

WOMEN PARTICIAPTION OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN INDIA

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Abstract

The role of women in politics can be measured by the turn out of women candidates in each election. It is an important indicator of the working and functioning of true democracy in any country. The overall political participation of women in India is a contested issue and opinion is quite varied and divergent. Women's entry into political decision making is viewed inevitable to deal with various forms of women's oppression and to improve their status. Gender equality is essential for effective participation of women in strengthening the institutional structure of democracy. Leaders in political parties still do not have the political will to give equal space to women in political parties or in Legislatures. The strategies adopted by different countries to increase the representation of women in political parties and consequently in the legislatures. There are three types of gender quotas such as (i) Legal Candidate Quota (ii) Voluntary Political Party Quota and (iii) Reserved Seats Quota, used to increase the representation of women in legislatures. The women's wings of the political parties do try to raise pro-women issues. But there is lack of co-ordination among the women's wings and there parent parties. As the office bearers of these women's wings are handpicked by the respective party leadership. They are not in position to take a stand against any policy of the party. Women's wings have failed to make the parties accede to their demand for adequate representation for women within the parties. There is need for more co-ordination within the women's wings and the political parties. The women's wings must take along other non-governmental organizations to work for the betterment of women in society.

Keywords: Political Participation, Women, National Parties.

INTRODUCTION

The political status of women's in any general public can be characterized not just as uniformity and opportunity with which they share power with men yet in addition the worth society puts on the job of women's in governmental issues. It is a significant mark of the working and working of genuine majority rule government in any country. The generally political cooperation of women's in India is a challenged issue and assessment is very shifted and disparate. There are contending contentions about the levels and examples of women's investment in the political cycle in the country. That is, the absence of political voice and unfortunate portrayal of women's in parliament is an aftereffect of avoidance on orientation basis.

Women's political participation can provide the inspiration for women to take on action on a vision of a better and more equal society and to make meaningful contributions towards inclusive national development. Women are and have been politically active throughout India and the large and expanding mass of women's groups and advocacy efforts are testament to this. However, their participation has been within movements and not structural politics. The question of women cannot be asked, certainly not answered by individual groups and women's questions need to be seen as matters of public interest not matters of specifically female concern outside of the political sphere. They must be raised and debated at all levels with "Women's issues" becoming public issues. Liberal

democracy is founded on reason, laws and freedom of choice and the position of different social groups in the social and political space where power is located is not always equal in practice. This is particularly so in the case of women. The nature of society or state has a decisive impact on the extent and effectiveness of women's political presence and participation. Notions of democracy, governance and state are often not gender neutral constructs but results from both, historical factors and experiences. The state and its organizational entities reflect the same social forces as other social organizations. It is thus necessary to examine the gender balance in women's participation in the political process, decision making and policy formulation.

THE INDIAN SCENARIO

As mentioned earlier India fares badly as far as women representation in the two Houses of Parliament and different state legislatures is concerned. Standing at a distant 149th rank in the list of 193 countries the percentage of women Parliamentarian is only around 11-12%. India can boast of having a woman Prime Minister, a woman President, many women Governors and Chief Ministers as well as women Chairpersons in the two Houses of Parliament. In 2014 general elections 62 women were able to occupy seats in Lok Sabha which has a total of 543 elected members. However this constitutes only 11.5% which in no way is enough. Though the present NDA government has as many as a woman in the Council of Ministers out of which six hold the rank of Cabinet Ministers. Moreover important portfolios of Foreign Affairs and Defence are also with women Ministers. Sushma Swaraj is the Foreign Ministers and Nirmala Sitharaman holds the Defence portfolio.

Women empowerment may have been the key slogan of various political parties in India for the last three decades but women still lag way behind men in having a say in decision making and in their participation in economic activity. Women's participation is much less than desirable in states where women have only around 9 percent share in legislative assemblies and 4 percent in legislative councils. Indian states provide for reserved seats for women ranging from 33 percent to 50 percent of total seats in local government bodies, both in panchayats and municipalities levels. States with 50 percent reserved seats in panchayats and municipalities include Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Maharashtra and Tripura, while other states including Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand and West Bengal and Punjab have 50 percent reserved seats for women only for panchayats. In Panchayati Raj Institutions there are 13.72 lakh Elected Women Representatives (EWR"s) which constitute 44.2 percent of total Elected Representatives (ER"s) as per December 2017 survey and women sarpanchs accounted for 43 percent of total Gram Panchayats (GPs) across the country, exhibiting active leadership of women in local government.

The reality of gender inequality in India is very complex and diversified because it is present in many ways, many fields and classes. The situation in our political system is also not very different. So far the efforts to push the number of women by providing one third reservation for them in various legislative bodies including the Parliament have failed as the much awaited 108th Constitutional Amendment Bill is yet to be passed by the Lok Sabha. The percentage of women in various forums of political parties is just 5-10 percent across all political parties in India. In some cases parties may restrict women's influence and use them instrumentally to mobilize women voters for the party, rather than to integrate a gender perspective into the parties' policies. Parties without a quota system or reserved seats for women in this leadership structure tend to have very few women leaders. Parties that are not required by their own internal rules or by a national statutory quota to

place women candidates on their lists or in winnable positions also tend to have a low level of women's participation in legislatures.

Women in India constitute nearly half of the population of the country but they are poorly represented in the various governance and decision making bodies. The position depicted through the 14 general elections so far reflects a low representation of women in Parliament and State legislature, in political parties and other decision-making bodies. The average percentage of women's representation in the Parliament, Assemblies and Council of Ministers taken together has been around 10 percent. In 15th Lok Sabha first time their representation crossed 10 percent with 59 women MPs and in 16th General Elections women's position in Lok Sabha is 11.8 percent and in Rajya Sabha is 11.9 percent.

Indian Constitution game plans of value gave women's political opportunities by legitimizing their occupation for participating in open life inside the formal and legitimate construction, yet all things considered, two or three women have had the choice to show up at the top boss posts or dynamic situations for instance State Legislative Assemblies and Parliament. An overall population is concluded by the circumstance with its women's, but tragically Indian history in this setting has been dismissal without a doubt especially in the field of dynamic bodies. The amount of women's people in the Lok Sabha to the extent that degree of complete number of people in Lok Sabha never crossed 12% inspite of the way that women's involve close to half of the votes. Everything is all around great if women's solicitation 33% reservation in Parliament and State Legislative Assemblies since they are fooling around in the regular course. Truth be told, it is the need vital to grow the depiction of women's in sum and quality. It was acknowledged that progression game plans for women's will deliver conditions for their interest in undeniable level bodies by challenging races which has not been seen up until this point. Ideological groups have women's wings as well as explains plan for their advancement yet the gatherings don't make substantial strides in handling women's up-and-comers, nor have they perceived the capacity of committed women's by permitting their portrayal in party legislative issues. Numerous women's having defeated familial man centric society, join ideological groups however they additionally need to surrender to party directs which implied subjecting to the directs of male individuals from the party. The man centric standards directing ideological groups have not been giving women's sufficient room to fabricate their vocation in legislative issues aside from the friends and relatives of the male individuals. There hosts been an inclination of political gatherings to keep women's on the edges. Women's competitors are many times handled in voting demographics where the possibilities winning are thin. At the point when women's win they are frequently consigned to the women's wings of the party and made to focus on what are viewed as explicitly women's issues, for example, endowment and assault cases. Such compartmentalization as opposed to making women's issues standard pushes wpmen's back to specific obliging limits.

Indian women have been exposed to greater poverty, illiteracy, casteism insecurity, unhealthy living conditions, inferior social status, hunger, and male dominance in most of the fields. Increasing criminalization, corruption and compromises required to sustain one's political career also deter women from entering mainstream politics. Indian Constitution provides provisions for equal political participation of men and women in the process of formulation of government. But it is hardly seen in practice. Lack of ability and opportunity to participate in the political system implies a lack of full membership in the system. For true equality to become a reality for women, the sharing of

power on equal terms is essential. But the reality is that women continue to be marginally represented even in areas where various policies have a direct impact on them. There is gap between constitutional guarantees and the actual representation of women in the political system in India. So there is certainly a need for women's more effective role in decision making process for the democratic and constitutional assurances of equal citizenship and rights in the Indian Constitution to become a reality at the operational level.

WOMEN'S POSITION IN SOCIETY

The status of woman in Hindu society has changed from time to time. Her position has been variously estimated and diametrically opposite views are current regarding her place in different stages of civilization. On one hand, she is considered little better than a slave or beast of burden, condemned to drudgery, bought as a chattel and treated as such. On the other hand, those who have had anything to do with tribes reckoning descent from the mother are likely to view a woman as the undisputed mistress of the family if not of the community life as well. Both concepts are, as far as the vast majority of the people are concerned, bound to be far away from the actual state of affairs.

The politicians of the nationalist movement, motivated by their own selfish aims, assiduously courted women who indicated a desire to be educated, work outside the house or to remarry. This was especially true of the wives, daughters and sisters of politicians and social reformers. They were encouraged to participate in political activities, organize social reform movements and accept responsible and decision-making roles in public life. They became symbols of the emancipated women and a source of pride not only to their families but to the country. Their presence in political life demonstrated the respect and dignity accorded to them by the Indian society. The new women, educated and politically active, would demonstrate to the Indian western public that new and alternative role models were an acceptable form of activity for respectable women.

Indian democracy is held in high esteem. Being the largest democracy of the world it guarantees equal rights to every citizen and provides equal rights to women. Even though there are several challenges before our democracy regarding rights of women, crimes against women are on rise particularly for the last few years attempts are being made to abolish the schemes meant for women-welfare and conspiracies are being hatched to limit constitutional rights of women. Our forefathers were of the opinion that any society can't be considered civilized and modern as long as women enjoy equal rights and their interests are not amply safeguarded. But in today's political landscape, woman is often deployed as a tool to highlight the 'sacred' nature of a subject, ranging from the 'gau mata' to 'Bharat Mata' and 'Ganga Mata'.

Women and their issues are only raised during the Mother's Day, the Women's Day or during the election time. Many political parties claim that they are serious to solve the women issues and give proper place to women in society and political field. For this purpose political parties come out with many schemes for the betterment of women, start campaigns from time to time on women issues and raise their voice to implement any law which is useful for women. Political parties election manifestos are another source that have been defined as public declarations of the parties' principles and intentions and reveal the ideologies that characterize them. It is in the manifestos in which political parties express their ideologies and views which will be implemented in future when they come to power. In election times all political parties accept invitations of women's groups to discuss

wide range of issues from violence against women to problems of women farmers. Some politicians also discuss gender budgeting, safe city and support to women survivors of sexual violence in their speeches and also make promises to push the recommendations of women's organizations in the main stream political parties discourse.

CONGRESS PARTY AND WOMEN ISSUES

Similarly the Congress Party Election Manifesto of 2014 had very promising provisions for women. The party manifesto promised to strengthen institutional arrangements to provide access to credit, training and marketing for women in the unorganized sector in Semi-urban and rural areas. The party vowed to provide low interest loans of up to Rs.1 lakh to women for livelihood activities. Party would increase the number of girls hostels, particularly in tribal areas and hostels for working women with day care to encourage women to become well educated and earn their own livelihood. Party further declared that in order to ensure that all measures were taken to make women feel safe and protected party would expedite such measures as the creation of functional helplines in all major towns and cities and rural areas for prompt grievance redressal for women, exclusive 24 hours transport facilities and gender sensitivity classes for police men and women, particularly in registering and investigating complaints made by women.

Indian National Congress further proclaimed strict implementation of PCPNDT Act 2002, Prevention of Domestic Violence Act 2005, Sexual Harassment of Women at Work Place (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act to April 2013, rape laws-the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 2013. These laws were passed when Congress party was in power at centre. Similarly it promised strict implementation of the Prohibition of Child Labour Act and also ensured that the strongest possible action was taken to prevent child trafficking. The party promised to pass citizens charter for safety of women and special protection for Dalit women. After gang rape incident in Delhi in December 2013 a law was created by the Parliament.

In 2014 manifesto Congress promised to establish fast track courts to address crimes against women. These courts would be established with 'in-camera proceedings, facilities in state headquarters and in regional centres for the sole purpose of addressing crimes against women and in all police stations 25 percent staffer would be women. The party would ensure the number of women police stations in the country goes up from 500 to 2000 in the next five years. Party supported 24-Hour-One-stop crisis centres to be established in the government hospitals to provide medical, legal and psycho social aid in cases of rape and domestic violence against women.

BJP AND WOMEN ISSUE

BJP claims to be the world's largest political party. It considers itself exemplary in the area of women's rights, pointing to its strong women's auxiliary and a widely admired program of support for female upliftment. BJP declares support to advancement of women and special steps to remove their social and educational disabilities without any change in the traditionally established principles of social organization. The Bhartya Janata Party led NDA alliance has been in power at the Union level for around eleven years. The programmes and schemes launched by the various NDA governments (1998-1999, 1994-2004 and 2014-2019) can be counted as the achievements of the BJP vis-à-vis women issues. Party believe that the goals and targets set in the National Population Policy can be realized only by making it a people's movement. Party in favour of providing incentives for the girl

child within a two-child norm BJP build consensus over ways that would ensure success of this mission.

Thus it is found that women's claim to development benefits is registered in the manifestos of these political parties. Women's concerns were addressed as part of political parties campaign to promote social justice either as part of special groups or more specifically to empower women. The BJP election manifesto of 2009 signalled women's empowerment as an imperative for inclusive development. Party manifesto committed to adopt a national policy on women's economic empowerment to ensure every women's has access to livelihood and enhance the income of all categories of working women and no gender discrimination in wages in organized and unorganized sector. BJP in their 2009 election manifesto introduced the Ladli Lakshmi Scheme at the national level which had been a success in Madhya Pradesh, to encourage girls of attend school up to at least pre-college level. Under this scheme each girl child from disadvantaged families was receive Rs. 2000 on reaching class 6, Rs. 4000 in class 9, Rs. 7500 in class 11 and Rs. 1,10,000 on completing 21 years of age. From class 6 onwards she was to get a stipend of Rs. 2400 per year till such time she remains in school. BJP launched a national programme with the help of State Government to provide bicycles to girls from Below Poverty Line (BPL) families who attended school. BJP recognized the important role of women in development of the society and growth of the nation and committed itself to give a high priority to women's empowerment and welfare in election Manifesto of 2014, BJP stated that it would ensure that strict implementation of laws related to women, particularly those related to rape and establish funds for the rehabilitation and welfare of victims of rape and acid attacks. The Manifesto claimed that government would create an acid attack victims welfare fund to take care of the medical costs related to treatment and cosmetic reconstructive surgeries of such victims.

The party committed itself to make the police stations women friendly and increase the number of women in police at different levels. It also purposed to introduce self defence as a part of the school curriculum. BJP manifesto of 2014 promised that party would protect women's right to land, property right, marital right and cohabitation rights and transform the quality of life of women in rural India by providing electricity, tap water, cleaner fuel and toilets in every home. The BJP election manifestos of 2004, 2009 and 2014 promised a lot for women equality and women's rights. Since the BJP led NDA government in 2014, a number of these schemes have been implemented. The only problem is that many of these benefits have actually not reached the real needy women. And moreover the government has failed to get the Women Reservation Bill passed in its five year term.

CPI (M) AND WOMEN ISSUES

The CPI (M) has stated in its manifesto (2014) that safe shelters must be instituted in each police district for women survivors of violence. Speedy justice, compensation and rehabilitation be ensured for survivors of rape and acid attacks and gender sensitive police and prosecutorial procedures must be strictly followed. Further the number of judges and courts should be expanded to ensure speedy justice in every case related to sexual violence. Party has been in favour of strict implementation of the Act against sex determination tests and female foeticide and activation of defunct monitoring committees. CPI (M) emphasised enactment of laws against honour crimes and trafficking of girls and women, laws for joint matrimonial property rights and strengthening of maintenance Act to ensure safe survival of women and children. Party manifesto of 2014 promised secure, dignified, remunerative employment for women and gave great emphasis on regulation of contract labour and

increase in minimum wages. Party promised for pension and health insurance for women workers in the unorganized sector including home based workers. Party promised provide to crèche facilities for all working women and adopting steps to prevent sexual harassment of women workers at work place and setting up local and workplace committees as mandated under the Sexual Harassment of Women at the Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressed) Act with elected representation. CPI (M) also stressed upon the long standing demand of the women's workers employed in work of perennial nature to be regularized and the principle of equal pay for equal work to be upheld in every field. ASHAs, Anganwadi workers, mid-day meal workers to be treated as regular employers with proper pay scales and minimum wages to be raised to Rs 15000 per month, as per its manifesto.

Table 1: Women Candidates by Three National Political Parties (1996-2014): Party wise

Year		BJP	INC	CPI (M)	Total Women candidate
1996	No. of women candidates Won Success rate in %	27 14 51.85	49 16 32.65	05 01 20	599 40 6.7
1998	No. of women candidates Won Success rate in %	32 15 46.88	38 10 26.32	08 03 37.5	274 43 15.7
1999	No. of women candidates Won Success rate in %	25 15 60	51 14 27.45	05 03 60	284 49 17.3
2004	No. of women candidates Won Success rate in %	30 10 33.33	45 12 26.65	08 05 62.50	355 44 12.4
2009	No. of women candidates Won Success rate in %	44 13 29.55	43 23 53.49	06 01 16.67	556 59 10.61
2014	No. of women candidates Won Success rate in %	38 30 78.95	60 4 6.67	11 1 9.1	668 62 9.28

Source : CSDS (Centre for the Study of Developing Societies) Report

The above Table presents the scenario of the women candidates from three political parties BJP, INC and CPI (M) from 1996-2014. The Table shows that in 1996 Lok Sabha elections, Congress fielded only 49 women candidates while BJP fielded mere 27 and communist party of India (M) gave tickets to only five women candidates. Out of 599 total women candidates in the elections in 1996, 40 crossed the finish line, they registered a 6.7 percent success rate. In 1998 and 1999 election INC fielded 38 and 51 women candidates. The success rate of women candidates in 1998 and 1999 elections was 26.32 percent and 27.45 percent respectively. BJP fielded 32 and 25 women candidates in 1998 and 1999 elections respectively. BJP women won 15 seats each in 1998 and 1999 elections. CPI (M) on the other hand won three seats each out of the eight and five women candidates respectively fielded by it in the 1998 and 1999 elections. The success rate of CPI (M)'s women candidates was 37.5 percent and 60 percent respectively.

All political parties raised the women issues in their manifestos and promise to fulfill them. But in actual sense many of these schemes are only tact of political parties for winning elections. At the time of elections there is always enough support for the women issues but this is quickly lost after the elections. While all political parties have relied on female politicians and Bollywood stars to endorse their party to appeal to women voters on the campaign trail they fail to address the real issue of equal political participation of women. Lack of gender perspective is a marked feature of the party manifestos of the major political parties. For the past two decades, while every national level political

party has been offering lip service to promote women's agenda due to pressure from the National Alliance of Women's Organization and United efforts of all the eight national women's organizations such as All India Women's Conference (AIWC), AIDWA, National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW), Mahila Daxata Samriti (MDS), Joint Women's Programmes (JWP), Forum for Child Care Services (FORCES), Centre for Women's Development Studies (CWDS) and Young Women Christian Association (YWCA) the fact is, parties of all shades and learning have betrayed women's cause. Members of political parties regularly create supporting groups around different issues and demographics, like Youth wings, Students wings and Women wings. Youth wings and women wings are the most common auxiliary groups in political parties all over the world. Members of these wings undertake varied programmes and extend support to the parties in addition to financial help. Members of these wings or organizations get representation in the legislature also through elections. These groups often have the right to send their own delegates to National Conventions and are sometimes even represented on the National Executive Committees. Women wings are important for women's political participation as these wings many times become the main entry point of women to participation in political activities. These bodies are generally aimed at supporting women who run for office and or seek senior leadership arrangements in the party.

THE ROLE OF WOMEN WINGS

Women wings should be viewed as one opportunity that is responsible for ensuring the encouragement of gender equality within political parties. Political parties are among the most important institutions for the participation of women in politics. Civil society ought to capitalize on the existence of women wings to demand change within political parties. The influence that women have within political parties is consequently a key determinant of their prospects for political empowerment, particularly at the national level. Women wings should consider taking their political parties to task when it comes to nominating candidates to run for elections. This is because it is more complicated to win elections without the backing of a political intuitions especially at the national level. In addition, political parties should priorities providing resources to women wings so that they can fully carry out their mandate.

IMPROVE THE WOMEN'S CONFIDENCE

Women wings of any political party include educating women in the wings and helping to improve their confidence to participate in the political activities. Women wings deal with women issues and help them to be self sufficient. Sometimes these wings encourage women to be financially independent. They are tasked to campaign for their political parties and are strong advocates for women's rights.

PROMOTE WOMEN LEADERSHIP

Women wings promote women leadership throughout the party at both local and national level. They influence candidates or leadership selection as well. Women are engaged with the party, at the local level where female party members start their political career and women voters are encouraged to support and join the party. It is also imperative for the local branches to have a strong relationship with the central women's wing which can then influence the national party's platform.

CONCLUSION

Political participation of women is crucial in any democratic system. Women, who constitute nearly

half of the total global population have been denied for too long, equal participation in all walks of life including social, economic and political though there has been considerable improvement, yet in most of the countries including India, there is wide spread gender imbalance and women's lot in society is not what it should be. If half the population is denied its due share in decision making, it is half a democracy. In present democracies it is found that women are underrepresented not only in institutions of the governments but in political parties also. Political parties are the gate keepers of today's democratic systems as all elections are held on the basis of political parties and governments are formed on the basis of political parties. Thus it is academically and political very important that there is equal participation of women not only in governmental bodies but also in political parties which are the vehicles of democracy.

The Constitution of India gives total equity to women's in all legitimate, political and financial issues. Widespread grown-up establishment gives equivalent democratic freedoms to all regardless of standing, variety, sex or statement of faith. No separation is made on any premise similarly as the capabilities for challenging decisions to different workplaces is concerned. Anyway because of the primitive and male centric upsides of the Indian culture women's face various impediments in partaking in the freedoms given by the Constitution. It may not be inappropriate to express that in the male overwhelmed society the women's got step by step barred from the dynamic interaction. The ideological groups too began utilizing women's just as citizens or prepares for the gatherings without giving them satisfactory portrayal inside the party associations or in the electing legislative issues.

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