

Women Empowerment 74 Amendment: Implementation Helps Women Political Empowerment in India

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Abstract:

Political participation and representation are the hallmarks of democracy. Women in India constitute nearly half the population of the country. However their representation in the various governance and decision making bodies is not up to the mark. Rather it seems to be poor. In spite of Constitutional guarantee of equal political status, women in India are unable to exercise their right to participate in political affairs. Women are not adequately presented in Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies. They have started playing an important role in local self-governing institutions only after that 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment. 74th Constitutional Amendment Act was passed in 1993. The 74th Constitutional Amendment Act introduced reservation for women in Municipal councils and corporations in towns and urban areas. The seats shall be reserved to the extent of not less than one-third of total number of seats. This includes seats reserved for women belonging to SC/ST. These reservations will apply for direct elections only. This reservation is implemented through a process of rotation, by identifying different constituencies as a reserved constituency for each election term.

Key words: Political participation- women in Municipal councils and corporations- Women's political empowerment

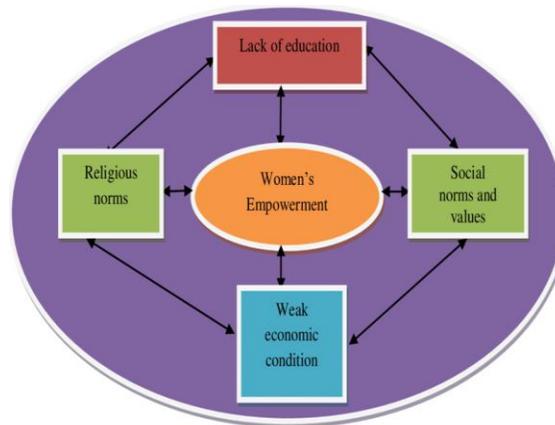
Introduction:

74th Constitutional Amendment Act was passed in 1993. The 74th Constitutional Amendment Act introduced reservation for women in Municipal councils and corporations in towns and urban areas. The seats shall be reserved to the extent of not less than one-third of total number of seats. This includes seats reserved for women belonging to SC/ST. These reservations will apply for direct elections only. This reservation is implemented through a process of rotation, by identifying different constituencies as a reserved constituency for each election term.

Women's political empowerment

Women's political empowerment can begin with PRIs, since their confidence and grasp of the polity will enable them to vote in elections to state legislatures and Parliament, opening the route from "Panchayat to Parliament".

They can even get the confidence to take a stand for themselves, but it is only the start of a journey toward empowerment. Women's empowerment requires more than local reservations and women's involvement in Panchayati Raj institutions because the mindset that women are meant for households has still not changed, women are still not educated. Still, women are oppressed and are denied their rights and they face many more hurdles. But the PRIs are great initiatives to make women strong either politically, economically, or socially.



Women Empowerment

Constitutional Provisions

Constitutional Provisions – 74th Constitutional Amendment Act. It was passed by Parliament in December 1992 and came into force on 1 June 1993 adding Part IX A (Articles 243-P to 243-ZG) and the 12th schedule in the Constitution. The 74th amendment provided a uniform law for all the municipalities in the nation.

Composition:

All members of the municipality should be elected directly by the people. For this purpose, each municipal area shall be divided into territorial constituencies known as wards. The state legislature is empowered to provide for the manner of election of the chairperson of a municipality.

The amended State municipal laws provide for detailed provisions for constitution and composition of municipalities, reservation of seats for SC/ST and women, fixed term of 5 years and re-election of municipalities within a period of 6 months in case of dissolution, functions and financial powers of municipalities, ...

Women's empowerment and strengthening of country's parliamentary democracy

With women's empowerment and strengthening of country's parliamentary democracy at the grass root level high on its legislative agenda, the Union government is to have four constitutional amendments in the ongoing Parliament session to achieve the twin objective. While one seeks to ensure the much-awaited one-third reservation for women in Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies, two are for enhancing quota for women from existing 33 per cent to 50 per cent of the total seats of panchayati raj institutions and urban local bodies, according to agenda papers.

Of the five constitutional amendment bills, lined up for passage in the winter session, the fourth one is aimed at providing autonomy to cooperative societies and strengthening democratic norms in their functioning.

Evolution of Panchayati Raj in India

The notion of Panchayati Raj was not new to India. From ancient times, Indian communities had Panchayats (five-person councils) with executive and judicial responsibilities and were responsible for resolving different issues (land distribution, tax collection, etc.) and conflicts that arose in the community.

1. The establishment of Panchayati Raj, its structure, and its organization was firstly recommended by the Balwantrao Mehta Committee in 1957. This Committee recommended the establishment of a three-tier system at the village, block, and district levels. On October 2, 1959, Rajasthan became the first state to implement Panchayati Raj, which began in Nagaur district.
2. After that, in December 1977, the Ashok Mehta Committee on Panchayati Raj was established. In August 1978, it issued a report with several suggestions to resuscitate and improve the country's ailing Panchayati Raj system. Its main recommendations were a two-tier panchayat system, frequent social audits, political party representation at all levels of panchayat elections, provisions for regular elections, reservation for SCs/STs in panchayats, and a Panchayati Raj Minister in the state council of ministers.
3. Later, the G V K Rao Committee, in 1985, again recommended adding some measures to strengthen Panchayati Raj Institutions.
4. Just after a year, in 1986, L M Singhvi Committee recommended that the constitutional position of Panchayati Raj institutions were also discussed, as well as the constitutional requirements to guarantee that Panchayati Raj Bodies elections be held on a regular, free, and fair basis. Based on this recommendation, a Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha but it was not passed by the Rajya Sabha.
5. Following this, P V Narashima Rao's administration submitted a Bill in the Lok Sabha in September 1991 for this purpose, which became the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992, and went into effect on April 24, 1993.

Restructured Panchayati Raj institutions

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has recently given its approval for restructuring Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA).

The restructured scheme will have the following components:

1. The program would apply to all Indian states and union territories, as well as rural local government entities in non-Part IX regions where Panchayats do not exist.
2. The program will feature a central component – National level activities such as the “National Plan of Technical Assistance”, “Mission Mode Project on e-Panchayat”, and “Incentivization of Panchayats”, as well as a State Component – Panchayati Raj Institution (PRIs) Capacity Building”.

3. The Government of India will completely fund the central component. However, for all states except the North East and the hill states, the Centre: State financing structure for the state component will be 60:40, with a 90:10 allocation for the North East and the hill states. The Central share will be 100% for all Union Territories (UTs) (with and without legislatures).
4. The scheme's implementation and monitoring would be mostly linked with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with a focus on Panchayats designated under Mission Antyodaya and 115 Aspirational Districts selected by NITI Aayog.
5. The Scheme will bring together capacity-building programs from other ministries, with a special focus on ministries that will be significantly impacted by the Scheme.

Impact on women with restructured Panchayati Raj Institutions

The said scheme of RGSA will give its major attention to Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). It will help lakhs of PRIs to strengthen governance capacities to achieve the SDGs via inclusive local government and the most efficient use of available resources. PRIs achieving SDG goals will ultimately help to achieve gender equality, education, hygiene, sanitation, nutrition, etc.

The scheme will help represent Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and women as panchayats which will help women become politically powerful. Also, this scheme will help in strengthening panchayats, and gram sabhas would be strengthened to operate as effective institutions that promote the social inclusion of people, particularly disadvantaged groups, under the plan. It will provide an institutional structure with appropriate human resources and infrastructure for PRI capacity building at the national, state, and district levels. All these developments in PRIs will ultimately make women stronger. As the main focus of this scheme is on women and development then, they say of women's words will be considered.

The reservation policy has definitely helped lakhs of women to enter politics. But their entry directly will not lead to their empowerment. No policy or decision operates in vacuum. It has to take into account societal framework where it will be implemented. In Indian society with patriarchal structures women find it difficult to work and prove them in public sphere initially.

Bringing societal changes

Therefore bringing societal changes was essential. This process has already started. The efforts have been initiated at the capacity building of these women, educating them; inculcate in them the principle of gender equality. It is not the task of one single person. The need is to bring them together. Attempts have been made to develop networks among them. All this will bridge gap between law and its implementation and will empower women. The intention behind 73rd and 74th CAA is to deepen the roots of democracy. When not only women but all underprivileged will be empowered, democracy will be successful in true sense often.

Empowerment of women would mean equipping women to be manically independent, self-reliant, have positive attitude to enable them to face any tough situation and they should be able to participate in developmental activities. John Show International JSI express empowerment in a behavioral sense as the ability to take effective decision encompassing inner state (sense of self, of one's autonomy, self-confidence, openness to new ideas, belief in one's own potential to act effectively) and a person's position and efficiency in social interactions.

Dr.(prof.)Sneha Palnitkar titled 'Women in Urban Local Governments'. (2012) According to her, one of the revolutionary features of 74th CA is greater participation for women in local governance as one - third of seats were reserved for women (including that of SCs and STs)in ULBs (Urban Local Bodies) and for the offices of the chairpersons at city level. She initially puts forth the arguments justifying the policy of reservation for women. Her observations are based on three important studies namely, study conducted by All India Institute of Local Self Government (1996), a study titled 'Impact Assessment of Training of Women Elected Representatives', (2004) which covered eight states i.e. Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Punjab, Tripura, and Uttaranchal and the study carried by All India Institute of Local Self-Government (AIILSG) to find out gender equality status of municipal elected women(2007-08) in four states of Goa, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Rajasthan by interviewing 349 Corporations. This study indicates that 70 to 80% of the women are elected for the first time, maximum of them were housewives who did not have high level of education, focused on routine work and emphasized the need of training. She has emphasized three important factors. They are Training, Capacity building and Networking. Areas of training would include not just formal or procedural training but training of gender sensitization, personality and leadership development and various functional areas of civic governance/ civic service delivery mechanism. It is a platform for economic and cultural exchange on global scale.

Observations:

- Most of the women enter politics without any political experience.
- Politics is male dominated and women are discriminated.
- Women have to carry dual responsibilities after being elected.
- They seem to enter politics or leave it at the influence of male members.

Though most of the women have political familial background, .all cannot be considered as proxies. Some prove themselves and can be tenned as 'political wives.'

The overall change in the attitude of political parties towards women leaders is essential. Training is extremely essential for women Corporators especially newcomers.

Training should not be just formal, procedural training but must expose them to the concepts of freedom, gender equality etc. Mobilization of the women Corporators is essential.

There should be commitment and willingness on the part of women Corporators.

Reservation is not an end itself. Conducive environment must be created in political institutions to enable them to carry their responsibilities effectively.

The focus is be on "successful" women leaders because they believe that the reasons responsible for their failure are often discussed. It is mentioned that those who were having young children got support from elder female members in the family. This indicates that even today child rearing is considered as responsibility of women. Though most of them were from families which had political background, their name was not considered earlier. It must also be noted that the article revealed that only education was not enough to play active role.

The dominance of male members is echoed in the article. Here the researcher seems to agree with earlier research which emphasizes the change in the structure of political parties. Similarly the point of projecting their failure indicates that women have an additional burden to prove themselves. The article emphasizes the importance of developmental issues in urban areas. They mention that there is relative neglect of women in urban governance by scholars. There are significant challenges for women in urban bodies. The article has covered number of aspects related to women and urban governance.

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