

Historical Development of Women Movement in Nepal and Their Significance

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Received: September 06, 2025; **Accepted:** September 24, 2025; **Published:** October 01, 2025**ABSTRACT**

This paper discusses the struggle for equality in Nepal, focusing on women's socio-political participation and the challenges they face. Nepal has experienced significant socio-political transformations over the past two decades, from civil war to negotiated peace, unitary to federal, and now to the republican system. Despite unfavorable circumstances, Nepali women have established themselves as key actors in these changes. The new constitution in 2015 ensured 33% of seats and inclusive provisions in all government positions, leading to women occupying in 2017, women accounted for 40.95% of elected representatives in local elections, while in 2022, they made up 41.21 percent of all elected representatives. However, continued concerted action among all actors is essential for achieving equality and equity. Nepal has made significant strides in women's empowerment and legal rights over the past two decades, but challenges remain in implementing these gains and addressing issues like gender-based violence and discrimination. Future strategies include strengthening implementation, addressing social norms, and collaborating with international organizations.

Keywords: Feminist Movement, Gender Equality, Changing Gender Status, Political Participation**Introduction**

Nepal's patriarchal society has seen women's rights movements revolutionize their status and improve their lives. These movements have led to significant changes in women's lives, such as the end of Sati Pratha, a cruel practice that required women to burn together in a pyre to serve their husbands. Prime Minister Chandra Shamsher ended the practice on July 8, 1920, marking a milestone in Nepal's women's rights movement. Today, women continue to face challenges and opportunities in their society [1].

Historically, Queen Rajendra Laxmi led a process to unify Nepal, while Mrs. Kamala Kunwar participated in the Nalapani Fort battle in the Anglo-Nepal war in 1814-16. Nepali women fought against the attempted British invasion, with the dead bodies of women inside the Nalapani Fort. Mrs. Yogmaya Neupane, born in Simle, Bhojpur, organized protests against discriminatory practices and demanded Dharma Rajya, meaning

"good governance" in the religious state of the time. Under her leadership, Nepali women began fighting against suppression and discrimination. Yogmaya and her followers planned mass immolation to put the weight of the deaths on the ruler's conscience, but were arrested and jailed. They were released four months later, and in their final act of rebellion, they all perished on 14 July 1941[2].

Nepal's first feminist organisation, Nepal Women's Association, was established in 1947 by Mangala Devi Singh, a strong Nepali Congress leader. The organisation fought for women's rights and education, leading to democratic reforms. The abolishment of chhaupadi, a discriminatory practice where menstruating women are exiled, was a significant step towards women's rights. In 2017, Nepal passed a law punishing chhaupadi offenders with jail time or fines.

Nepali citizens can now acquire Nepali citizenship if both parents have Nepali citizenship. The Citizenship Act, 2006, allowed children of Nepali women married to foreigners to obtain citizenship if they do not have another citizenship or permanent

residency in Nepal. This marked a milestone in women's rights and allowed many children to acquire citizenship. The Interim Constitution of 2007 reserved a 33% quota for women in the political system, leading to women securing more seats in the Constituent Assembly and cabinet.

The Domestic Violence (Offence and Punishment) Act, 2009 and the Domestic Violence (Offence and Punishment) Rules, 2010, have significantly impacted the women's rights movement in Nepal. The act provided survivors with a platform to report abuse and promotes prompt health checkups and protection. In 2017, a new law defined marital rape as a crime and set a five-year jail term, allowing women in abusive relationships to seek alimony or compensation [3].

The Balatkari Hos Ta campaign, organized by women in Nepal, aimed to raise awareness about the increasing number of rape and sexual violence cases. Similar performances were held across the country. The 'Ajhai Kati Sahane' campaign redefined social movements against sexual violence. The Department of Immigration proposed an amendment in the Immigration Procedure, 2008, which led to protests demanding women's right to freedom of movement. The 'Rato Kar Maaf Gar' campaign aimed to demand the pardon of tax on sanitary pads, which was approved in the annual budget 2021/22. These protests questioned the government's decision to label women as second-class citizens [4].

At the Women's March in Kathmandu, Hima Bista proclaimed that "My vagina will vote you out," sparking controversy. Critics criticized her for focusing on the term "vagina" in feminist discourse, arguing it alienated women who weren't born with a vagina and failed to consider intersectionality, a term coined by American civil rights activist Kimberle Crenshaw. Intersectionality is a term that acknowledges an individual's varying social and political identities, which influence their experiences of privilege and discrimination. Bista, an urban, educated 'upper-caste' woman, acknowledges that not everyone identifying as a woman may have a vagina. This concept is part of third and fourth wave feminism, which seeks to expand discourse to marginalized and third world individuals, LGBTIQ issues, sex positivity, and transfeminism [5].

Objective

The research explores the challenges faced by women in Nepal's socio-political movements, their impact on the political landscape, and evaluates strategies to enhance their participation.

Methodology

This study uses research methodology, a standard strategy for conducting research, to analyze data collected and analyzed from secondary sources like Nepal's constitutions, journals, and books and online documents. It is historical, exploratory, and analytical, providing a brief overview of the contribution of women in Nepal's political movement and achievement.

Discussion

Situation of women in Ancient period

Ancient Vedic philosophy respected women's equality and rights, allowing education, self-selection of spouses, property rights, inter-caste marriage, and rituals like Upanayan. However,

post-Vedic era saw systematic oppression by priestly Brahmins, leading to a decline in Vedic equity and a mass of ritual followers, resulting in a downward trend in women's Vedic position [6].

In ancient Vedic philosophy, women were respected and equal to men, with equal rights to education, property, and inter-caste marriage. However, post-Vedic era saw systematic oppression by priestly Brahmins, leading to a decline in Vedic equity. Bhrigu Rishi's Manusmriti, a code of conduct, propagated contradictory messages, favoring women and controlling them. The first message was that a household that values women would make God happy as well (Manusmriti, verse 3-56). The second message was that fathers should control women when they are young, husbands should control them when they are young, and sons should control them when they are older (Manusmriti, verse, 5-148).

The Hindu community recognized four famous female figures in the Vedic era: Ghosha, Lopamudra, Gargi, and Sulabha Maitreyi. Women enjoyed a high place in society, shared equal standing, and liberty, despite the oppressive nature of the post-Vedic era [7].

The most relentless of the Brahman lawgiver was Manusmriti, a code of conduct prepared by Bhrigu Rishi as he propagated two things simultaneously. The first message was that even the God would be happy in the house where females are respected (Manusmriti, verse 3-56). The second message was that women are supposed to be controlled by father in early age, by husband in youth, and by sons in older age (Manusmriti, verse, 5-148). The contradictory messages given at the same time as former favoring the women, and second one is controlling over them. Later, the patriarchal society practiced much the second one, which is the anti-feminist message of Manusmriti. Hindu community recognized four famous female figures active in Vedic era as Ghosha, Lopamudra, Gargi and Sulabha Maitreyi. Gargi was one of the philosophers, who argued with Yajnavalkya in Janaksabha [8]. If knowledge is power, women were not weak in those days. That is why women had a high place in society, shared equal standing and enjoyed liberty.

Hindu society worships Kali as a goddess of power and strength, known for demolishing evil characters like Sumbha, Nishumbha, Mahishasura, and Raktaveeja. She is also revered for her trait-man leadership. Other legendary female powers include Durga, Saraswati, and Laxmi. Panchakanya women, including Ahalya, Draupadi, Tara, Kunti, and Mandodari, are reverend women in Hinduism. The feminist movement has transformed women's roles from serving and caring to decision-making, aiming to end discrimination and oppression. Women are now half of the population and workforce, and their participation and mobilization are key to social progress in contemporary times [9].

In Islam, women, including contemporary Prophet Mohammad, enjoyed full rights and freedom. Nusayba advocated for women's rights, asking why God only addresses men in the Quran. The Quran emphasizes women's full participation in society and religious practices, allowing them to attain all qualities men have access to [10].

Buddhism rejects the idea that women are less valuable than men [11]. Buddhism accepts the biological and physical differences

between the sexes and views men and women as equally valuable to society. Wives and husbands are expected to carry out their responsibilities equally and with equal zeal within the family.

The status of women in Christianity is not all that different from that of other groups. During Jesus' time, women in Palestine were considered inferiors, subordinated to their fathers and husbands. However, Jesus did not differentiate between men and women in his preaching, promoting women's hearing the word of God, experiencing messianic salvation, and participating in the future kingdom of God in complete equality. Despite this, encyclicals and Pope Paul VI's declarations condemned gender discrimination and the subordination of women in the social world. The women's movement emerged in the industrialized region dominated by Christianity, spreading worldwide [12].

The feminist movement has transformed women's roles from serving and caring for men to decision-making individuals across various religions and cultures. It aims to end discrimination and oppression, recognizing women as half of the population and workforce, and recognizing their participation in all spheres of human life as key to social progress.

Feminists recognize politics as the core of policymaking and campaign for women's inclusion in sectors. Despite efforts, women are globally marginalized and considered weaker by patriarchal norms. From the 19th century in industrialized countries, women's voices have grown in the 20th century, aiming for gender justice and equality. The feminist movement uses strategies like request, demand, and pressure to establish provisions for gender equality, breaking the self-reproducing power of masculinity and promoting diversity and participation [13]. Historically, male leaders have established rules as cultural norms, institutionalizing political power in their favor. This has led to discrimination against women. Three types of rules: traditional, rational-legal, and charismatic, give power to rulers. Feminists are attempting to replace traditional rules with rational-legal and charismatic rules, aiming for gender balance in politics and humanitarian society. The Forth Women World Conference declared women's participation in all spheres of social life [14].

Women Movement in Nepal

There have been many influential women throughout history who have influenced Nepali politics and society. In his book *Medieval Nepal Volume 2*, DR Regmi claims that Gangarani, the Queen of Visvamalla, the fourth king of Bhatgaon (1547–1560), was the main force behind the throne for many years under her son Trailokya Malla. When her husband Pratap Singh Shah passed away, Queen Rajendra Laxmi took over as regent and ruled Nepal in spite of courtiers' attempts to persuade her to perform sati on her husband's funeral pyre. Queen Lalita Tripura Sundari's position also helped Bhimsen Thapa maintain his authority in the court and launch an anti-British campaign. Nepali women participated in various movements for centuries, including the Nalapani War in 1814, against British forces. Despite Nepal losing, their bravery was highly regarded by the enemy, as Nepali women fought for national sovereignty.

After the Nalapani war, women in Nepal initiated a movement focusing on sociopolitical issues. Divya Koirala attempted to

form a women's committee in 1917, but was forced into exile. Yogmaya Neupane, inspired by the Josmani Saint Tradition, initiated the Dharma Rajya movement, which aimed to address women's oppression and humanize society. The movement included issues like stopping child marriage, allowing widow marriage, and ending slavery. It also demanded abolition of slavery and pay rise for working people. This movement instilled the feminist movement in Nepal [1].

Feminism in Nepal began with Yogmaya Neupane's rebellion against the Rana regime in the early 20th century. Yogmaya, a Hindu religious leader and poet, demanded a 'dharma bhikshya' from Prime Minister Juddha Shumsher and founded the first women's rights organization, the Nari Samiti.

Neupane's group campaigned against the slavery system, leading to its abolishment in 1925. Throughout her life, she advocated for child marriage prohibition, widow remarriage rights, women's equal opportunities, and the hierarchical caste system. In 1936, she launched a mass self-immolation campaign, resulting in 68 deaths. This led to the establishment of organizations like Adarsha Mahila Samaj and the Nepal Women's Association in 1948, which aimed to raise women's awareness about child marriage, polygamy, and mismatched marriages, and advocate for women's suffrage [15].

Women have been at the forefront of many Nepal's political movements, often not as recognized as men. Rebanti Kumari Acharya founded the Adarsha Mahila Sangh in the mid-40s, while Mangala Devi Singh demanded the right to vote. Women's groups became more active after democracy came in 1950, demanding rights to education, property, and equality. During King Mahendra's autocratic Panchayat rule, women's organizations became limited, but they regained prominence after the restoration of democracy in 1990. After the restoration, women occupy prominent positions in government, acting as role models for young women.

Nepali women have been fighting for justice and political involvement for over a century, but their participation in economic, social, and political freedoms is not well documented. Many women have contributed to Nepali literature, art, and politics, but few are mentioned in official records. Notable figures like Queen Rajendra Laxmi and Mrs. Kamala Kunwar played significant roles in the unification of Nepal. The Nalapani Fort, a symbol of defiance against British forces, serves as evidence of their bravery and sacrifice. The joint efforts of political and educational institutions significantly accelerated the women's movement in Nepal, with Yogmaya Koirala founding the first women's group, the "Women's Committee," in 1974. Chandrakanta Malla established the Padma Kanya School in 1945 to provide girls with access to education [16].

Nepali women have been able to influence policy and obtain legal rights through established groups like "equality before the law" and the Nepali Congress Party [17]. In 1961, politically dissident female students like Kamaksha Devi Rana, Hira Devi Tuladhar, Ram Maya, Sadhana Pradhan Adhikari, and Sahana Pradhan became increasingly active in the fight for their rights. The pro-democracy movement of 2007 marked a major turning

point in women's participation in political movements. Women actively participated in events and protests to seek political reforms and equitable representation. In the 1980s and 1990s, the women's movement gained strength, pushing for legal changes, gender equality, and an end to unfair practices. Women became leaders and activists, speaking out against issues like child marriage, dowry systems, domestic violence, and women's poor access to healthcare and education [18].

The People's Movement I (1990) and the Role of Women

The People's Democratic Movement I (1990) in Nepal overthrew the 39-year party-less Panchayat system, leading to street protests and violence. Women played a central role in the movement, and the King was forced to compromise. They pressured the King to restore multiparty democracy with a constitutional monarchy. The movement was influenced by underdevelopment, gender discrimination, income inequality, regional disparity, ethnic and caste discrimination, and suppression of opposition voices. The King agreed to rewrite a new constitution, which included more democratic rights and opportunities for women in politics. Women were integral to the protests and demonstrations; some even lost their lives as a result of their actions. Ms. Sahana Pradhan had pushed the King to reinstate multi-party politics on behalf of women on the Democratic Movement's negotiating team. Ms. Pradhan was appointed as a senior member of the seven-member cabinet in the interim government. In 1991, general elections were held under the reintroduced multi-party-political system, requiring at least 5% of party candidates to be women [18].

The Peoples' Movement II (2006) and Women's Roles

The Peoples' Movement II (2006) in Nepal was a significant event in the country's history. The seven political parties formed the Seven-Party Alliance (SPA), which fought against the direct rule of the King. The SPA called for a protest against the King's takeover, which led to the King's surrender. The SPA formed an interim government and began peace talks with the CPN, agreeing to a different reform agenda, including the abolition of the monarchy. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed in 2019, ending the decade-long armed conflict. The movement forced the King to reinstate the dissolved Parliament and return political power to the democratic parties, laying the foundation for the Peoples' Movement II. The role of women was also crucial in the Peoples' Movement II.

The 2007 Interim Constitution mandated women's participation in the Constituent Assembly of Nepal. It provided for 601 members, with 195 reserved seats for women. The Constitution mandated 30% participation through the First-Past-The-Post system and 26 members from various societal walks. The quota provision increased women's participation in the CA and legislative structures [19].

Despite facing unfavorable circumstances throughout Nepal's political history, Nepali women have become key actors in socio-political change. The women's movement began during the Rana rule and continued during the Panchayat era. Women leaders like Yogmaya Neupane, Sadhana Pradhan, Mangala Devi Shrestha, Sadhana Pradhan (Adhikary), Kanak Lata Shrestha, and Sneh Lata, Sailaja Acharya, Bidhya Bhandari, Hisila Yami, Jayapuri Gharti, Binda Pandey, Onsari Gharti, Chitra Lekha

Yadav and many others played significant roles in both periods. Despite being victims of oppressive cultural, religious, and social traditions, Nepali women have been able to engage in peaceful political movements, fight in armed insurgencies, and secure seats in Parliament and other important constitutional positions. The Nepal Mahila Sangh, led by Mangala Devi Singh, was the first women's organization to fight for women's equality through a single platform. The group demanded equal voting rights for women, with Prime Minister Padma Shamsheer providing inspiration and encouragement for other women leaders to continue their struggles [20].

The Maoist movement in Nepal aimed to end discrimination against women, with women making up 30% of combatants during the conflict. The 2015 Nepali Constitution asserted equality and women's empowerment, but has been criticized for upholding patriarchal notions. The new constitution requires women to prove their husbands' death or absence for citizenship, and proposed laws reaffirm men's privileged position [5].

Women Empowerment and Achievement in Nepal

Nepal has made significant progress in achieving gender equality through legal reforms and policy measures. Despite the country's diverse cultural, ethnic, and religious makeup, challenges remain in ensuring equal opportunities, rights, and protections for all genders. Political empowerment has seen women's representation in politics increase, with mandates for at least one-third representation in federal and provincial parliaments and 40% in local governments. Women hold key positions in various sectors, with a high score on the political empowerment dimension of the Global Gender Gap Index. Economic empowerment has seen women's participation in the labor force decrease, but the Empowered Women, Prosperous Nepal (EWP) program aims to improve women's socio-economic empowerment and address gender-based violence. Collaboration between the government, civil society, and international organizations is crucial to bridge these challenges and achieve full gender equality in Nepal.

Overview of Womens' Participation in Election

Election Results for Women Candidates
1959 parliamentary election 6 women contesting in election lost where total 109 men were elected (suwal, 2013)
Rastriya Panchayat 1986 (legislative) Election Out of total 140 members, 3 women were elected (Mongbay, 2013).
Parliamentary, 1991 Out of 205 legislative representatives only 7 (3.4%) women were elected (Yami, 2010).
Parliamentary and local bodies, 1999 out of total 205 member of parliaments 12 (5.85%) were women and of total 4146 local elected representatives 806 (19.4%) were women (UNESCO, 2001).
Constituent Assembly, 2008 30 out of 240 elected CA members were women of the total 601 CA members (Election Commission, 2008).
Constituent Assembly, 2013 out of 240 elected candidates total 10 (4.1%) candidates were women (Shahi, 2013).

Recent local elections held in 2017 saw 753 Deputy Mayors/ Chairs from 6 metropolitan cities, 11 sub metropolitan cities, 276 municipalities and 460 rural municipalities elected. The fact that 700 of these were female is a major achievement. If you look at the details though, out of 753, only 18 of the elected Mayors/ chairs were female. The question is, why were only 18 female Mayors/Chairs elected out of 753 seats? Why were women

candidates compulsorily limited to deputy positions? Why were there only 3 female ministers out of 22 at the federal level? Why are there no females leading political parties? Why isn't there a single female Chief Minister in any of the seven provinces? Is it because there are no capable women, or can other reasons explain this phenomenon [21].

Candidate Nomination in the Local Elections 2022

Positions	Total	Women (N)	Women (%)
Mayor	3494	266	7.61
Chair	3387	198	5.84
Deputy mayor	2156	1549	71.84
Vice-chair	2401	1788	74.46
Ward chair	35255	1050	2.97
Women member	26448	26448	100
Dalit women member	23843	23843	100
Ward member	55471	2563	4.62
Nepal	152455	57705	37.85

Source: Compiled from Election Results, 2022

According to Section 17(4) of the Local Elections Act, at least 50% of the head or deputy head, chairman, or vice chairman positions of a party should be filled by women. However, this provision is not applicable in cases where only one candidate is nominated by the party, resulting in a decrease in the representation of women. This indicates that the parties have failed to uphold the constitutional spirit of women's reservation and have instead relied on legal provisions to promote women's participation.

Candidate Elected in the Local Elections 2022

Elected Positions	Local level election, 2017		Local level election, 2022	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
President of District co-ordination committee	2	75	4	73
Vice-President of District co-ordination committee	46	31	32	45
Mayor/Chairman of Local Level	18	735	25	728
Deputy mayor/Vice-Chairman	700	53	568	185
Ward Chair	61	6682	67	6676

Source: Compiled from Election Results, 2017 and 2022

In the recently held local level election in Nepal, only 25 women out of a total of 753 local levels have been elected as leaders, which accounts for only 3.32 percent of the total leadership positions [21]. This is a slight increase of nearly 1 percent compared to the previous local elections held in 2017, where only 18 women

were elected as leaders. Out of the 25 women leaders, 6 are from Koshi, 6 from Bagmati, 4 from Madhes, 3 from Gandaki, and 2 each from Lumbini, Karnali, and Sudurpachhim.

The 2022 election reveal that 25 women have been elected as leaders at the local level. Out of these women, 10 are from UML, nine are from Congress, and four are from Maoist, and one each from the CPN (United Socialist) and Loktantrik Samajwadi Party. This is a significant increase from the previous 2017 elections, where only seven women became mayors and 13 won in their respective municipalities. In rural municipalities, 11 women held chairs in 2017, while the number increased to 12 in 2022. These numbers indicate a positive trend towards greater gender diversity in leadership positions.

Changing Educational Status of Women in Nepal

Due to lack of quality education, women are denied from rules, regulation and their responsibility. Low educational system has not only limited women skill and capability but also individual health, family health, legal right, constitutional right, its utilization and active participation, etc. are being obstacles. Similarly, women are backward in discriminative policy and educational advantage. Due to lack of education, women cannot afford themselves and need to depend on men for survival. Hence, to overcome such condition and to develop the country, women education is must. Along with education, related educational training should be provided. In the past time, women are made to participate only in children growing activity. This makes them more dependent on other.

Table: Male and Female Literacy Percentage of Different Censuses (2009-2078)

Year	Male	Female	Total
2009	9.5	0.7	5.3
2018	16.3	1.8	8.9
2028	23.6	3.9	14.0
2038	34.0	12.0	23.3
2048	54.5	25.0	39.6
2058	61.1	42.5	53.7
2068	75.1	57.4	65.9
2078	83.6	69.4	76.3

Source: Population Census, 2078, CBS

On the basis of above information, Nepal's educational position has been stepping forward to further development. Before 2009, population census was not scientific hence they are not counted. Nepal's whole and male female's education status was informed after only 2009. According to population census of 2009 to 2011, total literate was 5.3 percent among which 9.5 were of male and 0.7 was female. The female literacy percent was neglected as compared to male. According to population census of 2018, literate percent was 8.9 percent of which 16.3 percent was male and 1.8 was female. Through this we come to know the educational status of women was poor. Similarly, the literacy rate of both male and female go on increasing and finally in population census of 2028, total literate was 53.7 percent of which 42.5 were female and 61.1 were male. Still the percent of

female was less in comparison to male. This hampers the overall development of the country.

The Evolution of Gender Equality Laws in Nepal

Nepal's legal framework has evolved since 1990, with the 2015 constitution promoting gender equality, recognizing women's rights as fundamental rights.

- The Gender Equality Act (2006): Aimed at removing discriminatory provisions in existing laws.
- The Domestic Violence (Crime and Punishment) Act (2009): Criminalizes domestic violence and provides mechanisms for protection and justice.
- The National Criminal Procedure (Code) Act (2017): Includes provisions for addressing sexual harassment and ensuring fair trials in gender-based violence cases.
- Swear of Unbounded Act, 2016.
- Jail act 2019
- Vital registration act, 2033
- Labour act, 2048
- Foreign employment act, 2064
- Human trafficking act, 2064, Regulation 2065.
- Chushi Praces Alatory directory, 2064.
- Domestic violence imprisonment Act ,2066.
- Regulation, 2067.
- The guidelines on sexual harassment control of working restaurants, such as dance and femur, 2064 etc.,

The legal system shows that he has helped establish and preserve women's human rights in Nepal.

Constitutional Provisions for Gender Equality

- Article 18 ensures equality before the law and prohibits discrimination based on sex, among other grounds.
- Article 38 explicitly guarantees women's rights, including equal lineage rights, reproductive health rights, and protection from violence.

Changing Constitutional policy on Women in Nepal

The Constitution of Nepal 2072 has declared the fundamental rights of women in article 38. According to this provision, safe motherhood and reproductive health, protection of GBV (any physical, mental, sexual or psychological or any other kind of violence against women or any kind of oppression based on religious, social and cultural tradition, and other practices) are introduced. Similarly, right to access participation in all state structures and bodies on the basis of the principle of propositional inclusion is also guaranteed by the Constitution. Special opportunities are provided by the Constitution for the minority's groups in every sphere of education, health, employment and social security on the basis of positive discrimination.

Article 11 (5) and (7) compromises the ability of women to independently confer citizenship to her child as the father of the child must be unidentified or to claim citizenship by descent; in cases where a Nepali woman is married to a foreigner, she may only confer naturalized (not descent) citizenship (Constitution 2072, Part II Citizenship) (Constitution of Nepal, 2072).

The Interim Constitution emphasizes on allocating 33 per cent of seats for women in political sector for both the first-past-the-post (FPTP) system and for the proportional representation system. During the elections, all political parties nominated female candidates only for the proportional seats. Only a few female candidates were elected through the FPTP system. This again helped place men in decision-making positions and places.

The Constitution of Nepal - rights in all spheres of their lives. Review of the constitution in gender perspective with general remarks is highlighted in the table.

Table: Review of Constitution of Nepal - 2015 in Gender Perspective

Content	Provisions in the Constitution	General Remarks
Preamble	Commitment to end gender discrimination	- Failed to commit to substantive equality - Failed to commit to end patriarchy; - Women's contribution throughout democratic movement is not recognized; - Failed to incorporate the concept of equal citizenry
Citizenship		
Part 2, Art 11 Citizenship	Father or Mother provision on citizenship by descent	Art 11 (5) and (7) compromises the ability of women to independently confer citizenship to her child as the father of the child must be unidentified or to claim citizenship by descent; in cases where a Nepali woman is married to a foreigner, she may only confer naturalized (not descent) citizenship
Part 2 Art 11 (6) Citizenship	Men can confer naturalized citizenship to his foreign national wife	Art 11 (6) is silent on conferring citizenship to foreign husband, that means it is likely that foreign men who marry Nepali citizen women, cannot get the citizenship on the ground of marriage
Key Fundamental Rights		
Article 18 Right to Equality	Non -discrimination	- The prohibited grounds of discrimination are listed, but discrimination is not defined - Discrimination on the ground of Sex is prohibited but not gender, gender-based traditions, rituals or customs

	Right to equality	- The equal rights of women in the political, economic and social spheres are not recognized - Right to equality has been limited to formal equality, no provision on substantive equality - Provision of gender equality, however according to Article 55 this provision cannot be enforced by courts and no question may be raised in courts even when the State objectives are not met
Article 31: Right to education	Right to education	Free higher education is not addressed
Article 20: Right relating to justice	Right relating to justice	- right of free legal aid to indigent parties as stated in Sub Article (10) appears to be available only in criminal cases. - Right of free legal aid is not provided for family or civil cases
Article 31: Right to health	Right to health	Primary health care rights recognized as fundamental rights women's right, emergency health care rights ensured for citizen and non-citizen

Source: Constitution of Nepal [22].

Women and gender concerns appeared in all national development plans from 1980 onwards. However, gender equality and empowerment of women was adopted exclusively in the Ninth Five-year Plan (1998-2002). The Tenth Five-year Plan (2002-2007) recognized women right (women's empowerment, gender equality, formulation of a gender mainstreaming policy and adopting a GRB system) as a key indicator of poverty analysis. The Interim Plan (2007-2010) adopted a policy of engendering development through economic, social and political process to ensure inclusive development.

Ongoing challenges for women:

Nepal's patriarchal system persists despite its weakened status in various sectors, including politics, economics, social, and culture. Dismantling this system is a long-term, multi-generational process. Women's minimal participation in Parliament is a persistent issue, with only 27 out of 197 women having previous parliamentary experience and 17.9% of women CA members having no formal education. Women in political positions often belong to higher classes or are close relatives of male politicians, making them subordinate to male leaders. Despite the provision of 33% participation, women's influence in decision-making and constitution-building processes is limited. During the Panchayat era, only three seats were reserved for women, and after the Jana Andolan I of 1990, the quota for women in Parliament was raised to 5%. Women were severely underrepresented in the cabinet and women politicians did not exceed 6% at any time until 2007. Despite favorable legal and policy frameworks, women's representation in the executive, judiciary, and bureaucracy still remains low. A study by the Asia Foundation revealed major challenges faced by 190 women representatives, including time management, financial problems, caste and gender-based discrimination, and transportation issues.

Discussion and Finding

Women's political participation in Nepal has historically been limited due to traditional gender roles. However, some strong women have broken through these expectations to become powerful figures in their communities. The Nepali women's movement has a long history, spanning over a century. It began with Yogmaya Neupane's movement against the Rana regime and social injustices. Later, women's organizations emerged, such as

the Nepal Women's Association, which aimed to address issues like child marriage and polygamy. The post-1950s saw increased political participation from women's groups demanding rights to education, property, and legal equality. Key figures like Tara Devi Sharma and the All-Nepal Women's Association played crucial roles in organizing women politically and socially. Post-1990s, women gained greater representation in government and played a significant role in shaping new laws and policies. The movement continues to advocate for women's education, economic empowerment, and an end to violence against women. However, the movement faces ongoing challenges related to patriarchal structures, social norms, and economic disparities. Feminists argue that the mainstream feminist movement in Nepal needs to embrace intersectionality and diversity in all of its manifestations, transcending gender, caste, and class.

Despite unfavorable circumstances, Nepali women have established themselves as key actors in these changes. The new constitution in 2015 ensured 33% of seats and inclusive provisions in all government positions, leading to women occupying 41.8% of political positions in the 2017-18 elections. However, continued concerted action among all actors is essential for achieving equality and equity. Improving women's representation in government is crucial for upholding democracy, liberty, and equality. Women legislators are more likely to address women's interests, and better representation ensures their voices are heard and their issues are recognized. Women's leadership styles are shaped by unique challenges and life experiences, and their presence in politics encourages young girls and women to get involved. Political parties have a responsibility to promote women's political participation from the grassroots up and uphold constitutional provisions.

Conclusion

Nepal has experienced significant socio-political changes since the Rana rule, Panchayat era, Maoist insurgency, and the Federal Democratic Republic. However, Nepali women have consistently challenged patriarchy and initiated a movement for their rights. Over the last decade, women have achieved a 33% quota in Parliament and other political and bureaucratic structures. The Constitution of 1990 introduced some changes regarding gender-discriminatory laws, but women's representation in government

structures and election processes has been limited. The 2015 Constitution promised at least 33% of women's participation in all state operations, but women have been denied political power at the local level. The influence of women in decision-making and constitution-building remains limited, and while they have achieved higher positions, continued concerted action among all actors is essential

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