

Women Participation in Parliament: A Rajasthan Perspective

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Abstract

Women's political participation has been recognized internationally as an important tool to check the status of women in the society. Hence, women's participation in politics and decision-making has received significant attention across the world. The women are underrepresented in decision-making positions worldwide. Half of the population lack access at all levels of government to their counterparts. When it comes to India and specially Rajasthan, the situation becomes worse. Only 28 women MP are elected in the Lok Sabha from Rajasthan since independence. Equal participation of women in decision-making and politics is prerequisite to achieve social justice. The objective of this study is to examine present status of women in the country and providing a viable solution to achieve social justice. Various factors such as; economic, social, religious and cultural factors contributed to women's poor political participation in the country and especially in Rajasthan. The systematic inequality that infuses various aspects of social expression can only be addressed through political empowerment of women. The Rwandan experience has shown that women reservation can bring just to half of the society. That's why political empowerment of women is urgent need to attain a sustainable and inclusive society.

Keywords: Political Participation, Women Empowerment, Parliament, Political Parties

More women in parliament means better, stronger and more representative democracies that work for all the people,"

Gabriela Cuevas Barron

President Inter-Parliamentary Union and Mexican MP

The possibility for all citizens to participate in the management of public affairs is at the very heart of democratic system. Equal participation of both women and men in political decision makes a balance that more accurately reflects the composition of society, and may as such enhance the legitimacy of political processes by making them more democratic and responsive to the concerns and perspectives of all segments of society. Despite the above facts, the political arena remains largely dominated by men in the most of the countries. The means of democracy is hearing the voice of all equally but women which constitute fifty percent of populations are underrepresented in decision-making processes at all level of government around the world. Women are dominated and marginalized politically, socially, economically and physically by their counter parts. Therefore, the participation of women in the political discourse is the need of hour. The participation of women as political decision maker was recognized a political right under the Universal Declaration of (UDHR) in 1948. UDHR Articles 2 and 21 states equal enjoyment of political rights without discrimination on the basis of one's sex or any other ground. Like many world countries, the majority of women in India has also deprived of social, economic and political rights and hold low status in the society. They have been denied equal access to education, employment and gainful opportunities that made low involvement of them in policy formulation and decision making processes. The political participation of women has been low since independence and they are treated as vulnerable section of the society. Women's participation in political system is the most essential prerequisite of creating a just, equitable and gender-sensitive society.

Political participation of women in India is not much impressive compared to other nations. Although women's political participation is increasing day by day but still it remains not satisfactory. They have been demanding for more space in legislative bodies since long. India has had an average 9 percent women MP before the 15th Lok Sabha. The 15th and 16th Lok Sabha put positive impact on electing women as MP. Globally, several international commitments have been made to achieve gender equality and these emphasized to enhance representation of women in political sphere. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979) upheld women's right to participate in public sphere, the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) called for removing barriers to equal participation in socio-political life. The Millennium Development Goals (2000) also encourage women's representation in parliament to foster gender equality.

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT:

- Article 14- states equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India.
- Article 15- prohibits discrimination against anyone on the grounds of religion, race, caste sex or place of birth.
- Article 16 - provides equality of opportunity in matters of public employment.
- Article 39(a) - provides direction to state for policy formulation to secure equally adequate means of livelihood for both men and women.
- Article 42 - provides state to make provision for securing humane conditions of work and for maternity relief.

PRESENT STATUS:

India stands at 150th position out of 193 countries in the matter of representation of women in lower house of parliament. In the 2013 Parliamentary elections Rwanda made record by electing 64% women in parliament. Although this decreased by 3% in 2018 election but still Rwanda tops in electing women representative in parliament. These are top three African countries –Rwanda, Namibia and South Africa whereas no Asian country in the top 10 list for female representation in parliaments. Nordic and Scandinavian countries have highest percentage of women representation in parliament. UK and USA have also high representation of women respectively 32 percent and 23 percent. Even Pakistan with 20% has better women representation in parliament. Every third Member of Parliament in Nepal is woman. Afghanistan with 28% and China with 24% have also higher women representation than India. Vanuatu has worst situation where not a single woman represents in parliament.

RWANDA CASE:

The participation of women in parliament was about 18 percent in the 1990s; the road for women's incredible participation in politics of Rwanda was paved by the 2003 constitution that set a quota of minimum 30 per cent women parliament members. Women secured 56 per cent of parliament. Seats in the 2008 elections, the number increased to 64 per cent after the 2013 elections whereas women make up a global average of only 23.8 per cent of parliament members as of June 2018.

India at South Asia:

Rank	Country	Lower House			Upper House		
		Seats	Women	Percent Women	Seats	Women	Percent Women
36	Nepal	275	90	32.7	59	22	37.3
60	Afghanistan	249	68	27.3	68	16	30.9
-	Bangladesh	350	72(50+22)	20.57			
101	Pakistan	341	69	20.2	104	20	19.2
136	Bhutan	47	7	14.9	25	4	16
150	India	524	66	12.6	244	28	11.5
183	Sri Lanka	225	12	5.3	-	-	-
185	Maldives	85	4	4.7			

Source: <http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>

Bangladesh: 22 seats, out of the 300 seats won by women except 50 seats that are under reserved category for women and still to be elected.

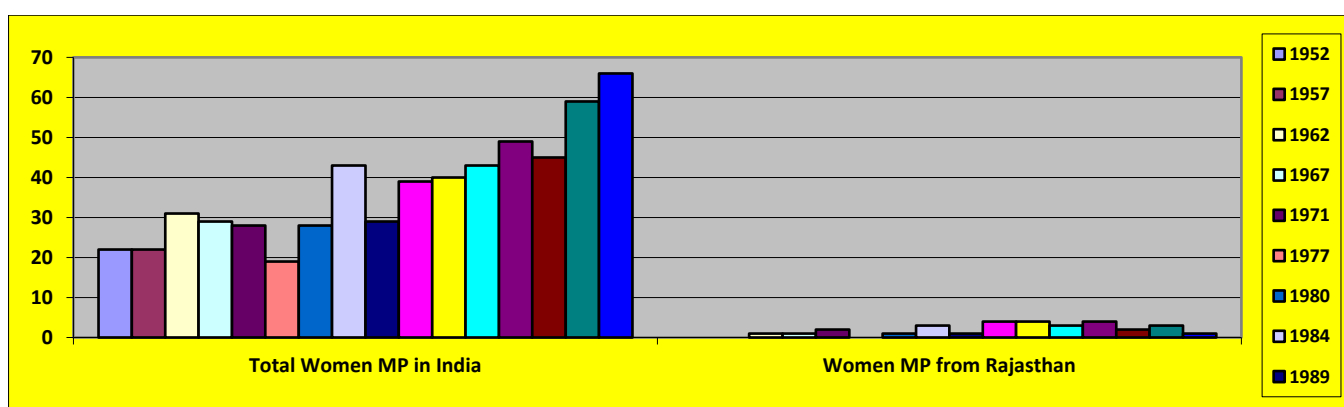
WOMEN IN INDIAN PARLIAMENT:

In 1917, women raised the issue of representation in politics which was mainly demand for universal adult franchise. By 1929 women got the right to vote on the basis of wifehood, property and education. Government of India Act -1935 provided all women over 21, right of vote, provided they fulfil the conditions of property and education. The setting up of the Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI) September, 1971 raised the demand for greater representation of women in political institutions in India. Earlier the focus had been on improving women's socio-economic position. It has been more than 70 years of independence but still women are searching their place in Indian political system. The vulnerability of women in Indian society can be understood by their representation in parliament. Here the table is given:

S. No.	Year	Total Number of Women MPs in Lok Sabha	Percentage of Women MPs (%)	Women MPs in Lok Sabha From Rajasthan	Percentage of Women MPs (%) in Rajasthan
1	1952	22	4.50	0	0
2	1957	22	4.45	0	0
3	1962	31	6.28	1	4
4	1967	29	5.58	1	4
5	1971	21	4.05	2	8
6	1977	19	3.51	0	0
7	1980	28	5.29	1	4
8	1984	43	7.95	3	12
9	1989	29	5.48	1	4
10	1991	38	7.11	4	16
11	1996	40	7.37	4	16

12	1998	43	7.92	3	12
13	1999	49	9.02	4	16
14	2004	45	8.29	2	8
15	2009	59	10.87	3	12
16	2014	66	12.15	1	4

Source: Election Commission of India



WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT STATE WISE:

There is also difference in electing women MPs state wise, UP with 14 MP has highest women representation in Lok Sabha followed by west Bengal with 11 whereas 3 states Haryana, Jharkhand and Meghalaya not have single women MP according to 2014 election. The same situation prevails when it comes to women representation in the state assemblies that accounts for average 9%. Bihar, Rajasthan and Haryana have 14% women in assembly whereas Pudducheri and Nagaland don't have any women MLA. Jammu and Kashmir, Kerala, Odisha that had no representation of women in Parliament did better. One woman candidate each from Jammu and Kashmir and Kerala and three from Odisha elected in Parliament.

STATE WITHOUT WOMEN MP- Not a single woman has won an MP seat from Jharkhand, Haryana and Meghalaya.

States Performed in Positive Manner

State	Women MP in 2014	Women MP in 2009
Jammu & Kashmir	1	0
Chandigarh	1	0

States Performed in Negative Manner

Tamil Nadu	4	1
Kerala	1	0
Odisha	2	0
West Bengal	14	7
Uttara Khand	1	0

State	Women MP in 2014	Women MP in 2009
Andhra Pradesh	3	5
Chhattisgarh	1	2
Madhya Pradesh	4	6
Punjab	1	4
Bihar	3	4
Haryana	0	2
Meghalaya	0	1
Rajasthan	1	3

IRONY

It is irony to state that those states who are backward in education, have elected more women representatives. Bihar, Haryana and Rajasthan have the highest number of representatives in respective state assemblies whereas state based on matriarchal pattern and forward state- Mizoram, Nagaland and Puducherry had elected no women representatives in their assemblies.

WOMEN MPS IN PARLIAMENT, PARTYWISE

The Indian election scenario has been dominated by two national parties – Indian National Congress (INC) and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Bharatiya Janata Party has 30 women MPs (10.6%) out of 282 seats it won in the 16th Lok Sabha. That is the second highest number of women MPs a single party has ever had in democratic history of Indian Parliament. Indian National Congress had 40 women MPs in 1984 election, which is the highest for a single party but INC that won 44 seats had just four women MPs (9.1%) in 2014 Lok Sabha. All India Trinamool Congress (AITC) stands second with 11 women MPs in 16th Lok Sabha, out of its 34 MPs – that is nearly about 33% of its MPs.

RAJASTHAN AT A GLANCE

On 31st march 1954 when Jawahar lal Nehru came to rajasthan assembly, he said, “when I visited yesterday at Vidhansabha, I was shocked to know that there is a single woman mla in rajasthan assembly.” This reflects how the situations were not in favour of women at the time of first general election. But after 70 years, the situation could not changed much that signs of exclusion politics. Ironcally in 1952, the lone MLA in Rajasthan vidhansabha, Yashoda Devi was elected in bye-election on Samajwadi Party from Banshwara. The situation goes worried when we figure out data of parliament election. Only 28 women could secure seats in Lok Sabha in the 70 years of democratic history. Total 180 women contested Lok Sabha election till

2014 from Rajasthan. The data shows 13 parliamentary constituencies of Rajasthan never got any female representation in Lok Sabha. There was no place for women in parliament from Rajasthan in the very first general election 1952. Two women contested but their deposit was forfeited. Women started to contest Lok Sabha elections from 1952, but registered the first victory in 1962, when Gayatri Devi was elected from the Jaipur parliamentary seat on Swatantra Party ticket. She won the election by a woman candidate Sharada Devi. Till 1990 on an average 5 to 6 women were contesting election for Lok Sabha. This number increased to 20-25 after 1991 election. 2009 saw the highest number of women contesting election was 31 whereas there was no women candidate in 1957 and 1977 election. In Lok Sabha election of 1991 total 14 women were in electoral fray, the number of female candidates has started gradually increasing. In 1996, 25 women contested elections followed by 20 in 1998, 15 in 1999, 31 in 2004 and 27 in 2014 polls.

S.No.	Election year	Women Elected	Name of Women MP Elected
1	1952	0	-----
2	1957	0	-----
3	1962	1	Gayatri Devi
4	1967	1	Gayatri Devi
5	1971	2	Gayatri Devi, Krishna Kumari
6	1977	0	-----
7	1980	1	Nirmala Kumari
8	1984	0	Nirmala Kumari, Indubala Sukhadiya
9	1989	1	Vasundhara Raje
10	1991	4	Vasundhara Raje, Mahendra Kumari, Krishnendra Kaur, Girija Vyas
11	1996	4	Vasundhara Raje, Girija Vyas, Divya Singh, Usha Devi
12	1998	3	Vasundhara Raje, Prabha Thakur, Usha Meena
13	1999	3	Vasundhara Raje, Girija Vyas, Jaskaur Meena
14	2004	2	Kiran Maheshwari, Bangaru Shushila
15	2009	3	Chandresh Kumari, Girija Vyas, Jyoti Mirdha
16	2014	1	Santosh Ahlawat

Source: <https://loksabha.nic.in/>

Till today in Rajasthan, BJP gave 19 tickets and INC gave 27 tickets to women candidate for Lok Sabha but mostly ticket were repetitive as Vasundhara Raje got 5 times, Girija Vyas contested elections the highest seven times and won four times. The voting percentage of women was 44.85% for 2009 Lok Sabha that was increased 61.39 % in 2014 Lok Sabha. But the number of women MP that was 4 in 2009 decreased to 1 in 2014. Congress fielded 6 woman candidates but no one could secure seat, only Santosh Ahlawat of BJP could win the election.

SEAT WISE REPRESENTATION

The low representation of women in Lok Sabha elections reflects the bias they suffer in society, according to women lawmakers and political analysts who contend that giving 33 per cent reservation to females in legislatures will address the gender imbalance in politics. Although women voters are nearly half of the total electors in Rajasthan, but the total count of women elected for Lok Sabha are merely 28 in the last 66 years ((1952-2018).

The highest 31 women candidates contested in 2009 while the figure was just two in 1952 Lok Sabha elections when Sharda Bai and Rani Devi Bhargava contested from Bharatpur-Swai Madhopur and Pali-Sirohi seat respectively. However, security deposits of both the candidates were forfeited as they failed to get one-sixth of the votes polled. The highest of four women candidates were elected by voters in Rajasthan in 1991 and 1996 polls respectively.

Women Represented Times	Number of Constituencies	Parliamentary Constituencies
5 Times	2	Jhalawar, Udaipur
3 Times	3	Jaipur, Chittorgarh and Sawai Madhopur
2 Times	2	Bharatpur, Jodhpur
1 Times	5	Alwar, Ajmer, Jalore, Nagaur, Jhunjhunu
0 Times	13	Shri Ganganagar, Bikaner, Barmer, Jalore, Pali, Rajasamand, Banshwara, Bhilwara, Jaipur Rural, Sikar, Dausa, Churu, Kota

Source: <https://loksabha.nic.in/>

WOMEN RAJYASABHA MEMBER FROM RAJASTHAN

S. No.	Name	Election term in Rajya Sabha	Period
1	Smt. Sharada Bhargav	3	1950-56, 1956-62, 1963-66
2	Smt. Lilawati Munshi	1	1952-58
3	Dr. Mangala Devi Talwar	1	1966-72
4	Smt. Narayani Devi Verma	1	1970-76
5	Smt. Lakshmi Kumari Chundawat	1	1972-78
6	Smt. Ushi Khan	1	1976-82
7	Smt. Shanti Pahadiya	1	1984-90
8	Smt. Jamuna Devi Barupal	1	2000-06
9	Dr. Prabha Thakur	1	2002-08, 2008-14
10	Smt. Nazma Heptullah	1	2004-10

Source: <https://rajyasabha.nic.in/>

SUCCESS OF PANCHAYATI RAJ

Political participation for women actually strengthened at grassroots by 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments that provided constitutional status to local government's institutions. The 73rd and 74th amendment to constitution made it compulsory for the state to provide minimum 33% reservation to women in the election at local government institutions. Some state provided more than 33% reservation. There are 14 states and union territories have 50% or more elected women representatives in panchayats. Sikkim made provision for 40% reservation to women at grass-route politics. Rajasthan and Uttarakhand have 56% women representation, the highest in the country. With the time, acceptance of women in politics has been increasing by the panchayati raj framework. Around 10 lac out of 28 lac elected Panchayat representatives are women. The average of women representation in panchayati raj institutions across the country is 36.94 per cent. But the percentage of elected women Lok Sabha members has never exceeded 12 per cent. The 110th Amendment Bill 2009 seeks to amend the Article 243D to enhance the reservation quota for women from one-third to one-half of the total seats in the PRIs.

Reasons for low participation of women in Indian politics:

The economic survey of 2017-18 states the reason for lower participation of women in political sphere

- Existing cultural attitudes regarding roles of women in society (Patriarchal Society)
- Domestic Responsibilities and
- Lack of support from family(Economically, Socially)
- Lack of confidence
- Economically dependency

Other Reasons are:

- Political Parties are reluctant to give adequate number of party tickets to women candidates
- No legal compulsion for giving tickets (Delay in passing of Women Reservation Bill)
- Patriarchal mindset of society
- Lack of education
- Lack of leadership training

- Limited involvement in decision making process
- Women are not integrated in any local political process

Benefits of Increased Women share in Politics:

- A UN University study shows that Women legislators can improve the economic performance of their constituencies 1.8 per cent more than male legislatures if they get elected
- The experience of Panchayat election shows that the number of drinking water projects in areas with women-led panchayats was 62 per cent higher than in those with men-led panchayats
- Better policy making: specifically vulnerable sections related policies. The study on Norway found, a direct causal relationship between the women councillor and childcare coverage
- Higher economic growth: various researches find the women have more efficient and economic approach and saving pattern rather than man. Women are more inclined to social justice also.
- Less Criminalization of Politics: Fewer women are into criminal sector that's why it will help in curb the criminalization of politics.
- Economic infrastructure: women are the most affected by infrastructures, as all the domestic liabilities lies with them. Study on Panchayat shows that they are more devoted to infrastructure building programmes in villages.

WAY FORWARD:

- The only way to address this in the short span is through a bold legislation. Passing of the long waited Women's Reservation Bill is the only key factor to enhance their presentation in political sphere.
- Breaking Gender stereotypes – society perceives women representatives as weaker than man. So there is need of modern scientific approach to education.
- Need of inclusive political institutions- like as panchayats and urban local self government.
- Need of providing political education, training and skills to women to build leadership quality into them.

- Political parties should focus on increasing the number of women representatives. The absence of women representatives has pushed them to the fringes in power sharing and has adverse impacts on their overall political status.
- Break socio-cultural barriers and improve their status in the society by opening all jobs and field to them because economic dependency is the key factor for the backwardness of women.
- Mass awareness and campaigns to educate them.
- Increase female literacy especially in rural areas.
- Enhance the participation of women in political and social organisations.

Apply Gill Formula: This formula was given Former CEC M.S.Gill making it compulsion for all political parties to nominate at least one third of women candidates for the seats deserves to be commended. If these are not prepared to accept the principle of representation within their own parties, make it mandatory by legal method or reject the status of political party.

CONCLUSION:

Democracy has become a vital tool to attain sustainable development. Without equal participation of women to political process, the hope for democracy and democratization is useless. Women are at the subordinate position and occupy low status in the society. Their involvement in policy formulation and decision making processes have been minimal. However various parties have declared its commitment to gender equality and empowerment of women by more representation in the legislation but they still hesitate to give tickets. The patriarchal mindset, lack of education and economically dependency makes women marginalised in political sphere. The government has initiated various measures and policies for women-empowerment. But still inclusiveness is much far away. There can be reservation within political parties. Countries like United Kingdom, Canada, France and Norway etc, reserve seats for women within the political parties. There is an also urgent need for education and leadership training to familiarize them with the local government functioning and to make them independent economically but lessons from Panchayati Raj elections states that passing of women reservation bill is the only solution to bridge the critical gender gap in political and legislative bodies.

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