

Women Reservation Act 2023 and Women Empowerment

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Abstract

Women's empowerment has been heard since 1980s throughout the globe. The UN's Third World Conference on Women in 1985 defines the term 'women empowerment'. In India it was started in 1840s by Savitribai Phule by establishing girl's school. The political movement for women has been referred as feminist movement and this was the initial stage for women empowerment. Women empowerment is handing over the decision making to women. Women empowerment may have seven components like self-respect, power to control oneself decision and rights, power to make decision inside and outside the house, right to access to resources and opportunities, ability to influence the social, economic and political courses, right to be elected, and right to determined choices in free will. Women empowerment seeks to raise status through education and participation in political affairs. Women's Reservation Act 2023 gave 1/3 of seat reserve at Lok Sabha, and State Legislative Assembly. This act is a pro-active step towards gender equality, increasing women participation in decision making or politics and empowerment. The attempt were made in 1996, 1998, 1999, and 2008 to make women reservation in the quest for women empowerment; then successfully comes up in 2023 in form Women's Reservation Act. The argument is will this act can be a bludgeon for women empowerment in a patriarchal society imbedded with religious norms of women as a supporter to husband or the way around.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Women's Reservation Act, Constitution, Gender Equality.

Introduction

In ancient time women of low status have been regarded as a man's property with no political and economic rights. Female status is often associated with their parents and husband; it was really hard for women in olden days to have their own status. The French Revolution of 1789 gave birth to liberty, fraternity and equality which were merely meant for men only. American Civil War 1861 to 1865 led to the abolition of slavery which was not much to do with women empowerment. In India women's empowerment begin in 1840s by Savitribai Phule by establishing girl's school. The early movement mainly focus on right to education and property right later on main emphasis had given to the political, social and economic rights.

Women empowerment is often associated with the feminist movement. The first phase of feminist movement begins by 1920s where women began to demand for political participation. The second phase was during the periods of 1960s after the end of Second

World War. The movement is mainly for the legal and social equality of women. Equal Pay Act, and Civil Right Act of 1960s were some of the successes of feminist second wave of movement. Women's empowerment has been heard since 1980s throughout the globe with the introduction of 'The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)' 1981. This has become the foundation of international treaty for women's empowerment and rights. The UN's Third World Conference on Women in 1985, coin the term 'Women Empowerment'. Women empowerment may have seven components;

1. Self-respect
2. Power to control oneself decision and rights
3. Power to make decision inside and outside the house
4. Right to access to resources and opportunities
5. Ability to influence the social, economic and political courses
6. Right to be elected
7. Right to determined choices in free will.

Women empowerment seeks to raise status of women through education and active participation in economic and political affairs. The policy and programs framed by a group of experts with the inclusion of women will be better off, if compare with the policy and program framed by men. Empowering the women became most necessitate to explore the full potential other half of world population. They must have a say in contributing to the society, economics, political, education and other development.

India is one of the frontrunners for women empowerment movement. During the course of freedom struggle women had immensely contributed side by side with men. As continuing the government of India incorporated laws related with women empowerment in form of fundamental rights, directive principle of state policy, 73rd and 74th amendment, and ultimately to Women's Reservation Act 2023. The Act gave 1/3 of seat reserve at Lok Sabha, and State Legislative Assembly for 15 years. This act is a pro-active step towards gender equality, increasing women participation in decision making. The Women's Reservation Act 2023 is indeed a way ahead for the women empowerment. The pertinent question is will this act be a practical and workable. India is a patriarchal society imbedded with religious norms of women as a supporter to husband or the way around, thus there may not be much changes. Manipur is known for its women roles in economic development, social movement, human rights movement, etc. The Women Reservation Act of 2023 and the empowerment of women in Manipur may be one of the best examples that can be built up. The women of Manipur throughout the history had been known for its active participation in economic, political, and social activities. The Women Reservation Act can be best tested in respect to women's empowerment at Manipur.

Review of Literatures

Jayabrata Ghosh in his article Empowerment of Women through Participation in Indian Politics argued that, "The word women empowerment essentially means that the women have the capacity to regulate their day-today lives in the social, political and economic terms. The principle of gender equality is protected in the Indian Constitution in its preamble,

fundamental rights, fundamental duties and directive principles. The Constitution not only grants equality to women but also empowers the state to adopt measures, a position and indiscriminate in favor of women. Within the framework of democratic polity, our laws, developmental policies, plans and programmes are aimed at women's advancement in different spheres. India has also ratified various international conventions to secure rights of women".

Dr. R. Sankar in his article Women Empowerment Through Political Participation in India: Problems and Challenges in Contemporary Political System narrated that, "Numerous factors influence on Women facing several problems when they have entered politics. Illiteracy is one of the highest obstacles in creating women as politically empowered. Because of the lack of indulgent they do not know about their basic and political rights. There are many reasons which are controlling women from being politically active. Because of their low fragment in internal political party construction of India, they have failed to gather resources and support for nurturing their political constituencies. Women do not get adequate financial provision from the political parties to contest the elections. Insufficient provision of resources or lack of resources and lack of education, they do not advantage adequate political training. Poverty is also a predominant encounter in recognizing women's political participation. The female child in a poor family is the main victim and has to face many problems. The proportion of school drop outs is also found to be moderately higher in the case of women compare than men. Caste system or class structure also predominant in society is also a huge problem. The lower caste girl child could not attend the school because of the low level of income of their families. These women got themselves indulged in less paying work to take care of their families. Women are not only having lack of awareness about their rights cherished in India constitution but also the due to lack of political spirit and etc".

Research Gaps

The scholars have presented vividly the empowerment of women through political participation along with the challenges face by the women. Nevertheless, they had missed out the contribution made by the Women Reservation Act to the women's empowerment. The act was surface on 2023 and been waiting to be tested on the upcoming elections. This study will deal with the probable outcomes of the act in empowering the women.

Objective

The study intends to explore the women's empowerment through Women Reservation Act 2023. In doing so, the quest of women empowerment in India will better explain in a systematic way. The act is on trial basis for a period of 15 years and this study will analysed the probable outcome of the women empowerment through this act.

Methodology

The study will entirely base on the theoretical research, employing content analysis, thematic analysis, or narrative analysis to identify patterns, themes, and gaps in existing knowledge. This method aims to advance knowledge and understanding of women empowerment through the prism of act passed by parliament.

Women's Empowerment through Women Reservation Act

History may not have favour on women's betterment in the past, but the thing had been change lots with the ever increasing consciousness of human rights. India in the wak of its freedom movement incorporated the women empowerment. Despite its strict and biased religion and social perception on women, several social reformist and freedom fighter works for equality with men and women empowerment. The establishment of girls school in 19th century, ashram for women, abolition of 'Sati System', insertion of several provisions of equality and empowerment in constitution, establishment of women commission, establishment of women police stations, etc. are some of the examples of seriousness of India in empowering women.

Rajya Sabha in 2008 passed a bill known as '108th Amendment Bill' for one-third women reservation in legislative bodies (Women's Reservation Bill, The Constitution 108th Amendment Bill, 2008, n.d). The 73rd and 74th Amendment Act was already existed providing one-third reservation for women at Panchayat Institution (73rd and 74th Amendment Act, 2023). Ultimately, Women Reservation Act of 2023 was passed on trial basis for a period of 15 years. The act is formally known as the Constitution 106th Amendment Act, reserving 33% of seats for women at Lok Sabha, State Legislative Assembly

Components of Women Empowerment

Women empowerment is to be yield not to be begging (Yumnam Kunjarashi, personal communication, September 7, 2025). The women empowerment can be yield from the following mechanism;

1. Self-Respect and Sense of Worth.

It is the women itself that treated women badly in true sense and women herself may be responsible for its downgraded treatment. It is the women herself that had to maintain sense of worth and self-respect.

2. Power to control oneself decision and rights.

If the power to make decisions lies in the hand of women itself, then the women may be regarded as empowered.

3. Power to make decision inside and outside the house.

The essence of true empowerment lies in the ability to make decision inside the house as well as outside the house. Outside the house means in public places a well as at work place. It also covers the decision to be made on social, political, cultural, and economics.

4. Right to access to resources and opportunities.

It is the resources that enable one to build oneself in the just and righteous way. And if the women are allowed to fully access to the opportunity then women will outshine man in almost most of the aspect of human lives.

5. Ability to influence the social, economic and political courses

If the women possess the ability to influence the courses of social, economic and political, it will be regarded as women had stand in par with the man.

6. Right to be elected.

Most of the women are very much active in politics yet only few are elected and serve the nation in par with men. When there arises any political uprising it was the women who are in the front, but there are almost nil of women political leaders in the top decision making level. If the women are genuinely given the right to be elected, it will be the point of real women empowerment.

7. Right to determined choices in free will.

Most of the women choices are made by the family and society which were in the hands of men. If the women are given the free will to determine its choice then there may be a possibility of women empowerment.

Conclusion

Women's empowerments have been one of the crucial issues in human history. The feminist movement was the initial stage for women empowerment. It was through this movement that women demanded for self-respect, power to control oneself decision and rights, power to make decision inside and outside the house, right to access to resources and opportunities, ability to influence the social, economic and political courses, right to be elected, and right to determined choices in free will. Thus, in India Women's Reservation Act 2023 was introduced providing gender equality, increasing women participation in decision making or politics and empowerment. This has enabled mould the patriarchal society imbedded with religious norms to change the concept of women as a supporter to husband or the way around.

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