



A STUDY ON INITIATIVES AND MEASURES FOR POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN

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Abstract

In India, women's political participation has undergone significant changes, demonstrating both progress and persistent obstacles. The current state of women's political participation in India is examined in this paper, highlighting achievements, persistent obstacles, and potential outcomes. Gender parity in government can be studied in depth in India, with its intricate sociocultural fabric and dynamic political landscape. Despite the fact that women's political participation is considered an essential component of all forms of development, India's gender equality policies continue to be under scrutiny. Since India gained independence in 1947, numerous efforts have been made to decentralize power in various local self-government institutions to increase women's political representation. This study examines the legal and historical context of women's political participation in India, past to the present, and evaluates the constitutional safeguards and legal frameworks that guarantee gender equality and political rights. The purpose of this paper is to determine the obstacles faced by women holding political leadership positions in India, the world's largest democracy.

Keyword: Gender, Politics, Participation, Women

Introduction

India's economic expansion is expected to continue for the next ten years, making it one of the world's major economies growing at the fastest rate. Women account for half of India's population and a significant portion of the country's untapped economic potential. In light of the "global recession" predicted by numerous international economists and organizations, empowering women in India through equal opportunities would allow them to contribute to the economy and ensure inclusive growth. Women will be able to participate in the construction of a nation if they are shielded from violence and abuse and a safer environment is established. Because of this, both the law enforcement agencies and civil society ought to place a high priority on their safety. Women in the country ought to be educated about their rights from an early age, and society ought to help them overcome the stigma associated with reporting crimes. Increased female political representation would provide a platform for raising awareness of issues affecting women in India and increase the number of female role models for young girls. Gender parity improves women's quality of life and gives them more control over their futures than was previously thought possible. The provisions of the law have contributed to the cessation of numerous practices that discriminate against women and to the advancement of women's status. The Indian government is committed to advancing gender parity across all sectors and governance tiers. The nation's women and children's safety and security are of the utmost importance to the government. The various initiatives and policies

that, either directly or indirectly, contribute to ensuring women's social, economic, and political empowerment highlight this commitment.

Reforming Education to Strengthen the Role of Women in Politics

Despite being frequently held hostage by caste politics and quotas, panchayat women leaders have been particularly active in bringing education to their villages. Poor policies in rural education are a mess that no one in government seems willing to fix. The recent Administrative Reforms Commission reiterates a long-standing recommendation that rural school teacher selection be delegated to each panchayat rather than state-wide and subject to caste-based selection. According to some experts, deploying state-selected teachers to rural schools in areas where they have no caste-based affiliation is a losing proposition from the start. Detractors argue that each panchayat will be susceptible to bribery and corruption if teacher selection is delegated to it. However, according to a member of the Administrative Reforms Commission, small-scale rural corruption with some accountability is preferable to large-scale corruption without local accountability.

When panchayat leaders don't have a say in who works in their village schools, they end up focusing on infrastructure and other issues. Studies have shown that creating separate bathrooms for girls will reduce the number of female dropouts after puberty. This is something that women leaders in panchayats discuss. They provide their students with potable water. All of these are not just temporary solutions; rather, they are essential advancements in rural education.

It's easy to be pessimistic about a federal election that promises to improve local government and the situation of women. This time may be different, not only because there are more women in parliament and panchayats than ever before, but also because Rahul Gandhi, a rising star in Congress politics, has been chosen to lead the rural government portfolio. One can only hope that the son of Gandhi will give more power to the people and free the portfolio from its grip at the state level. Economists without political affiliation have long advocated for decentralized local governance as the only means of accelerating reforms. I would add two additional objectives to that: expansion of access to microloans as a means of facilitating success and genuine empowerment of women in local governments.

Participation of women in Political Decision Making

“Women in every part of the world continue to be largely marginalised from the political sphere, often as a result of discriminatory laws, practices, attitudes, and gender stereotypes, low levels of education, lack of access to health care, and the disproportionate effect of poverty on women,” the UN General Assembly's 2011 resolution on women's political participation stated once more. 4.5.3 Gender parity in representative politics is important for effective democracy and good governance, which strengthens and enhances the democratic system, as well as for upholding social justice and women's rights. Women's representation in politics at all levels is important for a number of reasons, including the fact that women make up half of the population and the fact that achieving equal representation of women and men in public

and political decision-making is essential to the full enjoyment of human rights and social justice in a democratic society. Through the redefinition of political priorities and the addition of new issues to the political agenda, the realization of equal participation of women and men in political and public decision-making results in improved and more effective policymaking. Women could benefit from increased opportunities and a level playing field as a result of political empowerment.

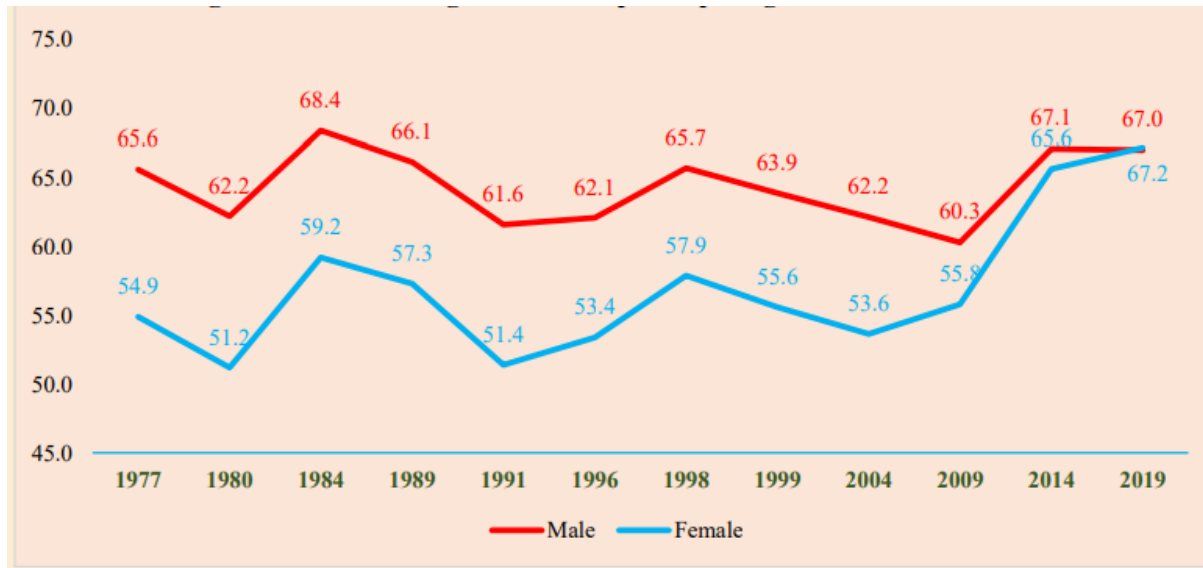
In spite of numerous discussions about women's participation in decision-making in India, very little has changed or improved. Figure shows that, with the exception of 1998, when the percentage of women in the central council of ministers was only 2.56, women's representation in the central council of ministers has fluctuated around 12, reaching its highest level in 2015. The fact that the percentage of women elected (out of all women candidates) has always been higher than the percentage of men elected (out of all men candidates) explains why the current percentage is 14.5. Given that women have a greater chance of winning the election than men do, additional measures must be taken to encourage a wide range of women to run. When we look at women's participation in the 17th Lok Sabha Election by state, Odisha has the highest percentage of women MPs out of all states with more than ten seats, at 33%, while Kerala has the lowest (5%). Given that women make up 49.5 percent of India's population, their representation in Parliament is skewed. This needs to be fixed so that women are better represented in the world's largest population.

However, the 73rd and 74th Amendments, which mandate 33% reservation for women in rural and urban local bodies, have made it possible for lakhs of women to participate in the country's political decision-making process since the early 1990s. Women's representation in local government has drastically changed since then. A welcome development is the provision of a 50% reservation for women in Panchayati Raj institutions in twenty states. Except for Punjab and Tripura, all of these states have fulfilled this mandate. In addition, women make up 50.7% of elected representatives in Manipur, despite the absence of such a law in the state. As of right now, more than one million women from all walks of life were elected to serve as representatives on the three tier local bodies and participate in the political decision-making process.

The right to vote is yet another important aspect of elections. When India's constitution was enacted in 1949, the idea of universal adult suffrage was adopted there. However, as of the 15th national election, men's turnout was 8% points higher than that of women, and less than 60% of women only participated in the elections. However, women were more likely to vote in 2014 than in previous elections, with participation of 65.6% in 2014 and 67.2% in 2019. For the first time, women had a slight advantage in the turnout, which surprised everyone. This could be because more women are reading and writing, which makes them more aware of politics. In 2019, the proportion of women voting outnumbered men by more than one percentage point in Daman & Diu, Lakshadweep, Meghalaya, Uttarakhand, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Jharkhand, Goa, and Uttarakhand.

राज्य / केंद्र शासित प्रदेश	महिला सांसद	कुल सीटें	महिला (%)	State/ Union Territory
	Women MPs	Total Seats	Women (%)	
अंडमान और निकोबार द्वीपसमूह	0	1	0	Andaman & Nicobar Islands
आंध्र प्रदेश	4	25	16	Andhra Pradesh
अरुणाचल प्रदेश	0	1	0	Arunachal Pradesh
असम	1	14	7	Assam
बिहार	3	40	8	Bihar
चंडीगढ़	1	1	100	Chandigarh
छत्तीसगढ़	3	11	27	Chhattisgarh
दादरा और नगर हवेली	0	1	0	Dadar & Nagar Haveli
दमन और दीव	0	1	0	Daman & Diu
दिल्ली	1	7	14	Delhi
गोवा	0	2	0	Goa
गुजरात	6	26	23	Gujarat
हरियाणा	1	10	10	Haryana
हिमाचल प्रदेश	0	4	0	Himachal Pradesh
जम्मू और कश्मीर	0	6	0	Jammu & Kashmir
झारखंड	2	14	14	Jharkhand
कर्नाटक	2	28	7	Karnataka
केरल	1	20	5	Kerala
लक्षद्वीप	0	1	0	Lakshadweep
मध्य प्रदेश	4	29	14	Madhya Pradesh
महाराष्ट्र	8	48	17	Maharashtra
मणिपुर	0	2	0	Manipur
मेघालय	1	2	50	Meghalaya
मिज़ोरम	0	1	0	Mizoram
नागालैंड	0	1	0	Nagaland
ओडिशा	7	21	33	Odisha
पुडुचेरी	0	1	0	Puducherry
पंजाब	2	13	15	Punjab
राजस्थान	3	25	12	Rajasthan
सिक्किम	0	1	0	Sikkim
तमिलनाडु	3	39	8	Tamil Nadu
तेलंगाना	1	17	6	Telangana
त्रिपुरा	1	2	50	Tripura
उत्तर प्रदेश	11	80	14	Uttar Pradesh
उत्तराखंड	1	5	20	Uttarakhand
पश्चिम बंगाल	11	42	26	West Bengal
भारत	78	542	14	India

स्रोत/ Source: Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi.



Male and female participation

Source: Election Commission of India.

Political empowerment of Women in India

1. Accountability and Gender-sensitive Governance- Women's political empowerment improves accountability to women and enables direct participation in public decision-making. It aids in the implementation of reforms that can improve the effectiveness of all elected officials in ensuring gender equality in public policy and its implementation.

2. Breaking the Patriarchal mould of Indian Politics- Males have held power positions and top party positions in Indian politics for a long time. The patriarchal nature of Indian politics is dismantled by an increase in women's representation in parliament.

3. Focus on Gender issues- UN Women says that having more women in parliament generally makes women's issues get more attention. This guarantees that policies will respond appropriately to gender issues and implement measures that are sensitive to women.

4. Gender Equality- Gender equality and genuine democracy are fundamentally dependent on women's political participation. It helps to start public inquiries about women's issues and uses the results to put them on the agendas of governments and in their legislative programs.

5. Change of Stereotypes- Enhanced representation helps in cooperation with the women's movement and the media to change the stereotyped image of women as only 'homemakers', to change it to 'lawmakers'.

6. Improvement of Economic Performance and Infrastructure- UN University found that, compared to male legislatures, women legislators improve the economic performance of their constituents by 1.8%. According to the evaluation of the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, female-led constituencies have a 22 percentage point lower share of incomplete road projects.

Measures taken in the Rajya Sabha for Political Empowerment of Women

- 1. Reconstitution of the panel of vice-chairpersons to include only women-** The vice president has started the practice of naming four women to the panel of vice-chairpersons. These women make up half of the group. S. Phangnon Konyak became the first woman from Nagaland to lead the House of Rajya Sabha. P.T. Usha, a well-known athlete, also made history by becoming the first MP to be nominated to serve as Vice Chairperson of the Rajya Sabha.
- 2. Training of Women Secretariat officers for House-related duties-** All of the Secretariat's gazetted female officers have been trained to perform House-related tasks, which were traditionally thought to fall under the male category because they required late sittings.
- 3. Womannisation of Table of the House-** Table of the House is largely being 'womanned' by female officers. Women officers are being deputed on chamber duty.
- 4. Women at key positions in the Rajya Sabha Secretariat-** Women officers have been appointed in key positions and leading roles in the Rajya Sabha Secretariat. Responsibilities such as human resources, the legislative section, and the capacity-building division have been entrusted to women officers of the Secretariat. A woman officer of the Secretariat has been appointed as master trainer for iGOT-Karmayogi Bharat.
- 5. Enhanced women responsibilities in Parliamentary Standing Committees-** Women at various levels perform high-skilled work, such as officiating in Parliamentary Standing Committees of the Rajya Sabha.
- 6. Women's safety:** An application-based system called "Vahan" has been implemented to address the issue of late-night commuting.
- 7. Celebration of Women's Day-** Women's day programmes are conceptualised, organised and executed by women officers and employees of the Rajya Sabha Secretariat.
- 8. Internships to women in Rajya Sabha-** Five women interns from Miranda House have been selected for a 15-day course on parliamentary procedures.

Empowerment Initiatives and Support Mechanisms

- **Role of Civil Society:** Analyzing the contributions of civil society organizations in promoting women's political empowerment and advocacy.
- **Government Policies:** Reviewing policies and initiatives aimed at enhancing women's participation in political processes and governance.

Future Prospects and Recommendations

- **Legislative Reforms:** Advocating for the passage and effective implementation of the Women's Reservation Bill to increase women's representation in legislative bodies.
- **Capacity Building:** Proposing strategies for enhancing women's leadership skills, education, and access to political training programs.
- **Changing Social Norms:** Discussing the importance of challenging traditional gender roles and fostering a supportive environment for women in politics.



Conclusion

In conclusion, the study acknowledges that, despite significant progress, women's participation in Indian politics must still be equal and meaningful. In addition to being a matter of justice and democracy, achieving gender equality in politics is also a way to improve the efficiency of government and address the unique requirements and perspectives of all citizens, regardless of gender. India can get closer to a political landscape that is more inclusive and reflects the diversity and aspirations of its people by addressing the challenges and building on the successes.

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