

Abstract

Political participation is a necessary ingredient of every political system for the successful working of democracy. Some empirical studies show that most people are not politically oriented and political participation is not a natural concomitant of citizenship. In this society, women are commonly constrained by the norms, beliefs, customs and values of the society creating separate codes of conduct for women and men (Kabeer,2000). We have not been able to get rid of these characteristics even in this 21st century. The main purpose of the present study is to make a comparative analysis of political orientation of working women in select formal (teachers and bank employees) and informal(sector street vendors and domestic workers) sectors of South Kolkata. It aims to study her cognitive orientation (i.e. her knowledge about political parties, symbols, their stay in power and their judgements about political system), her socio-economic security (i.e. her independent role in decision-making within the family in terms of investment , control over her income, taking major and minor decisions, nature of treatment meted out by family members or from the society at large, nature of such harassment if any and the kind of help received), affective orientation (her attachment towards the political system, issues and events, her interest in political and non-political forums) and evaluative orientation (her partisan preference and pattern of voting behaviour).Survey was carried by the researcher on 1000 working women from July 2016-July 2017 through structured questionnaire and informal interviews. Results: Women working in both the organised and the unorganised sectors play dual role looking after their children, elders in the family, husbands and also contribute to the family expenditure but they are bound to act as per the whims of their husbands or other male members of her family in decision-making. They consult their husbands, elder members of the family or the community before casting their vote and are not guided by individual preference or choice. Women do not yet exist as an effective political collectivity. Being treated as a deprived section, women are still denied from power indicating that they are relatively less entitled to make strategic choice.