



## STUDY ON THE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN INDIA

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### ABSTRACT

In addition to the "Right to Vote," engagement in political activism, political consciousness, etc. is also important. In India, women cast more ballots than men, run for public office and join political parties at lower levels. The two pillars of women's political participation are voting and political activism. The Indian government implemented reservations for seats in local governments to address gender disparity in politics.

In India's general parliamentary elections, 65.63% of women participated, compared to 67.09% of men. In terms of the percentage of women in Parliament, India comes in twenty-first from the bottom.

In India, women have served as president, prime minister, and chief ministers of several different states. Women have long been elected by Indian people to various state legislative bodies and the national parliament.

**Keywords: Suffrage, Parliamentary system, etc.**

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Constitution of India establishes a parliamentary system of government, and guarantees its citizens the right to be elected, freedom of speech, freedom to assemble and form associations, and vote. The Constitution of India attempts to remove gender inequalities by banning discrimination based on sex and class, prohibiting human trafficking and forced labor, and reserving elected positions for women.

The Government of India directed state and local governments to promote equality by class and gender including equal pay and free legal aid, human working conditions and maternity relief, rights to work and education, and raising the standard of living. Women were substantially involved in the Indian independence movement in the early 20th century and advocated for independence from Britain. Independence brought gender equality in the form of constitutional rights, but historically women's political participation has remained low.

### 2. FEMALE PARTICIPATION

## Voting

### Women's suffrage in India

The movement for women's suffrage began in the early 1900s in response to a national movement for suffrage, even though vast majority of neither men nor women had a right to vote the British colonial rule before 1947. After Indian independence from Britain, the Indian Constitution in 1950 officially granted women and men suffrage. Prior to universal suffrage, provincial legislatures had granted women the right to vote.

Madras was the first to grant women's suffrage in 1921, but only to those men and women who owned land property according to British administration's records. The rights granted in response to the movement towards suffrage were limited to qualifications of literacy and property ownership, including property ownership of husbands. This excluded vast majority of Indian women and men from voting, because they were poor. This changed in 1950 when universal suffrage was granted to all adult Indian citizens.

In 1950, universal suffrage granted voting rights to all women. This is enshrined in Article 326 in their constitution. India is a parliamentary system with two houses: Lok Sabha (lower house) and Rajya Sabha (upper house). Rates of participation among women in 1962 were 46.63% for Lok Sabha elections and rose to a high in 1984 of 58.60%. Male turnout during that same period was 63.31% in 1962 and 68.18% in 1984.

The gap between men and women voters has narrowed over time with a difference of 16.7% in 1962 to 4.4% in 2009.

Voter turnout for national elections in the past 50 years has remained stagnant with turnout ranging between 50 and 60%. State elections have seen a growing trend in women's participation, and in some cases women's turnout is exceeding male turnout. Increased turnout of women was reported for the 2012 Vidhan Sabha elections (legislative/state assemblies) with states such as Uttar Pradesh reporting 58.82% to 60.29% turnout. In the 2013 assembly elections, women's overall turnout was reported to be 47.4%, and male turnout was 52.5%. Indian states of Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Kerala and so on are reported higher turnouts among women than men.

(reservations) in constitutional amendments (73rd and 74th) to reserve 33% of seats in local governments for women. The Women's Reservation Bill (108th amendment) has been introduced in the national parliament to reserve 33% of Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha seats for women. The bill has yet to be passed by Lok Sabha and signed into law. The discussion of women's reservations began in the 1920s and continued into the 1930s until a compromise was reached with Britain to allow women in urban areas to vote. Discussion of women's

reservations were again introduced in 1974 by the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in India, but India did not fully establish quotas in local government until 1994. Local governing bodies in India are called Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) and one-third of seats and leadership positions must be reserved for women. States such as Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Kerala, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tripura, and Uttarakhand have increased reservations to 50%. The national government has also proposed to raise the level of reservations in PRIs to 50%.

Seats reserved for women are rotated for assurance that each seat has an equal chance of being reserved. After the establishment of women's reservations, political participation went from 4-5% to 25-40% among women, and gave millions of women the opportunity to serve as leaders in local government. Odisha, an Indian state, established reservations prior to the 73rd amendment and they had 28,069 women elected in 1992 and 28,595 women in 1997. Class differences have manifested with poorer women gaining presence in panchayats, but women of a higher class being elected as chairpersons (sarpanch).

Concerns remain in reserving seats for women in elected positions. The issue of training has become an increasing concern with preparing women for the role of leadership. It was found in Tamil Nadu that women lack the education and training to understand procedures in panchayats. Family also plays a significant role in women's participation in government. Familial influence can be a barrier or a support system for female elected officials in terms of connections. Family connections can help women seek elected positions at both the national and local government level. There has been concern over the role of women as proxies for male family members, but women may still have important effects on policy decisions. The effect of reservation for women has been increased in the number of public goods, including water and roads. Drinking water and road improvements are issues that are most frequently raised by female elected officials. The most significant issues for men are roads, irrigation, education, and water. Women are also likely to bring welfare issues such as violence against women, childcare, and maternal health to consideration.

### 3. POLITICAL PARTIES

India has a multi-party system with the 7 registered parties at the national

level. The three largest parties in India are the Indian National Congress (INC), the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and the Communist Party of India (CPI). Political parties have increased outreach among women voters as India's party system has become more competitive. This has included the creation of women's wings in the largest parties. The BJP's wing is the BJP Mahila Morcha, the INC's wing is All India Mahila Congress, and the CPI's wing is the National Federation of Indian Women.

Women's involvement in political parties is tied to the increasing demand for equal rights. The INC held power until the 1990s. As the INC moved away from welfare politics, other parties arose to challenge the INC using poverty as the center of their agenda. The INC regained power in 2004 with the help of women's participation. The INC has increased women's participation by instituting a 33% quota for women in all levels of the party. In June 2009, the INC nominated a woman to become first speaker of Lok Sabha, and also supported the election of Pratibha Patil, India's first female president. Women were involved in the early establishment of the BJP.

The BJP has encouraged greater representation of women by developing women's leadership programs, financial assistance for women candidates, and implementing a 33% reservation for women in party leadership positions. BJP has received women's support by focusing on issues such as the Uniform Civil Code to extend equal rights to women and men regardless of religion. They have also spoken out against violence against Indian women. The CPI has also supported gender inequality issues including addressing issues of violence nikitæktæu through the National Federation of Indian Women.

Women's participation in political parties remained low in the 1990s with 10-12% membership consisting of women. Indian women have also taken the initiative to form their own political parties, and in 2007, the United Women Front party was created, and has advocated for increasing the reservation of seats for women in parliament to 50%. Women only govern four of India's political parties. From 1980-1970, 4.3% of candidates and 70% of electoral races had no women candidates at all. As of 2013, it has been reported of the members of parliament 11% were women in Lok Sabha and 10.6% in Rajya Sabha.

### **Political activism**

Women's organizations in India first began to emerge in the early 1800s, and later in the 1970s after a period of limited activity from the 1950s to 1970s. One of the earliest women's organizations, Bharat StreeMahamandal, formed in 1910 and focused on helping women escape oppression from men. Women's associations had traditionally began with the help of men giving few women access to work and education, while limiting the expansion of traditional gender roles. In 1927, the AllIndia Women's Conference (AIWC) was formed to advocate for women's education and was helpful in the passage of the Hindu Code of Bills between 1952 and 1960. Women were also active in the freedom movement in protesting British colonial rule over Indian holding protests and public meetings in support of independence.

### **Women at farmers rally**

The new wave of feminism in the 1970s was in response to gender inequality issues and stagnant development in India. The Committee on the Status of Women in India released a report in 1974, and had a significant influence in the reemergence of activism towards gender equality. The report highlighted the significant differences between men and women in India, including the disparity in the sex ratio, mortality rates, employment, literacy, and wage discrimination. The report fueled the women's movement by signifying the ongoing discrimination towards women in India. Gender inequality has remained the focus of the women's movement with specific emphasis on issues such as the Uniform Civil Code, Women's Reservation Bill, and sexual violence against women. Women's organizations both informal and formal have developed at the rural, urban, national, and state levels in India.

Women's organizations in India address a variety of issues from the environment, poverty, empowerment, and violence against women. One of the most prominent women's organizations in India is the AIWC, which was established in 1927, focusing on empowering and educating Indian women. The AIWC has over 100,000 members and 500 branches in India, and has helped with the passage of the Sarda Act, Maternity Benefit Act, and Hindu Code Bills.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

India has a rich history of estimating political cooperation of ladies since its freedom. The decentralization of administration which is occurring for most recent two decades has expanded the significance of estimating support of ladies in basic leadership. Legitimate sexual orientation planning has just been worked out for comprehensive development of ladies and young ladies by ear-checking 33% spending plan for the ladies in all the schemes.

The Indian Government has a ton of accentuation on using continuous information for estimating distinctive social pointers and utilizing them for strategy intercession. With progressively responsive information on ladies investment, better sexual orientation spending activities plan to move the nation towards a sex level with society. Among different procedures, ladies' support in political foundations is seen as very engaging. In this association, 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 was a noteworthy occasion towards revitalisation of panchayati raj establishments when all is said in done and strengthening of SCs, STs and ladies specifically.

The Act makes arrangement for the booking of 33% of the absolute number of seats in panchayati raj organizations for ladies. This improvement brought about intrinsically commanded 2, 32,332 town panchayats,

6,000 halfway panchayats and 534 zilla panchayats with a delegate base of 27,75,858 panchayat individuals, 1,44,491 individuals from middle of the road panchayats and 15,067 individuals from zilla panchayats.

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