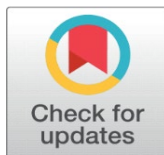


# WOMEN POLITICS RESERVATION BILL IN INDIA

Dr. Pralhad V Chengte<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Govt First Grade College Humnabad, Karnataka, India.



DOI  
[10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i3.2024.3658](https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i3.2024.3658)

**Funding:** This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

**Copyright:** © 2024 The Author(s). This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

With the license CC-BY, authors retain the copyright, allowing anyone to download, reuse, re-print, modify, distribute, and/or copy their contribution. The work must be properly attributed to its author.

## ABSTRACT

India is the largest democratic country in the world, where the women folk constitute nearly half of its population. Though the constitution guarantees equality to women along with men, but in politics very few women were able to make a room for themselves due to various reasons. The aim of this article is to explain about the Women Reservation Bill in India, reasons for low level participation of women and suggest measures to improve the participation of women in politics. The representation of women is low not only in Parliament but also in state assemblies, urban and rural local bodies. Those women who are having political background and influence were able to get seats in elections, before elections all political parties are giving promises but in actual practice very few seats were allocated to women candidates. In the present day politics money, muscle power and mafia are playing important role and these circumstances women do not like to enter into this field.

**Keywords:** Women, Representation Bill, Legislature



## 1. POLITICS. MEANING OF POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN:

Empowerment implies the creation of an enabling environment where individuals can fully use their capabilities to take charge of their lives. Empowerment also implies the building or acquiring of capacity to accomplish certain tasks and attain specific goals. In the area of women's political empowerment, it is increasingly becoming recognized that women should both empower themselves and "be empowered". This relates both to individual (such as increasing individual civic competencies) and collective empowerment (such as networking). Empowerment also involves creating a conducive environment so that women can use these competencies to address the fundamental problems of society at par with their male counterparts. It follows therefore that building the analytical, political, advocacy, leadership, networking and other competencies of women is just as important, or even more important than increasing women's numbers in high policy and decision making bodies and institutions. It can even be argued that these qualitative factors provide the foundation for sustainable improvements in the position of women. Otherwise, legislative or constitutional mandates (or any other situations where the existing male dominated power structures are required to "do favours" for women – for instance by appointing them to the cabinet) may merely result in tokenism, manipulation and unsustainable representation. As regards women's political empowerment we have come a long way. Women are making a little progress into politics and government, but not yet enough to make a difference. We can say women empowerment in national and state politics has just been a non-starter. The number of women members in the Lok Sabha in terms of percentage of total number of members in Lok Sabha never crossed two digits, in spite of the fact that women constitute

nearly fifty percent of the voters. It has taken more than six decades and 15 Lok Sabhas for the percentage of women members in the House to move up partially from a mere 4.9 percent in 1952 to 10.68 percent now, a figure that is far below the average of around 15 percent in countries which have elected legislatures. Though numerically the strength of women members in Lok Sabha has been increasing, their participation in the decision-making positions is significantly smaller.

## 2. PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN INDIAN LEGISLATURES SINCE 1952 TO TILL NOW

1. In the first Lok Sabha (1952-57) out of 466 seats, 23 were won by women members making a 4.9 percent of the total.
2. The second Lok Sabha (1957-62) had 24 women members out of the total 474 seats making a 5 percent of the total.
3. In the third Lok Sabha (1962-67) out of 500 seats 37 women candidates were elected. The percentage of women members increased to 7.4 percent also the number of women Ministers in the Council of Ministers increased substantially.
4. The fourth Lok Sabha (1967-70) had only 31 women members out of 505 total seats making it to 6.3 percent of the total members.
5. In the fifth Lok Sabha (1971-77) the number of women members declined to 26 out of the total 510 seats making it to 5 percent of total members.
6. The sixth Lok Sabha (1977-79) the number of women candidates dropped sharply to only 18 members out the total number of 533 seats making to a mere 3.3 percent
7. In the seventh Lok Sabha (1980-84) there were 32 women members, 5.8 percent of the total membership of 551 in the House.
8. During the eighth Lok Sabha (1984-89) there were 46 women members in that House constituting, 8.5 percent of the total membership of 538.
9. The ninth Lok Sabha (1989-91) the number of women members declined considerably to 29, with 5.4 percent of the total number of 529 seats.
10. Participation of women in the Tenth Lok Sabha has increased considerably from the previous Lok Sabha, it has 39 women members.
11. In the eleventh Lok Sabha (1996-97) out of 545 seats, there were 40 women members making a 7.3 percent of the total.
12. In the twelfth Lok Sabha (1998-99) out 545 seats, 44 were won by women, with 8 percent.
13. The thirteenth Lok Sabha (1999-2004) out of 545 seats, 48 women candidates were elected, with an average percentage of 8.8.
14. Fourteenth Lok Sabha out of 542 total members, 44 women candidates were elected, they constitute 8 percent of the total seats.
15. In the fifteenth Lok Sabha out of 543 members, 58 women members were elected with the percentage of 10.

From the foregoing study it is evident that though the number of women participation in political process has been increasing; women's involvement in the decision-making process has been marginal. Since the first Lok Sabha till date, only a very few women were able to make to the decision-making positions and reached the highest level of power and authority. Those who did so were recognized for their administrative skills and capacity to manage their affairs. Now we will look into the need of women Reservation Bill in Indian Legislatures The women's reservation bill has been a political raw nerve for nearly a decade now. It has always triggered heated debates in Parliament and outside. Its advocates say the bill is essential for active political participation of women. Opponents argue that reservation would only help women of elitist groups gain political power, aggravating the plight of the poor and deprived sections. The proposed legislation to reserve 33.3 percent seats in Parliament and state legislatures for women was drafted first by the H.D Deve Gowda – led United Front government. The bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha on September 12, 1996. Though it has been introduced in Parliament several times since then the bill could not passed because of lack of political consensus. Reservation for women at each level of legislative decision-making starting with the Lok Sabha, down to state and local legislatures. If the bill is passed, one-third of the total available seats would be reserved for women in national, state, or local governments. In continuation of the existing provisions already mandating reservations for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, one-third of such SC and ST candidates must be women. Its proponents say it would lead to gender equality in Parliament, resulting in the empowerment of women as a whole. Historically, the bill's supporters say, women are deprived in India. Increased political participation of women will help them fight the abuse, discrimination,

and inequality they suffer from. 33.3 percent seats in panchayat elections have been reserved for women already. The experience of women's at the Panchayat level has been very encouraging. A million women are being elected to the panchayats in the country every five years. This is the largest mobilization of women in public life in the world. Various political parties have staunchly opposed it because they fear many of their male leaders would not get a chance to fight elections if 33.3 percent seats are reserved for women. The bill has also been opposed by politicians from the socially and economically backward classes. They argue that reservation would only help women of the elitist groups to gain seats, therefore causing further discrimination and under-representation to the poor and backward classes.

### **3. HISTORY OF WOMEN RESERVATION BILL IN INDIA**

First in 1996 – the Deve Gowda government introduces the women's reservation bill as 81st Constitutional Amendment Bill. In 1998, the bill is re-introduced in the 12th Lok Sabha as the 84th Constitutional Amendment Bill by the National Democratic Pramana Quarterly Research Journal April-June (2012) 168 Alliance (NDA) government headed Atal Bihari Vajpatee. In 1999, the NDA government reintroduced the bill in the 13th Lok Sabha. In 2002, the bill is introduced in Parliament but fails to sail through. In 2003 - bill introduced twice in parliament. In 2004 – The United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government includes it in the Common Minimum Programme. In 2008, the government tables the bill in the Rajya Sabha so that the legislation does not lapse. In 2010 – the cabinet clears the bill for taking it up in the Rajya Sabha and on 8th March mother India was again made to cry by some political parties, just like Draupadi of Mahabharat. The house was adjourned for the sixth times and congress failed to punish the law breakers and kept silence like the they wanted the bill be treated like Draupadi and enjoyable the drama when mother India was insulted. Status of the bill now (9th March 2010): The Women's Reservation Bill was finally passed in the Rajya Sabha with 186 members voting for it and only one (Anantarao Joshi) voting against it. Trinamool congress members remained absent when the bill was put to vote. The Bahujan Samaj Party members boycotted the voting. Lalu Prasad Yadav of the Rashtriya Janata Dal, Mulayam Singh Yadav of the Samajwadi Party has been the main political. forces opposed the bill. These politicians say that this bill will favour only higher class females, won't benefit Muslim females and other females. The bill is suppose to get in Lok Sabha also. Now we will see the constraints for the Participation of women in politics.

### **4. WRONG SOCIAL AND CULTURAL VALUES**

It is generally accepted by a majority of people, both male and female, that the women's role is in the home. Women are considered stupid and ignorant when it comes to matters of any real importance. When they are constantly being told that they are not intelligent enough to participate in politics it is no wonder that they do not believe in themselves. Women are generally encouraged to believe that politics is much to complicate for them to understand and so it is best left to men. They should stay at home, cooking and cleaning and having children. Women who do have a slight inclination to achieve something in life might be encouraged to be a nurse, midwife or school teacher as these are jobs in their league.

### **5. LACK OF EDUCATION AND AWARENESS**

Lack of education and awareness is second reason for constraints of women participation in politics. Boys are encouraged to attend school whereas girls are of more use in the home. This denial of a basic education means that the majority of women do not realize that they are not receiving their full rights. It is difficult to teach them when they cannot read and difficult for them to stand up for themselves when they cannot write.

### **6. PATRIARCHAL VALUES AND NORMS**

The main reason for low political participation of women in politics is the patriarchal structure of society. According to our traditions and culture the participation of women in politics and the public eye is against the generally accepted role of women. The patriarchal values have subjugated and distempered women.

### **7. CRIMINALIZATION**

Criminalization in politics has increased rapidly in recent years. Mafia, money, manipulation and muscle power have played dominant roles in South Asia Politics. Because of this scenario it is very difficult to motivate and encourage women to come forward and take part in this „dirty politics“. Women feel that it is not their territory, that men are better players than them. This view is simply not true. Women can be just as good, if not better when it comes to these dealings.

## 8. LACK OF FAMILY SUPPORT

Family support can either prevent or promote women from participating in politics. Women who come from families with a strong political history will often be encouraged to continue the work of past relatives. Women generally need to receive permission from their husbands or fathers in order to embark on a political career. Without this permission and support it would very difficult for women to become a successful politician. This is not only because of the financial help, which is so often required, but also for moral encouragement.

## 9. LACK OF INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

Though there are many institutions established for the overall development of women there is a lack of institutional mechanism, which can encourage and support women to take part in elections. There are many women's organizations related to different political parties but they have not been able to moral and financial support to women who are interested to becoming involved in politics.

**Economic dependency:** Funds are required in order to embark upon a political career, the majority of women are financially dependent upon their husbands or fathers. Women without money do not have the freedom to make their own decisions and do as they want. A women who wants to become involved in politics but has no funds must have the support of her family. This can be difficult to obtain because of the cultural way of thinking.

## 10. STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN POLITICS

In order to encourage more women to participate in politics the following activities are essential:

- The value system prevalent in politics has to be changed, which currently exist within the male dominated system. Women's value includes peace, tolerance, inclusiveness and respect for democracy and the world badly need those values now.
- Leadership development programs for women would promote their confidence and teach them that they are capable of occupying political positions. The public relations and management skill of women could also be developed in these programs. Training would encourage them to take part in politics as well as raising the political consciousness among women.

There is a great need for transformative politics, which means transforming the "money and muscle" dominance into something more people's centered and transparent. It means doing away with corruption and aiming for accountability. Clean elections need to be brought about along with an election system that is favorable for women's political empowerment.

- Pressure groups and support groups should be formed throughout the country to work as lobbying groups in conjunction with political parties. Their aims should be to increase the political participation of women at various levels of the power structure and to support women eager to take part in politics.
- There should be increase in the number of seats reserved for women at all levels of the political power structure not only at higher level.
- There should be strict implementation of the legal provisions related to election expenditures, violence, voter identification and corrupt practices. Women must be given the opportunity to become economically independent so that they are able to make their own decisions without needing the permission of their husbands or fathers.
- There is a great need to change all the discriminatory laws related to women. There is also a need to set up foundation for women in politics at the national level which should undertake training, networking, mobilization of women voters and also monitoring of the performance of elected candidates.
- The media have been playing a negative role by projecting stereotype roles for women. There is a great need to change the attitude of the media through various gender sensitive-training programs. Above all to increase the participation of women in politics the women reservation bill must get its approval in both the houses of parliament.

All ready this bill got its approval in Rajya Sabha and supposed to get approval in Lok Sabha too. The role of the political parties is very important for increasing women's political participation. It has been observed that women are not being encouraged by the political parties. All the political parties should reserved at least 30-40 percent of their positions for women in all parts of the party hierarchy, especially at the decision making level.

## 11. CONCLUSION

In conclusion we can say that there is greater need to increase the participation of Women in Politics. It will be impossible to create any change to policies without increasing the representation of women in the various levels of the political

power structure. Women need to learn about politics, its impacts and its positive consequences. They must understand the importance of their vote. Everyone must realize that women are essential parts of a political system that is free from corruption and exploitation. The voices of women strengthen democracy and will lead to a peaceful, developed and equal society. Political parties should encourage more women to enter into politics. They should not be used only for votes but also encourage them to bring change in the political system through their participation.

## **CONFLICT OF INTERESTS**

None.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

None.

## **REFERENCES**

- Empowerment of Women; through Political Participation by Sinha, Niroj in 2007, Viking Publishers.  
Empowerment of women in India, by Subhas C. Parida, Sasmita, Northern Book centre Publishers.  
Towards Equality – the Unfinished Agenda – Status of Women in India, 2001 by Dr. Sarala Gopalan  
Political Empowerment, by Snehalata, 2002, Raj Publications.  
Quoted in C.R Jain “Women Parliamentarians in India” – Surjeet Publications, Bombay, 1991.  
Karl-Marilee, “Paths to Empowerment: women and Political participation” Editorial women in action (Philippines Journal) 1994.  
Towards Equality – Reports of the committee on the status of women in India, Government of India, Department of Social Welfare, Ministry of Education, and Social Welfare, New Delhi, 2004.