Politics of Presence in India: An Analysis

Dr. Satarupa Pal

Assistant Professor in Political Science, Asutosh College, Kolkata, India

Abstract:

Politics of presence is a contested concept in democracies around the world. Politics of presence refers to accommodation of hitherto excluded groups in especially ethnic minorities and women in democratic decision-making bodies. These measures included also use of gender quotas in the same bodies. Anne Philips in her celebrated book The Politics of Presence (1995), has been central arguments for increasing the number of women in formal politics. Politics of presence inspires many scholars of democratic theory, political representation, citizenship and multiculturalism world over. Indian government guaranteed various measures for women and minorities especially Scheduled caste and Scheduled Tribe communities in democratic bodies. For women two third reservation of seats are reserved in democratic decision making bodies in local governance. Despite of that fact, they remain excluded from their effective representation of the same bodies. They have been faced various discriminatory practices in their life cycles. Against this backdrop, the present paper explores that the politics of presence as a conceptual tool for analyzing the position of minorities and women in Indian context and how they accommodate in democratic decision making bodies.

Key words: politics, presence, excluded, women, democracy, representation.

Politics of presence is a contested concept of socio-cultural experience. Notion of presence hinge on the relationship between the lines and mediated, on notions of authenticity and originality. Presence raises questions of the character of self- awareness, of the presentation of self. Interaction is implicated----presence implies being in someone's presence. Celebrated scholar Anne Philips in her book The Politics of Presence (1995), arguing for increasing the number of women in formal politics. The politics of presence also being questioned became of the fact requirement of representation of disadvantaged groups in the elected assemblies. What is the role of presence of disadvantaged groups in democracies? Is their representation effective one? Are they asserting their voice for their respective groups? What is their accountability in the democracies?

On the contrary, deliberative democrats are usually neglected to groups' representation, criticize models of politics that rely on the aggregation of individual or group interest, and reject strict mechanisms of accountability that would make it impossible for political

representation to change their minds in the presence of deliberation. We can say that deliberative democracy is the right to challenge for the cause of accountability. It needs to assure that all citizens may equal access to take part in decision making bodies, and to recognize the continuing importance of group interests.

Since 20th century, the democracies around the different aspects including voting rights, having election, participation of all citizens irrespective of their sex, caste and class. Racial discrimination in voting rights was only prohibited in the US in the year 1965; Switzerland granted women the equal rights to vote in 1971, South Africa held its first non-racial election in 1994.

It is said that democracies ensure political equality through the voting rights for their citizens. It raised questions that how the democracy will be accelerated which immensely composed of men or economically sound persons or ethnic majority. Generally democracies are composition of various heterogeneous groups in terms caste, class, gender and various strata of people etc.

The politics of presence also analyses and solutions descriptive representation of ethnic minorities and women. In line with the shift in recent years gender scholars towards a more intersectional approach and using the case of the UK labour party's All Women Shortlist (AWS) policy, asking how gender and race with each other during candidate selection. Conducting interview for this work, making two data sets including B;ack and Ethnic minority MPs over the last decades-considering their gender and race –gender candidates at each stage labour's selection process over one-hundred of the fifty seats for 2015 UK election.

Politics of presence is basically emphasized on women's representation and its impact on democracy. The theory posits that women's politicians are best equipped to represent women's interest.

Sociologically speaking, politics of presence actually reflects that everyday life experiences are significant to the formation of political views and behaviours: women's politicians can connect the women's voters rather than male counterparts.

The theory of politics of presence has gained greater support in more recent empirical research (Bratton and Rayb 2003: Schmind Barya and Mashler 2005: Thomas 1994: Wangeurd 2000, 2009). Studies show that political views and promotions of interests of women's representatives are closely linked those of women voters.

But the women representatives are heterogeneous groups but the common problem areas have taken place on the agenda.

However, Philips' politics of presence refers that shared life experiences are mechanisms that will lead to change of the political agenda and by extension the condition of people's everyday lives.

Philips' describes gender parity among policy-makers as essential if women's interests are to be adequately addressed: there "must "be equality among those elected to office: There are particular needs, interest, and concerns that arises from women's experiences, and there will be inadequately addresses in a politics that dominated by men. Equal rights to a vote have not proved strong enough to deal with this problem; there must also be equality among those elected to office (Philips 1995, 66).

On the whole the politics of presence explores feminist standpoint that elected women must be look after women's interest in democracies. Elected women are raised their voices for women's cause.

However, the politics of presence challenged by I. M Young in her book Inclusion and Democracy (2000). The alternative approach may be called the theory of the politics of awareness. The central idea of Marion's writing that politicians need to consciously relate to particular groups' social experience in order to represent groups' interests. The politics of awareness believed not only women's issues by politicians rather than change –oriented agenda by them.

Against the outset, the present paper using politics of presence as conceptual tool for analyzing hitherto excluded groups with special reference to women in democratic bodies in India.

Politics of presence: An Indian Overview Politics of presence is a debated concept and it has various dimensions in operating democracy. Politics of presence is the incorporation of hitherto excluded groups. In other words, politics of presence is an exclusionary terrain by which excluded groups especially women included in democratic bodies. In Indian context, dalits or scheduled caste and scheduled tribes people have been faced denial of various rights in their life cycles.

Indian government guaranteed various provisions for marginalized groups through protective discriminations. In reality, they are deprived in every walk of life. The discrimination is embedded in societal interrelations and institutionalizations that exclude, discriminate, isolate and deprive some groups on the base of the groups' identities such as caste and ethnicity (Rao, 39). Sukhdeo Thorat observes that exclusion and discrimination in civil, cultural and particularly economic spheres such as corporation and labour employment is, therefore, interval to the system and a necessary outcome of its governing principles. In the market economy framework, the occupational inability would operate through restrictions in various markets such as land, labour, credit, other inputs and serious necessary for any economic activity. Labour being an integral part of the protection process of any economic activity would obviously become a part of market discrimination (2003).

So, we can say that caste and untouchability based exclusion can be operationalised   in economic civil, political, cultural practices and the denial of opportunities in economic spheres would necessary operate through market and non-market exchange (Rao.40).

Untouchability in schools has contributed to far higher dropout and illiteracy levels for dalits children than those the general populations.

It is seen that Andhra Pradesh tops the list in terms of reported cases, while Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, where one-third of countries dalits live, report very little.

In Indian context, women are taking part in local governance since 1993. The one –third of the seats reserved for women in panchayati raj institutions.   But they are the silent spectators. They could not express their view in local governance institutions. Baviskar and Mathew's book Inclusion and Exclusion in local governance (2009) continuing the women's descriptive representation in local governance.

Gendered and castiest organization practices that constrain the participation of elected women representatives are consistently noted but have only begun to be systematically analyzed. The practices ranges from the kinds of language and writing used and the physical organizations of segregated seating in panchayat spaces (Tekchand , Jyoti and Shamma 1997) to the scheduling of meetings at times when women cannot attend due to family responsibilities , and the location of meetings in upper-caste hamlets that lower caste- villagers hesitate to enter …….In feminist theorizing, Anne Philips work (1998), in particular the book The Politics Presence (1995), has been central argument for increasing the numbers of women in formal politics. Philips and other in the broad tradition of feminist-democratic theory see women's continued exclusion from formal politics as a structural problem rising in part from their resource endowments for public life-----their education, spare time , employment income and connections----- (being) lower than those of men (UNRISD 2005, 149). It is believed that increasing women's participation has been changed the structural and institutional   perspectives in democracy. Anne Philips conceded the view that reform of current governance arrangements should be a rallying point for feminist action, reflecting the case for quotas either through party lists or reserved seats.

The main normative proposition for the inclusion of women in formal politics is gender parity. Two other propositions are also provide supports for inclusion; first that women will take part into policy making; second, their presence will change the quality of public life. Women's increased presence would therefore improve both the content and quality of politics.

A key assumption underlying these propositions' that women's different material experiences (especially in the domestic sphere) give them perceptions, interests, and attitudes to politics of difference from those of men.

India's 73rd constitutional amendment mandated that one-third of all seats in local government be filled by women. The amendment also brought in decentralization refers across the country, through the actual design of the system and the extent of functional devolution varies across states.

The number of women in state and national level assemblies where no such quotas exist, remarks below 10 per cent. At the same time, increasing number of women is high at local level; the impact of their presence is broadly accepted as being women.

The general sense, especially in the early years, was that women had been handed access to power but access remained meaningless since women could amend little control due to social forces they engaged in household chores irrespective of caste, class, communities.

Many literatures depict that elected women representatives taking part in politics and gaining position or as surrogates and mere tokens enmeshed in patriarchal structures and bonds of family and community (Lieten 1996; Pai 1998). But even in early work, and increasingly, as the experiment remains in place, we find women being projected as pragmatic agents, often working against great odds, which reflect and act on some aspects of women's interests: mostly the immediately practical gender needs of shelter, childcare, education and infrastructure that affect them and their facilities (Duflo and Chattopadhyay 2004). And less so no longer term strategic interests that could lead to lasting change in gender relations (Jayal 2006).

The Indian experience shows that elected women representatives especially in Southern states which are relatively more gender-equal and PR institutions are more entrenched (Ban and Raw 2006).

Individual women also took part in organizing effort prior to entering politics. It is called "political apprentship" (Cornwall and Goetz 2005m 784), which include women's organizations and self-help group , teach women candidates valuable organizations and political skills and provide representatives with ongoing support network (Matlab 2006).

However, when groups are involved in economic development work in context s of marginalization, group members are not largely excluded in local; governance (Narayan 2002).

India's gender quota empowerment is particularly significant as it was implemented decentralization reforms. In this regard, we can say that women's inclusion could change and improve policy or making service provision more effective and a focus on women's interests would change the nature of politics or decrease corruption. As important is the common emphasis on institutionalized reform as an effective way to make governance inclusive.

It is noteworthy that overlapping reform arrangements focus on service attention to the design of public institutions and organizational practices that facilitate or constraints the effective of women as elected representatives (Misra and Kudra 2008).

In a nutshell, there seems to be consensus on how quotas are working in India. Notwithstanding institutions of inspired leadership and courageous action by individual women profiled in various case studies, the extent of active and decisive participation is limited but highly variable.

However, some elected women got enter into politics and empowered. It reflected positive change overtime. Many women unable to get empowered for several constraints in front of them which excluded them from inclusive governance.

It is also apparent that much of the analysis is connected around issues of recognition and valorization of identity politics, failing to connect between understanding an individuals' behavior as highlighted in the Indian quota literature, institution –focused on feminist political perspective.

It is said that gender justice that strategize around quota implementation. In reality, politics of presence is remained a strategy to include hitherto excluded groups especially women in democratic bodies.

Conclusion: Politics of presence has become the reality of democracies across the world. In other words, the politics of presence is an exclusionary terrain of inclusion of hitherto excluded groups in democratic bodies. Generally, politics of presence using to include especially ethnic minorities and women in democratic decision –making bodies. But excluded groups could not express their views because of discriminatory set of the same bodies. Their representation is not effective one, reflecting their nominal representation in the democratic bodies. We can say that one part of the process of politics of presence towards understanding is the theoretical reasoning due to the inters. Indian experience shows that elected women were "proxy" representatives in democratic bodies including panchayati raj institutions. So, the debated around us what continues "women's interest", for example, intense within feminist –oriented research. Contemporary debates concern features of elitism in gender research---that is, a tendency to ascribe interests to women in a top-down approach--- and also feature of essentialism: the tendency to view that man and women are unchanged categories. Thus, debates also emerged that how gender is related to categories such as ethnicity, age and class which previously said in the debated (Deitz2003). Celebrated scholar Hannah Pitkin in her book the politics of presence (1967) conceded the view that concept of interest is "ubiquitous" in debates on representation. In reality, we have seen that various groups in terms of gender, class and ethnicity are categories which can serve as important aspects in the fields of representation, trying to make their presence visible in democracies., Indian democracy has long way to go for the effective interplay between elected representatives and everyday lives of citizens. The politics of presence also ushered the question that the actual role of elected representatives and the importance of parliamentary process in Indian democracy.

References:
1. Boston,K,and Ray L. (2002). 'Descriptive Representation, Policy Outcomes, amd Municipal Day –Care Coverage in Norway', American Journal of Political Science, Vol. 46, N0. 2, pp. 428-437.
2. Baviskar, B.S amd Mathew, G. (ed) (2009), Inclusion Inclusion and Exclusion in Local Governance: Field Studies from Rural India. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

3. Cornwall, Andrea and Goetz, Anne Marrie. (2005).'Democratizing Democracy: Feminist Perspective, Democratization, Vol 12, No. 5, pp. 783-800.
4. Dietz, M. G. (2003). 'Current Controversies in Feminist Theory', Annual Review Political Science, Vol. 6, No.1, p. 399.
5. Duflo, E and Chattopadhyay, R. (2004). 'Impact of Reservation in the Panchayati Raj: Evidence from a Nationwide Randomized Experiment', Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 39, No. 9, pp. 979-986.
6. Goetz, A, M. (ed) (1997). Getting Institutions Right for Women in Developments, London: Zed.
7. Kudva, N. (2003).'Engineering Elections: The Experiences of Women in Panchayati Raj in Karnataka, India', International Journal of Politics Culture and Society, Vol. 16, No. 3, pp.445-463.
8. Lieten, G. K. (1996). 'Panchayats in Western Uttarpradesh: Nameshake Member', Economic and Political Weekly, Vol.31, No. 39, pp. 2700-2705.
9. Miraftab,F. (2006).'Feminist Praxis, Citizenship and Informal Politics', International Journal of Feminist Politics, Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 194-218.
10. Misra K. and Kudra, N. (2008). 'En (Gendering) Effective Decentralization: The Experience of Women in Panchayati Raj in India', in Victoria, A. B and Faranak . M and Christopher, S. (ed) Planning and Democratization Contested spaces for Public Action in the Global South, London: Rutledge.
11. Pai, Sudha (1998). 'Pradhans in New Panchayat, Field Notes from Meerut District, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 33, No. 18, pp.1009-1010.
12. Philips, Anne (1995). The Politics of Presence, New York: Clarendon.
13. Pitkin, Hannah. F. (1972). The Concept of Representation, USA: University of California Press.
14. Schwindt-BayerLA, Mishler, W (2005). ' An Integrated Model of Women's Representation' , The Journal of Politics, Vol. 67, No. 2 , pp. 407-28.
15. Thomas, S. (1994). How Women Legislate, UK: OUP.
16. UNRISD (United Nations Research Institute for Social Development) 2005 'Gender Equality, Striking for Justice in an Unequal World'. https://www.unrisd.org/en/library/publications/gender-equality-striving-for-justice-in-an-unequal-world (accessed on 5th July 2022).
17. Wangneurd, L. (2000).'Testing the Politics of Presence Women's Representation in the Swidish Riksdag', Scandinavian Political Studies, Vol, 23, No. 1, pp. 67-91.
18. Wangneurd, L. (2009). 'Women in Parliaments: Descriptive and Substantive Representation', Annual Review of Political Science, pp. 51-69.
19. Young, I. M. (2000) Inclusion and Democracy, UK: OUP.