

Status of Women Representation in Indian Politics – A Note on Various General Elections

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Abstract:

India nearly 50 per cent of women in the total population, the secondary status given to women in Indian society has placed her in a disadvantageous position in various fields in terms of social, political, economic empowerment of women and in the field of business, art, medicine, engineering, law and culture, women are given opportunity to prove their skills. But they have failed to gain ground in the field of politics. A Political empowerment necessitates equal participation of women in political process and in decision making bodies. But interestingly the percentage of women winning elections has always been higher than men. These trends indicate that women's representation in politics requires special consideration. Today, even best women parliamentarians feel sidelined and powerless within their parties except a few. Male party leaders have shown little willingness to include women in party decision making bodies or help to create a conducive atmosphere for women's participation in their own organizations.

Keywords: Women, Representation, General Elections, Loksabha, Rajyasabha

1. Introduction:

Demographically, according to the 2011 census, total population of the country was 121.02 cores. Out of this 49.5 per cent were females. According to 1901 census, the sex ratio of females (per 1000 males) was 979 and according to the 2011 census, it has declined to 940. This declining trend is because of the apathy towards the girl child. In fact in 1991 the sex ratio had decreased to 927 and thereafter there was a slight improvement in 2001. According to 2001 census, out of every 1000 females, 542 females were literate (655.46 percent) this shows that 34.54 per cent females were still illiterate in India. In comparison with the male literacy rate, the female literacy rate has always been lower. The total work participation rate of women in 2011 is 25.68 per cent and it includes in itself 13.45 per cent of rural women and 11.55 per cent of urban women. 71.8 per cent of the women employed were in primary sector, 21.7 per cent in tertiary sector and the remaining in the manufacturing sector. Considered to be a burden to the family. The secondary status given to women in Indian society has placed her in a disadvantageous position in various fields. Therefore, social, political, economic empowerment of women has become the main agenda of governmental and non-governmental organizations in recent years. Political empowerment necessitates equal participation of women in political process and in decision making bodies. The situation in India is same as in many other countries of the world where women are underrepresented. A better understanding of this position needs a historical analysis of status of women in India. These statistics show that literacy rate and work participation rate of women are increasing day by day but at a very slow pace. Female literacy rate has never been equal to male literacy rate. Female infanticide is increasing at an alarming rate because the girl child is considered to be a burden to the family. The secondary status given to women in Indian society has placed her in a disadvantageous position in various fields.

Therefore, social, political, economic empowerment of women has become the main agenda of governmental and non-governmental organizations in recent years. Political empowerment necessitates equal participation of women in political process and in decision making bodies. The situation in India is same as in many other countries of the world where women are underrepresented. A better understanding of this position needs a historical analysis of status of women in India.

The main objective of this paper is to clearly explore the political representation of women in the country during the last 60 years and 18th loksabha and Rajysabha elections

2. Methodology

This paper based on secondary data, such data collected from the CSDS New Delhi, and internet also such data including sex ratio of women, participation of women in general elections during the last fifteen elections in India. Simple percentages were used for the paper

3. Results and Discussions:

In this paper straightly explain and observe the women contest in general elections in India during the last 73 years and eighteenth loksabha and Rajyasabha. And also state that the constitutional safe guards of women i.e. provided by the constitution like social, economical and political aspects in India

4. Constitutional Safe guard of women in India

On attaining Independence in the year 1947, India became a republic. The Constitution of India adopted a parliamentary form of government. The government functions at different levels. At the apex level, there is the national government and governments at states and union territories. At the centre, the parliament consists of two houses i.e. the Upper House called the Rajya Sabha or the council of states and the Lower House called the Lokh Sabha (House of People). At the state level, the upper house is called the Legislative Council and the Lower House is called the Legislative Assembly. Each state has its own local self governments known as Panchayati Raj Institutions both at urban and rural areas Rural Panchayati Raj Institution has three tier structures consisting of the Zilla Panchayath at the district level, Taluk Panchayat at the taluk level, and Gram Panchayat at the village level. The Constitution not only grants equality of treatment to women but also calls upon the state to adopt measures favoring women neutralizing the socio- economic, educational and political disadvantages that they face. The following are the various provisions in the constitution which ensures equality between men and women.

Article 14 guarantees equality before law and equal protection of law with in the territory of India. This Article stands for absence of any discrimination by law or in their administration.

Article 15 prohibits discrimination on the basis of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth. It is a guarantee against every form of discrimination. According to article 15(3), nothing shall prevent the state from making special provisions for the benefit women and children.

Article 16 guarantees equality of opportunity for all citizens in matter relating to employment or appointment to any office under state. Secondly no citizen shall, on grounds of religion, race, cast, sex, decent, place of birth residence or any of them, be eligible for, or discriminated against in respect of any employment or office under the state.

Article 51-A clause (e) says that it shall be the duty of every citizen of India- to promote harmony and sprit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India, transcending

religious, linguistic and religious or sectional diversities, to renounces practice derogatory to the dignity of women.

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment has added the following articles to the Constitution providing reservation for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions.

Article 243-(D) (2) states not less than 1/3 of the seats reserved under clause (1) shall be reserved for women belonging to S. C or as the case may be S.T.

Article 243-(D) (3)-extends political reservation to women not less than 1/3 of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every panchayat shall be reserved for women and such seats shall be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a panchayat.

Article 243-(D) (4) extends reservation to elected offices as well. The office of the chairpersons in the panchayats or any other level shall be reserved S.C and the S.Ts and women in such a manner as legislature of a state may, by law provide.

The legal Constitutional framework in India would appear a combination of Communitarian perspective on one hand and that of liberal democracy on the other hand. In spite of such provisions in the Constitution, the decades following independence witnessed a decline in the women's participation in politics. These rights appeared illusionary as there was a shift from the aims of the Constitution. The lack of space for participation in political bodies has resulted in their presence in meager numbers in this decision making bodies.

Post independent women continued to play a significant role in less conventional activities such as environmental movements, anti-alcohol agitations, peace movements and even revolutionary activities which equally effect power relationships as they have the capacity to influence the state. Yet politics proved to be a very inhospitable terrain for women and continues to be the male domain where entry to women is severely restricted. Representation of women in parliament and state assemblies remain at a very low level. Their representation is 10.8 per cent in parliament. No doubt a few seats have been given to women but it has not been in proportion to women's strength in population. Table-1 presents the participation of women in the two houses of parliament.

Table-1 Year wise Membership of Women in the Lokhsabha and Rajya Sabha

Year	Members in Loksabha			Members in Rajya Sabha		
	Seats	Women MPs	per cent of women MPS	Seats	Women MPs	per cent of women MPS
1952	499	22	4.41	7.56	7.59	7.31
1957	500	27	5.40	237	18	7.59
1962	503	34	6.76	238	18	7.56
1967	523	31	5.93	240	20	8.33
1971	521	22	4.22	243	17	7.00
1977	544	19	3.49	244	25	10.25
1980	544	28	5.15	244	24	9.84
1984	544	44	8.09	244	28	11.48
1989	517	27	5.22	245	24	9.8
1991	544	39	7.17	245	38	15.51

1996	543	39	7.18	223	19	8.52
1998	543	43	7.92	245	15	6.12
1999	543	49	9.02	245	19	7.76
2004	543	45	8.28	245	28	11.4
2009	543	58	10.68	245	22	8.98
2014	543	66	12.15	239	28	11.71
2019	543	68	12.52	245	33	13.47
2024	542	78	14.39	224	24	10.71
Average	530	35	6.59	240	21.09	9.00

Source: CSDS data unit, New Delhi

The Table 2 shows number of women contesting elections is very low compared to men. It increased from 2.3 per cent in 1952 to 6.5 per cent in the year 1999, compared to the population; the percentage of women contestants is very low. Even today, more than 93 per cent of the total contestants are men. But interestingly the percentage of women winning elections has always been higher than men. This can be seen from the Table 2. The percentage of males who won elections in 1952 is 26.05 per cent whereas women were 51.16 per cent. In the year 1999, 12.3 per cent men won the elections out of the total male contestants and 17.3 per cent women won out of the total female contestants. In the 14th Lok Sabha elections 12.6 per cent female contestants won the elections. Political parties deny tickets to women candidates presuming that they are not capable of winning elections. While 48 percent of Indian population is female in 2011 census and 2019 general election, they have typically stayed on the fringes of mainstream politics. Just 12.6% of India’s 543 current Lok Sabha members are women, far lower than the world average of 24.3%. These results show that the percentage women winning elections is more than the percentage men winning

Table-2 Men and Women as Contestants during Various Elections in India

Years	Total Number of contestant	Male			Female		
		contestant	Elected	per cent winning*	contestant	Elected	per cent winning*
1952	1874	1843	DNA	DNA	43	DNA	51.16
1957	1518	1473	467	31.7	45	27	60
1962	1985	1915	459	24	70	35	50
1967	2369	2302	490	21.3	67	30	44.8
1971	2784	2698	499	18.5	86	21	24.4
1977	2439	2369	523	22.1	70	19	27.1
1980	4620	4478	514	11.5	142	28	19.7
1984	5570	5406	500	9.2	164	42	25.6
1989	6160	5962	502	8.5	198	27	13.6
1991	8699	8374	492	5.9	325	39	12
1996	13353	13353	504	3.8	599	39	6.7
1998	4570	4476	500	11.2	274	48	15.7
1999	4649	3976	494	12.3	278	49	17.3
2004	5435	5080	498	9.8	355	45	12.6

2009	8070	7514	484	6.44	556	58	10.43
2019	8040	6769	475	7.02	1271	68	13.47
2024	8338	7541	465	6.16	797	78	9.79
Average		69765	6926	13.94	3235	502	15.52

Source: September 14, 1999, Times of India, New Delhi and various Elections
DNA-Gender-wise data for 1952 not Availabl

5.Percent to the male and female contestants

Many factors are responsible for this state of affairs. History of freedom movement shows that a large number of women participated in freedom movement. But after that it went on decreasing. The ideology of the Nehru-Gandhi era has totally disappeared. Gender roles have become major obstacles in women's political empowerment. Traditional division of labour, illiteracy, economic barriers, the type of electoral system, lack of sufficient training etc have been keeping women away from politics. Apart from this, elections have become a very costly affair. Women are not able to generate large amount of money required to fight elections. Centralization of powers and corruptions has become major obstacles for women to participate in politics.

Vibuthi Patel observes that, among the majority of Women's Rights Groups, politics is equated with politicking, dirty maneuvering and manipulation and therefore power and politics remain an anthem to them. Political parties are reluctant to field women candidates. The gender biases of political parties are the major hurdles for women gaining decision making power. Women find it difficult to establish strong foothold in politics without party base. Women backed by family and husband are recognized by the parties. Veteran women politicians are sidelined. No serious efforts are made to mobilize women as a political group.

6.Conclusion

In India nearly 50 per cent of women in the total population, the secondary status given to women in Indian society has placed her in a disadvantageous position in various fields in terms of social, political, economic empowerment of women and in the field of business, art, medicine, engineering, law and culture, women are given opportunity to prove their skills. But they have failed to gain ground in the field of politics. A Political empowerment necessitates equal participation of women in political process and in decision making bodies. The low representation of women in parliament and state assemblies has been the major concern of various women organizations. This paper is based on secondary data it is observed the last fifteen loksabha and Rajyasabha election in India. It's clearly observed that the number of women contesting elections is very low compared to men. It increased from 2.3 per cent in 1952 to 6.5 per cent in the year 1999 and 10.8 per cent in 2009 and it is increased 13.47 percent in the 2024 general election, compared to the population, the percentage of women contestants is very low. Even today, more than 93 per cent of the total contestants are men. But interestingly the percentage of women winning elections has always been higher than men. These trends indicate that women's representation in politics requires special consideration. Today, even best women parliamentarians feel sidelined and powerless within their parties except a few. Male party leaders have shown little willingness to include women in party decision making bodies or help to create a conducive atmosphere for women's participation in their own organizations. Therefore special measures are required. Otherwise our democracy will remain seriously flawed if it fails to give adequate space for women. Political parties and other organizations should encourage women's participation in politics and in the exercise of political

responsibilities. The strategy should be to encourage a still greater number of women in decision – making power. Finally this paper suggested that no serious efforts have been made by political parties to give more representation for women. Representation of women in legislatures, thereby entering into power position is inevitable for political empowerment and equality of women. Given our political situation, it has become clear that it is difficult for women to enter into legislature without reservation. Therefore demand for 33 per cent reservation in national and state legislature has become a major demand of various women’s organizations.

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