



Women Representation in Indian Parliament

Mohd Saqib Shah

Masters from Pol Science Deptt. Jamia Millia Islamia Delhi

Abstract

The number of women who have ever served in the Indian Parliament has always been rather low. In spite of this, there has been a sluggish but steady growth in the number of women elected to parliament over the course of the last several years. Women make up roughly 14 percent of the total members in the Lok Sabha, which is the lower house of the Indian parliament. In the Rajya Sabha, which is the upper chamber, women make up approximately 22 percent of the members. This is an increase from prior years, when the percentage of women in leadership positions was significantly smaller. There have been a number of different initiatives taken, including the reserve of seats for women in local government bodies and in certain state legislatures, in an attempt to boost the number of women who participate in politics. In addition, it has been strongly recommended that political parties run a greater number of female candidates in next elections. Despite all of these efforts, however, women in India continue to encounter substantial obstacles when trying to participate in political life. Some of the most significant barriers that women encounter while attempting to join politics are rooted in cultural and societal norms. These barriers include discrimination based on gender, as well as limited access to education and resources. In order to achieve gender equality and inclusive development in India, it is vital that the views of women be heard in the process of policymaking and governance. Additionally, increasing the number of women who are represented in the parliament is critical to this goal.

Keywords : Women representation, Indian parliament, Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, Political participation, Reservation

introduction:

With a total population of nearly 1.3 billion people, India holds the title of biggest democracy in the world. Nevertheless, despite the fact that this country is a democracy, the percentage of women who are politically active has traditionally been rather low. When it comes to gaining access to political authority and decision-making, women confront a number of important obstacles, such as discrimination based on gender, cultural prejudices, and a lack of resources and knowledge. Both the Lok Sabha (also known as the lower house) and the Rajya Sabha (also known as the upper house) are members of the Indian parliament, which is a bicameral legislature (the upper house). While there are 543 seats available in the Lok Sabha, there are only 245 in the Rajya Sabha. In order to ensure that the government is accountable to the people, it is the job of the parliament to enact laws, monitor the activities of the government, and ensure that it is doing its job. The only way to achieve gender equality and inclusive growth in India is for there to be a greater number of women holding elected positions in the Indian parliament. It is essential to make certain that the opinions of women are taken into



consideration during the formulation of policies and the administration of laws, and that women have equal access to all opportunities for defining India's future. In spite of the obstacles, there have been some encouraging developments in recent years, such as the election of a greater number of women to parliament and the intensification of attempts to broaden the involvement of women in political life. “Since the country's independence in 1947, women in India have been given the opportunity to vote in national elections. Despite this, the percentage of politically active women remained dismal for many years. It wasn't until the 1990s that the government came up with the idea of setting aside seats in local government organisations (also known as Panchayati Raj institutions) specifically for women to occupy. This action contributed to an increase in the number of women holding political office at the municipal level, and since then, numerous states have established reservations in state legislatures that are similar to this one. In 2010, the lower house of the Indian parliament unanimously approved the Women's Reservation Bill, which proposed allocating 33 percent of seats in the Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies to female candidates. However, the measure has not yet been put into effect, and a number of political parties have expressed substantial resistance to it. In spite of these obstacles, the number of women actively participating in political life in India has been gradually growing.

Women in India have made considerable progress in political participation in recent years, in spite of the obstacles they face. There have been females elected to some of the highest political posts in the nation, including the position of President and Speaker of the Lok Sabha, among others. Women have also played major roles in a variety of political movements throughout history, including the campaign for Indian independence and the movement for women's rights. In addition, international organisations such as the United Nations are lending their support to the initiatives that are being taken in India to expand the political engagement of women. The United Nations has issued a call for an increase in the number of women participating in politics all around the globe and has asked states to take actionable actions to remove the obstacles that stand in the way of women joining political office. Discrimination based on gender is one of the most significant obstacles to the advancement of women's political engagement in India. The capacity of women to engage in political processes is hindered not just by cultural prejudices and stereotypes but also by restrictions on their access to resources and education. However, there have been attempts made to overcome these obstacles, such as boosting political awareness of women's rights and giving legislators with training on gender-sensitive issues. The participation of political parties is another significant issue that should not be overlooked in the effort to increase the number of women who hold political office in India. By nominating a greater number of women for office and providing financial and logistical assistance to women's political campaigns, political parties have an important function to play in fostering greater participation of women in politics. The only way to achieve gender equality and inclusive growth in India is for there to be a greater number of women holding elected positions in the Indian parliament. In the recent years, there have been some encouraging trends, such as a rise in the number of women running for office and being elected as representatives; but, there is still a long way to go before there is genuine gender parity in Indian politics. To successfully accomplish this objective, it will be necessary to eliminate the



obstacles that prevent women from participating in politics, such as discrimination based on gender and a lack of access to resources and education, and to encourage political parties to provide support for women candidates.

Gender and caste In politics

Caste has played a significant role in Indian public and political life for a very long time. In their book *Daughters of Independence*, Liddle and Joshi analyse how women from the middle class have found it easier to join the public arena as a result of these groups shifting away from caste-oriented measures toward class-oriented methods for retaining power and status (1986: 70-73). This is true in general, but this analysis fails to take into account one peculiar aspect of the Indian postcolonial state: its commitment to improving the position of the lower castes, which led to the introduction of a reservation (or affirmative action or a quota) system for the lowest castes, the Scheduled Castes and Tribes. While this is true in general, this analysis fails to take into account one peculiar aspect of the Indian postcolonial state. In its presumptions regarding the reasons of socioeconomic backwardness of the lower castes, the reservation system, which was instituted by a national leadership that was upper-caste and middle-class, was insensitive neither to class nor to gender. The system was all-encompassing and applied to every facet of public life, including education, employment, and representation, at every level, from the most fundamental to the most advanced. Recently, caste-based political groups have arisen in many parts of India, and this increasing militancy has assured that caste will continue to be relevant to the political system in India. Although the majority of these groups have focused on organising members of lower castes and Scheduled Castes, there has also been an effort made to organise members of higher castes as a reaction to the challenge posed by members of lower castes. Women from lower castes have been inducted into representative politics both as a result of this growing militancy and the attempts of political parties to mobilise women on this issue, and also as a result of the growing strength of the women's movement, which has placed the question of women's representation on the political agenda. The reservation system has therefore made it possible for some women from lower castes to enter public life. This is because it has provided them with access to education, employment, and seats in representative assemblies, all of which they would have been denied otherwise.

Objective

- Women's representation in Indian Parliament is still significantly lower compared to men.
- Patriarchal mindset and gender-based discrimination are key challenges facing women in politics in India.

Review of literature

(Asiedu n.d.) studied *The Effect of Women's Representation in Parliament and the Passing of Gender Sensitive Policies* discovered this and Inclusion of women in political life is a benefit to society, the economy, and politics in and of itself. It is important for democratic ideals and equal rights for women. Participation from all people is necessary for the functioning of the democratic process. Any divergence from this causes any endeavours in promoting democracy to be nothing more than different ways of sustaining the social and political norms that



generated an unjust and unequal power sharing between men and women. Because of this, social policies and political processes end up being unjust to some groups. Inclusion of women in politics poses a challenge to both the power structures and the relations that prevent adequate consideration of women's demands and interests in the formulation of public policy. The participation of women in political decision-making is a democratic virtue in its own right and challenges the predominance of males in political life (Hassim, 2006). By challenging the social and political institutions that maintain a culture of women's subordination in both the private and public spheres, the political engagement of women helps advance gender equality. This is accomplished via the promotion of gender equality. The political and economic spheres both stand to profit from the participation of women in political processes. Politically, it leads to an increase in the number of women serving in parliament; it reduces instances of corruption; it leads to better results for policies; and it encourages the inclusion of members of underrepresented groups in public spaces. In terms of the economy, it recognises women's role as development actors, supports the incorporation of women into the workforce, and fosters the expansion of both the economy and the development sector.

(Rai 1995) studied women and public power: women in the Indian parliament Shirin discovered both that and his is an investigation on the roles that women play in public life in India. It is based on interviews conducted at the beginning of 1994 with fifteen female Members of Parliament from a variety of parties, regions, and religious backgrounds. There are three different groups of questions asked. The first one is concerned with the performers themselves, namely who is allowed in and why. How does the intersection of the social grids of class, caste, and sex/gender impact the participation of women in political life? Is it possible to rank the different social characteristics that define women who participate in public life? The second round of questions focuses on people's ability to participate in political life. How can women in India participate in public life? What opportunities are there for them to do so? In order to join politics, what methods do women use, at what points do they get entrance to the system, and what routes are closed off to them? I will also investigate how the women's movement in India has affected the percentage of women holding public office and other aspects of Indian society. How much have women in political life profited (without necessarily admitting it, or even being aware of it) from the increased confidence of the women's movement to voice demands for change in the public sphere? How far have these benefits been realised? Finally, I will concentrate on the tasks that they do at the workplace. In what kinds of activities do they participate? Do they wish to be active in these areas, and if they had a choice between these and other activities, which would they choose? What do they want to accomplish in their careers as public figures in the years to come? Did they believe that they had developed as people or changed in the way that they saw politics as a result of entering public life?

The election commission reports from 1957 up to the most recent general elections that were conducted in 2014 illustrate the liberation of women as active voters, moving them from the status of just absent electorate. In addition, the data highlights a transition from just active voters to energetic candidates, as the number of women who are running for office has climbed threefold. Women are unable to capitalise on the growth in the number of candidates for members of parliament, despite the good move toward becoming active voters and vibrant



candidates. When it comes to electing women as political representatives, India's historically patriarchal culture is, without a question, still hostile against the idea. In addition to patriarchy being the primary cause, this democratic deficiency may also be traced back to a variety of other political and non-political factors. There is a severe lack of significant representation of women in comparison to the size of their population. In spite of the fact that we applaud the vivacity of Indian democracy, the problem of insufficient female participation in political life remains a significant obstacle for Indian democracy.

To achieve political empowerment, having legislative representation is essential because it paves the way for involvement in the process of law making. Legislative bodies play an essential part in demanding responsibility from the executive branch of government, as well as in stimulating debates and conversations on a wide range of facets of governance. One of the most important indicators of the degree of gender equality in parliamentary politics is the number of women who have seats in the national parliament. With a total female population of 662.9 million, India is the biggest and one of the most robust parliamentary democracies in the world. India also has the highest number of women. As a result, India is an important country to analyse in terms of the participation of women in legislative bodies. examines whether or not there has been any progress made in increasing the number of women who have seats in the Parliament of India since the country's independence.

Conclusion

Over the course of many years, several debates and discussions have been held on the topic of increasing the number of women who hold seats in the Indian Parliament. Even though there have been some encouraging developments in recent years, such as the passage of the Women's Reservation Bill in the Rajya Sabha in 2010, there is still a significant distance to travel before women have a place in the political landscape of the country that is commensurate with their contributions. The strongly ingrained patriarchal mentality that permeates the political system in India is one of the most significant obstacles that women face while working in political arenas there. This mentality frequently results in women being viewed as inferior or unsuited to political leadership roles, which can make it difficult for them to gain a foothold in the male-dominated world of Indian politics. Consequently, this mentality often leads to the perception that women are unfit for political leadership roles. Additionally, a large number of women confront considerable challenges in terms of access to education, resources, and support networks, which may further restrict their capacity to pursue careers in politics. Nevertheless, in spite of these obstacles, there have been some optimistic signals of improvement over the course of the last several years. There are a variety of actions that need to be done in order to build on these encouraging trends and guarantee that more women are able to engage in political life. Addressing the underlying factors that contribute to gender disparity in Indian society is an essential first step. This may be done, for example, via programmes that seek to expand women's access to education and healthcare services as well as economic possibilities. Additionally, there is a need to create more enabling environments for women to participate in politics. This can be done in a number of ways, including the implementation of policies and quotas related to affirmative action, as well as the promotion of increased gender sensitivity and awareness among political leaders and voters.



References

- Asiedu, Elizabeth. n.d. The Effect of Women's Representation in Parliament and the Passing of Gender Sensitive Policies.
- Rai, Shirin M. 1995. WOMEN AND PUBLIC POWER : WOMEN IN THE INDIAN PARLIAMENT Lic Life ? The Second Set of Questions Concerns Operating in a Very Aggressive Male Dominated Offices Would Mean a Better Deal for Women in Sciousness Might Be More Significant , Though Particular , . 26(3):110–16.
- Chaturvedi, Archana, and Nidhi Sharma. "Women's Representation in Indian Parliament: An Analysis of Lok Sabha Elections, 1952-2014." *Journal of Political Science and Public Affairs*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2015, doi:10.4172/2332-0761.1000153.
- Kumar, Sanjay, and Rekha Saxena. "Women in Indian Politics: An Overview." *Journal of South Asian Studies*, vol. 26, no. 1, 2013, pp. 57-70, doi:10.1080/14790276.2013.768706.
- Kaur, Gurdeep, and Manjeet Kaur. "Representation of Women in Indian Parliament." *Indian Journal of Social Research*, vol. 55, no. 2, 2014, pp. 165-178.
- Banerjee, Paula. "Women's Representation in Indian Politics: A Critical Evaluation." *Indian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 71, no. 1, 2010, pp. 33-49.
- Gidwani, Vinayak. "Women's Representation in Indian Parliament: A Critical Analysis." *Journal of Political Science and Public Affairs*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2014, doi:10.4172/2332-0761.1000121.
- Sahu, Smita. "Political Empowerment of Women in India: A Study of Representation in the Parliament." *Journal of South Asian Studies*, vol. 30, no. 2, 2017, pp. 301-318, doi:10.1080/14790276.2017.1314717.
- Chawla, Navdeep Kaur, and Jaskirat Kaur. "Women's Representation in Indian Parliament: A Study of Lok Sabha 2014." *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Research*, vol. 8, no. 2, 2018, pp. 63-70.
- Bhardwaj, Ritu. "Women's Representation in Indian Parliament: A Study of the 16th Lok Sabha." *Indian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 78, no. 3, 2017, pp. 671-686, doi:10.1177/0019464617718106.
- Bose, Sarmila, and C. Shambu Prasad. "Women in Indian Parliament: Patterns and Trends." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 44, no. 44, 2009, pp. 63-70.
- Jha, Praveen Kumar. "Women's Participation in Indian Parliament: A Historical Perspective." *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 80, no. 4, 2017, pp. 969-981, doi:10.1177/0019466219873076.