



THOUGHTS OF MAHATMA GANDHI ON PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN POLITICS

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Abstract:

Present review article is an attempt to understand the thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi on participation of women in politics. As if we think and study on contemporary political situations in India, need to sort out some basic facts of Indian politics, politicians and their perspectives. Participation of women in politics and their active participation are always questioned by different dimensions. To find out solutions and seek improvement in participation of women in politics must go through the lens of political and social thinkers. With the purpose researcher is trying to review the facts and thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi on participation of women in politics.

Key words: Politics, political participation and women

I. Introduction:

As the 2011 UN General Assembly resolution on women's political participation notes, "Women in every part of the world persist to be in chief marginalized from the political sphere, often as a consequence of discriminatory laws, practices, attitudes and gender stereotypes, low levels of education, lack of access to health care and the inconsistent outcome of poverty on women."

Women mug several obstacles to participating in political life. Structural barriers through discriminatory laws and institutions still limit women's options to run for office. Capacity gaps denote women are less likely than men to have the education, contacts and resources needed to become effective leaders. With this view the present article is reviewing thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi on political participation of women.

Concept elaboration:

Politics:

Essence of politics approaches from the Greek root 'polis'. It implies the principles and applications that guided the governance of the Greek city-states. It should be remembered that State was a holistic formation to the ancient Greeks, which enclosed every public activity of the citizens. In many Indian languages, politics has been called Rajniti. In one sense, it meant the principle of administration of the King or ruler

Political Participation:

The term 'political participation' has a very extensive meaning. It is not just allied to 'Right to Vote', but simultaneously relates to participation in: decision-making process, political activism, political consciousness, etc. Women in India take part in voting, run for public offices and political parties at lower levels more than men. Political activism and voting are the strongest areas of women's political participation. To contest gender inequality in politics, the Indian Government has instituted reservations for seats in local governments.

Women turnout during India's parliamentary general elections was 65.63%, compared to 67.09% turnout for men. India is on 20th rank from the bottom in terms of representation of women in Parliament. Women have apprehended the posts of president and prime minister in India, as well as chief ministers of various states. Indian voters have chosen women to numerous state legislative assemblies and national parliament for many decades.

II . Objectives:

1. To overview thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi on political participation of women.
2. To study the present situation of political participation of women through the lens of Mahatma Gandhi.

III . Methodology:

Present article is a review article so the secondary data for support was collected through different sources as books, journals, research articles, government reports, international organizations' reports and documents.

IV . Thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi on political participation of women

1. Satyagrah:

The first and foremost method where Gandhiji promote to have participation at large scale and anyone can participate in it without any specific selection or procedure. It was an endeavour when women came on the streets and public places to participate and mark their presence for independence. The originality and depth of Mahatma Gandhi's political thought was closely connected to action. He was not just proficient at translating ideas into action. In trying to make satyagraha valuable, he grasped some elemental facts and truths about the nature of politics. This was not a philosophy of and for the cave-dweller, but for popular politics in the street, the *maidan*, and the village. Gandhi's central input to modern politics was the inception of satyagraha. Tolstoyan non-resistance and Thoreau's civil disobedience inspired his aspiration to make satyagraha a universal political process. But Gandhi's greatest innovation was to turn satyagraha into a new sort of mass politics. As a tool of resistance, its power was most tough when enacted on a large scale. Its mass quality was also important for how it was practiced, and by whom.

Satyagraha was universal in a second sense; it could be taken up by anyone. At various times, Gandhi thought of children, women, and peasants as ideal satyagrahis. The inclusion of diverse classes was also essential to satyagraha's constructive purpose. Through the practice of satyagraha, the elite would unlearn privilege, and actively identify with the poor — most famously through the labour of spinning and village *seva* (service). In

overcoming fear of authority, the poor and vulnerable would likewise realise dignity and freedom through action.

2. Inclusive approach:

In Gandhiji's script he wrote that "I would boycott that legislature which will not have a proper share of women members". It utters the inclusiveness regarding participation of women in politics.

3. Gandhiji's concept of Equality:

Equality is not only a fundamental principle of Gandhian thought but it is one of the most aspired concepts. It inculcates equality of characteristics and also equality of treatment. Equality have been used in so many senses as (a) impartiality (b) equal share to all (c) equal share to equals (d) proportional equality (e) unequal shares corresponding to relevant differences.

4. Equal Rights in Indian Democracy:

Democracy implies equality for all, men and women. As against this basic notion of democracy what is normally seen is that women are excluded from different walks of life, more visibly in Politics.

5. Women's Representation in Legislature:

Mahatma Gandhi said, "Man and woman will attain equality only when the birth of a girl is celebrated with as much joy as in the case of boy." (Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. 87. p.229) Furthermore it will become key to participation of women in all spheres of life not only in politics.

6. Need of Women Participation:

In 1940 Gandhiji address to a summit in Santiniketan and spelled out an important thought when Sarojini Naidu was a nominated delegate, Gandhiji, heaving a humorous sigh of relief, remarked: "Thank God! The women there did not put forward a claim either for separate electorate or for reservation of specific number of seats in Legislatures!"

7. Women Participation on Merit basis:

Gandhiji wrote, "I am not captivated of equality or any other proportion in such matters. Merit should be the only test. Considering, however, that it has been the custom to decry women, the differing custom should be to prefer women, merit being equal, to men even if the preference should result in men being entirely displaced by women. It would be a dangerous thing to insist on membership on the ground merely of sex. Women and for that matter any group should disdain patronage. They should seek justice, never favor. Therefore the proper thing is for women as indeed for men to advance the spread not of English or Western education among them, but such education on general lines through their provincial languages as will fit them for the numerous duties of citizenship. For men to take a lead in this much-needed reform would be not a matter of favor but a simple act of belated justice due to women." (Harijan, April 7, 1946)

8. Women Participation for Strengthening Panchyat:

Gandhiji said: "In my opinion, it is demeaning both for man and woman that women should be called upon or induced to forsake the hearth and shoulder the rifle for the protection of that hearth. It is deterioration to barbarity and the beginning of the end." At the constructive workers' conference in Madras on January 27, 1946, Gandhi called upon women to enter the legislatures with the idea of serving the people and not politicking on party-basis. But how many of these would be able to enter the legislatures in a spirit of service, and strengthen the panchayat base, he asked. Their aim must be to build from below so that the panchayat foundation would be strong and the structure good. If any mistake occurred while building from the bottom, it could be rectified immediately and the harm done would not be much. (Addressing a few girls who called on him at New Delhi on April 7, 1947).

V . Conclusion:

Thoughts of Gandhiji are eternal and fit to every situation of human life. It represents nature first, so it is organically blended of all spheres of world. It is inevitably significant and can't be ignored. It gives immense understanding of participation and presence of all actors from society. His views on participation of women in politics, is based on equality, freedom of expression, fear free access to resources, and representation as human not being woman.

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