



Women participation in decision making: A scenario of Pondicherry

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Abstract:

In the 2011 Legislative Assembly Election in the Union Territory of Pondicherry, about 75% of female electors and 73% of male electors have participated in the election. The share of women participation in Council of Ministers was zero to till date from the year 1985. In general election to parliament, no women was elected from 1963onwards. The condition was same with Lok Sabha Elections also. No women contestant was elected for Lok Sabha in the history of elections in the Union Territory of Pondicherry. Women were not adequately represented in both formal and informal political processes and decision making in the Union Territory of Pondicherry. Representation of women in decision making in Pondicherry remains quite low in both private sectors as well as in government sector.

Key words: Council of Ministers, Decision Making, Lok Sabha Elections, Panchayat Elections

Introduction

Every human being has the right to participate in decisions that define her or his life. This right is the foundation of the ideal of equal participation in decision-making among women and men. This right argues that since women know their situation best, they should participate equally with men to have their perspective effectively incorporated at all levels of decision-making, from the private to the public spheres of their lives, from the local to the global.

The Gender discrimination in the family affects the vulnerable section very much. In India, women are more or less economically dependent upon the males. Women are expected to be house wives, home makers and care takers. Their role in decision making gets diminished and this gets reflected in health care and also in entire socio economic system. The differences between men and women are predominately the outcome of socialisation in male dominating societies.

In the 2011 Legislative Assembly Election, about 75% of female electors and 73% of male electors have participated in the election. The share of women participation in Council of Ministers was zero to till date from the year 1985. In general election to parliament, no women was elected from 1963onwards. This shows that the participation of women in politics in the Union Territory of Pondicherry was very limited. Women were not adequately represented in both formal and informal political processes and decision making in the Union Territory of Pondicherry.

Even though Indian women played a major role in the freedom movement, the participation of women in public life was less during the post-independence period. Women are expected to be the housewives, homemakers and caretakers and hence more or less economically dependent upon the males. Their choice is limited and they are not involved in decision making process. There is a need to raise



the basic standards of living of women. Education should be universal and made accessible to both Rural and Urban women and which in turn will help them to play lead role in decision making.

Government legislators must look directly at women's issue and enact laws to protect them. Economic and political empowerment only can pave way to liberation for women in India.

Table-1 Representation of Women in the Council of Ministers

Sl.No	Year	Number of Ministers		
		Male	Females	Total
1	1964	9	0	9
2	1969	5	0	5
3	1972*	0	0	0
4	1974	5	0	5
5	1977	7	0	7
6	1980	5	1	6
7	1985	5	0	5
8	1987*	0	0	0
9	1990	6	0	6
10	1991	6	0	6
11	1996	9	0	9
12	1998*	0	0	0
13	1999*	0	0	0
14	2000	1	0	1
15	2001	6	0	6
16	2006	6	0	6

Source: Information gathered from the records of election department, Puducherry.

Note:*Indicates Bye-Election.

Objective:

The main objective of this research is to highlight the place of the women's

Database and methodology:

The study is purely based on secondary data the sample observations are 45 years. The reference period of the study is from 1964 to 2009. The required information was obtained from records of Election Department, Pondicherry.

participation in decision making, and what was their role in political scenario of the Union Territory of Pondicherry.

In order to know the trend and pattern of the rate of growth of women's participation in decision making, percentages of women candidates who have contested in elections in various Legislative Assembly, Municipality, and Panchayats were calculated.



Table-2 Number of persons contested and elected in various legislative assembly elections

Year	Seats Allotted	Total number Contested	Average number of Contestants per head	Female			Male		
				Total number of Contested	Elected	Percentage	Total number of Contested	Elected	Percentage
1964	30	85	2.83	4	2	50%	81	28	35%
1969	30	77	2.57	1	1	100%	76	29	38%
1972	01	02	2.00	0	0	0%	2	1	50%
1974	30	108	3.60	2	0	0%	106	30	28%
1978	30	131	4.37	5	0	0%	126	30	24%
1980	30	132	4.40	4	1	25%	128	29	23%
1985	30	119	3.97	4	1	25%	115	29	25%
1987	01	4	4.00	0	0	0%	4	1	25%
1990	30	212	7.07	6	0	0%	206	30	15%
1991	30	208	6.93	6	1	17%	202	29	14%
1996	30	270	9.00	15	1	7%	255	29	11%
1998	01	05	5.00	2	0	0%	3	1	33%
1999	01	07	7.00	0	0	0%	7	1	14%
2000	01	04	4.00	0	0	0%	4	1	25%
2001	30	139	6.43	9	0	0%	184	30	16%
2006	30	218	7.26	12	0	0%	206	30	15

Source: Information gathered from the records of election department, Puducherry.

Findings:

Representation of women in decision making in Puducherry remains quite low in both private sectors as well as in government sector too. In general election to parliament, no women was

elected from 1963onwards. This shows that the participation of women in politics in the Union Territory of Pondicherry was very limited. Women were not adequately represented in both formal and informal political processes



and decision making in the Union Territory of Pondicherry.

The status of women representatives as ministers in the Union Territory of Pondicherry was very poor during 1964-2006. From the table above it could be understood that except in the year 1980 the participation of women in the council of ministers was absolutely zero. And in the year 1980, only one woman candidate was given opportunity as minister.

The above table explains that the number of women contestants to the Legislative Assembly during 1964-2006 .it shows that up to 1996 the status of women as decision makers was much lower and very poor. And from the year 1996 to till date no women candidate was given chance in politics though there were a little bit contesters from women side during said period. From the table above it is very clear that the total number of contestants from the female side is a maximum of 15 contestants in the year 1996 and only one candidate (7%) was elected. And the next big number of contestants was 12 women candidates contested for legislative Assembly in the year 2006, and no women candidate (0%) was elected. The number of female contestants for Lok Sabha during 1963 to 2009 was in most cases zero in the Union Territory of Pondicherry. And in 1963, 1989, 1991, 1996, and in 2004, only one one women candidate was contested, but defeated. It seems women were much

Before to that in the year 1964 four women candidates were contested in Assembly election, and out of which two contestants were elected (50%). And again in the year 1969, only one women was contested and elected. (100%)

The number of women voters had shown a continuous increase in various elections in the Union Territory of Pondicherry during 1963 to 2009. the number of women voters are maximum of 391722 for Lok Sabha in the year 2009, and it is higher than male voters-364167 during the same period. In the 2011 Legislative Assembly Election in the Union Territory of Pondicherry, about 75% of female electors and 73% of male electors have participated in the election. The share of women participation in Council of Ministers was zero to till date. In 2004 Legislative Assembly election, about 68.32% of female electors and 84.054% of male electors have participated in the election. The percentage of women in the total number of contestants has been very low, and no women were elected. The share of women in the Council of Ministers was also zero from the year 1985 onwards.

deprived in the Union Territory of Pondicherry for both Legislative Assembly as well as Lok Sabha elections. Women are adequately not represented in both formal and informal political process and decision making in the Union Territory of Pondicherry.



Table 3. Number of electors and voting percentage in various elections

Sl.No	Year	Total number of Electors			Polled Percentage		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Parliament Elections							
1	1963	100618	104466	205084	76.55%	73.82%	75.16%
2	1967	106654	110035	216689	76.01%	73.72%	74.85%
3	1971	122922	123867	246789	71.93%	68.28%	70.10%
4	1974*	132509	131594	264103	85.83%	84.81%	85.32%
5	1978	150606	147306	297912	74.49%	72.82%	73.66%
6	1980	162044	157193	319237	80.10%	80.62%	80.36%
7	1984	194502	186864	381366	72.34%	72.22%	72.28%
8	1989	296538	278019	574557	67.05%	66.36%	66.71%
9	1991	306620	286685	593305	67.31%	68.14%	67.71%
10	1996	320502	313133	633665	74.62%	76.10%	75.35%
11	1998	337186	328300	665486	62.45%	63.11%	62.78%
12	1999	356313	345677	701990	63.41%	63.13%	63.27%
13	2004	310658	326009	636667	77.29%	74.90%	76.07%
14	2009	364167	391722	755889	79.92%	79.79%	79.85%
Legislative Assembly Elections							
1	1964	108519	111396	219915	79.70%	75.99%	77.82%
2	1969	113606	114448	228054	82.09%	81.58%	81.84%
3	1972*	5297	5105	10402	81.20%	82.84%	82.00%
4	1974	132509	131594	264103	85.53%	85.11%	85.32%
5	1978	156137	151071	307208	74.58%	73.91%	74.25%
6	1980	162044	157193	319237	80.09%	80.68%	80.38%
7	1985	201284	192188	393472	76.89%	77.93%	77.40%
8	1987*	6241	5848	12089	87.69%	87.81%	87.75%
9	1990	302240	282935	585175	72.11%	72.68%	72.39%
10	1991	306620	286685	593305	67.23%	68.26%	67.73%
11	1996	320502	313133	633635	74.65%	76.03%	75.33%
12	1998*	9812	9238	19050	79.62%	82.38%	80.96%
13	1999*	4770	4756	9526	57.76%	58.85%	58.30%
14	2000*	8785	8803	17588	79.72%	77.25%	78.48%
15	2001	329739	328908	658647	71.89%	73.06%	72.48%
16	2006	319842	339578	659420	84.54%	86.32%	85.46%

Source: Information gathered from the records of election department, Puducherry.

Note: * indicates Bye-Elections



Table-4. Number of persons contested and elected in various general elections to the parliament (Lok sabha)

Year	Seats Allotted	Total number contested	Average number of contestants per seat	Female		Male	
				Total number contested	Elected	Total number contested	Elected
1963	1	3	3.00	1	0	2	1
1967	1	3	3.00	0	0	3	1
1971	1	4	4.00	0	0	4	1
1978	1	4	4.00	0	0	4	1
1980	1	3	3.00	0	0	3	1
1984	1	10	10.00	0	0	10	1
1989	1	11	11.00	1	0	10	1
1991	1	13	13.00	1	0	12	1
1996	1	21	21.00	1	0	20	1
1999	1	9	9.00	0	0	9	1
2004	1	21	21	1	0	20	1
2009	1	28	28	0	0	28	1

Source: Information gathered from the records of election department, Puducherry.

Table-5. Female Headed Households and their Average Size

Year	Rural		Urban	
	No. of female headed households per '000 households	Average Size	No. of female headed households per '000 households	Average Size
1	2	3	4	5
1993-1994	114	4.2	169	4.0
1999-2000	145	3.6	176	3.4
2004-2005	243	3.0	188	3.2

Source: National Sample Survey Organisation

It could be understood from the above table that the number of female headed households are higher in rural areas than in urban areas. The female headed households have increased from 114 in the year 1993-94 to 243 during 2004-2005 in rural areas of Pondicherry. Similarly in the urban areas of Pondicherry also it has shown a considerable increase during 1993-94 to 2004-05. This has increased from 169 female headed households to 188 female headed households, during said period.

There has been a little bit improvement in women participation in the Union Territory of Pondicherry in the case of Municipal election. We could see the women representatives in almost all the four regions of Pondicherry. The women participants as Councillors are more of 26 in number in Pondicherry region, and their number is eight in Karaikal region, Five in Mahe region, and their number Four in Yanam region. But as a Chairman, or as a Vice-Chairman, no women contestant was elected.



Table: 6. Region-Wise Municipality/Ward-Wise Women Representatives-2006

SL.No.	Name of the Region	As	Total	Women	
1	Pondicherry	2	3	4	5
		Chairman		2	1
		Vice-chairman		2	1
		Councillors		79	26
2	Karaikal	Chairman		1	1
		Vice-chairman		1	0
		Councillors		18	8
3	Mahe	Chairman		1	0
		Vice-chairman		1	0
		Councillors		14	5
4	Yanam	Chairman		1	0
		Vice-chairman		1	0
		Councillors		10	4

Source: Information gathered from the records of election department, Puducherry.

Table: 6. Region-Wise Women Panchayat Representatives During-2006

SL.No.	Name of the Region	Position	Total	Women
1	Pondicherry	Chairman	5	2
		Vice-Chairman	5	1
		Councillors	71	26
		Village panchayat president	71	23
		Village panchayat vice-president	71	11
		Ward members	611	220
2	Karaikal	Chairman	5	2
		Vice-Chairman	5	3
		Councillors	27	11
		Village panchayat president	27	11
		Village panchayat vice-president	27	10
		Ward members	204	69

Source: Information gathered from the records of election department, Puducherry.

Note: No Panchayats in Mahe and in Yanam regions.

Out of the four regions (Pondicherry, Karaikal, Mahe, and Yanam) only two regions that are Pondicherry and Karaikal regions are having PANCHAYATS. And there were no PANCHAYATS in Mahe and in Yanam regions. Women's place in the above mentioned two PANCHAYATS really appreciable. As Chairman ,four

women candidates were elected, as Vice-Chairman, four women candidates,as Councillors thirty seven women candidates, as village Panchayat President, thirty four women candidates, as village Panchayat Vice-President twenty one women candidates, and as a ward members two



hundred and eighty nine women candidates were elected .

Conclusion:

Except in the two PANCHAYATS,(one is at Pondicherry and the other one is at karaikal region)of the entire Union Territory of Pondicherry, the representation of women in decision making in Puducherry remains quite low in both private sectors as well as in government sector. Hence best practices in legislative and policy environment are to be meted. Institutional mechanisms are to be established and efforts exerted on monitoring and evaluation of operations and out comes as well as

monitoring and evaluation of issues and challenges faced in realizing women's right to equal participation in good governance are to be concentrated for the betterment of the status of women in decision making. There is a need to raise the basic standards of living of women. Education should be universal and made accessible to both Rural and Urban women and which in turn will help them to play lead role in decision making. Government legislators must look directly at women's issue and enact laws to protect them. Economic and political empowerment only can pave way to liberation for women in Pondicherry.