



## WOMEN REPRESENTATIVES IN INDIAN PARLIAMENT (1952 -2014) - A STUDY

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### ABSTRACT

*“A Better Democracy is a Democracy where women do not have the right to vote and to elect to be elected”- Michele Bachelet*

*Democracy provides equality for all persons. But unfortunately, women are excluded from different walks of life more particularly in politics. UN observes that women constitute ‘World’s largest excluded category’. In order to achieve true democratic spirit, women should be ensured political participation. Women until the 20<sup>th</sup> century did not have the right to vote in many of the countries. American women are the first to start fighting for the right to vote. In most of the Western liberal democracies, women won voting rights after their continuous fight with the system. In India, the women have raised the issue of Universal Adult Franchise in the year 1917. The then the British Government granted the right to vote on the basis of marriage, property and education. The Indian Government Act of 1935 provided the right to vote for all women those who attained the age of 21 years who fulfilled the conditions of property and education. In 1950 the Indian Constitution was came into existence and it granted Universal Adult Franchise to all its citizens irrespective of religion, race, caste, sex, nativity, colour and creed*

**KEYWORDS:** *Democracy, Political participation, women representatives, property, education*

### INTRODUCTION

India is the largest democratic country in the world. Democracy is defined as government of the people, by the people and for the people. Democracy is considered the finest form of government in which every individual participate consciously and in which the people remain in sovereign power determining their destiny. In India we have the federal form having both governments at the Centre and in the States. India’s total population is **137 crores** out of which Male population is **70.90 crores and Women population is 66.10 crores**. The sex ratio of the total population was 1.070 (1,070 males per 1 000 females) which is higher than global sex ratio. The global sex ratio in the world was approximately 1 016 males to 1 000 females as of 2018 data.

Democracy provides equality for all persons. But unfortunately, women are excluded from different walks of life more particularly in politics. UN observes that women constitute ‘*World’s largest excluded category*’. In order to achieve true democratic spirit, women should be ensured political participation. Women until the 20<sup>th</sup> century did not have the right to vote in many of the countries. American women are the first to start fighting for the right to vote. In

most of the Western liberal democracies, women won voting rights after their continuous fight with the system. In India, the women have raised the issue of Universal Adult Franchise in the year 1917. The then the British Government granted the right to vote on the basis of marriage, property and education. The Indian Government Act of 1935 provided the right to vote for all women those who attained the age of 21 years who fulfilled the conditions of property and education. In 1950 the Indian Constitution was came into existence and it granted Universal Adult Franchise to all its citizens irrespective of religion, race, caste, sex, nativity, colour and creed.

### WOMEN-POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Political participation is broadly defined as being a process through which an individual plays a significant role in political life of his society, has the opportunity to take part in deciding the common goals of the society and the best way of achieving these goals for the betterment of the society.

Women need to actively participate in government and politics in order to maintain democracy. There must be an opportunity to all members of the state in selection of rulers

and also taking part in the formulation of public policy and also influence the decision-making process. Political participation is not just casting their vote, it also includes a wide range of other activities like membership of political party, electoral campaigning, attending party meetings, expressing their views, demonstrations, communication with their leaders, holding party positions, contesting in the elections, membership in representative bodies, following leaders instructions from time to time, influencing the process of decision-making and other related activities etc., The popular women activist Smt.Usha Narayanan stated that "Political participation constitutes the first and foremost step to attain gender justice". Hence, Gender equity is very much essential for the progress of any society.

**CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS WITH REGARD TO WOMEN**

The dreams and aspirations of the National leaders like Mahatma Gandhiji Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr.B.R.Ambedkar, Sardar Vallabhai Patel, Dr.Babu Rajendra Prasad and others were embodied in the Preamble of the Indian Constitution viz., to promote social, political, economic and ethical values and also to provide social justice, economic and political liberty of individuals and general welfare. Some of the articles in the Indian Constitution speaks about women. They are as follows:

*Article 14* guarantees "Equality before Law", "Equal Protection of Law" within the territory of India.

*Article 15* prohibits discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex and place of birth or any one of them.

*Article 15 (3)* reads as "Nothing shall prevent the State from making special provisions for the benefit of women and children".

*Article 16* guarantees "Equality of opportunities to all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State.

*Article 39(A)* provides that citizen, men and women shall equally, have the right to an adequate means of livelihood.

*Article 39(B)* provides that the ownership and control of the material resources of the community are so distributed as best to sub serve the common good.

*Article 39(C)* guarantees that the health and strength of workers, men and women, and the tender age of children are not abused and that citizens are not forced by economic necessity to enter into unsuited occupations for their age or strength.

*Article 39(D)* provides that equal pay for equal work for both men and women.

*Article 42* guarantees that just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief. This is accordance with Articles 23 & 25 of United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR).

*Article 51(A) (e)* refers to the fundamental duty of citizens to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women.

*Articles 325 & 326* introduce adult franchise without distinction of sex.

*The 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act, 1993* had added the following articles to the Indian Constitution providing reservation for women in Panchayatiraj Institutions.

*Article 243 (D)(2)* reads as not less than 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the seats shall be reserved for women belonging to SCs or STs as the case may be.

*Article 243 (D)(3)* extends political reservation to women not less than 1/3<sup>rd</sup> 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 officers as well. The office of the chairpersons in the panchayats or any other level shall be reserved SCs and the STs and women in such a manner as Legislature of a state may, by law provide.

Women Sarpanchas accounted for 43% of total Gram Panchayats across the country exhibiting active leadership of women in Local Government.

**REGIONAL VARIATION OF WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT (2014)**

Let us look at the women representation in Parliament in different countries in the world appears in the Table.

Region-wise	Lower House (percentage)	Upper House (percentage)	Both Houses Combined (percentage)
African Nations	42.10	NA	NA
<b>USA</b>	<b>25.70</b>	<b>26.40</b>	<b>25.80</b>
European countries	24.90	22.80	24.40
Sub-Sahara Africa	22.90	19.80	22.50
Asian countries	19.30	14.30	18.70
<b>Arab countries</b>	<b>17.80</b>	<b>7.70</b>	<b>15.90</b>
Pacific countries	13.40	38.60	16.20

Source: Inter Parliamentary Union, April, 2014

From the above table, it shows that most of the countries have failed to give due space and representation to women in their political systems. Only in a handful of countries women are moving equally with men. For instance, Germany, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland. In the advanced countries like Western Europe and North-America, female

representation in legislature remains small and relatively insignificant. When compare to other countries in the globe, American states having 25.80% of women representatives in the both houses and the lowest women representation is Arab nations with 15.90%. Women representation in Lower House is shown in the below Table.

**Percentage Representation of Women in Legislature in Various Countries (2014)**

Name of the Country	Women Representation in Lower House (%)
America	18.30
Bangladesh	19.10
Brazil	8.60
Canada	25.10
China	23.40
Cuba	48.90
Denmark	39.10
Finland	42.50
Greece	21.00
Germany	36.50
India	11.40
Indonesia	18.60
Japan	8.10
Nepal	29.90
Pakistan	20.70
Russia	13.60
Sri Lanka	5.80
Sweden	45.00
UAE	17.50
UK	22.60

Source: Inter Parliamentary Union, April, 2014

From the above Table, it is evident that the highest women representation is prevailing in Cuba (48.90%) followed by Sweden (45.00%) and Finland (42.50%). The lowest women political representation in the Lower House is Sri Lanka (5.80%) followed by Japan with 8.10%, Brazil 8.60% and India with 11.40%. The average percentage of women's representation globally stands at about 22%, whereas in case of India, it is a mere 11.8% in Lok Sabha and 11.1% in Rajya

Sabha. Countries like Rwanda, Burundi, Zimbabwe, Iraq, Somalia, Saudi Arabia, Fiji and Ghana rank higher than India.

In South-Asia, Nepal (48), Afghanistan (54), Pakistan (90) and Bangladesh (92) rank much higher than India. Countries like Egypt, Brazil, Malaysia, Japan, Sri Lanka and Thailand have less than 15

% representation of women in Parliament. The below Table shows the women contestants in the General elections.

**Women Contestants in General Elections (1952-2014) (Lok Sabha)**

Year	Males	Females	Total	Female (%)	Male Winning (%)	Female Winning (%)
1952	1831	43	1874	2.3	26.08	51.16
1957	1473	45	1518	3.0	31.7	60.0
1962	1915	70	1985	3.5	24.0	50.0
1967	2302	67	2369	2.8	21.3	44.8
1971	2698	86	2784	3.0	18.5	24.4
1977	2369	70	2439	2.8	22.1	27.1
1980	4478	142	4620	3.0	11.5	19.7
1984	5406	164	5570	2.9	9.2	25.6
1989	5962	198	6160	3.2	8.5	13.6
1991	8374	325	8699	3.7	5.9	12.0
1996	13353	599	13952	4.2	3.8	6.7
1998	4476	274	4750	5.7	11.2	15.7
1999	3976	278	4254	5.8	12.3	17.3
2004	5050	355	5405	6.5	9.8	12.6
2009	7514	556	8070	6.8	6.4	10.6
2014	7500	636	8136	7.8	6.4	9.6

Source: Parliamentary Information Bureau, Ministry of I& B, GoI.

From the above table, it is learnt that the number of women contestants is very low compare to men. It is increased from 2.3% in 1952 to 5.7% in the year 1998. During the years 1952-1966, there are slight changes. From 2004 to 2014, there is constant strength of women representatives in the House of Lok Sabha. The percentage of winning of female

candidates is more since 1952 to 1967 (51.16% to 44.8%). From 1971 onwards, the percentage of female winning candidates is slowly coming down up to 1984 (24.4% to 25.6%). From 1989 onwards, the female winning in the elections are reduced drastically. The below Table explains women representation in Lok Sabha.

**Women Representation in Lok Sabha (1952-2014)**

Year	Members in Lok Sabha			
	Total Members	Males	Females	Percentage of Female
1952	499	477	22	4.41
1957	500	473	27	5.40
1962	503	469	34	6.76
1967	523	492	31	5.93
1971	521	499	22	4.22
1977	544	525	19	3.49
1980	544	516	28	5.15
1984	544	500	44	8.09
1989	517	490	27	5.22
1991	554	515	39	7.04
1996	543	504	39	7.18
1998	543	500	43	7.92
1999	543	494	49	9.02
2004	539	495	44	8.16
2009	543	484	59	10.87
2014	544	481	63	11.58

Source: Election Commission of India, 2014

From the above table, it is evident that the percentage of women in Lok Sabha in relation to the total number of seats. In the year 1952, it was 4.4%. It increased marginally in 1957 and 1962. In 1967 and 1971, there is a downfall of women representation in the Lok Sabha. As per the table, the lowest

representation of women is in the year 1977 (3.49%). In the year 1991, 1996 and 1998, the women percentage is more or less same. From 2009 onwards, there is a significant growth of women representation in the Lower House.

**Membership of Women in Rajya Sabha (From 1952-2015)**

Year	Members in Rajya Sabha			
	Total Members	Male	Female	Percentage of Female
1952	219	203	16	7.31
1957	237	219	18	7.59
1962	238	220	18	7.56
1967	240	220	20	8.33
1971	243	226	17	7.00
1977	244	219	25	10.25
1980	244	220	24	9.84
1984	244	216	28	11.48
1989	245	221	24	9.80
1991	245	207	38	15.51
1996	245	204	19	7.76
1998	245	230	15	6.12
1999	245	226	19	7.76
2005	245	218	25	10.20
2006	242	218	24	9.92
2008	241	219	23	9.54
2015	241	213	31	12.7

Source: Election Commission of India, 2014

It is clear evident from the above table that the status of women representation in the Rajya Sabha in 1952 to 1962, there are no changes. There is a slight change in the year 1967 and again in 1971, there is downfall of representation. In

1977, there is a tremendous increase and again in 1984, 1991, 2005 and then 2015, we observed a considerable growth with compare to the rest of the years. The women ministers in the Union Cabinets are as follows:

**Women Ministers in Various Cabinets of the GoI**

Year	No. of Women Ministers
1952	3
1957	3
1962	5
1967	5
1971	3
1977	2
1980	8
1984	5
1989	1
1991	5
1996	5
1998	4
1999	9
2004	10
2009	9
2014	6

Source: www.parliament of india.nic.in

From the above table, it is learnt that the number of women ministers in the Council of Ministers is negligible from 1952 to 1998 except 1980. In the years 1999 to 2009.

The number of women representation in the cabinet was reduced in the year 2014. State-wise women MPs in the Lok Sabha is shown in the below Table.

**State-Wise Women MPs in Lok Sabha (2009 & 2014)**

Name of the State	Total No. of LS Seats	Female Candidates Won 2009	Female Candidates Won 2014	Difference (+/-)
Andhra Pradesh	42	5	3	-2
Assam	14	2	2	0
Chandigarh	1	0	1	+1
Chhattisgarh	11	2	1	-1
Gujarat	26	4	4	0
Jammu & Kashmir	6	0	1	+1
Karnataka	28	1	1	0
Madhya Pradesh	29	6	4	-2
Maharashtra	48	3	3	0
Punjab	13	4	1	-3
Tamil Nadu	39	1	4	+3
Bihar	40	4	3	-1
Kerala	20	0	1	+1
Delhi	7	1	1	0
Odisha	21	0	2	+2
West Bengal	42	7	14	+7
Uttarakhand	5	0	1	+1
Uttar Pradesh	80	13	13	0
Haryana	10	2	0	-2
Meghalaya	02	1	0	-1
Rajasthan	25	3	1	-2
<b>Total</b>	<b>543</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>+2</b>

Source: Election Commission of India, 2014

**Women Members in Legislative Assemblies of States &UTs**

Sl.No.	Name of the State /UTs	Election Year	Total No. of Seats	Women Members	Percentage
1	Andhra Pradesh	2014	175	19	10.79
2	Arunachal Pradesh	2014	60	02	3.33
3	Assam	2016	126	8	6.34
4	Bihar	2015	243	28	11.5
5	Chattishgarh	2018	90	10	11.11
6	Delhi	2018	70	6	8.5
7	Goa	2017	40	2	5.0
8	Gujarat	2017	182	16	8.79
9	Haryana	2014	90	13	14.44
10	Himachal Pradesh	2017	68	3	4.41
11	Jammu & Kashmir	2014	87	3	3.45
12	Jharkand	2014	81	8	9.87
13	Karnataka	2018	224	6	2.67
14	Kerala	2016	140	8	5.71
15	Madhya Pradesh	2018	230	30	13.04
16	Maharashtra	2016	288	20	6.94
17	Manipur	2017	60	3	5.00
18	Meghalaya	2018	60	4	6.67
19	Mizoram	2018	40	0	0.00
20	Nagaland	2018	60	0	0.00
21	Odhis	2014	147	11	7.48
22	Punjab	2017	117	14	5.12
23	Puducherry	2016	30	4	13.33
24	Rajasthan	2018	200	28	14.00
25	Sikkim	2014	32	3	9.37
26	Tamilnadu	2016	234	21	8.93
27	Telangana	2018	119	9	7.5
28	Tripura	2018	60	5	8.33
29	Uttarakhand	2017	70	5	7.14
30	Uttar Pradesh	2017	403	42	10.42
31	West Bengal	2016	294	42	14.14

Source: Election Commission of India

From the above table, the data gives an analysis relating to women Legislative Members in the states and Union Territories shows that there is no significant representation.

### CHALLENGES FACED BY INDIAN WOMEN IN POLITICS

However, Indian women remain under represented in state and national politics as well as decision-making bodies due to the following reasons.

1. The rise of women in politics has been fallen into obstacles due to family legacy or traditions.
2. They are facing acute and multiple and structural issues.
3. According to Economic Survey 2018, the prevailing cultural attitudes regarding gender roles.
4. Domestic responsibilities, lack of confidence and lack of finances and threat of sexual violence.
5. Lack of education which hinders their political involvement.
6. Lack of awareness about their rights and privileges as mentioned in the Constitution.
7. Participation as a proxy candidate-There have been evidences that due to reservation policy, certain women got elected into the set up, but they acted merely as the mouth piece of their male family members.
8. Pro-female and pro-family policies.
9. Presence of innumerable social inequalities and low level of political awareness and political participation.

### HOW TO IMPROVE THE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN ?

1. One way to combat against the discrimination faced by Indian women is through providing legitimate quotas to women in the elected bodies.
2. Women leaders should serve as positive role models for many girls. Gender disparity should be erased through attainment of education to all.
3. Women panchayat leaders should invest in priorities for women. Newly elected women representatives will be given training programmes about the nature and working of political institutions.
4. The provisions contained in 73rd & 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts should be implemented in true spirit.
5. "Women Reservation Bill" providing quota to women in the Parliament and in the State Legislatures should be passed immediately.
6. We should break gender barriers in order to overcome social and political bias.
7. Women leadership should be encouraged by the society.
8. Women should be inspired and motivated to think discuss and act to solve problems by Political leaders.
9. Showing transparency and gender balance in the selection process.
10. Developing mechanisms and training to encourage participation of women in the electoral and political processes.

## CONCLUSION

Gender development and women's empowerment is now considered as the core of the growth policies and the overall economic prosperity of a state and country. The states of India are now strictly implementing acts related to women education, domestic violence, and child marriage, equal participation in institutes, working places and in politics. There is a need of thought of consciousness in the minds of women about themselves. They must realize that they have constitutional rights to equality, economic security, and access to education, employment opportunities, pay equality and political power.

These initiatives are helping to reach out to the targeted groups effectively and in turn, to achieve the desired objective of gender development. Women moreover need to be actively involved in defining the political, economic and social agenda. The entry of women in politics will transform the total scenario. The full and equitable participation of women in public life is essential to build a strong democracy. Women's participation in politics helps advance gender equality and affects both the range of policy issues that get considered and

the types of solutions that are proposed. The positive impact of women in politics is undeniable. Very soon, the 33 % reservation for women in the Parliament and State Legislatures also will provide them an opportunity to escape from crooked traditions imposed upon them by patriarchal norms and practices. A large scale grass roots movement must be initiated to change the perceptions and attitude of both decision makers and voters. Further laws alone cannot bring social transformation and it must come from the society.

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