



## Women in Indian parliament: A critical analysis on women representation and obstacles in Indian politics

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### Abstract

In parliament and other positions of decision making, women are under-represented globally at all socio-political levels. Every nation has a unique political environment, but they all share the same unfavorable treatment of women who wish to participate in politics. Wherever there are restrictions that prohibit women from engaging in politics. The social, economic, and governmental systems that are currently in place all contain these impediments. In India, especially for women, a person's public career is greatly influenced by their family's past. Most women don't want to perform the actions that seem necessary to effectively run for public office. Their representation in the Parliament, State Legislatures, and other top political echelons is not particularly significant. They still have a long way to go before they can vote, run for office, campaign, and occupy party positions alongside males on an equal footing. They are still unaware of the importance of their political position. This paper makes an effort to look into the status of women in politics at the national, regional, and international levels against this context.

**Keywords:** India, women, politics, gender, government, representation, parliament

### Introduction

India's parliamentary system has benefited greatly from the rise and development of women. Indian women made a huge contribution to both parliamentary democracy and the social reformation movement, which cannot be understated. In the executive and legislative branches, where they currently occupy important positions, they have greatly improved both of these institutions. Everyone is aware that women are underrepresented in politics globally, in both developed and developing nations, and that many of them fought for the right to vote for a long time. Voting, power sharing, and involvement in collective decision-making at all levels of state government are a few examples of what is meant by political engagement. Women's political engagement involves more than just running for office; it also entails giving them accepted, legitimate political authority. Actual political involvement is defined as engaging in voluntary activities that allow society's members the chance to directly or indirectly decide on norms and shape public policy.

Despite the fact that the constitution has a provision requiring women to actively participate in politics, the study mentioned above makes it abundantly evident that there is a substantial gap between the language of the law and how it is actually applied. The entrenched patriarchal attitudes and prejudices that impede growth must be eradicated if Indian culture is to achieve this. Regarding the percentage of female MPs, India ranks twenty-first from the bottom. In a number of Indian states, women have served as president, prime minister, and chief minister.

Women have historically been elected by Indian voters to a number of state legislatures and the national parliament.

### Politics

Politics is a set of behaviors that have to do with distributing power, whether it is through the distribution of wealth or status, or with other kinds of decision-making processes.

Politicians employ a wide range of strategies, including influencing the populace, striking deals with other political figures, passing legislation, and utilizing both internal and external force, such as engaging in conflict with rivals. Politics is practiced at a wide range of social levels, from the clans and tribes of prehistoric civilizations through modern city governments, corporations, and organizations, all the way up to sovereign nations and the international sphere.

Political parties are typically created by individuals to represent their values in contemporary nation states. On a wide range of policy problems, as well as the same legislative initiatives and political figures, members of a party typically share similar opinions. The parties frequently compete against one another during an election.

### Political participation

Affiliation with a political party, electoral campaigning, attendance at party events, holding party positions, running for office, and shared decision- and policy-making at all levels of government are all examples of political involvement. It also involves using one's right to vote. It is, to put it simply, a process whereby people engage in political life by deciding on the common goals of society and the most efficient ways to achieve them.

### Pre and post-independence women representation in Indian politics

Although the majority of men and women did not gain the right to vote under British colonial authority until 1947, the campaign for women's suffrage began in the early 1900s in response to a national movement for suffrage. Equal voting rights for men and women were formally confirmed by the Indian Constitution after India gained independence from the British in 1950. Provincial legislatures had already granted women the ability to vote before there was universal suffrage. According to records collected by the British

government, women were granted the right to vote for the first time in Madras in 1921, but only if they were landowners. Only those who possessed the necessary qualifications for reading and property ownership, including husbands, were granted the advantages that were offered in response to the suffrage campaign. The great majority of Indian women and men were denied the right to vote because of their terrible poverty. This status changed in 1950 when all adult Indian nationals gained the right to vote. In 1950, all women were granted the right to vote as a result of universal suffrage. Article 326 of the Indian Constitution declares this to be true. The Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha are the two houses of India's parliamentary system. Women's participation rates in Lok Sabha elections peaked in 1984 at 58.60%, up from 46.63% in 1962. In 1962 and 1984, respectively, male turnout was 63.31% and 68.18%. Voter gender disparity has decreased over time, from a difference of 16.7% in 1962 to 4.4% in 2009. The increase in the number of women voters in India is also partly responsible. India's election commission has worked to promote voting among women by educating them and engaging with them on college and university campuses. Increased polling place security has also been credited with increasing voter turnout.

#### **Women representation in 16th (2014) and 17th (2019) Lok Sabha election**

The election commission of India held the 16th Lok Sabha election in nine stages from April 7 to May 12, 2014. 62 women were elected to the House of Representatives in the 16th Lok Sabha, making up 12.45% of all MPs. In India, where there is a substantial gender disparity in politics, there are very few prominent female political figures. In the 543 constituencies where parliamentary elections were held in 2014, 661 women ran for office; 144 of them were associated with national parties, 150 with state parties, 163 with unrecognized groups, and the remaining 204 ran from independent parties. Only 35 of the 144 candidates who ran on the ballots of major parties were successful. Only 23 of the 150 candidates who ran for positions on state party ballots were successful. Only three of the 163 women who ran for office from unrecognized parties won, and none of the independent candidates was able to win a seat in the Lok Sabha, forfeiting their deposits in the process. The Indian National Congress fielded the most candidates, with 59 women running for office; of them, four were successful, 31 were unsuccessful, and 24 forfeited their deposits. With 29 of the party's 37 candidates winning seats, the Bhartiya Janata Party had the most successful candidates.

Between 11 April and 19 May, the 17th Lok Sabha election was held in 542 parliamentary constituencies. across seven phases. A total of 78 of the 716 female candidates that ran for office were elected, making about 14% of the house. This number is greater than in 2014, when there were 62 female MPs in the chamber. From 5% in the first Lok Sabha to 14% in the 17th, the representation of women MPs in the Lok Sabha is gradually increasing. Although while the proportion of female MPs has grown over time, it is still lower than in some other nations. They include Bangladesh (21%), South Africa (43%), the United Kingdom (32%), the United States (24%), and Rwanda (61%).

#### **Women's participation in local politics**

In India, municipalities or municipal corporations are the third tier of local government, while Panchayati Raj Institutions are the third tier of local government in rural areas. To "provide new chances for local level planning, effective implementation, and monitoring of various social and economic development initiatives in the country," the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments were implemented in 1992. One of the most significant and ground-breaking elements of these revisions was the mandate that women hold one-third of the seats up for election in local administrations. The strategy significantly increased women's political participation at the municipal level, according to studies. The reservation has since been increased to 50% in 20 of India's 28 states.

#### **Women's low representation in state legislature and parliament**

##### **Work and family responsibilities**

Women spend a disproportionate amount of time caring for the home and children compared to men because of the unequal distribution of family care responsibilities. In addition to putting in time and effort during pregnancy and childbirth, a woman must continue to do so until the child needs parental care.

##### **Stereotypes based on gender**

Traditionally, women have been entrusted with the duty of managing the home. Women should be encouraged to rise above their conventional roles and participate in governmental decision-making.

##### **Sexual violence**

Education and marriage-related problems promote sexual violence in India. Sexual abuse of women occurs. Sexual violence has increased in India as a result of child marriage, domestic abuse, and poor literacy rates, which have reduced the economic options for women there. Violence in marriage is not illegal, and sexual assault is frequently unpunished, which is said to be the cause of widespread sexual violence.

##### **Lack of resources**

Because of societal conditioning, they are required to abide by the laws that are imposed upon them and bear the burden of society. Both directly and indirectly, public opinion and the number of female candidates who succeed in winning a general election have an impact on the number of women who are considered for and nominated for office.

##### **Institutional inaccessibility**

Election results reveal that, despite the majority of political parties' promises to provide adequate representation for women in their constitutions, far too few women candidates actually get party tickets. According to a survey, many women who do earn party tickets have connections to the political elite or are 'dynastic' politicians. Because the typical routes of accessibility are constrained, such relationships are typically a woman's entry point.

### Expensive election system

Many women are dependent on their families for financial support, funding is another issue. A significant financial commitment is necessary to mount a competitive campaign in parliamentary elections, which can be very expensive. Women candidates must arrange for their own campaign money if their parties do not provide sufficient assistance; this presents a significant obstacle that deters them from running.

### Indian constitutional provisions for women

The Indian Constitution guarantees all citizens equality, freedom of thought, and social, economic, and political justice. The Constitution guaranteed women's equality and urged the State to take action to eliminate the socioeconomic, educational, and political disadvantages that women experience. Article 14: It ensures that everyone in India has the same access to the legal system and equal protection under the law. Article 15: It forbids discrimination based on birthplace, caste, race, or religion. States are permitted to make specific provisions for the benefit of women and children under article 15(3). Article 16: All citizens shall enjoy equal opportunity in areas relating to employment. No citizen may be denied employment on the basis of their religion, race, caste, sex, gender, ancestry, place of birth, place of residence, or any combination of these. All citizens are guaranteed a sufficient means of subsistence under Article 39(a). Equal compensation for equal work for men and women is outlined in Article 39(b). There are provisions in Article 39(c) to protect the health and vitality of employees, both men and women, and not to exploit children while they are still young. Article 42: It guarantees maternity leave and reasonable and decent working conditions. Articles 23 and 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are in agreement with Article 42. Articles 325 and 326 provide equal rights to vote, equal participation in political life, and equal political equality. The political reservation for women in all panchayat elections is provided for under Article 243(D). It now includes elected office in this reservation.

### Importance of women in law making process

- Legislative representation makes it possible to participate in the creation of laws, which is crucial to political empowerment. In order to spark discussion and debate about various aspects of governance as well as to hold the administration responsible, legislative bodies are essential.
- The representation of women in the national parliament has a significant impact on the degree of gender equality in parliamentary politics.
- Women "bring varied abilities to politics and supply role models for future generations; they appeal to justice between the sexes," says political scientist Anne.
- The participation of women in politics encourages the representation of particular women's concerns in state policy and creates the conditions for a revitalized democracy that bridges the participation and representation gap.
- In terms of economic indices in their districts, female legislators fare better than their male counterparts. In comparison to men, they are also more effective and resistant to political opportunism.

### Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to examine historical events that contributed to the emancipation of women and to comprehend the current position of women in Indian politics. It is evident from the aforementioned points that even today, female competitors are not treated equally to male competitors and are called names or given pejorative labels. These comments, which were uttered by illustrious figures, have the potential to harm women's perceptions of themselves in public. Women's political representation and democracy should be positively correlated. As a result of the democratic process, gender bias is less prevalent. Equal chances should be made available to those in political egalitarian parties in order to increase the representation of women in national legislatures. Opportunities for women could enhance democratic decision-making, increase competition for better governance, and promote a diversity of expertise and viewpoints in national politics, all of which could enhance policymaking.

Politicians began to be concerned about matters pertaining to women's welfare and legal rights. Numerous social and political organizations have made an effort to get the government to pay more attention to issues affecting women. Yet, despite these attempts, it appears that these problems are not being addressed sufficiently. As a result of the government's actions, there have been numerous social feminist groups where women have vocally addressed these problems and demanded equal rights in society. Many people still think that these situations can only improve if women get control of the authority, even though the results of such movements have brought about certain advances and social reforms. Women are better equipped than anyone else to comprehend and handle these difficulties. They recommend electing more women as MPs in order to affect change in society.

Women have always had a low representation in political organizations. For example, in India, the proportion of elected women to the Lok Sabha's overall membership reached 12 percent in 2014 and 14% in 2019. Their percentage of representation in state legislatures is under 5%. Just 23.5 percent of elected female officials worldwide are women, not just in India. This is not very high as compared to male representations. Similar representations for women in the Lok Sabha and state legislatures are being demanded by a number of women's organizations and social activists. On which the bill has been put out in the legislature but has not yet been approved. Although gender inequality is a social issue, political expression of it has the potential to both help the disadvantaged group and change social conditions.

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