

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN STATE ASSEMBLIES

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ABSTRACT

Throughout the world, the issue of women's representation in legislative has emerged as one of the key issue to determine the level and extent of their empowerment. Women have played a significant role in the growth and development of parliamentary democracy of India. India is one of the few countries where regular competitive parliamentary elections have taken place since the attainment of independence in 1947. Promulgation of the constitution in 1950, women were brought at par with men and given equal rights to participate in the political process and since the constitutional recognition of this equality more are more women have some forward to participate in electoral politics and some of the successful women candidates have adorned the seats of various representative institution in the country but the number of women in parliament and state legislative assemblies is marginal. The present paper deals with the women participation as voters, candidates and representation in five state assemblies i.e. Goa, Manipur, Punjab, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh.

Key Words: Democracy, Election, Representation and Political System.

INTRODUCTION:

The democratic set up, at the centre and the state levels, is based on adult franchise, direct elections, individual freedom, and competitive parties. Taking noted of the cited facts, it may be said that the study of elections in India, is of particular importance, because the elections are not treated here, merely as a ritualistic or symbolic exercise, but as an effective means for the recruitment of political elite and for political socialization of the masses.

India is one of the few countries where regular competitive parliamentary elections and State Legislative Assembly election have taken place since the attainment of independence in 1947. The constitutional scheme in India, makes it clear that the legislature and the executive authority of the centre as well as the states, has been placed in the hands of the representatives of the people, chosen at regular intervals, by means of free and fair elections.

In a democracy elections constitute a major political activity for the people. Political participation is hall mark of democracy and modernization nature, success and effectivity of a democracy largely depends upon the extent to which equal, effective and actual participation is provided by the system to all its citizen. As women comprise about half of the population, this segment of society cannot be ignored but requires a special attention. A predominantly liberal conception of democracy is “a fair procedure for political decision-making, if each citizen is given an equal opportunity by the procedural rules to cast his/her votes in election”. With the attainment of independence in India in 1947 and the promulgation of the Constitution in 1950, women were brought at par with men and given equal rights to participate in the political process. Although women are enfranchised members of the political realm, actually they have remained second class citizens in terms of political participation and political power. Especially at higher levels they are nowhere equal to men. Legally, women are equal to men in matter of political rights, but in practice their participation in active politics does not appear to be very encouraging.

DATA ASSESSMENT:

It is often noticed that the suitable representation of women in Legislature remain a distant dreams, excluding their representation in the local self-government institutions, since independence, the position of women in politics has always been marginal in India. Women’s participation in the Lok Sabha has not come up to even 10 percent, although we had 15 General Election since 1952. At the level of various state legislative also, the picture is gloomy. Table 1.1 shows all this.

Table 1

S.No.	State	Latest year’s for which data are available	Male	Female	Total Members
1.	Andhra Pradesh	2009	258 (88.35%)	34 (11.65%)	292 (100%)

2.	Arunachal Pradesh	2011	58 (96.67%)	2 (3.33%)	60 (100%)
3.	Assam	2011	112 (88.89%)	14 (11.11%)	126 (100%)
4.	Bihar	2010	209 (86.00%)	34 (14.00%)	243 (100%)
5.	Chattisgarh	2008	79 (87.88%)	11 (12.22%)	90 (100%)
6.	Delhi	2008	67 (95.71%)	3 (4.29%)	70 (100%)
7.	Goa	2012	30 (97.5%)	1 (2.60%)	40 (100%)
8.	Gujrat	2007	166 (91.21%)	16 (8.79%)	182 (100%)
9.	Haryana	2009	81 (90.00%)	9 (100%)	90 (100%)
10.	Himachal Pradesh	2007	63 (92.65%)	50 (7.35%)	68 (100%)
11.	Jammu and Kashmir	2008	84 (96.55%)	3 (3.45%)	87 (100%)
12.	Jharkhand	2009	73	8	81

			(90.12%)	(9.88%)	(100%)
13.	Karnataka	2008	221 (98.66%)	3 (1.34%)	224 (100%)
14.	Kerala	2011	133 (95.00%)	7 (5.00%)	140 (100%)
15.	Madhya Pradesh	2008	205 (89.13%)	25 (10.87%)	230 (100%)
16.	Maharashtra	2009	277 (96.18%)	11 (3.82%)	288 (100%)
17.	Manipur	2012	57 (95.00%)	3 (5.00%)	60 (100%)
18.	Meghalaya	2008	58 (98.30%)	1 (2.70%)	59 (100%)
19.	Mizoram	2008	40 (100%)	0	40 (100%)
20.	Nagaland	2008	60 (100%)	0	60 (100%)
21.	Orissa	2009	140 (95.24%)	7 (4.76%)	147 (100%)
22.	Punjab	2012	103 (88.03%)	14 (11.97%)	117 (100%)

23.	Puducherry	2011	30 (100%)	0	30 (100%)
24.	Rajasthan	2008	172 (86.00%)	28 (14.00%)	200 (100%)
25.	Sikkim	2009	28 (87.5%)	4 (12.50%)	32 (100%)
26.	Tamil Nadu	2011	217 (92.73%)	17 (7.27%)	234
27.	Tripura	2008	57 (95.00%)	3 (5.00%)	60 (100%)
28.	Uttar Pradesh	2012	368 (91.31%)	35 (8.69%)	403 (100%)
29.	Uttarakhand	2012	65 (92.86%)	5 (7.14%)	70 (100%)
30.	West Bengal	2011	260 (88.43%)	34 (11.57%)	294 (100%)

Source: Compile from the Statistical Reports of Election Commission of India.

Notes: Figure in parentheses indicate the percentage in the total of the data in respective columns.

From the above table it can be say, that in all India, State Assemblies, nowhere women representation in the State Legislative exceed from 14 percent. It is only in two states i.e. Bihar, Rajasthan where number of women legislator is 14 percent. Mizoram, Nagaland and Puducherry are such types of states where no women legislator enter in the House.

Representation' is the democratic politics enforces where the one starts for and protects the interest of the many in the nation's is legislative and executive bodies is also a concept that is rendered problematic in the case of women leaders often women leaders adopt a tough, even ruthless and authoritarian political style that effectively pre-empts and possible identification or partisanship on their part with women as a sex or as a group.

In five states of India i.e. Goa, Manipur, Punjab, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh Assemblies Election result was declared on 4th March 2012. In this paper political participation of women in five state assembly elections is discusses.

The right to vote can be said to be the starting point in the struggle for women political equality. The table1.2 shows the voting participation of women in five states in 2007 and 2012 assembly elections.

Table 2

Comparison of Electors who Voted in 2007 and 2012 Assembly Election in Five Vidhan Sabha

S. No.	State	% of 2007 Turnout Voters			% of 2012 Turnout Voters		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1.	Goa	69.70%	70.30%	70.51%	78.86%	84.57%	81.73%
2.	Manipur	85.88%	86.82%	86.73%	76.94%	81.36%	79.19%
3.	Punjab	75.36%	75.47%	75.45%	77.58%	78.90%	78.20%
4.	Uttarakhand	58.95%	59.45%	59.45%	64.41%	68.12%	66.17%
5.	Uttar Pradesh	49.35%	41.92%	45.96%	58.68%	60.28%	59.40%

Source: Compile from the Statistical Reports of Election Commission of India.

Note: Figure in parentheses indicate the percentage in the total of the data in respective columns.

The table shows that in two consecutive terms i.e. 2007 and 2012 in five states Assembly

election, women of the states have shown a great deal of enthusiasm in taking part in election as electors. Reports of Election Commission reveals that during the elections in five states women found as much anxious as men to exercise their women right.

Though the voting participation of women is not poor in comparison to men's, their participation as contestants and representation in law-making bodies is very shocking. Though voting is an important indicator of political participation and mobilization, it is not necessarily indicative of representation. Political participation does not mean merely exercising of political rights like franchise. It also involvement of women in a wide range of political activities such as membership in political parties among the electors and most important is involvement in the decision making bodies of the Government of the State.

Behind every race for public office the contestants has to make a decision to spend his or her time, energy and efforts, and also to risk disapproval and defeat. This makes the contestant an interesting object of study. The Committee Report "Towards Equality" published in December 1974.

Reviewing women's political participation into report, the committee concluded had a negligible impact on the political process that though they constituted a numerically majority, they were slowly acquiring the features of a minority group because of inequalities of status and political power. To make women's political rights more functional and to give women more opportunities to participate in the formal political process the committee recommended that political parties set a quota for women candidates. In five states Assembly elections, it has been seen that, the number of women contestants was disproportionately low in comparison with the total number of women voters.

Table 3

Male-Female Candidate : Five State View

S. No.	State	Candidates in 2007			Candidates in 2012		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1.	Goa	188 (93.06%)	14 (6.94%)	202 (100%)	205 (95.35%)	10 (4.65%)	215 (100%)

2.	Manipur	296 (96.10%)	12 (3.90%)	308 (100%)	264 (94.62%)	15 (5.38%)	279 (100%)
3.	Punjab	987 (94.63%)	56 (5.37%)	1073 (100%)	985 (91.38%)	93 (8.62%)	1078 (100%)
4.	Uttarakhand	729 (92.86%)	56 (7.14%)	785 (100%)	725 (92.00%)	63 (8.00%)	788 (100%)
5.	Uttar Pradesh	5716 (93.92%)	370 (6.08%)	6086 (100%)	6252 (91.42%)	587 (8.58%)	6839 (100%)

Source: Compile from the Statistical Reports of Election Commission of India.

Note: Figure in parentheses indicate the percentage in the total of the data in respective columns.

From the table 3 it shows that women candidates have increased gradually in four states i.e. Manipur, Punjab, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh in comparison to 2007 Assembly election. But this increasing is number is not satisfactory especially when the 33% reservation for women in the Parliament and State Legislative bill has been passed in Rajya Sabha. In no state women contestants is above than 9 percent. The overall percentage of candidates who are women has remained between 4.65 to 8.62 percent in five Assembly election recently held in this shows that political parties provides only lip service for equal participation of women in their parties. The candidates fielded by various political parties are still dominantly male. Indian constitution and political parties though support equality of both sexes do not come forward to nominate adequate number of women candidates to fight election.

Women participation in decision-making process in vital for the betterment of their human right conditions. The section on 'Women in Power and Decision-Making' of Beijing Platform for Action Beijing with the following paragraph.

Women's equal participation in political life plays a pivotal role in the general process of the advancement of women. Women's equal participation in decision making is not only a demand for simple justice or democracy but can also be seen as a necessary condition for women's

interests to be taken into account. Without the active participation of women and the incorporation women's perspective at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved. The platform embodies two strategic objectives: (i) Ensuring women's equal access to and full participation in power structure and decision-making; and (ii) Increasing women's capacity to participate in decision making and leadership.⁶ Women's presence in policy-making bodies will at least make a mark in male-dominated patriarchal politico-cultural structures. The absence of women from decision-making bodies has always remained an important issue on national agenda. Their representation in national and state legislative bodies and their presence at decision-making levels is marginal.

Table 4
Male-Female Representation in Five State Assemblies

S. No.	State	Legislators in 2007			Legislators in 2012		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1.	Goa	39 (97.50%)	1 (2.50%)	40 (100%)	39 (97.5%)	1 (2.50%)	40 (100%)
2.	Manipur	60 (100%)	0	60 (100%)	57 (95.00%)	3 (5.00%)	60 (100%)
3.	Punjab	109 (93.16%)	8 (6.84%)	117 (100%)	102 (87.18%)	15 (12.82%)	117 (100%)
4.	Uttarakhand	65 (94.20%)	4 (5.80%)	69 (100%)	65 (92.86%)	5 (7.14%)	70 (100%)
5.	Uttar Pradesh	380 (94.30%)	23 (5.70%)	403 (100%)	260 (88.44%)	34 (11.56%)	294 (100%)

Source: Compile from the Statistical Reports of Election Commission of India.

Note: Figure in parentheses indicate the percentage in the total of the data in respective columns.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION:

The analysis of five Vidhan Sabha election shows that the representation of women in the legislative is less than 13 percent. The number of women legislators is increased in Punjab and Uttar Pradesh but this is not at satisfactory level. In Manipur, where in 2007 Legislative Assembly there were no women legislators but in 2012 Assembly election three women legislators make a place in house. Fixing of 'quotas' or 'reservation' of seats for women would open up a possible entry for women in politics, and this is necessary because it cannot be denied that a handful of women in legislative bodies cannot make their voice strong enough to be heard. Number of women in the legislative is rising but it is not at a satisfactory level.

The proper representation of women in terms of numbers and quality is absolutely essential for their meaningful partnership in the progress of the nation. When we do not allow women to be a part of decision-making at the highest level we are denying half of humanity the right to be represented and give a voice. The every legitimacy of every decision taken without the consensuses of women is questionable because it has been by only 50 percent of the population (the men). The study of five Legislative Assemblies reveals that women have been accepted as voters but not as policy formulators. Gender discrimination rules the scene even in the states legislature, where women constitute a very small percentage vis-à-vis men. The number of women candidates contesting for the States Legislative Assemblies has been extremely discouraging. It is unfortunate that in India even after six decades of independence, the status and position of women in political participation and their representation in the Parliament and State Legislative Bodies is a myth and distant dream. The reservation of seats and due representation for women in National and State Legislatures is need of the hour not only to improve the self-respect of Indian women but also to ensure the political empowerment of one half of the Indian society.

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