

POLITICAL EMPOWEMENT OF WOMEN IN INDIA: AN OVERVIEW

***DR. K. SEKHARA**

**Guest Lecturer in Economics, S.G. Govt. Degree & P.G.College, Piler, Chittoor district, Andhra Pradesh.*

ABSTRACT

The political women empowerment is a social process and is dire essential for the development and progress of women who constitute 50 per cent of the total population. The status of women is measured globally by the involvement of women in politics and their empowerment. Women empowerment and equal involvement in political life is very significant at all the levels of Indian culture. Despite benefitting from reservations, women frequently experience obstacles when they participate in politics. Though India is moving towards development side, still it has rather a very low representation of women in politics. So, extension education can play an immensely important role in achieving gender equality by strengthening women's rights and addressing barriers to their political involvement. Women should be involved in local as well as national decision making bodies for the whole development of a country. Women's political empowerment means the self-sufficiency of women to cast vote according to their consent, political involvement, contest elections, political demonstration, political expression, power and implementation regarding their action, requirements and priorities. Thus, it implies the degree of equality and freedom enjoyed by them in shaping and sharing of power and the value given by the society to political role of women. The present study analyses the political participation in 17 elections (1952-2019) in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha and empowerment of women in India.

Keywords: *Women empowerment, Political, India, Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.*

INTRODUCTION

Empowerment is not only an indistinct term but also a much contested term. For understanding empowerment, it is significance to study power. It refers to set of power relations and how power is exercised and constructed in the society. It raises subject of power and reconstruction of power as empowerment and immensely involves a critique of power relations of the ways exercise of power is constructed, legitimized and reproduced. Women make up half of the population of each country in the world but this half population yet lag far behind

men when it comes to participation in politics and economy. By the end of 21 century, almost every country in the world provides the legal right for women in politics, women can vote, women can support candidate, women can run office but in political life of each nation there is a dearth of female faces that dearth suggests that the dogged discrimination against women remains. This has led to focus on engagement of women in development, popularly termed as women empowerment. Women empowerment is the buzzword and most talked about them today.

Political involvement is the hallmark of a democratic setup. An efficiency of democracy depends largely on the scope to which equal and effective involvement is provided to its entire people. Women include about half of the population in India. Citizens' active involvement in political relationships sumptuously strengthens the democratic fabric. Since women's attendance is seemed to be low in Indian politics, it is the most essential to make women aware of their rights and motivate them for involvement in mainstream politics. The Indian constitution under articles 325 and 326, guarantees equal right to participate in political performance effectively. Though lack of space for involvement in political process has not only resulted in their absence in numbers of decision making bodies but, also neglected their general problems and issues too. For strong and effective democratic method, the involvement of women is dire necessary. There cannot be any genuine democracy if the voice and issues of women are mistreated.

Political representation is primarily based on the premise that it deals primarily with individuals, regardless of gender and equal opportunities should be granted for authority and influence in society. It was believed that very few women are actually joining politics and giving time change in terms of education and employment opportunities would essentially percolate into the political sphere too and their representation would increase. However, the representation of women in the Lok Sabha has not crossed 14.37 per cent in India. In the first Lok Sabha there was only 4.4 per cent of the house and increased to 14.37 per cent in the 17th Lok Sabha. Likewise, in the case of Rajya Sabha, the percentage of women members has never crossed 15 per cent. These facts inevitably lead us to conclude that there is an utmost need for taking positive action in favour of women.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the total seats and women elected in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha during 1952 -2019
- To analyze the State-wise total seats and men and Women MLAs elected in State Assemblies-2019

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The information for this study has been primarily collected from secondary data, i.e. Election Commission of India, Books, Journals, Government reports and Internet. The data has been represented by bar diagrams in this study.

ROLE OF WOMEN IN LOK SABHA OF INDIA

Since independence, women continued to play a pivotal role in less conventional performance such as anti-alcohol agitations, peace movements, environmental movements and even revolutionary activities which equally effect power associations as they have the capacity to influence the country powerfully. 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. Role of women in Indian parliament and states assemblies remain at a very low level. The women role is 14.37 per cent in Indian parliament in 2019. No doubt, a small number of seats have been given to women but it has not been in proportion to women's power in population. The table 1 shows the total number of seats contested, number of women elected and percentage of women in the Lok Sabha in relation to the total number of seats.

Table 1: Women members in Lok Sabha during 1952- 2019

Sl. No.	Year	Total No. of Seats	No. of women members elected	Percentage of the Total
1	1952	499	22	4.40
2	1957	500	27	5.40
3	1962	503	34	6.75
4	1967	523	31	6.92
5	1971	521	22	4.22
6	1977	544	19	3.49
7	1980	544	28	5.14
8	1984	544	44	8.08
9	1989	529	28	5.29
10	1991	509	36	7.07
11	1996	541	40	7.39
12	1998	545	44	8.07
13	1999	543	48	8.84
14	2004	544	45	8.27
15	2009	545	59	10.87
16	2014	542	65	11.99
17	2019	543	78	14.37

Source: Election Commission of India

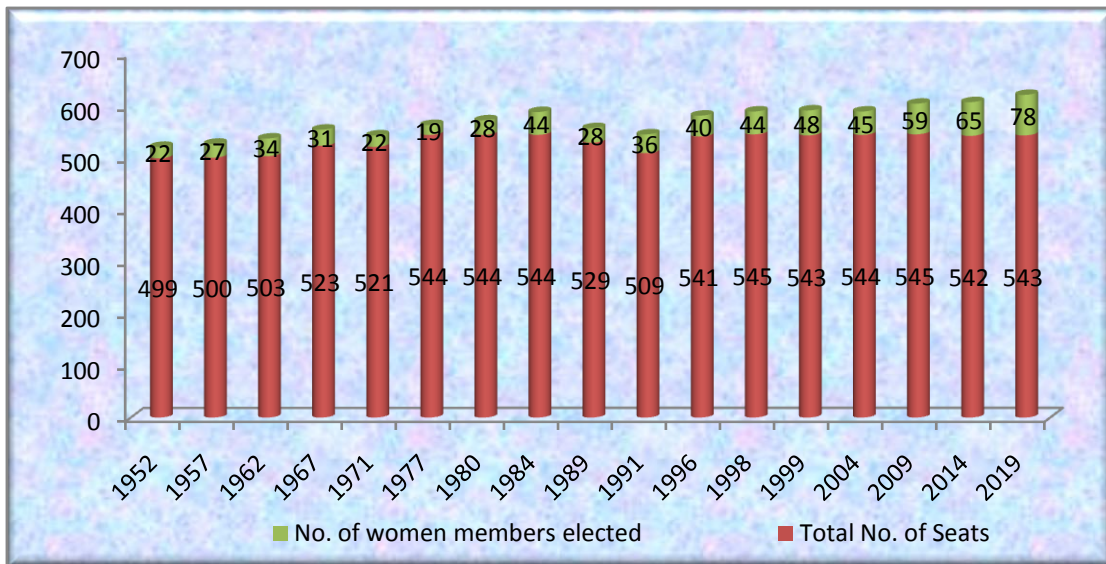


Figure 1 Women member in Lok Sabha during 1952- 2019

The table 1 and figure 1 show the percentage of women in the Lok Sabha in relation to the total number of seats. In the first Lok Sabha, out of 499 seats, 22 women members (4.40 per cent) were elected to the house in the year 1952. It increased slightly from 5.40 in 1957 to 6.75 per cent in 1962, 5.93 per cent in 1967 to fell again to 4.22 per cent 1971, 3.49 per cent the lowest in the year 1977 and increased slightly to 8.09 per cent during the year 1984. Later, it improved slightly to 7.07 per cent in 1991 to 8.07 per cent in 1998 and 8.84 per cent in 1999, but it again decreased slightly 8.29 per cent in 2004. Later, it increased to 10.87 per cent in 2009 to 11.42 per cent in the year 2014 and 14.37 per cent during 2019. It is concluded that the percentage of women representatives in the Lok Sabha is very low and women’s representation has not crossed 14 per cent till date.

WOMEN MEMBERS IN RAJYA SABHA

The table 2 shows the total number of seats contested, number of women elected and percentage of women in the Rajya Sabha in relation to the total number of seats.

**Table 2
Women members in Rajya Sabha during 1952- 2019**

Sl. No.	Year	Total No. of Seats	No. of women members elected	Percentage of the Total
1	1952	219	16	7.30
2	1957	237	18	7.59
3	1962	238	18	7.56
4	1967	240	20	8.33
5	1971	243	17	6.99

6	1977	244	25	10.24
7	1980	244	24	9.83
8	1985	244	28	11.47
9	1990	245	38	15.51
10	1996	223	20	8.96
11	1998	223	19	8.52
12	2004	245	27	11.02
13	2009	246	22	8.94
14	2014	245	29	11.83
15	2019	245	25	9.84

Source: Election Commission of India

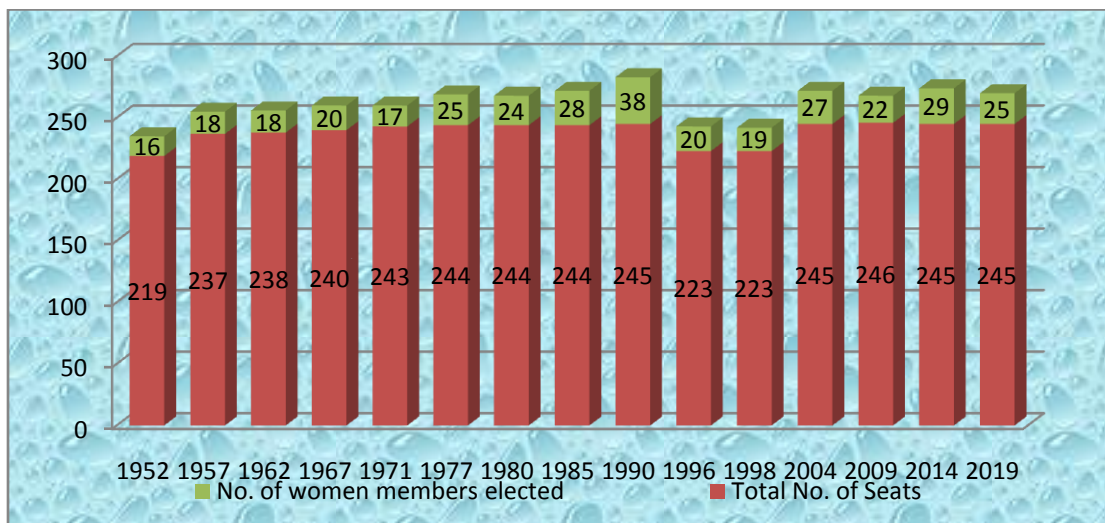


Figure 2 Women members in Rajya Sabha during 1952- 2019

The table 2 and figure 2 show that the total number of seats contested by women varies from 219 in 1952 to 246 in 2009 showing a marginal improvement. Similarly the number of women members elected ranges between 16 in 1952 and 38 in 1990 showing more than two fold increase. Likewise, the percentage of women members elected to Rajya Sabha varies from 7.30 in 1952 to 15.51 in 1990 and shows a two fold increase. It is quite clear that the total number of seats contested by women, the number of women members elected and the percentage of women members elected to Rajya Sabha show an increasing trend with several variations. It is concluded that women members in Rajya Sabha are increasing but the increase is not steady owing to several reasons like not allotting more seats to women, lack of interest of women, non cooperation from leaders, cadre and family members.

WOMEN REPRESENTATION IN STATE ASSEMBLIES

Women representation in state legislature has been equally dismal. The women elected highest representation states are Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu. The States like Nagaland and Mizoram have no representation of women in the Assemblies. Analysis of trends of women participation in contesting elections to the state legislatures indicated that there is a large gender discrimination that is responsible for poor representation of women in India. Table 3 shows the State-wise Representation of Women MLAs in State Assemblies- 2019.

Table 3
State-wise Representation of Women MLAs in State Assemblies-2019

State Assembly	Total MLAs in Assembly	No. of men MLAs	% of men MLAs	Total women MLAs	% of women MLAs
Andhra Pradesh	175	161	92	14	8
Assam	126	117	92.8	9	7.2
Arunachal Pradesh	60	57	95	3	5
Bihar	243	215	88.5	28	11.5
Chhattisgarh	91	78	85.7	13	14.3
Goa	40	38	95	2	5
Haryana	90	81	90	9	10
Himachal pradesh	68	63	92.6	5	7.4
Uttar Pradesh	404	366	90.6	38	9.4
Maharashtra	289	265	91.7	24	8.3
Tamil Nadu	235	214	91.1	21	8.9
Madhya Pradesh	231	214	92.6	17	7.4
Gujarat	182	169	92.8	13	7.2
Karnataka	225	218	96.9	7	3.1
Rajasthan	200	175	87.5	25	12.5
Odisha	147	134	91.2	13	8.8
Kerala	140	131	93.6	9	6.4
Jharkhand	82	72	87.8	10	12.2
Punjab	117	111	94.9	6	5.1
Uttarakhand	71	66	92.9	5	7.1

Tripura	60	57	95	3	5
Manipur	60	58	96.7	2	3.3
Meghalaya	60	56	93.3	4	6.7
Nagaland	60	60	100	0	0
Mizoram	40	40	100	0	0
Sikkim	32	29	90.6	3	9.4
Puduchery	33	29	87.9	4	12.1
Delhi	70	64	91.4	6	8.6

Source: Website of Election Commission of India

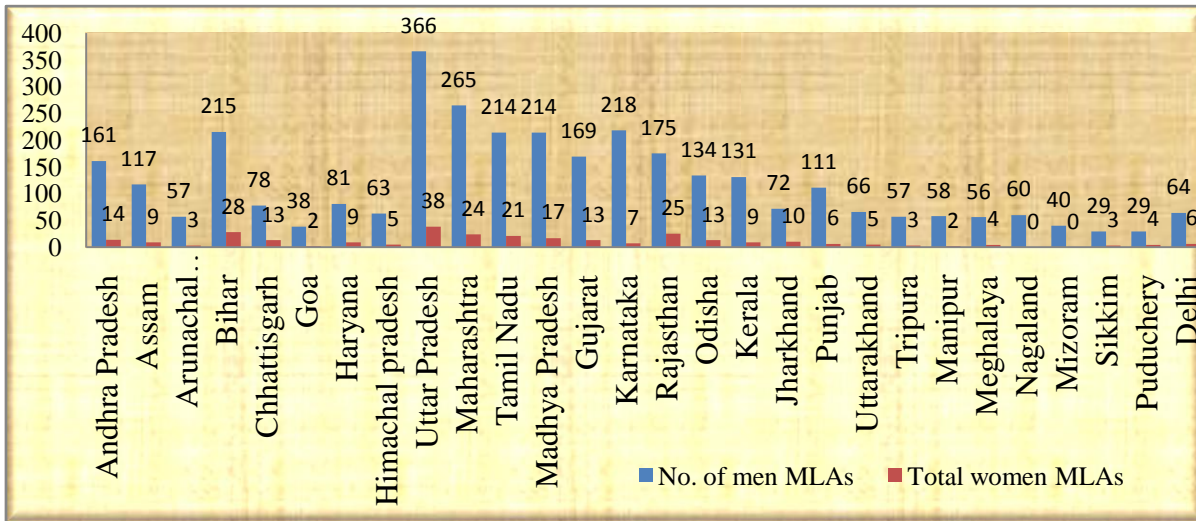


Figure 3 State-wise Representation of Women MLAs in State Assemblies-2019

The table 3 and figure 3 portray that the total Assembly Seats in various states vary from 32 in Sikkim state to 404 in Uttar Pradesh. In both the states women MLAs are only 9.4 per cent while their counterparts are 90.6 showing large gender bias. The number of Men MLAs ranges between 29 in Puducherry and Sikkim and 366 in Uttar Pradesh state. The percentage of Men MLAs ranges from 85.7 in Chattishgarh to 100 in Nagaland and Mizoram. The total number of women MLAs is lowest at 0 in Nagaland and Mizoram and highest at 38 in Uttar Pradesh. The percentage of number of women MLAs ranges between 0 in Nagaland and Mizoram and 14.3 in Chattisgarh. It is not even at least one fourth even though 33 per cent reservations for women in politics. It is concluded that there is peak and value configuration in the total Assembly Seats in various states, number of Men MLAs, percentage of Men MLAs, total number of women MLAs and percentage of number of women MLAs. The allotments of seats to women are rather very low in all the states though women are half of the total population.

CONCLUSION

The emphasis of this study is to know about the role of political participation in women empowerment in India. The percentage of women representatives in the Lok Sabha is very low and women's representation has not crossed 14 per cent till date. The total number of women MLAs is lowest at zero in Nagaland and Mizoram and highest at 38 in Uttar Pradesh. The percentage of number of women MLAs ranges between zero in Nagaland and Mizoram and 14.3 in Chhattisgarh. It is unfortunate to observe that the states like Nagaland and Mizoram did not allot seats to women. Consequently all the trends indicate that women's representation in politics need special consideration and cannot be left to the forces that currently dominate our political parties and government. Today even the best of our woman parliamentarians feel sidelined and powerless within their respective parties. The few women in leadership positions have not been able to encourage the entry of greater numbers of women in electoral and party politics and are an ineffective minority within their own respective political groupings. Consequently it is urgently necessary that we have to take special method to enhance women's political participation in ways that help them influence decision-making at all levels of our society and polity. Our democratic system seriously faulty if it fails to yield adequate space to women for their political empowerment in India. It is suggested that women should raise their voice and achieve number of more seats allotted to them as per their population. Moreover, they must fight for implementation of 33 per cent reservation in politics and gender discrimination.

REFERENCES

1. Rathod A (2014), Women's Political Participation and Representation in India, Issue Brief, Delhi policy group, www. Delhipolicygroup.com.
2. Sudhakar Patra, Political Empowerment of Women in India and Millennium Development Goal, The Indian Economic Journal, Special Issue, ISSN 0019-4662, December 2015, pp.312-320.
3. Rashmi Srivastava, Empowerment of Women Through Political Participation with Special Reference to Madhya Pradesh in Niroj Sinha (ed) Women in Indian Politics, Anmol Publications, New Delhi, 2000, p.206.
4. Saxena, K.S., Womens Political Participation in India, Sublime Publications, Jaipur, 1999, p.108.
5. Hust. E, Women's Political Representation and Empowerment in India-A Million Indiras Now? New Delhi, Manohar Publishers and Distributors, 2005.

6. Gochhayat Artatrana, 'Political Participation of Women in gram Panchayat Elections in Odisha: A Case Study of Hindol Block in Dhenkanal District', International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention 2 (2): 38-46, 2013.
7. Praveen Rai, women's participation in electoral politics in India, journals.sagepub.com, 2017.
8. M. Ameen Nisha, 'Political Empowerment and Participation of Women in India', International Journal of Pure and Applied Mathematics, Volume 120, N0.5, ISSN: 1314:3395, 2018.
9. Ruqia Mohi-ud-Din, Women in Jammu and Kashmir: Political Empowerment and Participation, International Journal of Academic Research and Development, Volume 3, Issue 1,ISSN: 2455-4197, 2018.