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Status of Indian Women in the Eve of Azadi @75 years

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Abstract:

Status of Indian women in post independent era is no doubt improved than the previous time but there are still many disparities remain as it is which should be unveil and abolish from our society. Women are not mere object. They should be treated as subject in each field. We celebrate our 75 years of independence but still we lagging in respect of women health, education, financial condition, legislative representation etc. Amrit of liberty should be enjoyed by all. Government should execute their policies in true sense.

Keywords: Azadi, women status, amrit, society, government policies.

Introduction: The mother nation is celebrating @75 years of Independence, name ‘Azadi ka Amrit Mahatsov’ . We the Indian feel proud for remain united even after 75 years! It’s really a miracle. Actually it is our destiny to become a nation. After a long struggle of 200 years against British rule finally we arrived at our destination .called, “**Independence**”. But there were so many challenges in this road that we should remember .It is the right time to reassess our strength , capacity , objectives and of course future plan . During freedom struggle our freedom fighters addressed their mother land as “*Maa*” which shows respect and this respect also for women of the mother land. Now, we have to explore the condition of entire women community of the country .The occasion is really auspicious, but without unveil the truth, it is really tough to say “*Glorious 75 years of Independence*” is really a Mahatsov . The path we travelled was not very smooth and easy. The burden of colonialism was huge and task was tremendous but our leaders and policy makers tried to reach the optimum level of development Is their initiatives are enough for each section of the society? Most probably the answer is no , at least in terms of women status . I would like to focus on women’s status in terms of their health, education, financial strength , decision making, placement and etc. As per Global Gender Gap Report 2022 of World Economic Forum, India ranks 135 out of 146 countries. The picture is clear. We all want freedom but nobody knows what it is exactly. Let’s discuss on it.

How Nation is worried about their half of the Sky: Achieved freedom from Colonial master was as like victory in World Cup Football final. We cherished it out and out, but

time goes on and our fantasy faded out, desperateness for existence became the crude reality. Under colonial rule, exploitation was huge which caused poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, underdevelopment and these all issues ultimately turned into uneven society . It is quite impossible for a nascent post colonial nation state to eradicate each disparity within a day. Our policy makers put their emphasis on impending problem .They tried to attain basic goals which could not able to take special care for half of the sky who needed extra care and effort to overcome age long injustice. Bibek Deb Roy, the Chairman of EAC-PM also point out that in any emerging economy overcoming gender discrimination is a big challenge ¹. In every aspects half of the population having suffer from disparity, injustice. If we talk about education, the picture is not very bright. Proper education and well health composed an able society, but in India it have not been examined properly. Lack or insufficient hygienic environment in schools caused dropout. This is purely infrastructural barriers which hindering educational attainment for girls. A small example can make it clear . CAG Report , 2020, shows that 30% of the 2326 constructed toilets in schools across India were non- functional due to lack of running water , cleaning arrangements which caused adverse affects on female attendance . 23% of them dropping out of schools and ultimately it affects on their potential workforce participation,² In May, 2013 the Government of India (Ministry for Women and Child development) established a high level Committee on the Status of Women in India . It is the demand of the time. Previously in 1971, the Government of India also appointed the Committee on the Status of Women in India. The 2013 Committee wants to adopt appropriate policy based on contemporary assessment of Women’s legal, economic, political, education, health and socio-cultural needs,³

The changing scenario of Indian as well as world economy has some positive and negative impact on our socio-economic and political aspects. After independence there were massive industrialization, urbanization, and recently globalizations have some irreversible changes in the life of women. In India women and children are the most vulnerable section of the population and these vulnerability and inequality creates further discrimination for girls and women in India. Let’s take a look on women’s condition in respect of employment.

Employment: The ILO gender wage gap report(2018-2019) assesses the reasons behind the persisting gender wage gap across the world .According to the report separation and polarization by gender of industries , motherhood are the cause of wage gap . Only 4% of total women employed in India are in the organized sector who enjoyed job security and benefits. The condition of Muslim women in workforce is worst .Their representation is less than 10% in India. ⁴ Not only low representation but women workers also deprived from

¹ . EAC-PM Report 2022, Preface

² .EAC-PM, October, 2022

³ . Executive Summary Report on the Status of Women in India, 2013

⁴ Executive Summary Report on the Status of Women in India, 2015, pp-18-19

equal remuneration. According to 'The Equal Remuneration Act (ERA), 1976, any discrimination against women workers in wages, categorization and promotion should be monitored by Government through formation of special cell.⁵ Same as in the case of maternity benefit issue. Maternity benefit Act, 1961 provides universal maternity benefits and child care facilities to all women workers both for organized and unorganized sectors. Unfortunately the provision implemented for a limited circle, not for all.

Violence against women: In our country gender preference is a big problem. Still girls child seems as burden, they cannot look after their paternal family after marriage and family have to bear the cost in forms of dowry in marriage. In 2001 census report there was a clear decline in child sex ratio from 927 to 919 in 2011. State wise data is more painful. In fact women are the most vulnerable section, they suffer from their birth. If we really want to improve women status we have to focus on inter ministerial interventions for effective implementation of policy. Government can take initiatives through media to change mind set and increase awareness regarding laws, rights and policies. Government should introduce Gender Equality Movements in schools, because boys must be engaged to drive away traditional concept of manhood. To promote women voice and security women friendly local bodies (Gram Panchayats) may help. People's representatives also be accountable for their respective area to prevent violence against women, but unfortunately sometimes they personally torturer. It is really shameful for us that after 75 years of independence the status of women is still underprivileged issue. Though few states, like Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, people's representatives provides rewards or punishment against VAWS⁶. Since 1991 odious crime against women in India close to 6% per year. This problem might be solved by addressing structural issues, like- education, health, workforce participation, financial inclusion etc. It is not crime to be a woman, it is simple natural law. If we really want to celebrate our 75th Anniversary of freedom we should establish a gender equal democracy.

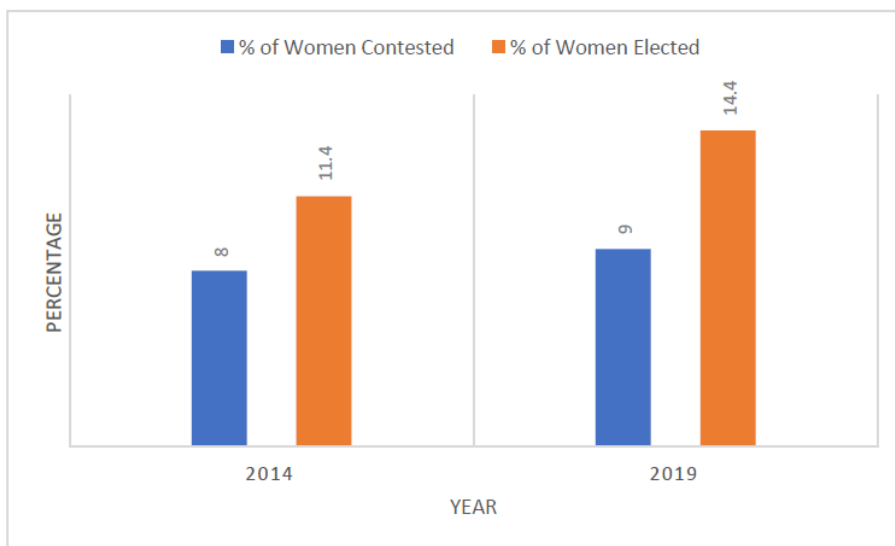
The status of Women in power and decision making process: whether there is any gender equality persist or not that may be realized by gender representation in governance and political participation in a particular country. In India there is a paradox between political participation and the extent of women's participation. Actually still politics is a masculine term. Women are only showcased in parties and they are given most soft role, because women are basically care giver, not policy maker. The reasons behind this blurred picture are patriarchy, power, physiology, tendency etc. In very recently, a report shows that, in February 2021 only 14.4% of seats in Parliament were hold by women⁷. Representation is closely related with decision making process. More and more female representation will create more and more pressure on policy makers. 73rd and 74th

⁵ .Executive Summary Report on the Status of Women in India, 2015,p-16

⁶ .Executive Summary Report on the Status of Women in India, 2015, p-8

⁷ <https://data.unwomen.org/>:

Constitutional amendment act no doubt provides some reservation of seats for women in local administrative bodies but it is insufficient and another point of discord. If we want to move towards ‘Equity’ then reservation should be abolish. Actually our society, at first, sensitized from gender aspect, political parties, governmental bodies should be sensitized . They have to change their role and activities irrespective of gender. In developed countries women not only passive participants rather they are active policy makers in the field of applied politics. But unfortunately after a prolong period of independence we have very few number of successful, influential lady politicians. Though there is slight increase in percentage. In 2014 percentage of women contestant was 8% and in 2019 general election the percentage was 9% . In respect of total number of seats in Lok Shabha the percentage of elected women contestants was 11.4% which was increased in 2019 general election up to 14.4% . No doubt there is a slight improvement in percentage of women participation but we should miles to go. A diagram is given for the purpose of female participation in last two general elections . Actually physical presence is not enough for qualitative change, unless proper utilization of human resource. In Panchayets over the year women participant is high which also reflected in Lok Sabha result . With the help of data we can see the changes in female representation. The nation should increase the amount for gender responsive budget from 6% of overall budget



Lok Sabha Election Percentage of Women Elected and Contested
Source: PIB (2022)

Conclusion: Over the decades there have been numerous schemes was taken for women. The objectives and intentions of these schemes was to improve their lives. We are blessed because we born in Independent India and got some provisions . In last few decades the government of India initiates so many programs, create Commissions, Committee, but there is a lagging between practice and implementation. There are various types of fund

allocation are made for women development, from Ministry of Rural Development, MHRD, ICDS, NCW, etc. but remain insignificant due to lack of goodwill . The policy maker should assess the impact of different schemes on women in terms of economic empowerment, eradication of discrimination against but remain insignificant due to lack of goodwill . The policy maker should assess the impact of different schemes on women in terms of economic empowerment, eradication of discrimination against eradication of discrimination against mere 6% of overall budget . Five years planning is not enough because it takes too much time to materialize and sometimes the policies becomes unambitious and finally failed. However, the nation is trying to uplift their half of the sky through various activities . **Beti bachao Beti padheo** is one of the affective initiatives in last few years which really useful scheme . Girls trafficking is another big problem in India . To tackle this problem the government of India introduced **Swadhar Greh** and **Ujjwala** schemes for those helpless girls who are not destitute inborn but unfortunately they compelled to live like a destitute. Who are the Culprit? Is there any meaning of 75th anniversary of independence to them? Increasing rate of violence against women suppressed the voice of women and few of us who are privileged , think that India is shining and progressing towards new horizon . Respected finance Minister , Mrs. Nirmala Sitaraman announced ‘ Mahila Samnan Savings’ certificate to provide more financial support to those women who has a strong background already . This is not real *bharat*, we witnessed shocking incidents of abuse, malbehavior , sexual atrocities . In fact national policy on women empowerment should focus on equity, out reach capacity of a scheme . We have to travelled more path but at the same time we must pay our homage to our ancestral because without their sacrifice , the journey of 75 years will be incomplete .

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- 7) [https// data.unwomen.org](https://data.unwomen.org)
- 8) www.unicef.org