



Understanding Women Empowerment in India

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Foreword by
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Political Participation and Women Empowerment

Lipika Guha

(I)

Women have been discriminated against in most countries of the world and in India for a long time since ancient times. In recent times many initiatives have been taken to promote women's rights all over the world. The Indian constitution also recognizes various rights of women. Right to equality and freedom, right against exploitation are particular noteworthy. The government has enacted several laws to protect the rights of women. Various movements have been organized for the liberation of women in India. As a result, women's equal rights in education, employment, politics and social life have been recognized. Several organizations have been formed focusing on women's interests and problems. For natural reasons, women claim special power to solve the problems of women in the society. This is the empowerment of women.

The right of people to participate in governance is very ancient but this right was very limited. Some people used to enjoy this right. But all rights were nowhere. Not everyone had the right to participate in governance. With the spread of democracy, everyone's right to participate in governance is guaranteed. Which in a democratic state we call voting rights. There was debate over whether women would participate in politics through this right to vote. The end of this is that the debate over their representation is not over. The way women have entered Public life has also changed the scope of their discussion of social and political life. During the Swadeshi movement, the type of political discussion of women and their ability to enter the stage of direct politics is different. Indian women tried to free themselves

from feudal bonds by participating in political reforms. Indian women's participation in the freedom movement is memorable today. Women's participation in politics basically means two things - (1) Awareness of women's rights as citizens and (2) participation in state power capture and decision making. However, the history of Indian women's participation in politics is very short. Mahatma Gandhi made the most sense of women's right to participate in politics before independence. Large numbers of women were spontaneously arrested to fuel the demand for independence seeing the large number of women participating in the freedom movement and Indian politics, Mahatma Gandhi said that their role would be written in gold.

"During the freedom struggle in the 1930s, Gandhiji exhorted women to take part in Satyagraha movement on par with men. That 17,000 of around 30,000 persons who courted arrest during the Salt Satyagraha were women volunteers is a conspicuous example of their equal role under the leadership of the Mahatma. The message Gandhi gave to the women of India was of such a nature that they responded to it in a manner which they had never done before. "His civil disobedience campaigns brought about, in a dramatic manner, the entry of women in large numbers into the public life of India. These became the starting points of women's emancipation in our land." (Bose: 74). It shows that the upliftment of women was given an important place in Gandhi's constructive programme. Hearing his clarion call to action women came out in large numbers giving up their sheltered and secluded existence to play their role in the national movement. Aristocratic women discarded their fineries and adornments and cheerfully marched to prison wearing coarse handspun khadi and handmade chappals. Kamala Nehru, Sarojini Naidu, Anasuya Sarabhai, Sushila Nayyar and Miraben are a few of the illustrious women associated with the Gandhian movement. The emancipation of the Indian woman has largely been attributed to the political awakening of the pace of national life in all spheres. The picketing of liquor, opium and foreign cloth shops in the thirties was almost exclusively done by women. Gandhi played an important role in motivating women to participate in the freedom movement and in politics. Gandhi's ideas about women and their role in political life was a departure from those of the 20th century reformers. He saw women as a potential force in the struggle to build a new social & political order. He consciously attempted to articulate the connections between private and public life in order to bring women into the