



THE MILESTONES OF WOMEN POLITICAL REPRESENTATION DURING THE 65 YEARS OF INDIAN CONSTITUTION: AN ANALYSIS

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“I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress which women have achieved”- Babasaheb Ambedkar

ABSTRACT

An attempt is made in this paper to analyze the India women Political Representation especially at the national level- Members in Lok Sabha and Members in Rajya Sabha during the 65 Years of Indian Constitution. Data has been presented since 1952 to 2014 elections. Election commission reports and internet source are the major source of data. The paper is heighted the constitutional provisions (inclusive efforts of **Babasaheb Ambedkar**) and women participation trends in membership of women in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha during the said period. Précised information on women political representation over the globe is also covered.

Introduction:

It is estimated by demographers and statisticians that women constitute about half of the population of the world. But, despite their numerical strength women occupy secondary position in society because of several socio-economic constraints. Empowering of women presupposes a drastic, dynamic and democratic change in the perception of and expectation from women in the society. It is also a process of acquiring, providing, bestowing the resources or enabling them access to resources, gain autonomy, are able to set their own agenda and are fully able to participate in the social, economic and political decision-making process.

Constitutional provisions:

It is clear that many inclusive efforts were made by the father of Indian constitution Dr **Babasaheb Ambedkar** by various constitutional provisions. No doubt to say that Dr. Ambedkar tried an adequate inclusion of women’s right in the political vocabulary and constitution of India. i.e., Article 14 - Equal rights and opportunities in political, economic and social spheres. Article 15 prohibits discrimination on the ground of sex. Article 15(3) enables affirmative discrimination in favour of women. Article 39 – Equal means of livelihood and equal pay for equal work. Article 42 – Human conditions of work and maternity relief. Article 51 (A) (C) – Fundamental duties to renounce practices, derogatory to the dignity of women. Article 46 – The state to promote with special care, the educational and economic interests of weaker section of people and to protect them



from social injustice and all forms of exploitation. Article 47 – The state to raise the level of nutrition and standard of living of its people and the improvement of public health and so on. Article 243D (3), 243T (3) & 243R (4) provides for allocation of seats in the Panchayati Raj System.

Participation of women in political arena: An overview

Participation of women in political arena and in decision-making role is an important tool for empowerment. The extent of this participation is monitoring standards of political performance at all levels. Women in India raised the issue of representation in politics first in 1917. At that time it was basically a demand for universal adult franchise and political participation. By 1930 women had gained the right to vote, which initially benefited women from elite families. Women's involvement in nationalist struggle changed their lives in that even though they were denied equal opportunities to shape the new state, they gained constitutional and legal rights. But even after the right to vote became a reality for all women, their representation in the parliament, political parties and other decision making remained low even after independence, and after the Indian Constitution came in force in 1950 (Mehta et al). A few women no doubt attained positions as members of parliament and state legislatures and as leaders of opposition, etc., mostly through family dynasties or through male political patronage. However, the percentage of women in legislatures and decision making positions always remained low. Women do not share the power of decision-making and are not involved in policy making in India democracy in proportion to their numerical strength. From Indira Gandhi to Gloria Macapegal – Arroyo from Aung San Soo Ki to Tanaka Makkio during the last forty years one can find Asia's roaring tigress as ministers, heads of political parties, opposition leaders, and heads of government of presidents. Among the Asian nations, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Phillippines, India and Bangladesh have has or are formally led by women especially in the third world countries were under pardha, they are not coming into the society, because of their ignorance, inequality and indignity (Vidyasagar Reddy).

India had women PM as early as in 1966. It tops the list of countries with the longest tenure of women at the helm. Until recently during the UPA government, the ruling coalition was headed by a woman, the Lok Sabha Speaker was a woman, the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha was women and it has had over a dozen women CMs and CMS in there large states were women. Yet India ranks among the worst on every other index on gender equity and inclusion. India ranks 136 on a list of 186 countries on the United Nations Gender Inequality Index trailing its BRICS peers and countries like Kiribati, Vanuatu, Namibia, Iraq, Timer Leste and Equatorial Guinea (Shankkar Aiyar, 2014).

Trends in Women Representation in the Lok Sabha

Table 1 shows that the pattern of women representation in Lok Sabha since 1952. Average number of women representation in Lok Sabha works out to only



36.87 and average percentage of women representation in Lok Sabha is not more than 6.91 per cent.

Table 1: Women Presence in the Lok Sabha

Sl.No	Year	Seats	Women MPs	Per cent of women MPs
1	1952	409	22	4.41
2	1957	500	27	5.40
3	1962	503	34	6.76
4	1967	523	31	5.93
5	1971	521	22	4.22
6	1977	544	19	3.29
7	1980	544	28	5.15
8	1984	544	44	8.9
9	1989	517	27	5.22
10	1991	544	39	7.17
11	1996	543	39	7.18
12	1998	543	43	7.92
13	1999	543	49	9.02
14	2004	543	45	8.03
15	2009	543	59	10.86
16	2014	543	61	11.23
Average		531.06	36.87	6.91

Source: Election Commission of India (www.eci.nic.in) and Mamta Mokta (2014),

Table 2 indicates the presence of women in the Upper House. It is found that they have been slightly higher to overall, probably due to indirect elections and nomination of some women members. It was highest in 1990 at 15.5 per cent and shows a declining trend thereafter. Nonetheless, this representation does not even come close to the 33 per cent marks. It is significant note that the Deputy Chairperson of the Rajya Sabha at least for more than 25 years has been a women, yet women fare increasing competition from male politicians for nomination.

The number of women contesting election has always been low, as seen from table 3. The highest number of women contestants has been merely 636 in 2014, while the number of male contestants has always been thousand, the highest being 13,353 in 1996. Yet it is encouraging to note that the percentage of winners among women has consistently been more than that of the men, notwithstanding the fact that more often than not, the losing sets are offered to women candidates by the respective political parties. For example, in 1996, only 3.8 per cent of male candidates won, in comparison to 6.7 per cent female candidates. Likewise, the percentage of winners was 11.2 per cent in 1999, 6.44 per cent and 10.61 per cent in 2009 and 6.39 per cent and 9.74 per cent, respectively in 16th Lok Sabha, 2014.

**Table 2. Women representation in the Rajya Sabha**

SL.NO	Year	Total seats	No of women	per cent of women
1	1952	219	16	7.3
2	1957	237	18	7.6
3	1962	238	18	7.6
4	1967	240	20	8.3
5	1971	243	17	7.0
6	1977	244	25	10.2
7	1980	244	24	9.8
8	1985	244	28	11.4
9	1990	245	38	15.5
10	1996	223	20	9.0
11	1998	223	19	8.6
12	2004	245	27	11.1
13	2009	245	22	8.97
14	2014	245	29	11.83
Average		238.21	22.92	9.62

Source: Election Commission of India (www.eci.nic.in)

The representation of women in the Union Council of Ministers between 1985 and 2014 is shown in the table 4. The data shows that women have remained poorly represented in Council of Ministers. Since Independence we had so far 15 women chief ministers and 23 women governors. Only one woman so far served as President of India but so far we had no women as Vice-President and Chief Justice of India. Only one woman has got the opportunity to serve as Chief Election Commissioner and one as Chairperson UPSC but none as CAG.

Table 3: Women Contestants in India

Sl.No	Year	Males	Females	Total	@age of male winners	per centage of Female winners
1	1952	1831	43	1874	26.05	51.16
2	1957	1473	45	1518	31.7	60.00
3	1962	1915	70	1985	24.0	50.00
4	1967	2302	67	2369	21.3	44.80
5	1971	2698	86	2784	18.5	24.40
6	1977	2369	70	2439	22.1	27.10
7	1980	4478	142	4620	11.5	19.7
8	1984	5406	164	5574	9.2	25.60
9	1989	5962	198	6160	8.5	13.60
10	1991	8374	325	8690	5.9	12.00
11	1996	13353	599	13952	3.8	6.70
12	1998	4476	274	4750	11.2	15.70
13	1999	3976	278	4254	12.3	17.30
14	2004	5080	355	5435	9.8	12.30
15	2009	2514	556	8070	6.44	10.61
16	2014	7527	636	8163	6.39	9.74

Source: Election Commission of India (www.eci.nic.in), Mamta Mokta (2014) and G.Vidyasagar Reddy (2015)

**Table 4: Representations of Women in the Union Council of Minister (1985-2014)**

S.No	Year	Number of minister			Number of women minister		
		Cabinet Minister	Minister of state	Deputy Minister	Cabinet Minister	Minister of state	Deputy Minister
1	1985	15	25	00	01	03	00
2	1990	17	17	05	00	01	01
3	1995	12	37	03	01	04	01
4	1996	18	21	00	00	01	00
5	1997	20	24	00	00	05	00
6	1998	21	21	00	00	03	00
7	2001	30	07	35	03	02	04
8	2002	31	45	00	02	05	00
9	2004	28	38	00	01	06	00
10	2009	34	45	00	03	05	00
11	2014*	23	23	00	06	01	00

Source: Election Commission of India (www.eci.nic.in), Mamta Mokta (2014) and G.Vidyasagar Reddy (2015): *First phase of Narendra Modi's Council of Ministers which took oath on May 26, 2014.

Global average of women in parliaments

The global average of women in parliaments as of 2014 stood at 21.3 per cent, a slight increase over the numbers in the immediately preceding two years by 20.3 per cent and 19.5 per cent. The **Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)** is an international organization of parliaments and works for the establishment of representative democracies. In India, women have a poor 11.2 per cent (4.41 in 1952) representation in India's Lok Sabha and 11.8 per cent (7.31 in 1952) in the Rajya Sabha in 2014, making India 108th among 188 countries covered in the annual analysis on statistics of women members of parliament (MPs) conducted by the IPU ([Lubna Kably, 2013](#)).

In the recent, it is found from the review of the studies that, over a million women have actively entered political life in India through the **Panchayat Raj institutions**. There are many elected women representatives at the village council level. In recent years there have been explicit moves to increase women's political participation at top level. At the grassroots level 50 per cent reservation given to women in local self-government institutions has improved political participation of women in India.

Conclusion

It is found from the above analysis; women have a poor representation in India's Lok Sabha and in the Rajya Sabha as making India 108th among 188 countries covered in the annual analysis on statistics of women members of parliament. Sum up, it is observed from the statistics released by the **Election Commission**, yet, political participation of women in Legislative Assemblies and Parliament is still quite low in India. It is concluded that women do not share the power of decision-making and are not involved in policy making in Indian



democracy in proportion to their numerical strength. Thus there is a gap between the formal idea of women's participation and their meaningful use of power. This may raise expectations of India's female population to break the glass ceiling in many other bastions so far dominated by men. Their power is restricted, as it the men who wield all the authority. Their decisions are often over-ruled by the government machinery. The women's reservation bill is a sad story as it is repeatedly being scuttled in the parliament. All this shows that the process of gender equality and women's empowerment still has a long way to go. Thus, Women empowerment in India is still a distant dream. India has miles to go on this path of empowerment.

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