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WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH POLITICS – AN OVER VIEW.

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KEYWORDS :

The status of **women in India** has been subject to many great changes over the past few millennia From equal status with men in ancient times]through the low points of the medieval period, to the promotion of equal rights by many reformers, the history of women in India has been eventful. In modern India, women have held high offices in India including that of thePresident, Prime Minister, Speaker of the LokSabha and Leader of the Opposition.

As of 2011, the Speaker of the LokSabha and the Leader of the Opposition in the LokSabha (Lower House of the parliament) were women

According to scholars, women in ancient India enjoyed equal status with men in all aspects of life. Works by ancient Indian grammarians such as Patanjali and Katyayana suggest that women were educated in the early Vedic period. Rigvedic verses suggest that women married at a mature age and were probably free to select their own husbands.

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In spite of these conditions, women often became prominent in the fields of politics, literature, education and religion Razia Sultana became the only woman monarch to have ever ruled Delhi. The Gond queen Durgavati ruled for fifteen years before losing her life in a sbattle with Mughal emperor Akbar's general Asaf Khan in 1564. Chand Bibi defended Ahmednagar against the powerful Mughal forces of Akbar in the 1590s. Jehangir's wife NurJehaneffectively wielded imperial power, and was recognized as the real power behind the Mughal throne. The Mughal princesses Jahanara and Zebunnissa were well-known poets, and also influenced the ruling powers. Shivaji'smother,Jijabai, was queen regent because of her ability as a warrior and an administrator. In South India, many women administered villages, towns, and divisions, and ushered in new social and religious institutions

European scholars observed in the 19th century that Hindu women are "naturally chaste" and "more virtuous" than other women During the British Raj, many reformers such as Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and JyotiraoPhule fought for the betterment of women. Peary CharanSarkar, a former student of Hindu College, Calcutta and a member of "Young Bengal", set up the first free school for girls in India in 1847 in Barasat, a suburb of Calcutta (later the school was named Kalikrishna Girls' High School). While this might suggest that there was no positive British contribution during the Raj era, that is not entirely the case. Missionaries' wives such as Martha Mault née Mead and her daughter Eliza Caldwell née Mault are rightly remembered for pioneering the education and training of girls in south India. This practice was initially met with local resistance, as it flew in the face of tradition. Raja Rammohan Roy's efforts led to the abolition of Sati under Governor-General William Cavendish-Bentinck in 1829. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's crusade for improvement in the situation of widows led to the Widow Remarriage Act of 1856. Many women reformers such as PanditaRamabai also helped the cause of women.

KitturChennamma, queen of the princely state Kittur in Karnataka led an armed rebellion against the British in response to the Doctrine of lapse. Abbakka Rani, queen of coastal Karnataka, led the defence against invading European armies, notably the Portuguese in the 16th century. Rani Lakshmi Bai, the Queen of Jhansi, led the Indian Rebellion of 1857 against the British. She is now widely considered as a national hero. Begum HazratMahal, the co-ruler of Awadh, was another ruler who led the revolt of 1857. She refused deals with the British and later retreated to Nepal. The Begums of Bhopal were also considered notable female rulers during this period. They did not observe purdah and were trained in martial arts.

ChandramukhiBasu, KadambiniGanguly and AnandiGopal Joshi were some of the earliest Indian women to obtain a degree.

In 1917, the first women's delegation met the Secretary of State to demand women's political rights, supported by the Indian National Congress. The All India Women's Education Conference was held in Pune in 1927, it became a major organisation in the movement for social change. In 1929, the Child Marriage Restraint Act was passed, stipulating fourteen as the minimum age of marriage for a girl. Though Mahatma Gandhi himself married at the age of thirteen, he later urged people to boycott child marriages and called upon young men to marry child widows.

Women played an important part in India's independence struggle. Some famous freedom fighters include BhikajiCama, Dr. Annie Besant, PritilataWaddedar, VijayalakshmiPandit, Rajkumari AmritKaur, ArunaAsaf Ali, SuchetaKriplani andKasturba Gandhi. Other notable names include Muthulakshmi Reddy and Durgabai Deshmukh. The Rani of Jhansi Regiment of Subhas Chandra Bose's Indian National Army consisted entirely of women, including Captain Lakshmi Sahgal.Sarojini Naidu, a poet and freedom fighter, was the first Indian woman to become President of the Indian National Congressand the first woman to become the governor of a state in India.

Women in India now participate fully in areas such as education, sports, politics, media, art and culture, service sectors, science and technology, etc Indira Gandhi, who served as Prime Minister of India for an aggregate period of fifteen years, is the world's longest serving woman Prime Minister.

The Constitution of India guarantees to all Indian women equality (Article 14), no discrimination by the State (Article 15(1)), equality of opportunity (Article 16), and equal pay for equal work (Article 39(d)). In addition, it allows special provisions to be made by the State in favour of women and children (Article 15(3)), renounces practices derogatory to the dignity of women (Article 51(A) (e)), and also allows for provisions to be made by the State for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief. (Article 42)

Feminist activism in India gained momentum in the late 1970s. One of the first national-level issues that brought women's groups together was the Mathura rape case. The acquittal of policemen accused of raping a young girl Mathura in a police station led to country-wide protests in 1979-1980. The protests, widely covered by the national media, forced the Government to amend the Evidence Act, the Criminal Procedure Code, and the Indian Penal Code; and created a new offence, custodial rape. Female activists also united over issues such as female infanticide, gender bias, women's health, women's safety, and women's literacy.

Since alcoholism is often associated with violence against women in India, many women groups launched anti-liquor campaigns in Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Odisha, Madhya

Pradesh and other states. Many Indian Muslim women have questioned the fundamental leaders' interpretation of women's rights under the Shariat law and have criticized the triple talaq system.

In 1990s, grants from foreign donor agencies enabled the formation of new women-oriented NGOs. Self-help groups and NGOs such as Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) have played a major role in the advancement of women's rights in India. Many women have emerged as leaders of local movements; for example, MedhaPatkar of the Narmada BachaoAndolan.

The Government of India declared 2001 as the Year of Women's Empowerment. The National Policy For The Empowerment Of Women came was passed in 2001.

In 2006, the case of Imrana, a Muslim rape victim, was highlighted by the media. Imrana was raped by her father-in-law. The pronouncement of some Muslim clerics that Imrana should marry her father-in-law led to widespread protests, and finally Imrana's father-in-law was sentenced to 10 years in prison. The verdict was welcomed by many women's groups and the All India Muslim Personal Law Board

In 2010 March 9, one day after International Women's day, RajyaSabha passed the Women's Reservation Bill requiring that 33% of seats in India's Parliament and state legislative bodies be reserved for women.

CONCLUSON :

A good nation is built only with empowering women . When women are empowered society with stability is assured. Empowerment of women is essential as their thoughts and their value systems lead development of good family, good society and ultimately good nation.