

## **WOMEN REPRESENTATION IN INDIAN POLITICAL SCENARIO**

**D. S. Thorat**

Assistant Professor (Political Science),  
Vijaysinh Mohite Patil Mahavidyalaya, Natepute.

### **Abstract:**

The women reservation bill introduced in the year 1996 proposes to reserve 33% of seats in Parliamentary and state assembly. Women reservation Bill has been introduced much earlier in several countries. Women population is almost half of total population in India. Their contribution to the social and economic development of societies is also more than half as compared to that of men by virtue of their dual roles in the productive and reproductive spheres. Women representation in India Political Scenario is a meager 10.6 % which is less compared to 20.4 globally. The present paper highlights women representation in Indian Politics.

**Key words:** India, Politics, Political Parties, Reservation, Women.

### **INTRODUCTION:**

The women reservation bill was introduced in the year 1996 by the Deve Gowda government. It required extra ordinary effort as failed to pass each and every time. It proposes to reserve 33% of seats in Parliamentary and state assembly. Women reservation Bill has been introduced much earlier in several countries. Women population is almost half of total population in India. Their contribution to the social and economic development of societies is also more than half as compared to that of men by virtue of their dual roles in the productive and reproductive spheres. Their participation in formal political structures and processes, where decisions regarding the use of societal resources generated by both men and women are made are insignificant. Presently, women's representation in legislatures around the world is 15 percent. The commitment of the international community to gender equality and to the bridging the gender gap in the formal political arena, reinforced by the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform of Action, there are only twelve countries where women hold 33% or more seats in the parliaments (UNDP Report, 2005).

Women constitute 10.6 percent of members of Parliament in India today, while globally this number is double, at 20.4 percent. The severe political underrepresentation of women has lead to a surge in the number of countries willing to experiment with various forms of women's reservations. Global experimentation with different forms of women's reservation is both inspirational and an early warning for India. It is important improve the design and

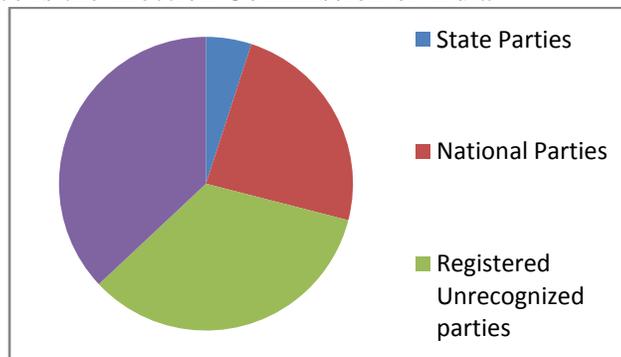
implementation of quotas for women, which would result in better female representation in Indian politics.

**Women representation in Indian Political Parties:**

An analysis of Election Commission of India (ECI) data highlights that in the outgoing 15th Lok Sabha, only 59 of the 543 seats were occupied by women. This is half the international average of 21 percent female representatives in Parliaments across the world. Even in terms of the number of candidates who contested elections, the scales were tilted vastly against women. Of the 8070, only 556 or 6.9 percent were women. Poignantly, as figure 3 shows, only 29 percent of these women candidates were ticket-holders of national or state political parties. While 34 percent of the female candidates belonged to Registered Unrecognized parties, 37 percent ran as independents.

Figure Female Candidates by Party in 2009 elections

Note: Data Source is the Election Commission of India

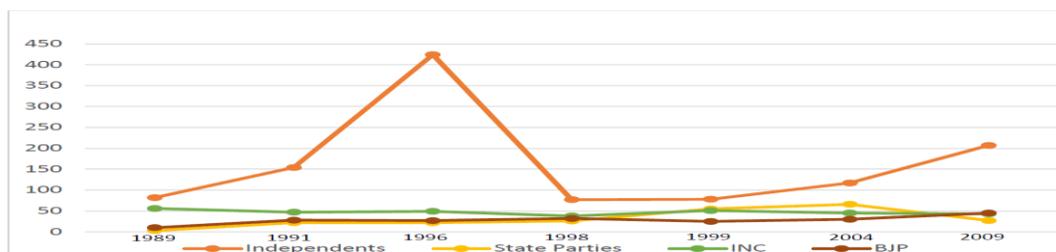


State Parties	5
National Parties	24
Registered Unrecognized parties	34
Independents	37

Data Source: Election Commission of India

This trend for woman candidates is being there since 1989. As figure below shows, there have been more women who run as independents than those who run as a part of a political party traditionally.

Figure 4: Women Candidates by Political Party, 1989-2009



Note: Data source is the Election Commission of India

The data on independent candidates point to another trend –women independents have increased at a greater rate than independents in general. Between 1991 and 1996 for instance, there was a spike in the participation of both total independents and women independents, but while the total increased by 93 percent, women independents increased by 175 percent. Similarly, between every subsequent election, the growth in women independents has been larger than independents in general. The 1998 elections saw a sharp decline in the number of independent candidates.

Now we study the role of political parties in fielding women candidates. The number of women ticketholders from state parties fell sharply from 66 in 2004, to 27 in 2009. For national parties, the number of women candidates actually increased from 110 to 134, but nearly 60 percent of this increase is attributed to the BJP alone. While the Congress’ number of women candidates reduced marginally, the BJP fielded 50 percent more women than it did in 2004. This rapid increase by the BJP within two election cycles helped it to catch up and overtake the Congress in the 15th Lok Sabha election. BJP, Congress or other political party are not fielding enough women candidates for women representatives. Studying the disaggregated data by political parties, for the 2009 elections, we note in Table 1 that there are critical variations, but all parties are fielding significantly less than the benchmark of 33 percent.

<b>Party</b>	<b>No. of total candidates</b>	<b>No. of Women Candidates</b>	<b>No. of Women Winner</b>	<b>Women as a % of total candidates</b>	<b>%of Women Candidates that won</b>
ATC	27	5	4	18.52	80
NCP	68	7	2	10.29	28.57
BJP	433	44	13	10.16	29.55
INC	440	43	23	9.77	53.49
DMK	22	2	1	9.09	50
AIADMK	23	2	0	8.7	0
JDU	27	2	2	7.41	100
CPI (M)	82	6	1	7.32	16.67
CPI	56	4	0	7.14	0
TDP	31	2	0	6.45	0
SP	95	6	4	6.32	66.67
BSP	500	28	4	5.6	14.29
RJD	44	2	0	4.55	
SHIVSENA	22	1	1	4.55	100
BJD	18	0		0	
JDS	21	0		0	
INDEPENDENT	3831	207	0	5.4	0

The party with the highest representation of women was the All India Trinamool Congress (AITC), with 18.5 percent women candidates compared to the ratio. The AITC,

---

however is a clear outlier, and the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) is a distant second, with only 10.3 percent female ticket holders. The BJP and the Congress ranked third and fourth respectively, with only 10.16 percent and 9.77 percent of their 425-plus candidates being women. This collective failure of political parties to field a critical mass of female candidates is rather worrying because it highlights the absence of a huge chunk of women leaders. Indian Political arena has collectively failed to nurture women leaders, leaving it unprepared should quotas in Parliament be legislated. In such a context, even if the Bill were to pass, its impact would be dubious.

### **Lack of preparedness of Indian Political Parties**

Several Indian political parties are inclined to increase women participation among their rank and file. According to the Constitution of the INC, 33 percent of the seats in different Committees, 33 percent of members of the Executive Committees, and 33 percent of the seats for the All India Congress Committee (AICC) are to be reserved for women. Rule 9 of the Trinamool Congress's constitution reserves 33 percent of seats in different committees for women. Even the Aam Aadmi Party has a ruling that 7 of the 30 members in its highest executive body be women. The challenge among Indian political parties is that these impressive constitutional rules are seldom followed. In the case of the INC, only 5 of the 42 members of the party's executive body, the CWC, are women. Similarly, 6 of the 57 AICC members are women and only 4 of the 14 members of their Election Committee are women. Moreover, 30 (of 35) state screening committees for elections don't have a single woman. Statistics for Trinamool Congress and AAP are just as discouraging. Within the Trinamool, none of the 30 Vice Presidents are women; and only 2 out of the 8 General Secretaries, and 1 out of 14 Secretaries, are women. TMC has 10 frontal organizations in West Bengal, of which only one the Trinamool Mahila Congress is led by a woman. The AAP has 24-member National Executive, of which only two are women. This is significantly less than the 25 percent benchmark stated in their constitution. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) has strongly censured both the BJP and the Congress for their failure to pass the Women's Reservation Bill in Parliament, stating that "denying women their place in elected policy making institutions, is a subversion of democracy." However the CPI (M) itself has failed to adequately represent women in the party's top leadership positions. There is only one woman in the 12-member political bureau and only 11 out of the 74 Central Committee members are women. The BJP's experiment with internal party quotas has been more successful. In 2007, the party amended its constitution to provide 33 percent reservation for women, following the recommendations of a Committee led by Sushma Swaraj and it was followed with another amendment in 2010 that increased the number of women in cadre posts. The powers of the BJP Mahila Morcha are clearly defined. At the national level, the National President of the Mahila Morcha serves as an ex-officio member of the Central Election Committee, which is responsible for making the final selection of candidates for the State Legislatures and Parliament, as well as administering election campaigns. Similarly, at the statelevel, the President of the State Mahila Morcha serves on the State Election Committees. As a consequence of these amendments within the BJP, 26 of the 77 members – or 33.7 percent – of the BJP's National Executive are women leaders. Women comprise 26 percent of BJP national office bearers, which is higher than all other political parties in India. Some statistics within the

BJP, however still raise concern. For instance, only 2 of the 19 members of the Central Election Committee are women (one of who is the President of the Mahila Morcha). Out of the 12-member Parliamentary Board, there is only one woman representative. Similarly, in the party's various working groups, women are largely relegated to the Mahila Morcha, with no female representation on the Economic, Agriculture, Security, and Legal groups, and only marginal representation in others areas. In general then, most political parties in India flout the rules of their own constitutions. The absence of women in party leadership positions is indicative of an internal party infrastructure that is unsupportive of women's political participation. It is apparent that women are confronting both explicit and implicit barriers when trying to reach higher positions within parties. Political parties blame each other for the fate of the Women's Reservation Bill in India, but they abdicate their own responsibilities in ensuring a critical mass of women party workers and leaders within their party machinery. The BJP gave less than 11 per cent of their tickets to women in Lok Sabha elections. Indian political parties must realize their critical role as gatekeepers in women's political participation. Each party has to evolve internally to facilitate a greater culture of inclusiveness and operational democracy.

The Election Commission of India too can play a pivotal role by holding parties accountable for their stated rules and promises in their Constitutions and manifestos. The Women's Reservation Bill may or may not pass in India. However, it shouldn't stop political parties from making their internal structures more conducive for women and introducing quotas in their own candidate lists. Such fundamental reforms at the party level will serve as necessary and strategic complements to the Women's Reservation Bill. These party measures will ensure that the enactment of such a Bill will not result in mere tokenism. But even in the event that the Bill continues to be derailed, internal reforms within political parties will have long run effects in improving the true political representation of a population of which women comprise a significant share.

### **Conclusion:**

Women are no longer lagging behind men in any field. Potential of women have not been fully utilized even after fifty years of independence. So it is essential to harness the growth of women in the political field for all round development women society and development of nation altogether.

### **References:**

1. S.Lal, 2010, Women in Indian Politics, Kunal Books, New Delhi.
2. Singh Preeti, 2010, Women and Politics worldwide, Axis publications, New Delhi.

### **Web :**

1. Election Commission of India: Statistical Reports 1989-2009, Viewed on 24 April 2014. [http://eci.nic.in/eci\\_main1/ElectionStatistics.aspx](http://eci.nic.in/eci_main1/ElectionStatistics.aspx)
2. Indian National Congress (2010): Constitution and Rules of the Indian National Congress, Viewed on 24 April 2014 <http://inc.in/documents/constitution.pdf>

- 
3. All India Trinamool Congress: Constitution, Viewed on 24 April 2014.  
<https://aitmc.org/partycons.php>
  4. Aam Admi Party: Our Constitution, Viewed on 24 April 2014.  
<http://www.aamaadmiparty.org/ourconstitution>
  5. Indian National Congress: Organisation, Viewed on 24 April 2014.  
<http://www.inc.in/organization>
  6. All India Trinamool Congress: Office Bearers, Viewed on 24 April 2014.  
[https://www.aitmc.org/office\\_bearers.php](https://www.aitmc.org/office_bearers.php)
  7. Communist Party of India (Marxist): In Defence of Women's Rights, Viewed on 24 April 2014.  
<http://cpim.org/elections-2014/election-issues/defence-women%E2%80%99s-rights>
  8. Communist Party of India (Marxist): Leadership, Viewed on 24 April 2014.  
<http://www.cpim.org/leadership>
  9. Bhartiya Janata Party: Organisation, Viewed on 24 April 2014.  
<http://www.bjp.org/organisation>
  10. Vyas, Neena (2007): "BJP for 33% reservation for women in party," 23 September, The Hindu  
<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/bjp-for-33-reservation-for-women-in-party/article1916300.ece>
  11. [hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-report-2005](http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-report-2005)