, democracy can be exercised directly by the people; in large societies, it is by the people through their elected agents. Or, in the memorable phrase of American President Abraham Lincoln, 'democracy is government of the people, by the people, and for the people'<sup>1</sup>.

"No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time"<sup>2</sup>

This famous quote attributed to the former British Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill (1874-1965) focuses right on the weak spot of democracy. There is no such thing as the "perfect form of government" on earth, but any other form of

Government produces even less desirable results than democracy. Until today, no other form of government has been invented that could regulate public affairs better than democracy<sup>3</sup>.

The highest aim of a society, as Dr. B.R Ambedkar believed, was the "growth of personality" according to him, Society's duty was to enable each individual "to assume any role he is capable of assuming provided it is socially desirable". For Dr. B.R Ambedkar, democracy was the political form best suited to bringing about the kind of just society, he envisioned. But governments required people to take on different social roles, he argued, which tended "to develop the personality of the few at the cost of the many", something that was antithetical to democracy throughout his

writings, he sought to establish how democracy might look in India. It would have to look quite different than in the West, he insisted, because the very nature of Indian society went against the individual – it was a society constituted by its communities.<sup>4</sup>

Democracy means more than just increasing the numbers of women in politics. It means increase women participation in policy making both at domestic and international level. There enhance presence and as well as their empowerment through such participation.

**Democracy, Political participation and Women:**

**“Success without democracy is improbable; democracy without women is impossible”**

**Madeleine K. Albright**

In any political system, right from the developed to the developing countries, presence of women is very low compared to men. In many countries women had to wage long battles to get right to vote. Today the percentage of women as voters has increased considerably, but their political participation is not equal to men and therefore women are unable to get an equal share in organization that require decision making. Women have not been regarded as significant part of the political arena. Politics at every level of participation is dominated by men. The omission of women from positions of power seriously affects the ability to challenge the subordination of women in all its manifestation. Women have to be in politics and power to participate as women and to change the very nature of that power which excludes them. Women who consist of almost half of the population need to be represented significantly in decision making bodies. Otherwise the goal of development cannot be achieved. Gender equity is very essential for the progress of any society.

**Facts on Participation of Women in Different Regions of the Globe:**

**Regional average of the percentage of women in parliament<sup>5</sup>**

<b>Regions</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Nordic Countries</b>	<b>41.1%</b>
<b>Americans</b>	<b>21.8%</b>
<b>Europe</b>	<b>19.1%</b>
<b>Asia</b>	<b>17.4%</b>
<b>Pacific</b>	<b>13.4%</b>
<b>Arab States</b>	<b>9.6%</b>

This regional fact reveals that there is gender inequality in political participation of women even in 21<sup>st</sup> century. Now the question is – what are the causes in the way of the political participation of women.

As women population is about fifty percent of the world population but there participation in formal political institution is hardly ten percent in the world scenario, it reflects that there is gender discrimination. A democratic parliament reflects the

views and interests of the society from which it is drawn and allows those perspectives to shape the society's social, political and economic future. Therefore, equal participation means parity in representation between men and women in both numbers and the levels of decision making. It should reflect the views and interests of both men and women in society. Democracy is not democracy until women's voices are augmented in legislation, political institutions and processes. Democracy is not democracy without the inclusion of women in politics.

Participation in electoral processes involves much more than just voting. 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 practice, however, it is often harder for women to exercise this right.

Participation in politics and democracy has a very close association because in a democracy, how democratize the participation of men and women is, a matter for concern. To form equal society, participation of women in formal and informal institution is required. To ensure political participation of women there is a need to think beyond system and functioning of political parties. Women can also become involved in certain aspects of the electoral process through independent action—particularly at the local level—and by joining civil society organizations. Some women in post-conflict countries have gained political experience by participating in non-elected transitional assemblies. Women's networks, trade unions, non-governmental organizations, and the media can all provide avenues for women's political participation.

### **Hurdles in Political Participation of Women:**

Initially women did not have the right to cast vote but slowly and gradually this legal lacuna had been removed in many countries and now most of the country have given them right to be, to contest election and form association and so on but still there are few countries where women do not have right of political participation in one way or the other. For Example –

**Brunei-** Both men and women have been denied the right to vote or to stand for election since 1962. **Lebanon-** partial suffrage for women, proof of elementary education is required for women but not for men. Another example is- Saudi Arabia, no suffrage for women, they do not have right to vote or to contest election.

### **Causes of Status of Women:**

- Ideals and principle state adopted is itself become the reason for low women participation.
- Each country's political system and environment exert a strong influence on women's effective participation in policy-making.
- Organisation and structure of political parties- the environment of political parties is not 'gender-friendly' and deters some women from considering entering political life.
- Lack of financial support and time for campaigning, because of balancing family and public life and socio-economic values and cultural values. In

reality political participation and economic empowerment are inter-related; How more women in position of power can influence policies and strategies for enhancing women's economic opportunities and how, in turn, the related enhancement of women's economic status can provide better conditions for accessing and ensuring effective participation in decision making institutions.

- Socio-Economic position of women in societies negatively affect their participation- women earn less than men, sexual division of labour in societies impose burden on women, which normally not faced by men. Most societies organise in a manner that enables both men and women with families to share these responsibilities particularly child-rearing responsibility.

### **Rationality for Promoting Women's Political Participation:**

- Women account for approximately half the population and therefore have the right to be represented.
- Women's experiences are different from men's and need to be represented in decision making and implementation.
- The interest of men and women are different therefore women are needed in representative institutions to articulate their interest- women interest is contest-specific. The different life experience, multiple social identities and adherence to various political or religious doctrines collectively shape the interest of women.
- Impact on gender equality policy- women play an important writing and amending Constitutions that address the issue of gender equality- for example, French parity Constitutional amendment on equal representation of men and women and post-Apartheid Constitutional drafting process in South Africa.

### **International Framework and initiative for Political Participation of Women:**

**United Nations Charter** is the first and foremost document which proclaims equality of men and women in all regard through various provision. And after that, Universal Declaration of Human Rights also reaffirm the same principle of equality which much more clear and elaborate provisions.

**International Covenant on the Civil and Political Right, 1966** Recognizing that, in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the ideal of free human beings enjoying civil and political freedom and freedom from fear and want can only be achieved if conditions are created whereby everyone may enjoy his civil and political rights, as well as his economic, social and cultural rights, Considering the obligation of States under the Charter of the United Nations to promote universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and freedoms, Realizing that the individual, having duties to other individuals and to the community to which he belongs, is under a responsibility to strive for the promotion and observance of the rights recognized in the present Covenant.

**United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW)** in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in collaboration with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), organized an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on "Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes, with particular emphasis on political participation and leadership" hosted by the Economic Commission for Africa, October 2005.

**The Fourth World Conference on Women**, held in Beijing in 1995, drew attention to the persisting inequality between men and women in decision-making. The Beijing Platform for Action reaffirmed that women's persistent exclusion from formal politics, in particular, raises a number of specific questions regarding the achievement of effective democratic transformations, in practice. It undermines the concept of democracy, which, by its nature, assumes that the right to vote and to be elected should be equally applied to all citizens, both women and men. The absence of women from political decision-making has a negative impact on the entire process of democratization. The Beijing Platform for Action emphasized that "women's equal participation in decision making is not only a demand for justice or democracy, but can also be seen as a necessary condition for women's interests.

Without the perspective of women at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved." (Para 181). The Beijing Platform for Action defined two strategic objectives in its critical area of concern on women in power and decision-making- to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision making and to increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership.

**Commission on the Status of Women**, To accelerate the implementation of action in these areas, the at its forty-first session in 1997, adopted Agreed Conclusions (1997/2), which emphasized that attaining the goal of equal participation of men and women in decision-making was important for strengthening democracy and achieving the goals of sustainable development. The Commission reaffirmed the need to identify and implement measures that would redress the under-representation of women in decision-making, including through the elimination of discriminatory practices and the introduction of positive action programmes. Constitution of separate commission sparked the movement throughout the world to promote gender equality in political participation of women.

**The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women**, called upon States parties "to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country"<sup>7</sup>. At its sixteenth session (1997), the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women adopted general recommendation- regarding the participation of women in political and public life. It emphasized that States parties should ensure that their constitutions and legislation complied with the principles of the Convention and that they were under obligation to take all necessary measures, including temporary special measures, to achieve the equal representation of women in political and public life.

**United Nations Security Council**,<sup>8</sup> on women, peace and security, reaffirmed the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace building, and stressed the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, as well as the need to increase their role in decision-making.

**United Nations the General Assembly, at its Fifty-Eighth Session in 2003**, adopted resolution<sup>9</sup> on women and political participation which urged Governments, the UN system, NGOs and other actors to develop a comprehensive set of policies and programmes to increase women's participation in decision-making, including in conflict resolution and peace processes by addressing the existing obstacles facing

women in their struggle for participation. The resolution also addressed the importance of supporting and generating political will, serious commitment to the promotion of the advancement of women and the goals of gender equality through the organization of awareness raising campaigns.

World Summit in 2005 also reaffirmed commitment to the equal participation of women and men in decision-making. Member States resolved to promote the increased representation of women in Government decision-making bodies, including through ensuring their equal opportunity to participate fully in the political process.

### **Women's Political Participation – Constitutional and Legislative Mandate:**

Constitution is supreme law of our country – it gives in its substance equal participation in all regard. Preamble of the constitution promises to ensure Justice-social economic and political. This is considered, to be a signature tone of the Constitution and having a very close association. In present era its functioning in any country become the mark of civilization.

Political participation has been defined in various ways. Political participation means not only exercising the right to vote, but also power sharing, co-decision makes, co-policy making at all levels of governance of the state.<sup>10</sup> Right of political participation includes various rights- right to form assembly, association, freedom of speech and expression, right to cast vote and right to contest election. Political participation is a process by which people take part in political activities. Exercising voting rights during elections is one of the important political activities of the people. Participation of women in this political activity is almost equal to men. Political participation is not just casting vote. It includes wide range of other activities- like membership of political party, electoral campaigning, attending party meetings, demonstrations, communication with leaders, holding party positions, contesting

elections, membership in representative bodies, influencing decision making and other related activities. Our Constitution guaranteed all these rights and freedom to women without any discrimination on the basis of sex or gender.

Constitution guarantees equality in general and equality of opportunity in public institution without any discrimination on the basis of sex, gender.<sup>11</sup>

Constitution through its various clauses gives freedom to speech and expression, to form association and with the constitutional amendment it also confers right to form co-operative societies to all and every one without any discrimination.<sup>12</sup>

Elections to the House of the People and to the Legislative Assemblies of States to be on the basis of adult suffrage - The elections to the House of the People and to the Legislative Assembly of every State shall be on the basic of adult suffrage ;that is to say every person who is a citizen of India and who is not less than eighteen years of age on such date as may be fixed in that behalf by of under any law made by the appropriate Legislature and is not otherwise disqualified under this Constitution or any law made by the appropriate Legislature on the ground of non-residence,unsoundness of mind, crime or corrupt or illegal practice shall be entitled to be registered as a voter at any such election.<sup>13</sup>

The 73rd and 74th Amendment to the Constitution ensured that 33 per cent seats for panchyats in rural areas and urban local bodies were to be reserved for women. This



ensured the direct involvement of women in positions of decision making. Elected women representatives are slowly bringing change in the rural countryside and urban areas, by bringing social development, women and child related issues to the forefront.

This is basically a technique used by the number of government, quota system-which is defined as a mandatory percentage of women candidates for public elections. While in a few countries reserved seats for women existed as far back as the 1950s, the real push for quotas came in the 1990s with the introduction of quotas in Argentina in 1991 and the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action at the United Nation's Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. While quotas were met with great hope by women throughout the world, their history is decidedly mixed. In mapping the implementation of quotas, International

### **Constitution and Local Government:**

Local government is a part of all over governance. Constitutional Amendment Acts<sup>14</sup> for the first time provide one- third representation to women at urban and rural level. This has raised the question as to what is the performance of political women to develop India and world. According to first European summit on women in decision making in Athens,1992, **“women represent half potential talents and skills of humanity and their under representation in decision making is a loss for society as a whole<sup>15</sup>.”** The UN's Economic and Social Council passed a resolution in 1990 recommending increase proportion of women to leadership positions-30 percent by 1995 and 50 percent by 2000.<sup>16</sup>

In recent time , why women representation is essential to development? It has become a sensitive debate issue. Many scholars given own thought or arguments on this issues such as;

Justice argument; experience argument; interest argument; symbolic argument; critical mass argument; democracy argument. In these type of argument have own features, but democracy argument refers to a different and unique features to describe women representation at grass-root level, such as 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> amendments known as grass root democracy. Grass-root democracy advocates that the equal representation of women and men enhances the democratization of governance in both transitional and consolidated democracies. In India , before 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> amendments, the 64<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendments Bill was introduced in parliament in 1989, which provided for 30% reservation. But it could not be passed in parliament. Again , bills were reintroduced in parliament in September 1991,as the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendments bills with in an additional provision such as one third representation to women in local government.

73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional amendments provided 30% reservation to women through the this amendments had open a channel for the women power structure from different strata of the society for vertically and horizontally, to occupy the legitimate space.

### **Limits and Constraints of Women Participation in Institutions:**

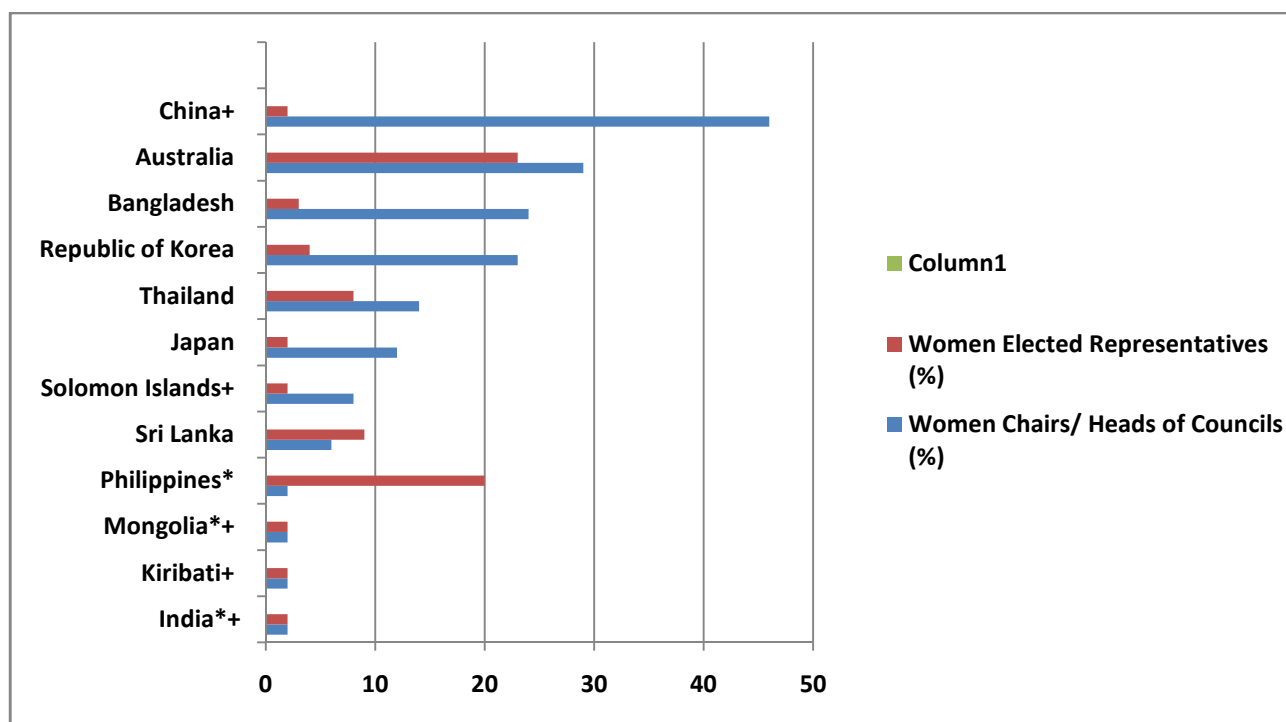
Many constraints that prevent women to effective participation at the local government.

These are as follows;

- (i) lack of awareness to development issues and development administration

- (ii) lack of party support, for example, limited financial support for women candidates,
- (iii) illiteracy and limited access to education and choice of professions; and
- (iv) the dual burden of domestic tasks and professional obligations.

**Women Position in Local Government at World Level:<sup>17</sup>**



**Women Position in National Parliament at International Level:**

Historically, female national leaders have been rare . The first woman to enter a position of national leadership who was not a monarch was Sirimavo Bandaranaike, who became prime minister of Sri Lanka in 1960. Later in the same decade, two other prominent women, Indira Gandhi of India and Golda Meir of Israel, also rose to power as prime ministers. However, it was not until 1974 that Isabel Perón of Argentina became the first female president. In general, the progress in the early decades was slow: three women became national leaders in the 1960s, followed by six in the 1970s, and seven in the 1980s. In \_\_\_\_\_

contrast, drastic change began to occur in more recent decades: 26 women first obtained positions of top executive leadership in the 1990s, followed by 29 additional women through August 2009.

There has been no other leader quite like Margaret Thatcher , Indira Gandhi, Shrimaobhandar Naike, Benazir Bhutto, Khalida Zia etc.Margaret Thatcher is an iron leady to Britain. Because she undoubtedly shattered some deeply held beliefs when she led the male dominated Conservative party to victory in the 1979 general election. She was ‘crowned’ Britain (and Europe’s) first female head of government and went on to become the longest serving British Prime Minister of the 20th century. The most popular theory **Thatcherism** became a need of developing countries to achieve own goal. **Thatcherism** describes the conviction politics, economic, social policy, and political style of the British Conservative politician Margaret Thatcher, who was leader of her party from 1975 to 1990. It has also been used to describe the beliefs of the British government while Thatcher was Prime Minister between May

1979 and November 1990, and beyond into the governments of John Major and Tony Blair. An exponent or supporter of Thatcherism is regarded as a **Thatcherite**.

In Indian scenario, the charismatic and epoch-making personality of Indira Gandhi left her imprint not only in the affairs of her own country but also in international affairs. She belonged to that noble galaxy of great leaders who wielded extraordinary power. Indira Gandhi was an Indian to the core but at the same time her vision went far beyond her own nation and embraced the entire human race. By virtue of being the Prime Minister of India, the largest democracy in the world, she was able to make a significant contribution to the practice of inter-national relations. She enjoyed well-deserved prestige and profound respect on the international scene. An attempt is being made here to highlight her role as an international leader.

Khalida Zia, became a role model to women in Bangladesh. she is a Bangladeshi politician who was the Prime Minister of Bangladesh from 1991 to 1996 and again from 2001 to 2006. When she took office in 1991, she was the first woman in the country's history and second in the Muslim world (after Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan in 1988–1990) to head a democratic government as prime minister. Khaleda Zia was the First Lady of Bangladesh during the presidency of her husband Ziaur Rahman. Khalida zia rahman political theory based on socialism. She advocates that,

‘ If we want to progress as a country, if we want to remove poverty, if we have to spread awareness of family planning and bring down population growth, we have to educate them [girls], give them equal rights. Women have to prove that they are no less than men. I am trying to end [the] dowry [system]. That will only happen when women start working as professionals.’

Benazir Bhutto is the 11<sup>th</sup> prime minister of Pakistan. Benazir Bhutto used more participative and less autocratic style of governance. Her standing by her motto and mission of idea of democracy was not less than a political miracle in the history of Pakistan, where stage was set to go, deserted with so called Hadood laws, most of which were wrongly interpreted and were made the part of legal system. As a parliamentarian she kept moving towards a mission of democratic and independent Pakistan.

The global average of women in parliament has registered a record annual increase of 1.5 percentage points, reaching 21.8 per cent on 1 January 2014. The Americas maintains its lead as the region with the highest average of women MPs at 25.2 per cent, while the Arab world has witnessed the biggest regional increase from 13.2 per cent to 16 per cent. Steady progress continues in Africa and Europe (up 2.1 and 1.4 percentage points, respectively to 22.5 per cent and 24.6 per cent) but eludes Asia and the Pacific (now 18.4 per cent and 16.2 per cent).

Current statistical data about of women representation at national level, was published by inter- parliamentary union in 1 April 2015.<sup>18</sup>

WORLD CLASSIFICATION									
Rank	Country	Lower or single House				Upper House or Senate			
		Elections	Seats*	Women	% W	Elections	Seats*	Women	% W
1	Rwanda	9 2013	80	51	63.8 %	9 2011	26	10	38.5 %
2	Bolivia	10 2014	130	69	53.1	10 2014	36	17	47.2

					%				%
3	<b>Cuba</b>	2 2013	612	299	48.9 %	---	---	---	---
4	<b>Seychelles</b>	9 2011	32	14	43.8 %	---	---	---	---
5	<b>Sweden</b>	9 2014	349	152	43.6 %	---	---	---	---
6	<b>Senegal</b>	7 2012	150	64	42.7 %	---	---	---	---
7	<b>Finland</b>	4 2011	200	85	42.5 %	---	---	---	---
8	<b>Ecuador</b>	2 2013	137	57	41.6 %	---	---	---	---
9	<b>South Africa <sup>1</sup></b>	5 2014	400	166	41.5 %	5 2014	54	19	35.2 %
106	<b>India</b>	4 2014	543	65	12%	12014	243	31	12.8

Sources: statistical data on international parliamentary union, April, 2015

IDEA found nearly 100 countries that had either implemented quotas, previously used quotas or were considering implementing quotas. Of these, 10 countries had adopted reserved seat guarantees and 30 countries had adopted legislation mandating quotas. In addition, 130 political parties in 61 countries had voluntarily adopted quotas. There is a very good example of the effect of quota system- in 1994, South Africa ranked 141<sup>st</sup> in the world in the percentage of legislative seats held by women. After the African national congress enacted a 30% quota for female candidates, South Africa jumped to 13<sup>th</sup> place in 2004 with women elected to 32.8% of its lower parliamentary seats<sup>19</sup>. In India in local level legislative bodies these provision drastically change the position of Indian women but in most of the areas these elected women remains only “proxy-women representative.”

### **Issues and Challenges of Women in Indian Politics:**

Representation of the People Act, 1951 in consonance with constitutional mandate, gives right to cast vote to every adult member without any discrimination and further authorised the Election Commission of India to take punitive measures in case of violation.

Indian women, as early as 1917 raised the issue of universal adult franchise. The British government granted the right to vote on the basis of wifehood, property and education. The 1935 Government of India Act provided for right to vote for all women above 21 years of age who fulfilled the conditions of property and education. The Constitution of India which came into existence in the year 1950 granted universal adult franchise to all its citizens. Besides the exercising of voting rights, the representation of women in legislative bodies as policy formulators or decision makers is very low. Women have been demanding for more space in legislative bodies. Most countries in the world have failed to give due space 51 and

representation to women in their political systems, only in a handful of countries women are moving equally with men, for example, Germany, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland. In these countries women are making substantial inroads into decision making process. In the advanced countries like Western Europe and North America, female presence in legislature remains small and relatively insignificant.

At the time of national movement women get the chance to become the part of social and political transformation and understand the significance of political rights in true

substance. Accordingly constitution confer them all the right to political participation but the practice of this right is not as envisaged still today women participation in politics- formal or informal is not satisfactory. There is a need to encourage women to seek greater involvement in the decision-making processes at all levels and to provide a systematic significant influence on decision-making processes and policy outcomes.

It has been truth of Indian context that the personality traits and the socio-economic and cultural environment are to a great extent responsible for women's marginal participation in politics. The culture which puts maximum premium on the males, the political environment of instability, criminalization and absence of political ideology are factors which influence the extent of political participation. Socio political environment determines the participation and involvement of Indian women in politics<sup>20</sup>.

Economic-Social condition of Indian women is so alarming in each and every sphere of life either it is economic condition, educational condition or political constitution. They do not allow participating in the decision making at all because since a long time they are considered as inferior to men.

Patriarchy is deeply rooted in the Indian society that society never ready to accept their capabilities. The problem is that girls become subject of discrimination from the very early age of life, society itself never ready to provide them equal and sustainable environment to prove their capabilities. So it is very difficult for Indian women to make herself a part of decision making process.

### **Turnout of Men and Women in General Parliamentary Election**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Turnout for Men</b>	<b>Turnout for Women</b>
<b>1962</b>	<b>63.31%</b>	<b>42.63%</b>
<b>2014</b>	<b>67.09%</b>	<b>65.63%</b>

### **Conclusion:**

Political participation is very basic right of every individual. It open the ways for claiming and bargaining right from the state. But women because of their gender have been subject of discrimination throughout the world in terms of social, political and economic justice. Politics still remain the domain of men. And if any how system of a country removes legal barriers, even though results are not very good because of unfounded social and cultural beliefs. Several countries adopted quota systems. It definitely improve the participation of women in formal and informal politics of countries institution. But we should think beyond numbers and access to what degree and under what conditions elected women actually do represent and contribute to democracy and gender equality. The most important thing to consider is how far women participation good for countries progress and sustainable development.

There is a need to bring reformation in the political structure itself and continuous effort on the part of the government to articulate issues of women in policy making and implementation. Gender mainstreaming is required through various measures. Women centric economic policies, encouragement of the NGO's and voluntary institutions shall work for empowerment of women. Civil society institutions and structures play an important role in placing pressure on politicians and institutions to support women's entry into decision making process. Political parties may develop incentives to attract women to the party providing funding to run an election campaigning, providing access to networks, training and skill development for women candidate for public election. Political commitment to increased women participation by all countries is the solution to women involvement in politics. Gender should be preserved as an unequivocal goal of democracy.

#### References:

1. Majid Behrouzi; Democracy As the Political Empowerment of the People, p.5 available at <http://books.google.co.in/> accessed on 8 May 2015.
2. [www.democracy-building.info](http://www.democracy-building.info) accessed on 8 May 2015.
3. <http://www.democracy-building.info/definition-democracy.html> accessed on **8 May 2015**.
4. Shabnum, Tejani; The Necessary Conditions for Democracy R Ambedkar on Nationalism, Minorities and Pakistan; Economic & Political Weekly , December 14, 2013 Vol. xlvi no 50
5. [WWW.iwdc.org](http://WWW.iwdc.org)
6. The Baijing Platform for Action Report, para 181.
7. Art.7, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, 1979.
8. UN Security Council Resolution, 1325 (2000).
9. UN General Assembly Resolution, 58/142 (2003)
10. Singh, J.P., Indian Democracy and Empowerment of Women, The Indian Journal of Public Administration, Oct-Dec, Vol XLVI, No. 4, 2000, pp-61 9.
11. Art.14-18 of Constitution of India.
12. Art. 19 of Constitution of India.
13. Art.326 of Constitution of India.
14. 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Acts.
15. Delys Sarah, (2014), Women and Political Representation, Hand Book on Increasing Women Political Representation in Georgia, Human Rights and Monitoring Center, Georgia.
16. Federation of Canadian Municipalities, for promoting leadership in local government: Local Association help women meet the Challenge, Ottawa.
17. Report on Women's Representation in Local Government in Asia Pacific, 2010.
18. [www.unwomen.org](http://www.unwomen.org) accessed on 09 May 2015.
19. Global database of data for women.
20. Sinha Niroj (ed), Women in Indian Politics, Empowerment of Women Through Political Participation, Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi, 2000, pp. 17-18.