



WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

In Indian society, women have always been marginalized and deprived. In societies where women have been given equal rights as men, there has been an environment of development, prosperity, cooperation, and positivity. The rights that women should have received as per the scriptures were not given to them, but women have been fighting for these rights on their own. Today, as we aspire to become a developed nation by 2020, the need for women empowerment is being felt everywhere. Education is the most essential factor for the advancement of women. Through education, women are progressing in every field, including politics, economics, business, industry, art, and administration. However, the percentage of such women remains very low. To increase women's political participation, it is necessary to bring about a change in the mindset of society, especially among men. The younger generation must work towards this, and women themselves need to remain aware of their rights.



KEYWORDS: *Indian society, women empowerment, economics, business, industry.*

INTRODUCTION:

The current era is one of the revivals and empowerment of marginalized sections and women, bringing transformative changes in all aspects of society. The 21st century can be called the era of women's upliftment, awareness, and development in Indian politics.

The prevalence of multiple social constraints in society has led to a temporary stagnation in the status of Indian women, particularly those from underprivileged backgrounds, hindering their access to various rights that had been long-standing demands. However, this stagnation also gave rise to several challenges.

In the context of Indian democracy, numerous provisions ensure equality, freedom, and opportunities for both men and women at a fundamental level. Despite this, the societal perception of women has not evolved as swiftly as expected. Gradually, women have proven their capabilities and actively contributed in social, political, economic, educational, and administrative fields, establishing themselves successfully. This process is not a challenge to the dominance of men but an acknowledgment of the importance of gender inclusivity and participation.

The proportion of men and women in India is approximately equal, which underscores the need to view women as an essential foundation for societal progress. Today, upon reflecting on the

status of women in Indian society, it is evident that their role has grown significantly compared to the past. Women are actively contributing to national development, yet their participation remains disproportionately low compared to their population ratio.

The political status of women in India, when compared historically or globally, reflects a consistent disparity in equality. In many countries, women have had to struggle and fight for their rightful political rights, as seen in England, France, and America. Even today, women in various nations continue to fight for these rights. However, in India, post-independence, educated and uneducated women alike were granted equal rights alongside men as citizens of a democratic nation. Following independence, women entered legislative assemblies, parliaments, municipal corporations, and village councils. Significant achievements include India's first female Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi; first female President, Pratibha Patil; first female Governor, Sarojini Naidu; and numerous female Chief Ministers and Speakers across various states.

Despite these accomplishments, the representation of women in Indian politics remains insufficient. Traditionally, society has confined the role of women to the household and regarded politics as a male domain. Political activism is often seen as contrary to the nature and capabilities of women. Only a few political parties provide opportunities to women candidates. Women, despite working tirelessly within social constraints, are often underestimated and undervalued. Hence, their achievements remain underappreciated.

In this context, women lack adequate protection for their interests and social responsibilities in organizational roles. Therefore, providing women with secure positions and reducing the uncertainty of their rights to a certain extent is imperative.

Political awareness, meaning the ability to engage in political discussions, cultivate political ideology, understand political parties, and comprehend political perspectives, is essential. Globally, democracy or public governance is often associated with India. However, questions arise as to who participates in political decision-making, as elections determine this participation. In India, while the number of women voters is substantial, their political awareness during elections reveals a superficial engagement. They are often utilized merely as tools of political campaigns rather than active participants.

In conclusion, the insufficient representation of women in Indian politics reflects broader societal constraints. Women's political engagement is often limited, and they are seldom granted significant opportunities in decision-making processes. Ensuring women's representation and active participation in governance and organizational roles is necessary to achieve true equality. The development of inclusive policies and reducing uncertainty surrounding women's rights can significantly enhance their contributions to the political domain.

The Status of Women in Parliament

Lok Sabha	year	Women Contesting Elections as Candidates	Women Winning Elections as Representatives	Success Rate Percentage
First	1952	---	---	--
Second	1957	45	22	48-9
Third	1962	66	31	47-0
Forth	1967	67	29	43-3
Fifth	1971	86	21	24-4
Sixth	1977	70	19	27-1
Seventh	1980	143	28	19-6
Eighth	1984	162	42	25-9
Ninth	1989	198	29	14-7
Tenth	1991	326	37	11-4
Eleventh	1996	509	40	6-7
Twelfth	1998	274	43	15-7
Thirteenth	1999	284	49	17-7
Fourteenth	2004	355	45	12-7
Fifteenth	2009	556	58	10-6

Between 1957 and 2009, the participation of women in India's electoral process showed significant growth, not only in the number of women contesting elections but also in their success rates. In 1957, women were underrepresented in the political arena, with only a small number of candidates actively participating in elections. However, by 2009, this scenario had changed dramatically, reflecting broader societal shifts, legal reforms, and increasing empowerment of women.

Growth in Women's Electoral Participation:

The total number of women who contested elections between 1957 and 2009 amounted to 3,231. This indicates a steady increase in the number of women willing to step forward and seek public office. However, the number of successful female candidates in 1957 was just 45, representing a small fraction of the total candidates. Over time, as political consciousness among women grew, and with the support of various initiatives aimed at women's empowerment, the success rate among female candidates began to increase.

Rise in the Success Rate:

By 2009, the number of successful female candidates had increased significantly to 556, representing a major leap in women's political representation. This indicates that while fewer women initially entered politics, those who did were increasingly successful in securing political positions. By 2009, women represented a larger share of the total candidates and had a success rate of 15%, a notable improvement from previous decades.

Periodical Trends:

In 1957, the number of successful women candidates was relatively low, with only 45 women winning elections. However, the trend shifted towards a more inclusive political environment for women in the subsequent years. The figures from 1957 to 2009 indicate a clear upward trajectory. The success of women in elections steadily increased, with 493 women winning by the year 2009. This rise can be attributed to multiple factors, including political reforms, education, gender quotas, and changing societal attitudes that promoted greater political involvement of women.

Factors Contributing to the Change:

Several factors contributed to this positive trend:

1. **Legal Reforms and Quotas:** The Indian government introduced various legal frameworks, such as reservations for women in local bodies, which laid the foundation for women's political empowerment. The introduction of policies aimed at increasing female representation in legislative bodies helped encourage more women to contest elections and secure success.
2. **Socio-political Changes:** Over the decades, India witnessed a gradual shift towards more inclusive politics, with growing support for the rights of marginalized communities, including women. Social movements for gender equality and women's rights also played a crucial role in encouraging women to step into politics.
3. **Education and Awareness:** Increased access to education for women, along with greater political awareness, empowered women to take part in electoral processes. As more women gained access to higher education, their capacity to engage with and understand political issues grew, leading to greater participation in elections.
4. **Role of Political Parties and Civil Society:** Political parties began to recognize the importance of female votes and started fielding more women candidates, particularly in areas with high female voter turnout. Civil society organizations also worked to increase women's participation in politics, running campaigns and providing training for potential female candidates.

The Significance of 1996-2009:

In the years following 1996, the number of women contesting elections continued to rise. During this period, women's representation in local and state elections showed substantial progress. Several state and national governments initiated programs specifically aimed at increasing female political participation. For example, the National Policy for Women's Empowerment and other similar initiatives directly contributed to the higher success rates of women in elections.

Challenges Faced:

Despite the progress, women still face significant challenges in India's political landscape. These include gender-based violence, societal expectations, lack of financial resources, and patriarchal attitudes that hinder their full participation. Although the success rates have improved, women are still underrepresented in many political offices, especially at the national level.

CONCLUSION:

From 1957 to 2009, the path of women's participation in Indian politics was marked by slow but steady progress. The number of women contesting elections increased from a modest figure to over 3,200 by 2009, with the success rate climbing significantly as well. This shift can be attributed to multiple factors such as legal reforms, changing societal norms, and increased political awareness among women. However, challenges remain, and the continued effort towards gender equality in politics is essential for achieving greater representation and empowerment of women in the political process. The experience of women in elections from 1957 to 2009 demonstrates the transformative power of policy, education, and social change in enhancing women's roles in public life.