

WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN INDIA FOR INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE

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Introduction

Democracy is known as a system in which the people rule and the government is formed for the people. This is a subject in which it can be questioned whether the government includes all the diverse sections and whether the government works for all the people in a democracy. In this context, the problem of less participation of women in political office is a matter of special concern for democracy. Women's interests must be taken into consideration while making decisions in governance. It is common knowledge that governing arrangements that do not allow women to participate adequately are typically plagued by state intervention, which is not inclusive or democratic! A crucial first step towards gender equality and gender-sensitive policy is the inclusion of women in governance, particularly in municipal administrations. Women's opinion on political and social problems varies. Women's participation in governments is therefore crucial in order to integrate all societal perspectives in the formulation of policies and the process of making decisions.

The proposed research study will attempt to identify the factors that are responsible for the continuous increase and decrease in women's participation in governance and explore their implications for the institutionalization of inclusive democracy. The research study will also shed light on the social background of women representatives in government. It will attempt to identify the strategies adopted by women to deal with the challenges and uncertainties they face in politics.

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Inclusive Governance

It has been long argued that democratic government is essential to promoting social and economic growth, as well as to combat poverty. Originating from the Greek term “demos” denotes individuals, and “Kratos” implies possessing government. The inherent power or authority of democratic government represents the involvement of individuals. Therefore, there are two main ways that democracy differs from other forms of government. First, the involvement of citizens in the system of government guarantees that the community’s needs and values are represented in the way the government acts and regulations. Second, granting citizens the authority to choose their representatives and allows citizens to demand accountability from their governments. There are several elements of working democracy such as frequent elections that are fair, free, and opposition parties that are active, availability of independent knowledge, freedom of expression and mobility, and autonomy to interact with governing authorities via campaigning, voting, running for office, and politics. The rule of law and the independent of third wings of government.

Women & Political Participation

Making individuals participate in the formulation of Political representation is a term used to describe public policy and it explains why political players behave in the best interests of the people. Hanna Pitkin explains portrayal as “to male present again.” Women have been represented since ancient times. The defining characteristic of a democratic system is political representation. Democracy necessitates equality of all people, both men and women. In contrast, women are marginalized in a variety of life in politics more clearly. Although equality is included in the Preamble as one of the goals and incorporation of basic rights, and principles of directives, Articles 324, 325, and 326 Women are not adequately represented in electoral politics.

The initial issue is the conflict between expanding democracy and Women’s aspirations and the limited opportunities accessible to them in the nation’s democratic framework, roles, and procedures of political judgment. The second issue is connected to the current gender gap among third-world countries. This gap restricted women’s decision-making capacity. The need for 33% Women’s seat reservations in the state and Zero tolerance for violence and national governance against women are connected in a positive way, therefore ways to strengthen the foundations of democracy. The elimination of institutional obstacles will guarantee unhindered prospects for women. Despite their progress, women in Indian politics continue to encounter several obstacles. From early trailblazers who dismantled obstacles to contemporary leaders making progress, the path has been both challenging and inspirational. Social conventions and systemic problems still prevent women from fully participating in politics, even in the face of laws and policies designed to advance gender equality.

An overview of women in Indian politics is given by this analytical research, which focuses on their representation, the difficulties they confront, and the results of their participation. It looks at the historical context, emphasizing significant personalities and turning points in the political empowerment of women. The study examines how women are currently represented in Indian politics and pinpoint the causes of their underrepresentation. It talks about how the reservation policy affects women's engagement in governance.

The review also looks at how women in politics affect governance and policies, highlighting their beneficial effects on a range of topics. It explores the difficulties and impediments that Indian women encounter in politics, such as violence, stereotypes, and gender bias. Additionally, the research recommends actions to strengthen women's political participation, including local to central.

Women are particularly affected by this democratic gap since their marginalization violates their entitlement to political participation. Additionally, it has led to regulations that don't accurately represent women's priorities, needs, and beliefs, thus decreasing their ability to effectively address inequality and encourage growth. In India, the biggest democracy in the world, Women's equality, rights, and status are honored in the Constitution. Following the liberation from the British colony, our constitution input the essence of liberation movements, which emphasizes personal rights and avoids discrimination which is based on caste, class, and gender. Additionally, it includes affirmative action strategies to combat discrimination against females in cultural, social, and political arenas in accordance with the Articles described in fundamental rights and directive policy of the Indian constitution. However, Indian women still do not have full and equal rights even after 75 years of democracy and freedom. This still poses a serious challenge to the establishment of true democracy in governance.

Furthermore, patriarchal ideals are ingrained in several social, political, and cultural aspects of Indian systems that cause discrimination against women nation and indifference in both their personal and public spheres. Additionally, women have Nonetheless; the most prevalent type of gender-based violence in India is still domestic abuse. According to official data, 36% of married Women in the 15-49 age range have experienced violence since they turned 15. The underreporting of violent incidents against women, especially those who experience domestic abuse, is also widely distributed. The precise quantity of women who encounter violence in their homes is thought to be much greater. The health, dignity, and well-being of women are severely impacted by gender inequality. Additionally, it harms social, economic, and political advancement. For India to attain genuine participation, Democracies must dismantle the patriarchy. Women's direct and active involvement in government will help to prevent gender inequality.

Women representative in the Lower House:

Constituency election	Number of women representatives	Percentage of women representatives
1951	22	5
1957	22	5
1962	31	6
1967	29	6
1971	28	5
1977	19	4
1980	28	5
1984	43	8
1989	29	6
1991	39	7
1996	40	7
1998	43	8
1999	49	9
2004	45	8
2009	59	11
2014	66	12
2019	78	14
2024	74	13.6

Source: Election Commission of India.

Since the first general elections in 1952, India, a sovereign republic, has granted all of its women the right to vote. Although all women have had the right to vote since the Constitution's inception, their representation in the State and Lok Sabha legislatures has been far from ideal. Until 2004, there were only about 5% to 10% of female MPs in the Lok Sabha. In 2014, it increased slightly to 12%, and as of the 18th Lok Sabha, it is at 14%. With a national average of about 9%, representation in State Legislative Assemblies is significantly worse.

Name of Country	elected women percentage	Quota in parliament	Quota in political parties
Sweden	46%	No	Yes
South Africa	45%	No	Yes
Australia	38%	No	Yes
France	38%	No	Yes
Germany	35%	No	Yes
U.K	40%	No	Yes
U.S	29%	No	No
Pakistan	16%	Yes	No
Bangladesh	20%	Yes	No

Source: PRS Legislative Research (September 2023)

Democracies depend on how many women are represented in parliament. Promoting greater representation for women, which is half of the population worldwide, is a constant challenge. The two main strategies employed globally to guarantee greater representation of women are (a) mandatory or voluntary quotas for candidates within political parties and (b) quotas in parliament through seat reservation. Political party quotas provide voters with more democratic options and give parties more latitude in selecting female candidates. A reserved quota for women in parliament is opposed on the grounds that it would be interpreted as a lack of merit-based competition. It may also lessen the motivation for MPs to put in extra effort because the seats designated for women will be switched after delimitation.

According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, a global organization that represents national parliaments, India is ranked 143rd out of all nations in its “Monthly ranking of women in national parliaments” as of April 2024. At 38%, the Trinamool Congress has the most female Members of Parliament in the current Lok Sabha. About 13% of the vote is shared by the main opposition Congress party and the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party. The Tamil Nadu state party Naam Tamilar Katchi has voluntarily reserved 50% of its seats for female candidates in the last three general elections. Political party quotas, whether required or voluntary, are unlikely to offer the best representation in our nation.

Because of this, in September 2023, The 106th constitutional amendment was approved by the Parliament, allocating a third of the seats in the State legislative assemblies and Lok Sabha to women. This would ensure that women are equally represented in legislatures and also increase gender awareness in legislative procedures and legislation. Ideally, there would also be an increase in the number of female ministers in both the federal and state governments. The proportion of women in the Indian Parliament is one important measure of the country’s progress in tackling gender inequity. There are 662.9 million women living in India, the biggest and strongest parliamentary democracy in the world.

It draws a comparison between the percentage of women in parliament and those in lower-level legislative positions. It notes that although female voter turnout has increased dramatically, women have found it challenging to engage in electoral politics overall due to long-standing institutional impediments.

It makes the case that institutional change, in addition to State legislatures and parliaments “make a representative claim’ to represent various constituencies, identity groups, and interests in addition to making laws and holding the executive accountable.” Even while women’s voting participation has increased significantly, the percentage of female lawmakers in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha has remained low when compared to their male counterparts, according to data on women’s representation in both bodies. The 2019 elections saw the largest number of female lawmakers elected to the Lok Sabha to date, accounting for less than 15% of the overall membership.

According to surveys by the “Centre for Study of Developing Societies (CSDS),” women’s participation in political procedures has increased over the past three decades. These activities include going to election rallies, conducting door-to-door campaigns, distributing election pamphlets, and raising money for elections. However, this type of involvement is still rather low overall. This suggests that greater educational attainment, political consciousness, and exposure to public life have made women more politically active voters; nonetheless, several institutional and structural barriers still keep them from participating fully in the wide range of other aspects of electoral politics.

In 1992, the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments were introduced to provide “new opportunities for local level planning, effective implementation and monitoring of various social and economic development programs in the country.” Reserving one-third of the seats in local body elections for women was one of the most important and revolutionary features of these reforms. Local women’s political engagement increased dramatically as a result of the strategy, according to studies. Twenty of the 28 states in India have since increased the quota to 50%.

The problem of “proxy representation,” in which women elected to public office were mostly “controlled” by their male relatives, has also diminished. Both government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have implemented numerous leadership training sessions and skill development programs for women at the grassroots level, which have improved the performance of elected female political leaders.

Slow progress has been made in creating opportunities for women in Indian legislative politics. Social change is another requirement. Because of increased educational opportunities, women’s financial stability, the relative decrease in cultural prejudices, and more media awareness, political parties have been compelled to establish spaces for women’s participation.

As more women vote, political parties have created social programs that benefit women in an effort to win over more of them.

Conclusion

Therefore, Inclusive governance is only possible when the human Citizens’ rights are acknowledged and autonomous. There are systems in place to protect these rights. Additionally, in order for democracy to be fully representative and inclusive, every person has to have an equal opportunity for involvement in democratic procedures. In the absence of these circumstances, the advantages of democracy for the economy and society are oppressive and hierarchical, while minority groups continue to face pervasive discrimination and exclusion from decision-making forums. In this situation, Women’s exclusion from India’s political sphere is a significant obstacle. However, the difficulty is not unique to India; rather, it is a widespread issue in democracies worldwide.

As the movement for women's political liberation gains momentum, women's organizations and networks inside political parties and civic society must continue to help women claim their place in the larger political and social landscape. Women's political mobilization may be stepped up to compel rapid institutional change that would improve women's representation in India's state assembly and parliament. More women in these roles are necessary to shift the discourse around governance and policy-making and bring India closer to being a genuinely inclusive and representative democracy.

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