

# WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS



राज्यसभा  
लोकसभा

विधान परिषद

विधानसभा

जिल्हा परिषद

महानगरपालिका

नगरपालिका

ग्रामपंचायत



Spacial Edition 2025

**Mahila Vishwa Visheshank - 2025**

# **Women's Participation in Politics**



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**Website : www.streadhyayan.org**

**(For Private Circulation only)**

## **Mahila Vishwa Visheshank - 2025**

### **Women's Participation in Politics**

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- **Publication : 10 November 2025**
- **Publisher**  
**Drishti Stree Adhyayan Prabodhan Kendra**  
1360, Shukrawar Peth, Bharat Bhavan  
Behind Saraswati Mandir Highschool,  
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- **Printed At**  
Sanwad Tradeprints  
595, Shaniwar Peth, Pune 411030 (Maharashtra)  
Mob. : 9422321229
- **Price : Rs. 100/- Only**
- **ISBN : 978-93-94669-05-5**

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# Editorial....

The long-standing issue of 'Women's participation in politics', which has been on the minds of many *Drishti* activists, is finally taking shape in the form of this special issue, following the unanimous approval of the Nari Vandan Act by the Lok Sabha.

From ancient times, women's inner strength has driven them to participate in all spheres of life. Depending on the circumstances and the times, their level of participation may have fluctuated, but that strength has remained constant throughout. Even a global overview confirms this.

A woman's mindset—her inclusive outlook, her central role in the family and her concern for the well-being of her surroundings—are her inherent qualities. These make her a natural participant in all fields.

In the context of Indian ideology, this becomes even more apparent. Whether for her own benefit, her family's, or for societal transformation, she has always stepped forward. Whatever responsibility she undertakes, she fulfills it based on these very principles. This same chain includes her participation as a ruler or political leader.

Since ancient times, many queens in India have skillfully governed kingdoms. During the freedom struggle, too, women played an active role in politics. Even during colonial rule, they were part of political representation. We also know that 15 women participated in drafting the Constitution of independent India — a fact that may be unique globally.

On the international stage, Indian women like Hansa Mehta and Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit have represented India with distinction.

The right to elect representatives is granted by a country's constitution to its citizens. In India, this right was given to all citizens (men and women aged 18 and above) right from the first election after independence. Interestingly, women in India had already begun fighting for this right before independence, whereas in many so-called “developed” nations, women had to fight long and hard for this fundamental right.

Given this right to vote and since women constitute about 50% of the population, their presence as voters must be taken seriously—something that has been recognized globally. It has also been observed that in developed countries, women's votes significantly influence political representation.

As literacy levels among Indian women increased and their participation in various sectors grew, their voting turnout also began to rise. In fact, in some regions, the percentage of women voters has now exceeded that of men. This issue explores this in more detail.

This special edition includes articles by experienced individuals from the world of electoral politics. It also presents the actual text of the Women's Reservation Bill and its analysis. Before the Lok Sabha passed the reservation bill, the reservation of women in local self-governance

bodies had already been implemented and experienced across the country. This, too, is covered in the issue.

We have also made an attempt to present a brief overview—supported by some data—of how electoral politics looks from a woman’s perspective.

We warmly welcome your feedback and suggestions. Sincere thanks to all the writers, printers, and readers! Special thanks also to Savita Kajarekar for her precise and fluent translation of the articles.

**Dr. Anjali Deshpande**  
(The Secretary)



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# The Women leaders in India

## Suneela Sovani

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All India Prachar Pramukh of Rashtra Sevika Samiti



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‘Women leading the Indian states’ - If we wish to study this topic right from ancient times, then we have to consider the fact that today’s attitude towards the state, nation, society, culture, law etc. has been acquired mostly from the western way of life which did not exist in ancient times. There was no gender relativity in the evaluation of fame and infamy. The criteria for measuring achievements were also completely different, they were based on integrated life philosophy and religious life system.

In the initial period, the Supreme Brahma, the divine and conscious, was alone. According to her wish to become many, this power was divided into two parts, one part was female (prakriti) and the other part was male. No one was inferior or superior. One became two. The many that were formed from them, started expressing themselves through different sentiments, colors, sounds, shapes. All were related to each other, all complementary to each other...! That is why the mention of men or women rulers of ancient times is made very casually. If seen in the context of mantras, 36 hymns of women have been part of the Vedas. Similarly, information about women who were leading in various fields is also available. These include warrior women like Mudgalani, Vishpala etc. However, it is not known whether they were rulers or commanders themselves. But this Rishika Vakbhrini who introduces her work and ownership to the entire human race is in the 125th hymn of the tenth Mandal of the Rigveda, the Adi Veda. She says, ‘I am the presiding deity of this world, the owner of the world, the creator, the protector, the one who moves everywhere.’ “My glory is even greater than heaven.” This entire hymn is sufficient to underline the hollowness of all other places of power and prove the importance and power of the Shakti (woman) element.

The description of rulers, social life, places of power, found in the Shruti period i.e. Vedas, Upanishads, Brahmanas, Aranyakas is without any discrimination. Since the period is very ancient, it is impossible to get visual evidence like inscriptions. It can be obtained only through oral tradition and texts.

After this period there are many references to women who ruled during the period of Ramayana, Mahabharata and Puranas. This also gives an idea of the viewpoint.

A reference found in Valmiki Ramayana (translation, Geeta Press Gorakhpur) is like this - Shri Ram will not be crowned but he has been ordered to live in the forest for 14 years. When this news reaches Rajguru Vasishtha, he says to Kaikeyi,

नगन्तव्यं वनं (7-23-24) देव्या सीतया शीलवर्जिते।

अनुष्ठास्यत रामस्य सीता प्रकृतमासनम् '॥23॥

(Balakand Sarg 27-23-24) O characterless wicked woman, Sita will not go to the forest. Sita will sit on the throne which is actually the right of Ram.

There is another incident of this type in Ramayana. After killing Vali, brave Hanuman appeals to Vali's wife Tara as the heir to the kingdom, 'You take the position of the king, you are fully capable to shoulder this responsibility.' He says, 'O virtuous woman, this kingdom of all the monkeys along with son Angad will be protected only because of you. Therefore, you become the mistress of this kingdom.' (Kishkindha - 21-8)

Both of them declined the invitation regarding taking the throne. It was their own decision. Sita had herself decided to go to the forest with Ram, Sita remained firm on her decision and went to the forest. Tara also declined Hanuman's invitation and Angad was crowned. Both these examples are unique. Both the inviters were very great and respectable, their words had great value. Thus, it is clear that Sita and Tara were capable of looking after the important kingdoms like Ayodhya and Kishkindha, that is why such great people made such a proposal. There are many references to women rulers in Indian mythology. But it is difficult to see these stories as facts from the point of view of historical reference sources, however, the history of fact-based dynasties is also obtained from the Puranas. References change according to the period of creation. Despite this, all historians confirm the statement of Chinese traveller Huen An Sang on the basis of other evidences. His texts mention the kingdoms run by women rulers in the eastern and western regions of the Himalayas. There was a tradition of women rulers in the Garhwal region and that region was known by the name of 'Suvarnagotra Desh'. In his Brihat Sanhita Varahamihir has also given information about women-run kingdoms in the Northwest border province. Apart from some such references, not much information is available today about women kingdoms. On the basis of historical sources like stone inscriptions, copper plates (tamrapat), coins, architecture, objects, utensils, paintings, crafts, earthen structures found in excavations, documents etc., evidence of the personality and achievements of women rulers is found in the context of queens of the Satvahani Empire from Maharani Naganika onwards. Maharani Naganika ruled the state. She issued coins in her name. She trumpeted her empire by carving stone inscriptions describing the glory of the kingdom on the trade route. This happened many years before the beginning of the Christian century. After Maharani Naganika, many queens have influenced the world with their achievements through out India and have become an inspiration for the society.

Nagnaika ruled over entire South India. In the north of India, there were many cruel attacks from Shak-Hun and many others. At that time, taking over the charge of the state in South India and continuously waving the flag of victory, Gautami was raising a powerful and valiant Satvahani

Emperor Satkarni, along with that she was also ruling the kingdom smoothly which was prospering in all aspects. This kingdom continued for about 450 years. In the fourth-fifth century, this kingdom rich in knowledge and grandeur was ruled by Vakataka Queen Prabhavati Gupta for continuous 13 years. Many temples were built. She kept the Shakta-Shaiva and other sects together.

Women rulers had already made their mark in the south, in the east, in the Bhaumakar dynasty of Orissa in the 8th-9th century, such a feat was perhaps the only one in the history of the world. Women ruled for 8 consecutive generations. Tribhuvan, Mahadevi, Prithvi Mahadevi, Gauri Mahadevi, such extraordinary women impressed the world with their magnificent deeds.

Around 1000 A.D., women of Suranga, Didda took over the reins of the kingdom in Kashmir. In Gujarat too, Mayanalla, a queen well known for her justice and queen Udaymati, the builder of the artistic Jal Mandir, ruled.

Abbakka mother and daughter, who kept the Portuguese at bay for 60 consecutive years, won many battles by making their policies very cleverly. Their kingdom was near Mangaluru. Even before this, in the 13th century, Queen Rudrambha defeated the powerful Yadavas and strengthened her hold on the kingdom. Queen Durgavati faced the powerful Akbar bravely and Chennamma of Keldi showed the courage to challenge Aurangzeb directly by giving shelter to Shivaputra Rajaram. The only woman ruler who defeated the British was Velu Nachiyar of Tamil Nadu. Rani Kittur Chennamma, Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi and many such self-respecting women rulers have set an example of bravery.

Mangammal of Tamil Nadu, Gauri Lakshmibai of Kerala, Sethu Parvatibai, all these brave women have shown their brilliant achievements. Similarly, the work of Rani Bhavani and Rani Rasmani of Bengal is also especially noteworthy.

This is the 300th birth anniversary year of Lokmata Ahilyadevi. One feels like bowing down again and again in front of her achievements. Her work in every field like industry, agriculture, environment, education is remarkable.

This series of Indian women rulers is very big. It is really noteworthy that there are references to ruling women in every province, in every group.

If we take a collective look at all the ruling women, we can understand that except for a few honourable exceptions, most of the queens got the power to rule suddenly or they mostly looked after the affairs of the state on behalf of their sons. But the surprising thing is that they had to accept the responsibility of running the state suddenly, despite this they were successful in creating their influence as a ruler. How would they have done such multi-faceted tasks like establishing civil order, keeping sovereignty uninterrupted, speeding up development works, driving away invaders, stopping internal treason, running an ideal judicial process?

The logical answer to this is very clear. In a special situation, they accepted the responsibility of running the state, however they must have definitely received all kinds of training. To understand the political skills required in the court, they would have closely supervised all these works like assistance in decision making process, experience of war, dispensation of justice and formulation

of administrative policies, otherwise how would it have been possible to create an impact through excellent administration? In the absence of any kind of prior experience, it was simply impossible to do such an eye-catching business. Consulting with the cabinet is one thing and taking decisions by depending on them is another thing. Looking at the decisions made by these successful women and their courage, it does not seem that they would have ruled by depending on others. Therefore, the positions of authority they adorned were not nominal but were those that proved the ability, yearning and courage of women.

There was another reason behind her ability to carry out the responsibilities of the royal post with great success, which we should pay attention to. That reason was the complete support she received from her subjects. In the context of any royal family, it is not seen that there was ever opposition to a woman with the thought that she would not be able to handle the affairs of the state. Rather, many ruling women performed the responsibilities of 'Lokmata' along with 'Rajmata' with utmost responsibility, so they were very popular in the society. At some places, Sardar-Mansabdars revolted, however, that opposition was not because the ruler was a 'woman'. Even when the enemy who had the view that if the ruler is a woman, it is easy to defeat her, was driven away, then the enemy also did not repeat such a mistake. The soldiers of the state felt proud to fight under the leadership of a warrior woman. After seeing the success and qualities of women associated with the royal power, such distinctions of king or queen disappear. Not a single ruling woman used femininity as a shield. They had only one vow - to hoist the flag of glory of their kingdom high. Such accomplished women were not the speciality of any particular region of the country, such women were found in all the regions of the country. They were from all the stratas of society, castes and creeds. They came from all castes and creeds of the society. From the beginning of known history, there have been marriages between different castes in royal families. There are examples of all types from child marriage to swayamvar. Among the ruling women, there were women who followed the sati tradition and there were also women who rejected this tradition. No woman who did not follow the sati tradition was rejected by the society. In such a vast country, all ruling women must have received good literacy education. Such references have been found in some studies.

Excluding few exception like Didda Rani, all the queens have given more importance to the richness of character. They worked with the thought that 'We are the representatives of the divine power, that is, we are running the kingdom for the welfare of the people'. Some did not directly rule the kingdom but they were queens, such queens also had the same approach. With this feeling, they were leading in public welfare works like donating villages for good cause, building lakes, building markets, establishing temples etc. Sometimes while adorning the royal position themselves, sometimes as the wife of the king, sometimes with the authority of the queen, women did historic work. This is worth remembering for ever.

Many queens have done such works very skillfully by taking along all religions and sects, keeping them together. This journey of Indian ruling women is a golden flow, an inspiring, conscious journey!



# Women and Politics (1947-1975)

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India has a rich history, hence we find many examples of women's participation in politics in the Vedic period, medieval period and even in the early British period. When we look at women's participation in politics after independence, we find its seeds in the history of these efficient administrators and brave women. In modern India, we are always proud of the fact that from the freedom struggle of 1857 till now we have got able leadership like the Rani of Jhansi. With the expansion of British rule, school education spread and women from ordinary households also started getting education. Women joined the Indian freedom struggle through Mahatma Gandhi's Satyagraha and due to the participation and leadership of women like Sister Nivedita, Madam Cama and later Sarojini Naidu. Women are also seen participating in related movements like women's participation in provincial governments and the demand for voting rights.

### ● **Women in the Constitution Committee -**

On 15th August 1947, India became independent. The beginning of Indian independence was visible only at the end of the Second World War. After the war, the British were ready to declare India an independent country. On 19 February 1946, Attlee indicated the establishment of the Indian Constitution Committee in Parliament. On 9 December 1946, 207 out of 296 members were present for the first meeting of the Indian Constitution. On 29 August 1947, Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar was appointed as the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constitution. All the 15 women members of the Constitution Committee had the understanding of Indian society and political situation, they were familiar with world events, were familiar with Indian history, culture and traditions and the women had seriously considered how society would develop in a peaceful manner during the changes. Sarojini Naidu, Durgabai Deshmukh, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, etc. all members of the Constitution Committee were associated with the freedom movement and social work for many years. All the discussions of the Constitution Committee are available today. These women members were giving suggestions on women's issues as well as about education, judiciary, religious freedom, problems of minorities and backward classes and uniform civil code and also suggested some reforms. Sucheta Kriplani and Ammu Swaminathan were in

the flag committee, Renuka Ray, Dakshayani Velayudhan were members of the Constitution Committee, while Padmaja Naidu, Uma Nehru and Mrs. Jayshree were members of the last government. Begum Aijaz Rasul, Hansa Mehta, Purnima Banerjee, Sarojini Naidu, Vijayalakshmi Pandit, Malati Chaudhary, Kamala Chaudhary and Annie Maskarane were also the members of the Constitution Committee. There were only 15 women in the Constitution Committee, but it is important that their opinion was considered while taking the final decision. While participating in the discussions, these women strongly expressed their views and raised many new issues.

The Indian Constitution is not rigid. There is also a provision for amendment in the Constitution as changes take place with time. The participation of women in the making of such a constitution has been significant and the early women parliamentarians have always looked at the Constitution Amendment Bill in a positive light, forgetting party differences. These women understood the mindset of the public, that is why while suggesting necessary changes, they refrained from giving any major blow to the public perceptions.

These patriotic and intelligent women of the Constituent Assembly are role models for women MPs of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.

### ● **Urging to vote, election campaign**

In the pre-independence era, many women from all states of India had become aware of the political situation and from the beginning of the twentieth century they were conscious of their rights, and were also getting organized to make every possible effort for this. In 1919 when the Government of India thought of including Indian representatives in the government, Margaret Cousins along with Ramabai Ranade, Sarlabai Naik presented a memorandum requesting that women be given the right to vote. The issue was discussed for four months and then a law was passed that educated women should be given the right to vote. Ramabai Chemburkar of Mumbai was a publicly appointed member of the Municipality from Parle Andheri division since 1938. Ramabai, a representative of the Hindu Mahasabha, served as the President of the Market and Garden Committee, which is why today a good and large fruit and vegetable market is spread in this area. In 1952, she ran a nursing and first aid centre for cholera victims. During the wars of 1962, 65 and 71, women were organised and they sent relief funds to the families of many soldiers and also to the government. Women were engaged in such type of activities on a large scale throughout India in the first decade of independence. Even in the 1960s, women were taking part in politics under the pretext of patriotism and social service. In 1957, Madhukar Mahajan, the first and only assembly candidate of Bharatiya Jana Sangh in Mumbai, contested jointly (from the alliance) on behalf of Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti, Peter Alvaris was the Lok Sabha candidate from Madhukar Rao's Chembur constituency. At that time Mrinal Gore, Pramila Dandavate, Leela Alvaris along with Sushilatai Mahajan gave speeches in the election campaign.

Even at that time, even though it was rare for women to go to different settlements and create awareness among people, all parties consistently supported women activists and people also welcomed these women, Sushilatai Mahajan says this with great satisfaction even today. In

Mumbai, Nirmalatai Shende started working for Jan Sangh from 1962. In order to increase women participation she started adult literacy classes in the working class and labor class community. She also went to those settlements which were known for crime and liquor making. She worked to bring the children there into the mainstream. These women activists later contested elections as municipal, assembly and Lok Sabha candidates. The first Lok Sabha in 1952 had 24 women MPs, we see this number increasing gradually. Initially, women who participated in elections were mainly activists who had worked in the freedom movement. They saw politics as a medium of patriotism.

### ● **Women MPs**

The rules for the election of MPs in the Rajya Sabha are different from the Lok Sabha. The Constitution Committee members believed that experienced and skilled people from the state could make a meaningful contribution to Indian politics by being represented in the Rajya Sabha. The first generation of women in the Rajya Sabha were involved in the freedom movement as well as other social work. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur and Ammu Swaminathan were also members of the founding committee of the All India Women's Council, Lakshmi Menon and Nandini Satpati were also president and vice-president of the Mahila Parishad and some women like Begum Aziz Rasul and Ammu Swaminathan were members of local government and the temporary Lok Sabha. The experience of these women in social organisations and the leadership they provided was clearly visible in the contribution of the members of legislative assembly in earlier days.

Along with Padma award and Dnyanpith award winners, actresses, writers and artistes were also present in Rajya Sabha. While discussing the budget, Smt. Rukmini Devi Arundale (52 to 62) said that education should be imparted in such a way that it imparts knowledge and improves the outlook towards life. There are many examples like Bharati Ray, Violet Alva, Najma Heptulla. Sita Parmanand first brought to the notice of the House that there was no provision for legal separation in the Special Marriage Act under the Hindu Marriage Act 1955 and this first Rajya Sabha bill was passed due to the efforts of a woman, this incident is also mentioned in the government report. Nominated MP Shakuntala Paranjape had done a lot of work on family planning in Maharashtra and due to her efforts family planning was made an important programme of the health department, this issue raised by Shakuntalabai was widely welcomed by the media. Sensitive women MPs always studied and thought about women's questions and understood the nuances of those questions. She was always aware that simple, innocent, uneducated and hardworking Indian women have to face many hardships with courage.

Women in the Lok Sabha and the Vidhan Sabha are the representatives of the people, they are in constant touch with the people of their constituencies and this experience is evident from their speeches and questions in the House. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, the first Health Minister of independent India, was an assistant to Gandhiji for sixteen years, was a Congress member in the Provisional Lok Sabha, and also became an MP in the first Lok Sabha. In 1957, she was

appointed to the Rajya Sabha. Rajkumari made special efforts to establish the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in Delhi for medical education. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur decided to serve the country more through these two issues, health and education. Lakshmikantamma and many members repeatedly drew the attention of the House to the issues of yellow journalism and autocracy and suggested ways to control it. Subhadra Joshi emphasised in the House, the problems arising from a second marriage while the first wife is alive and later a law was also passed in this regard. The survey also shows that women representatives spend more time in the House and they also insist on focusing at their work and voters more responsibly. In the first twenty-five to thirty years after independence, bringing politics to the common women was also a challenge and for this many women activists did important work to create awareness among women. Many initiatives like education, cleanliness, health, self-employment started from small settlements. Separate wings for women were established by many political parties in this early period. And women's participation in political matters became important.

### ● **National and International -**

Intelligent and accomplished created their own identity women on the international stage. Sarojini Naidu constantly raised women's issues in national and international meetings, while Madam Cama hoisted the flag of independent India in Stuttgart in August 1907.

In 1948, Hansa Mehta prepared a draft on the rights and duties of Indian women for the United Nations General Assembly. It is noteworthy that the influence of Hansaji's writings is clearly visible on the United Nations human rights document. Rajkumari Amrit Kaul was entrusted with the responsibility of leading the Indian delegation to UNESCO. Her speech at UNESCO received widespread praise and increased the respect for Indian women. After serving as a member of the Constitution Committee for some time, Vijayalakshmi Pandit was appointed India's ambassador to Russia.

### ● **Who has got freedom without a battle?**

Fifty years before the satyagraha and movements, armed rebellions had already begun against the British. Hundreds of revolutionaries were hanged, thousands had to endure rigorous imprisonment and India became independent. Then most of the princely states merged into a single central government of India. India drove out the Pakistani army that had entered Kashmir. However, Hyderabad and Goa were later conquered by the Indian government. Women also contributed through various means in this struggle after independence.

### ● **Hyderabad Mukti Sangram -**

In Hyderabad the urge for independence was getting stronger since the end of the 19th century. The 'Vande Mataram Satyagraha' of 1938 can be considered an important step in this regard. During this time, women especially helped the satyagrahis. The Hindu Mahasabha made efforts to stop the attempts of Muslims to convert and tried to ensure that Hindus adopt many professions like butchers, 'tangelwas' (horse drawn carriage drivers) and florists. To prevent

women from buying bangles from Muslim bangle sellers, along with Saraswati Bai, wife of Veer Wamanrao Joshi, Dandanak and Kurvalkar's mother also went door to door to sell bangles. Women were implementing Gandhiji's 'Khadi' and 'Sutaktai' programs on a large scale, which the Nizam did not oppose. Due to the 1942 movement, many prominent leaders and male activists of Hyderabad state were in jail. The women had planned to celebrate Gandhi Jayanti on 2nd October, but the Nizam did not give permission for this programme. Despite the Nizam's ban, T. Ramaswamy, his wife Vanamala and sisters Kamalabai and Vimalabai Melkote decided to hold secret meetings. But before that Padmaja Naidu was arrested, but Gyankumari Heda decided to organize the meeting and went underground. On the evening of 2nd October, dressed as Muslims, sitting in a covered cart, everyone gathered, reached the meeting place and the meeting was held. These experiences have been written by Gyan Kumari Heda in her memoirs. The country was experiencing the wibes of Indian independence. At the same time, the behavior of Razakars in Hyderabad continued to be more cruel and uncontrolled. The Nizam was their great supporter. The Nizam had decided not to join India. The deeds of the Muslims like atrocities, arson, looting, forced conversions and the issue of insecurity of women, all these were completely ignored by the Nizam government. After 1947, the people of the Nizam government decided to go beyond the activities like conducting 'Prabhatpheris' and expressing through slogans like 'Vande Mataram' or hoisting the tricolor flag on government buildings. They were prepared for armed resistance. Women fearlessly participated in secretly collecting weapons, supplying ammunition and transporting guns and pistols. During this time, Sindhutai Bhalerao and other women took up many responsibilities like creating public awareness, printing and distributing pamphlets. Saraswatibai Bapat spent three months in jail with her two-year-old son. Dagdabai Shelke was trained in shooting and for participating in actual fight. Riding on a horse, dressed as a man and carrying a bomb in one hand, she attacked the Nizam's camp with her disabled son. For this she also had to suffer imprisonment. She was opposed at home due to her continuous revolutionary campaigns. At that time, she personally sacrificed her worldly pleasures for the independence of the country, such courage is very rare. In independent India, Dagdabai also worked as a member of the Gram Panchayat and District Council. Dagdabai, who was called the 'Queen of Jhansi' of Marathwada, died in 2013 at the age of 98.

### ● **Goa Liberation:**

In the post-independence period, the Goa Liberation Movement witnessed the achievement and courage of women. The Portuguese could not expand their empire on the western coast in south and the credit for which goes to Queen Abakka of Ullal. There was resistance to the Portuguese in Goa since 1928. Berta and Dr. Beatrice are considered the first women freedom fighters. Berta was a founding member of the Goan Youth League in 1945. Dr. T.B. Cunha was in Portuguese prison from 1946 to 53, during this period Berta continued publishing his newspaper and did important work of creating awareness in public. Dr. Beatrice lodged her protest at the Portuguese Embassy in Mumbai and made Prime Minister Nehru aware of Goa's issue. The

Goa Seva Sangh was established in 1943. Pramilabai Jambulakar was conducting Khadi making classes for girls and was also using Khadi herself. When Vatsala Kirtane was arrested in Margao on 18 th June 1946, Pramilabai led a march against the Portuguese along with 40 women including Lalita Kantak. Umabai Shirale, Indira Bhise, Vatsana Kirtani, Jeevan Tarapurkar, Sharda Penkar Kamat, Mukta Tarapurkar were also her colleagues. On 6 th June 1948, Pramilabai was arrested and imprisoned for the anti-Portuguese movement. After Goa became independent, Pramilabai participated in the movement by insisting that Goa should be given the status of an independent state without merging with Maharashtra. The names of many women freedom fighters like Dr. Ratan Khawate, Shashikala Horadkar, Shalini Loirlekar, Libya Lobo Sardesai are taken with respect. Sindhu Deshpande, an activist of the 'Chale Jaav' movement, came to Goa from Maharashtra and hoisted the Indian national flag on 23 rd June 1954 and also was also jailed. Sudhatai Joshi was also in jail with her. Laxmitai Paigankar was arrested on 17 February 1955 for carrying the tricolour and for the imposed charges of participating in other anti-national activities and had to endure imprisonment for four years till March 1959. Many women under the leadership of Sudhatai Joshi participated in 'satyagraha' on 4th April 1955. Sudhatai's sister Asha Phadke was not only a freedom fighter but also a great 'kirtankar' (one who expresses thoughts through a way of presentation called kirtan.). She also propagated the freedom movement through kirtan. The participation of these aware and courageous women in the Indian freedom struggle is also noteworthy.

### ● **Women ministers and Indira Gandhi**

Rajkumari Amrit Kaur was the Union Health Minister in India's first cabinet, but after that for many years women did not get the post of cabinet minister. The sixth and ninth cabinets had experienced women ministers of state like Sarojini Maharshi, Nandini Satpathy, Sushila Rohatgi, Saroj Khaparde. Sarojini Naidu Uttar Pradesh, Padmaja Naidu West Bengal, Vijayalakshmi Pandit Maharashtra, these women held the post of Governor. To date, 18 women have held the post of Chief Minister in India. The first woman Chief Minister, Sucheta Kriplani was a staunch Gandhian and freedom fighter. The song Vande Mataram was sung by her at midnight on 14th August 1947. She went to Lok Sabha from Delhi as MP in 1952 and 57. She efficiently handled the 62-day strike of government employees. From June 1972 to March 1973 and from March 1974 to December 1976, Nandini Satpathy was the Chief Minister of Odisha. Shashikala Kakodkar from the Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party was appointed the Chief Minister of Goa in August 1973. She ran the government efficiently till April 1979.

From India's independence till 1977, the Nehru family remained the Prime Minister. Lal Bahadur Shastri was the Prime Minister only for one and a half year in 1965 and 66. During his tenure, we defeated Pakistan. India's only woman Prime Minister, Bharat Ratna Indira Gandhi, is an epitome of courage. She became the Prime Minister for three consecutive terms from 1966 to 1977. She was elected again for the term from 1980 to 85, but this term ended in 1984 due to her unfortunate assassination. While assisting Prime Minister Nehru as a private secretary in

the 1950s, she had studied politics and mindset of India very closely. After Panditji's demise, she was appointed a Rajya Sabha member in 1964. Indiraji was the Minister of Information and Broadcasting in Lal Bahadur Shastri's government. After Shastriji's tragic and sudden death, Indiraji became the Prime Minister. This fifteen-year period of Indiraji is considered extremely important in the history of independent India. This period witnessed many important and controversial events, not only in Indian politics but also in all areas of India's economy, international trade, democratic values and Indian sovereignty. The split of the Indian National Congress in 1969 was an extremely important event. The Indo-Pakistan War of 1971, won on the eastern and western borders, and the creation of Bangladesh are important examples of Indiraji's courage and determination. The creation of Bangladesh was not only the creation of a government in accordance with the wishes of the people, but through this action India gave a solid assurance that human rights would be protected in any province or country. India also returned the Pakistani territory conquered by India in war, as per the Shimla Agreement. All these decisions and India's strategy created an image of India internationally as a democratic and non-violent but heroic country fighting against injustice. At the national level too, Indiraji's rule was governed by socialist ideology and democratic methods for the first ten years. The Agricultural Land Reforms Act was adopted throughout India. Punjab was divided and a new province called Haryana was formed. Amendments to the Constitution were necessary to abolish the princely salaries. When the majority in the Rajya Sabha fell short, Indiraji called an emergency meeting of the cabinet and implemented the ordinance issued by the President to withdraw the approval given to the princely states. Indiraji also took a similar immediate decision to nationalize the banks. In 1969, Morarji was relieved from the post of Finance Minister and she took charge of the Finance Department. While facing natural disasters, Indiraji also put forth public welfare schemes like 20-point programme or poverty eradication.

During this period, Indiraji's attitude and actions showed her greed for power. The corruption charges against Indiraji regarding misbehaviour in the 1971 elections were proved and the Allahabad Court ordered her not to contest elections for six years. Indiraji, disregarding the court's order, declared emergency on June 25, 1975 using Article 365 of the Constitution. Democracy and freedom of thought, all ended. The judiciary collapsed. The fundamental rights of the Constitution were violated.

Just a few years after the celebration of the Golden Jubilee of Indian Independence, the democratic system faltered. The unjustifiable importance of power politics, rise in corruption and suppressing patriotism, these were not overnight changes. At the dawn of independence, Durgabai Joshi gave a warning about this system in newly independent India in her novel Pagalkhana (1941). Since the formation of the combined Governments in India, Durgabai Joshi, a member of the Central Province Legislative Assembly, saw the power-hungry attitude of the politicians and was extremely distressed. Even after independence, she printed some books for creating awareness and went from village to village to awaken the people through her speeches. 'Patriots have been declared insane and imprisoned and selfish people who have not done any work for the country are

sitting in power. The author has mentioned this dream in the novel “Pagalkhana”. She has expressed this fear in the novel.

Seeing her position of power in danger, Indira Gandhi declared Emergency on 26 June 1975 despite having no other strong reason. Here we get a glimpse of Subhadra Joshi’s political foresight. The imaginary situation presented in the novel was actually experienced in Emergency. The topic ‘Emergency’ will be discussed in the coming article.

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### President of India



#### 1. Droupadi Murmu

Born – 20 June 1958 , Odisha

She is the first Woman President belonging to a tribal community and she is the first President born in Independent India.



#### 2. Pratibha Patil

Born – 19 December 1934

She was the first woman to become the President of India from 2007 to 2012

### Prime Minister



#### 1. Indira Gandhi

Born – 19 November 1917, Prayagraj - 31 October 1984

She served as the Prime Minister of India from 1966 to 1977 and again from 1980 to 1984. She was India’s first and only female Prime Minister.

# Women and Politics :

## From Emergency to 2024

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Indiraji's ten years as Prime Minister established her image as a great political leader. During her tenure, the country fought two wars with Pakistan on the eastern and western borders and she faced many natural disasters. However, due to her obstinacy to retain power, she rejected many important practices and rights of democracy. Indiraji was unable to accept the freedom of expression of opposition parties, judiciary and citizens. Despite the court declaring her election and selection illegal, she disregarded the court order. Emergency was declared in the country using Article 365 of the Constitution. Parties, institutions and their activities which differed in ideology were banned. Opposition intellectuals and common citizens and journalists were illegally sent to jail. Emergency was declared on 25 th June 1975. From that day till the announcement of general elections on 21 March 1977, discipline was established in the bureaucracy, but democracy and freedom of thought had almost vanished. The judiciary had collapsed. The fundamental rights of the Constitution were being violated.

### ● Unjustifiable Emergency

Emergency was declared on the night of 25 th June and arrests began all over India. Volunteers of Bharatiya Jana Sangh, Samajwadi Party, CPM, DMK as well as Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and other organizations were arrested and were put in jail without any reason. Honorable Atalji and Advaniji were also arrested in Bangalore without any prior notice, while Sarsanghchalak Balasaheb Deoras, who was on a tour, was also sent to Yerawada prison. One and a half lakh volunteers of political parties and 75 thousand to 80 thousand Sangh volunteers were arrested. Many workers went underground, yet the arrests continued. The people arrested were not traitors, just their views were different from Indiraji's views and their leaders Jayaprakash Narayan and Nanaji Deshmukh had become more popular. Fearing that if these people become popular she will lose power in future, Indira Gandhi put the workers of this party and RSS in jail without any investigation and not only that, she also treated them very badly. Snehlata Reddy had to suffer imprisonment because of her relations with Lawrence Fernandes, brother of George Fernandes. Unfortunately, she could not withstand the torture in jail and eventually died there.

Many activists were treated worse than criminals. In January 76, the DMK and Jan Sangh governments in Tamil Nadu and in March 76, the Gujarat government were dismissed. There were Congress governments in the rest of India. Along with this, journalists were arrested. Many newspapers had to be closed.

The Indian people were now ready to oppose this dictatorship. Only Shiv Sena and the Communist Party of India were with Indira Gandhi. The workers of all other parties together formed the Lok Sangharsh Samiti. This Samiti decided to hold a satyagraha all over India from 14th November 1975 to 26th January 1976. One lakh thirty thousand satyagrahis expressed their protest, out of which 80 thousand satyagrahis were from the 'Sangh Parivar'. The All India Women's Organization Rashtriya Sevika Samiti was not banned, but the workers of the committee also participated in the satyagraha. The writer led the satyagraha at Ruparel College. Eight girls including sister Sushma were arrested and had to stay in Arthur Road Jail for a few days. The committee's preacher Sindhutai Phatak was active in spreading the agitation in the entire North India including Delhi, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh. She held meetings at various places and inspired women for satyagraha and other help. The workers of the committee did similar work in South India from Assam to Karnataka, Telangana, Tamil Nadu. The present Pramukh Sanchalika, honourable Shantakka, also led a group of satyagrahis in Bangalore and went to jail. At the same time, a delegation of Kusumtai Sathe, Sushila Mahajan, Pramilatai Medhe met Vinoba and tried to convey their message to Indira Gandhi. As the satyagraha became massive the jails also became smaller. Many girls, including the author, were released from jail early considering the argument that youth expressed their feelings in the college campus. The men of the house were imprisoned. The women used to stay outside and take care of their household chores. They used to boost the morale of the people in the jail. They also used to serve them sweets on festivals. Both Sunita Arlikar and her husband were in jail. Sunita's young son was with her in one jail and her husband in another jail. The situation during emergency, described by Sunita Bai in her autobiography 'Vinchwaache Birhad' is heart-rending. Jaipur's Rajmata Vijayaraje Scindia and Gayatri Devi were kept in jail with women criminals and were subjected to mental torture. Writers across the country also campaigned against restrictions on personal liberty and freedom of expression. In Maharashtra, many writers including P.L. Deshpande and Durgabai Bhagwat started holding meetings at various places. Durgabai was arrested and had to spend time in jail. Even after fifty years we will be able to imagine how terrible this emergency imposed by a woman would be! Not only those who wrote against Congress party but also those who expressed their views saying 'we have our own independent views' were being arrested.

### ● **Changes in the Constitution and Laws**

During this period of emergency, the Prime Minister made 47 new laws as per the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution and got them passed. The bill passed by the Lok Sabha can be challenged in the court, but the law made through the Ninth Schedule cannot be questioned in the Supreme Court. During this period, thousands of innocent people were put in jail without warrant

under the 'MISA' law. At the same time, the 'FERA' law also came into force. During this time, Indira Gandhi included the words socialist and secular in the Constitution.

### ● **Last phase of Indira Gandhi's tenure**

In January 77, Nandini Satpathy and Jagjivan Ram also left the Congress party. The emergency was called off on 16 January 1977 and elections were announced in March. The opposition leaders were supported by the popular leaders like Loknayak Jayaprakash Narayan and Nanaji Deshmukh. The Janata Party government of people of different ideologies was formed under the leadership of Morarji Desai. Due to the atrocities committed during the emergency and the political mistakes of Indira Gandhi, Indira Gandhi lost this election. Thirty years after independence, a new era began in the history of India. For the first time, Congress was out of power. However, even after this defeat, Indiraji's political existence remained and when she became the Prime Minister in 1980, she made foreign plans very efficiently. She tried to change India's image as a country that acted at the behest of Russia by increasing relations with other European countries. Indiraji met scientists and scholars abroad and inspired them to return to India. During this time Punjab was turbulent and murders were taking place in broad daylight in Assam. Once Indiraji had given shelter to Bhindranwale. Then he demanded independent Khalistan. Indiraji ordered the Indian Army to enter the Harmandir Sahib area to control the supporters of Khalistan. 492 Khalistan supporters were killed in this operation. Three hundred devotees and 79 soldiers and army officers were also martyred. As a result, on 31st October 1984, Indiraji was shot dead by her two bodyguards at her residence. A powerful and ambitious leadership came to an end. Indiraji, a woman, who was a politician, a diplomat and a skilled leader, was honored with the post of Prime Minister by India within a short time after independence, as compared to the western world. This can be said to be a good example of the fact that Indians know that women are as intelligent as men and have the ability to manage the state.

### ● **International Women's Year, Women's Awareness**

The years 1975 and 76 were celebrated very differently as they are marked as the years of Emergency and International Women's Year. During that time many college-aged girls and slightly older women became active in politics. Many of them later joined politics, settled there and also reached high positions. Sumitra Mahajan, Sushma Swaraj, Vasundhara Raje started their work during the Emergency itself. Sumitra Mahajan was a worker of Rashtra Sevika Samiti. Apart from this, after marriage she was working in Mahila Mandal and Ahilya Samiti in Indore. Sumitra, who was at the forefront in helping Sangh brothers during the Emergency, also started giving discourses on Ramayana from her home for public awareness. There was legacy of Sangh-Samiti at her in-laws, so she had the skill of public service, but had no political background. Her oratory and study based knowledge took her to the post of Deputy Mayor of Indore and later to the post of MP. She became the Speaker of the 15th Lok Sabha. Vinod Bahuguna of Uttarakhand got married into a Sangh Parivar during the Emergency, she later got involved in social service, now she is a Minister of State in Uttarakhand. Vasundhara Raje was from a royal family, she

entered politics at a young age and later became a Union Minister of State and Chief Minister of Rajasthan. Mamata Banerjee was associated with the Emergency movement due to her faith in Jayaprakash Narayan and later made her own independent existence in politics. We should note that our honourable President Draupadi Murmuji is also not from political background. Some women were benefited by the political family background. At the same time, we see that many women entered politics on their own initiative and settled there. These days after 75 again brought a new change in the lives of women. Women's Year had brought awareness about women's rights everywhere. People were more concern about women welfare and about various useful schemes for women. The new generation born in the post-independence era was more conscious about education and women were more confident. After Emergency, many charitable organizations run by women emerged across India and till date these organizations are contributing substantially for the welfare of the society at large. Thus, Women's Year, Women's Decade should be considered very important for women and in terms of awareness about women.

### ● **From activists to positions of authority**

There was rise in the ratio of women education. They started participating in social work and gradually the number of women MPs and MLAs increased. For the first time since independence, more than one woman was given the post of Cabinet Minister between 2004 and 2009. The Indian government gave priority to the issue of women empowerment and in the 16th Lok Sabha, Narendra Modiji's 23-member cabinet had six women cabinet ministers. These women were also given challenging departments. The Ministry of External Affairs, which was always given to men, was with Sushma Swaraj. Nirmala Sitharaman was given the responsibility of the post of Defense Minister. This is a matter of great pride for all women. Nirmala Sitharaman has been handling the charge of the Union Finance Ministry very efficiently since 2019. Sheila Kaul, who was a councilor and MLA from Uttar Pradesh, was Minister of State in the Ministry of Education, Social Welfare and Culture from 1980 to 84 and Urban Development Minister since 1991. Sheila Kaul has done the important work of integrating foreign universities with Indian universities. Najma Heptulla, who held the post of Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha for sixteen years, is well acquainted with the parliamentary process. Najma ji, who was a Rajya Sabha MP from 1980 to 2015, held the post of Minister of Minority Affairs in the **Narendra Modi cabinet in 2014 and then the post of Governor of Manipur.**

### ● **Welfare laws**

Dowry system is prevalent everywhere in India. In some areas, this inhuman practice could not be stopped, which led to female foeticide. The thought of anti-dowry law was initiated in 1951 itself. In 1980, Krishna Sahi and Pramila Dandavate suggested amendments in this law, Margaret Alva also presented a revised bill. The law related to television was clarified by Ambika Soni during her ministerial tenure i.e. after 2009. Important laws like Protection of Children from Sexual Offenses and POCSO have been passed due to the efforts of women. All the women in the House supported the laws related to human trafficking, care and protection of minors and domestic violence against women.

## ● **Changing mindset after globalization**

Time changed rapidly after 1990. Globalization and scientific progress changed our social and economic life, changed the needs of living and changed the way people think. Its effect is also visible on the topics discussed in the Assembly and Lok Sabha. It appears that the new laws made after 2000 have been made considering the changing circumstances. More and more women started participating in the discussions. Till 1977, since most of the women in the House were from the Congress party and MPs from other parties were also constantly aware that it is the job of MPs to make laws for the benefit of the people, discussions were based on the subject of the bill. The political picture kept changing continuously since 1990. In 2014 and 2019, women representing 13 political parties were in the Lok Sabha, so the discussion on the bill also had a political color rather than its utility. Due to the changing mindset with globalization, every woman MP started speaking on the ideology of her party as it became important to show one's presence. In the 15th Lok Sabha, there were 12 women MPs from Scheduled Castes and five from Scheduled Tribes. These figures show that social awareness has increased. More women are being represented in the Lok Sabha from the states as well. We can also see that women are more interested in Constitution Amendment Bills related to daily life and contemporary topics. Women also gave their opinion in the discussion on Lokpal and Lokayukta Bills. Women also seem to understand the importance of the Environment Bill along with the Nuclear Energy Bill. Women have also drawn the attention of the House towards the problems of women's education as well as earning and employment. We can now see a huge change in the women related issues raised by MLAs and MPs, the referenced presentations and their study of women related topics.

## ● **Women Chief Ministers**

The contribution by women legislators is important for the state. In India, by 2025, 18 women chief ministers have taken charge of state governance. Shashikala Kakodkar (Goa), Jayalalithaa (Tamil Nadu), Sheila Dixit (Delhi), Mayawati (Uttar Pradesh), Rabri Devi (Bihar), Vasundhara Raje (Rajasthan) have taken oath as Chief Minister more than once. Women Chief Ministers have given priority to adapting many laws for their state. India's first woman Chief Minister, Mrs. Sucheta Kriplani, was a staunch Gandhian patriot and freedom fighter. She had a strong grip on the administration, thus she managed the largest state like Uttar Pradesh with great competence. This was the face of an Indian woman who was a confluence of affection, strong will and fighting spirit. Sucheta Kriplani, who lived a simple life and had high ideals, is remembered by people in politics as a loving mother who did not compromise on principles. Jayalalithaa was the Chief Minister for four times and administered Tamil Nadu for more than 16 years. Keeping the Revenue Department in her hands, she started many schemes for women. As soon as she took over as the Chief Minister, she closed all the cheap liquor shops and imposed many restrictions on the production of country liquor. When the National Integration Council was reluctant to give 27 percent reservation to the backward classes, she announced 50 percent

reservation and later she also made her presence felt in the Lok Sabha to make such a law. The proposal of more than fifty percent reservation was passed in Tamil Nadu. The success of Delhi Metro is credited to Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit. Sheila Dikshit, who was the Chief Minister for fifteen years, came into politics with the encouragement of her father-in-law Umashankar Dikshit. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Mayawati established herself in politics at the age of 21 on the strength of her efficient leadership. She was the first Dalit woman Chief Minister to reach the post of Chief Minister at the age of thirty-eight. From here a new era began in Indian history. For the first time in India, she built memorials of great personalities of the Dalit community. Mayawati, who works for minorities and Dalits, is considered an all-India leader. Vasundhara Raje, daughter of senior BJP leader Rajmata Vijaya Raje Scindia, started working as the vice-president of BJP Yuva Morcha in Rajasthan in 1984, then became MLA in 1985 and a Lok Sabha member in 1988. She became a Minister of State in the Ministry of External Affairs. In 2003, Vasundhara ji became the first woman Chief Minister of Rajasthan. Vasundhara ji implemented many schemes for agriculture, women empowerment, education, industrial development, energy, tourism, art and culture departments and gave a new direction to the development of Rajasthan. Vasundhara Raje took efforts to pass the Dharm Swatantrata Bill 2006 with the intention to stop religious conversions by offering inducements. It is well known that Rabri Devi took over the post after her husband left the post of Chief Minister. However, Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel has been associated with Gujarat BJP since 1987. She was made a Rajya Sabha member in 1994. Since 1998, she has been elected as MLA four times. In 2014, when the then Chief Minister of Gujarat Narendra Modi became the Prime Minister of India, Anandiben was given the responsibility of the Chief Minister of Gujarat. She handled the Gujarat Water Issue and passed Land Ceiling Bill and Agricultural Land Bill. It was noticed that the terrorists enter into our country by road or by water way by befriending Indians in border areas. As a solution to this issue, law GUJCOCA was passed by the Gujarat Legislative Assembly. It was pending at the Presidential level. After continuous efforts Anandiben government could bring it to implementation level.

### ● **Reservation for women**

Today we see that women have achieved various positions in politics as a result of their efforts and hard work. Even after women got the right to vote, the path towards equal position as men in politics was not easy and simple. Therefore, all parties raised the demand for 33% reservation for women. In 1989, Rajiv Gandhi put forward the idea of Women Reservation Bill. Then in 1992 and 93, Narasimha Rao's government decided to get 33% reservation for women in public institutions in rural and urban areas under Constitution Amendment Bill 72 and 73. After the states accepted this reservation, today 15 lakh women have been elected to panchayats and municipalities.

In 1996, the issue of women reservation was raised in the Lok Sabha once again in the Deve Gowda government, but the Lok Sabha did not pass this bill. After that in 96 a joint parliamentary committee was formed. Geeta Mukherjee was its chairperson and while presenting

the report, she had said that women should get 33 percent reservation in public institutions in rural and urban regions. The issue of OBC and SC people also getting reservation in this 33 percent was also raised. Two years later, Atal Bihari Vajpayee's government also once again presented the Women's Reservation Bill, but unfortunately it could not be passed. This bill presented during the Vajpayee government in 1999, 2002, 2003 could not get full majority. After that, in 2008, during the government led by Manmohan Singh, this bill was presented again and some more changes were suggested. In 2010 this bill was passed only in the Rajya Sabha. It was not passed in the Lok Sabha. After the dissolution of the Lok Sabha in 2014, the Women's Reservation Bill remained rejected. The Women's Reservation Bill 2023, known as the 'Nari Shakti Vandana Act', was presented in the Lok Sabha during a special session of Parliament on 19th September 2023. This Act makes provision for reserving 33 percent seats for women in the Lok Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies and Delhi Legislative Assembly. This was the culmination of a legislative dispute that had been going on for 27 years due to lack of consensus among political parties, which also includes the Women's Reservation Bill, 2010. This was the first bill to be considered in the new Parliament House. On 28th September 2023, President Draupadi Murmu signed the bill and the gazette notification was also published on the same day. The long lasted efforts by women turned to be fruitful.

### ● **Results of Women's Reservation**

In 1992, during the tenure of Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao, the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts were passed, making reservation mandatory for Panchayat Raj institutions. Thus, 33.3% reservation for women was approved in Panchayat Raj. Later, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Kerala, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Tripura and Uttarakhand offered 50 percent reservation to women in their states. The constituencies reserved for women were constantly changed to provide opportunities to women in all the constituencies. After increasing the participation of women in politics in this way, the total participation of women, which was four to five percent, increased to 25 to 40% and thousands of women got the opportunity to work and lead in local self-government bodies or Gram Panchayats. Even very ordinary woman got a place as a member in the Panchayat. But some persons from so-called upper castes or families of former Sarpanches were becoming Sarpanch. Along with this, it was also realized that women need special guidance to make them aware of the work of the Panchayat and to enhance their leadership skills. In Tamil Nadu, due to lack of education among women, they are being taught about Panchayat subjects. In Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh, NGOs are arranging guidance programmes for them. This guidance has definitely increased their confidence. Women who were selected on the basis of their family background were later able to enter local politics, regional and central politics as well. After women got involved in the affairs of Gram Panchayat, more attention was given to water and roads. Men were more interested in the development of agriculture, irrigation, education and roads. But as women's participation increased, issues such as violence against women, child care and health of pregnant women also became the points of concern.

## ● **Status of women in political parties**

At the national level, independent women's organizations were working in various parties, but after reservation, BJP Mahila Morcha, All India Mahila Congress, AAP Mahila Shakti are seen to be more active. Congress Party led the country for many years. Poverty eradication was its main slogan. Women's participation increased after 2004. Then in 2009, for the first time a woman Mira Kumar was elected Speaker of the Lok Sabha. Pratibha Patil became the first woman President of India. Right from the beginning women participated in the formation and development of BJP. BJP had paid more attention to the issues of women empowerment, leadership qualities in women, economic development and 33 percent reservation. Women know the importance of Uniform Civil Code as well. Uniform Civil Code has always been one of the topic of priority for BJP. It is believed that this will give equal rights to men and women of all religions. It is believed that these laws will be used to raise voice against atrocities on women. Communist Party of India had given importance to gender equality from the very beginning.

In 1990, women's participation in political parties was only ten to twelve percent. Women used to participate more in social work, but then political awareness increased and the number of women entering politics increased remarkably. Media and the desire for fame also played a role in this. In the 2019 general elections, Tamil Nadu's Naam Tamilar Katchi fielded fifty percent women candidates. It was the first party in India to give women equal opportunities. Subsequently, in the 2021 Tamil Nadu Assembly elections, the party offered 50% seat to women candidates.

As the number of women candidates in elections increased, the number of women elected also increased slightly, although it is still very low. When there will be 33% women candidates under women reservation, the number of women in the assembly will definitely increase. Along with this, it is also being seen that women leaders and activists are increasing in large numbers. Such indirect participation of women in politics is a very important phenomenon from the point of view of public awareness.

## ● **Social work, agitations and politics**

Women in politics have turned to social work over time, undoubtedly the opposite journey has also been seen sometimes. Women's movements have definitely had an impact on politics. Mrinaltai Gore reached Delhi through a water-related movement. She started a wave of protest, which was supported by women of all ideologies and all regions, and it definitely had an impact on government decisions. We see some examples of women's movements prominently. All women's organizations strongly condemned the Mathura rape (1972) and the Bhawari Devi gang rape (1992). The Nirbhaya atrocity incident in 2012 shook the entire country. As a result, the women's movement was successful in building pressure and the anti-rape Nirbhaya Act was passed on April 3, 2014. Shah Bano was given justice by the Supreme Court in 1985, but in 1986 the Muslim Law Board invalidated this decision. Various women organisations strongly supported the victims of 'teen talak'. They took out marches, collected signatures, wrote letters.

70,000 women from 13 states wrote to the Prime Minister requesting to amend the Muslim Personal Law and later in 2019 the 'anti-triple talaq law' was passed.

The movement for prohibition of liquor in Andhra Pradesh was initiated by women who gathered for an adult education class in a small village near Nellore. These newly-educated women began to realize that alcohol is a major cause of domestic violence and poverty. Without contacting any organization or political party, the women gathered on their own and decided to close the shops of liquor vendors. Later this movement spread across Andhra Pradesh. Liquor shopkeepers and goons were luring these women with money so that the sale of alcohol could continue, but the agitating women remained firm and showed their determination. Three hundred shops were closed in the next two years. No single leader or organisation led or guided this movement. Women from all classes, castes and religions from across the state stood with the suffering women. It turned into a massive movement.

'If elected, I will ban alcohol in Andhra Pradesh.' N.T. Rama Rao made this promise publicly in an election meeting and later the Telugu Desam Party won the election with a majority. He implemented the total prohibition law in Andhra Pradesh. The Chipko movement of Gaura Devi and other women in Uttarakhand resulted in the formation of the Ministry of Environment and the Government of India took many decisions related to the environment. The efforts of Medha Patkar led to the postponement of the Nano car project in Bengal. As a result, the Central Government also made several amendments in the Land Acquisition Act. Aruna Roy brought the 'Right to Information' to the Indian public through her struggle against corruption. Thus women's movement and women's leadership, showed us a different aspect of Nari Shakti. Even with the rise in educational or economic level, we see qualities like determination, integrity and readiness to work both at home and outside in women. Women have led many movements, inspiring and forcing political leaders to take decisions that are favorable for the society.

Politics surrounds our lives, that is why it is said that what is personal is also political. The journey of Indian women in politics is very important. I know that it is impossible to mention many important events and persons in one article. This article will definitely introduce the important and active role of Indian women in politics. Thanks!

- **Reference**

Contribution of Women in Law Making, Dr. Vidya Deodhar, National Book Trust



# Women's Reservation Bill

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(When we talk about women's reservation, we mainly consider political reservation. The natural reason for this is that people in positions of power are more aware of it and women can work here more effectively and their work has a greater impact on society. Women who have come to power in various places through reservation in local self-government bodies have proved this. However, women's reservation has not yet come into existence at higher level. It has been proposed many times and despite day-to-day discussions, there has been no consensus on it yet, so this proposal remains as it is. A few years ago, experts in this field also suggested various alternatives to it, but it could not reach to acceptable conclusions. In 2010, a bill related to this was passed in the Rajya Sabha, but it was opposed in the Lok Sabha. With the dissolution of the Lok Sabha, this bill also ended, which could not be presented again till date. This article, written about 10 years ago, takes review of the situation of that time.)

'Women's reservation' means to give women an opportunity to move forward. It is about the concessions given at various places. Some seats are reserved for women in education, jobs, various committees, etc. Similarly in politics too, to be more precise, seats are reserved for them to get proper representation in power. Of course, this reservation is applicable only in local self-government bodies right now. Though its implementation has been demanded for Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha for many years, it still remains a mystery. The whole journey of this 'Women's Reservation Bill' seems to take many turns.

33% reservation in local bodies was implemented in 1993 through the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments. Prior to that the Karnataka government implemented 25% reservation, while in 1990 the Maharashtra government implemented 30% initially and later in 1993, 33% reservation in rural and urban local bodies. In this case, it was not a demand by women or women's organisations. This bill came up suddenly. So, although by 1996 about one million women had come to various positions of power through this reservation, no one paid much attention to bringing such reservation in the Lok Sabha or even the Rajya Sabha. On 12 September 1996, the Deve Gowda government introduced first such 'Women's Reservation

Bill' in the 11th Lok Sabha through the 81st Constitutional Amendment. Though representatives of some organizations had made statements in this regard before some committees earlier, it cannot be said that this Bill was brought here on the demand of women's organizations or others. This Bill later came to be known as the Women's Reservation Bill (WRB). However, this Bill also lapsed with the dissolution of the 11th Lok Sabha.

On 14 December 1998, Atal Bihari Vajpayee's NDA government introduced the 84th Constitutional Amendment Bill in the 12th Lok Sabha. It was to be valid for 15 years. However, this too ended with the dissolution of the Lok Sabha in 1998. On 23 December 1999, the NDA government introduced it again in the 13th Lok Sabha through the 85th Constitutional Amendment. But even then its future remained dark because all political parties could not build a consensus on it. Two unsuccessful attempts were made to introduce and pass this bill in 2002 and 2003. In 2004, the UPA government included it in its manifesto. In 2008, the government introduced the 101st Constitutional Amendment Bill in the Rajya Sabha so that this bill does not get technically cancelled. In 2009, this bill was again introduced through the 108th Constitutional Amendment. The then government repeatedly presented the bill by amending the Constitution, but unfortunately it was rejected again and again with the same force. Women's organizations also made many efforts to get it passed. But someone or the other kept opposing it. The opposition did not want this bill in the form as it was while the women's organizations insisted that it should be passed as it was.

In 2010, the cabinet allowed it to be presented in the Rajya Sabha. On 8 March 2010, many efforts were made to get this bill passed in the Rajya Sabha. During this period, the House was dissolved 6 times, during which the Congress failed to punish those who violated the law in this regard and once again the House had to see this bill being disrobed. However, on 9 March 2010, after many efforts, it was passed in the Rajya Sabha with 186 votes. Only one vote was registered against it, while Trinamool Congress decided to remain absent at that time, Bahujan Samaj Party boycotted the vote and now everyone is waiting for this bill to be presented in the Lok Sabha. Those who opposed this bill mainly included Lalu Prasad Yadav of RJD and Mulayam Singh Yadav of Samajwadi Party. They said that this bill will only bring the so-called upper class and highly educated women to power and there will be no place for women of backward class and Muslim society in it.

It is important to know what exactly is this 'Women Reservation Bill', what issues are included in it. If we look at its main points, it is clear that through this, about 1/3 seats of Lok Sabha and Assembly i.e. 33% seats will be reserved for women. That is, out of 181 seats of Lok Sabha and 4,109 seats of 28 state assemblies, 1,370 seats will be reserved for women. Seats reserved for Scheduled Castes and Tribes will also remain reserved. This reservation will be rotating. It will be ensured that a constituency will be reserved for women only once in three consecutive elections through a lottery system.

Taking into account the various issues raised, various experts have meanwhile suggested various alternatives to the Bill. Those opposing reserved seats had introduced an 'alternative bill'

in 1998 through the Forum for Democratic Reforms. Their activist Madhukishwar pursued it through her bi-monthly 'Manushi' and a magazine called 'Miloon Saryajani' also supported it. They mainly raised the following issues. Keeping in view the uncertainty created by rotating reservation and the possibility of women being left out when a constituency opens up for the second time, instead of reserving a constituency, it should be made compulsory for every official political party to field women candidates in one-third of the constituencies. For this, the Representation of the People Act 1951 should be amended accordingly. The party which does not do so should make it mandatory for them to field two male candidates for every female candidate; such provisions should be there.

Mukesh Dalal and Rami Chhabra had also suggested in 2000 that 50% of constituencies should be made bi-member for women. On 15 July 2003, when Manohar Joshi was the Lok Sabha spokesperson, a joint meeting of four political parties, including the BJP, Indian National Congress (I), Communist Party of India (Marxist) and Samajwadi Party, was held on this issue. The option of 1/3 bi-member constituencies came up. It proposed a plan that each constituency would have one male and one female member. The government was repeatedly requested to draft it. On 19 July, the BJP's Raipur National Executive committee meeting passed a resolution that 181 out of 543 constituencies should be made bi-member, i.e. 1 male and 1 female. As a result, the number of Lok Sabha members in each election would be 724 (362 + 181 + 181), as it was proposed. The same was proposed for reservation in Rajya Sabha and SC/ST. Women were to get 25% representation instead of 33% (181 out of 724), which was later opposed by the Congress. In 2005-2006, Shivraj Patil even said that the number of seats in Parliament should be increased to 800. In 2008-2009, organizations working for women empowerment like Bhartiya Stree Shakti also demanded two-member constituencies so that women can get equal representation.

There are some flaws in all these various options that have come up. The option proposed by Madhu Kishwar states that those political parties who do not follow this should suspend two male members behind a female candidate, but it is not clear which two members should be suspended. This also raises the apprehension that constituencies that are weak will be given to women. It cannot be said that if only 1/3 of the candidates are women, the representation of women will actually increase. Because the possibility that the parties might give such seats to women which can hardly be won, cannot be ruled out. According to a report, even after making a provision to give tickets to 30% women in Argentina, only 1% of the elected candidates were women. It is not clear on what basis the 50% two-member reservation suggested by Rami Chhabda and others has been made. Also, Manohar Joshi suggested that 181 constituencies should be made two-member and rotational. As it is rotational, it is not certain which constituencies will be reserved for women this time. Therefore, the potential candidate will always have the fear of uncertainty in this context. Also, Shivraj Patil has asked to increase the number of constituencies to 800, there is doubt on what and how women will benefit from this.

Thus, these alternatives to the Women's Reservation Bill have many flaws, and this is basically the case with the Bill being presented now. As mentioned above, since reservation is cyclical, the future of 1/3 of the constituencies and the future of the current male or female MLAs and MPs will remain uncertain in every election. The main reason for this Bill being pending in Parliament is the provision of cyclical reservation. If this Bill is passed, 181 of the current male or female MPs will lose their constituency in the next general election. This is not only unfair, but also political suicide in their view. The situation is the same in local self-government bodies. But basically there is a lot of difference between Lok Sabha or Rajya Sabha elections and local self-government elections. It takes a lot of time and effort on the part of candidate, to create Lok Sabha or Rajya Sabha constituencies. So, if there is uncertainty and lack of continuity, it may be difficult to develop local leadership. Also, if there is no guarantee that the current constituency will remain ours tomorrow, there is a possibility of not working hard there and, conversely, of grabbing as much as possible if the opportunity is available. Also, there is the risk that once that constituency opens up for all, there may be a tendency to not give seats to women again. People also feel that the 15-year limit set for reservation is wrong. Because once that time period is over, there is a possibility that the proportion of women will again go down.

Along with this, the lack of reservation for OBC and minority women is also a big drawback. Since the proportion of SC and ST is fixed, they were given reservation permanently, but the castes included in OBC are backward in some states, while in others they do not come under backward classes or they do not exist in those states at all. Therefore, it is difficult to make general rules. Just because a caste is in OBC in one state doesn't mean it will be there in another state. The same is true for minorities. So, it is difficult to consider all of them and include them in the existing 33% reservation. While the joint committee on this bill has proposed that it should not be implemented for Rajya Sabha. This proposal faces opposition. The reason for which is also the thought, 'why should only we Lok Sabha people bear this'. So without mentioning the root causes, they are trying to show that this opposition is from different sections of the society.

Political parties also have their own opinions and objections about this bill. If this bill comes, they will have to find such a large number of capable women to field them in elections at this level. Due to the old practice of having more men than women in these positions of power, it may be difficult for them to face this new change. Like political parties, there are differences in the society about the current bill. According to some people, giving reservation to women is wrong; by this we underline the thought that women are not capable. At the same time, with such reservation, women who are not capable will also sit in positions of power and hence will not be able to contribute to equality and national cause. On the contrary, if there is no reservation, capable women will move forward and they will properly contribute for the development of society and the nation. Some people have very radical opinions about women's reservation. According to them, are the women who have reached the House today as representatives doing such effective work that we are sending more women there through reservation? Of course, this rule applies to men as well. There is no such reality that all male representatives perform effectively.

Some people who support women coming to power and their empowerment also face such questions. “Does women’s entry into politics mean that they will be empowered?”

Feminist organisations or women activists also have their own views on women’s reservation. Basically, some of them, like some others, think that asking for women’s reservation means proving women incapable. Also, there is a fear that instead of real leadership coming to the fore through this reservation, men will only put forward dummy women or puppets and take advantage of the power themselves. The result of all this is that despite many attempts, the issue of reservation remains only a topic of discussion. Similarly, the women community for whom we are asking for reservation is also not ready to accept this reservation and accept that it will do some good.

The mindset of our society is mainly responsible for all this. We have developed a traditional view about what women should do and what they should not. The same is true in the context of men. Even today we look at men and women’s work and their place in the home or society from a traditional perspective. In fact, there are examples of women holding positions of power since ancient times. However, society and women themselves are not used to it that they are holding positions of power. We believe that women should assume power only in emergencies, otherwise men should be in those positions.

Whether at home or in the outside world, we have all become accustomed to the fact that men are the centre of power and women are their followers. As a result, it is difficult for women to assume or retain power and for men to work under their leadership. Kavita Mahajan has given many such examples in her book **ब्र**. Through women’s reservation in local self-government bodies, she has shown what kind of problems women face in positions of power like Sarpanch and Zila Parishad President. In 1998, a women’s organization called ‘Bharatiya Stree Shakti’ conducted a study of women holding various elected positions in municipal corporations of Maharashtra. In that study too, women shared similar experiences. So, though the opposition to the present Women’s Reservation Bill and the various reasons given for it are more or less true, it is clear that the main reason for it is the ‘traditional attitude’ of the society towards this issue.

It is important that society should see this issue with more seriousness and responsibility. India has a tradition of women providing such leadership. Women have proved their capabilities on many occasions. An example of this is, before independence, a large number of women joined the freedom movement, they also led the movement successfully. Not only this, but at that time they were also at the forefront in the political field.

But after independence this picture changed. Today, not more than 10 women are seen in the Parliament. This is really a sad thing. When women come into politics, when they come to places like Parliament, their direct participation in the decision-making process increases. When we say that women should be in different fields, the same justice applies to the field of politics as well. If women come into politics in the right numbers, then they will truly represent the entire society, otherwise this 50% of the society is not getting the right numerical representation in today’s Parliament, this is the reality.

We see many positive effects of women's participation in politics. Efforts should be made to increase this ratio. Today, the result of women being deprived of various types of powers is the increase in the incidents of domestic violence, murder, dowry, rape and pushing them into prostitution. Women are the victims of such atrocities. Across the world, only 1% of the wealth is owned by women, while 75% of the poor are women. It is in the interest of the society that equal participation of men and women begins in positions of power in all areas. It is well known that no one dares to oppress the powerful elements, on the contrary, the weak elements become victims of injustice.

If women get proper representation in the Parliament, then a direct result of this will be that from now on, various issues will be seen from the point of view of women and this will also bring about new dimensions. If the decision making involves women's point of view then the decisions will be more meaningful. Secondly, this 50 percent of the society will fully participate in national development. An indirect but far-reaching result of this will be that women will get a respected place in society and family, which will have a positive impact on their personal and social life. Today women are considered a burden and as a result, incidents like female foeticide also take place, such things will also be curbed to some extent. If such an equation is formed, then it will have a far-reaching effect in eliminating discrimination against women at all levels and in all forms. Therefore, a sensible society needs to think more seriously on this issue.

Today, various countries of the world have understood the importance of political participation of women. So in the context of gender equality about 100 countries of the world have implemented reservation for women in some form or the other. Women have 22% representation in the Pakistani Parliament, 18% in Bangladesh and 33% in the Constituent Assembly of Nepal. However, reservation is still awaited in the country like India, which is the largest democracy in the world. Delay in the Women's Reservation Bill gives the message that even if the assurances given in the context of women are not fulfilled, there is no objection, they need not be fulfilled. In the present situation, we should welcome it if the Women's Reservation Bill is passed as it is. However, if it is not passed due to the above reasons, then there is a need to remove the flaws of the current bill and bring forth suitable alternatives and make every possible effort to pass this bill. It is also necessary to create social pressure for it if needed.



# Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam Bill

**Vibhavari Bidave**

Advocate, Writer, Social Worker



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India did not take long after independence to implement the values of freedom, equality and justice enshrined in the Constitution. In many countries of the world, women had to fight for their voting rights. However, in independent India, women's political participation, apart from voting, was a very easy thing to achieve. Even in the Constituent Assembly, women had their contribution, though smaller. And soon a woman was also seated in the highest office of the country. The reason for this is that India has been accustomed to having women rulers, fighters and administrators since ancient times. Even in the Ramayana and Mahabharata, India has seen women warriors like Kaikeyi, Satyabhama, Mandodari, Shikhandini, and skilled administrators like Tara, Draupadi, Padmavati Gupta, Rudrama Devi and Ahilya Devi.

Despite the fact that the Constitution provides for equality of opportunity and even in this land, there is no gender discrimination before merit, it is also true that the representation of women in politics after independence has remained very low. In 2019, out of 542 seats in Parliament, 78 were women. That is, their proportion was only 14.4%. While 11% of the Rajya Sabha members are women. In 1957, the proportion of women contesting elections was 2.9% of the total candidates, while in 2019 with just a slight rise it came to 9%. It is a fact that women's political participation remained limited due to many problems such as lack of education among women, political ignorance, traditional gender discrimination and violence and the responsibility of childcare and other family responsibilities being shouldered by them alone. But it is not right for a group that constitutes half of the population to remain outside society and politics in such a way that it is not conducive to overall social development.

In politics, representation at the central and state levels has many benefits for society. Before independence, a very big movement arose against injustice and for the rights of the deprived community and it also got good leadership. No such independent movement of women arose, but even then mainly men like Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, Maharshi Karve, Mahatma Phule came forward for it. However, to bring about change for their own rights at higher level, representation of women is very necessary because even though half of the population is occupied

by women, the ones who make decisions and laws for them are mainly men. We have basically accepted the principle of contribution of all sections of society. Otherwise, it cannot be called representative democracy, so it is very necessary for the sustainability of democracy. The right of women to represent themselves and to take decisions for themselves is disappearing due to their low representation and this is not good for a balanced society.

The increasing participation of women in politics can be beneficial for everyone. Due to the inherent qualities of women, they can do things successfully like thinking holistically from different perspectives, negotiating, holding fruitful discussions, and building good organizations. Mutual cooperation, the tendency to save time and money, and a better understanding of women's and family issues add to it. That is why excluding women from politics is not beneficial for any society. And yet, due to many things, their participation is still not increasing. As a solution to this problem, the 'Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam' bill to reserve 33% seats for women in Parliament, state and union territory legislatures was passed in Parliament in September 2023, signed by President Draupadi Murmu on September 28, 2023 and today this law is enforceable. This reservation will also be applicable in Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe reservation. Initially, it will be applicable for 15 years, but Parliament can also take measures to continue it. The Mahila Reservation Bill was being presented in Parliament since 1996, but it could not be passed due to lack of majority. Of course, this cannot be implemented without a census and geographical delimitation of constituencies.

This reservation has a very long background. In 1988, the National Perspective Plan for Women had suggested that there should be reservation for women from Panchayat to Parliament. The National Women Empowerment Policy 2001 also said that women's reservation would be considered. In 2013, the Ministry of Women and Child Development set up a committee on the status of women, which recommended 50% reservation. The 2015 report on the status of women also said that women's representation is disappointing and suggested reserving 50% seats.

In order to increase the participation of women in local governance, in 1992, important constitutional amendments like 73 and 74 were made and local self-government bodies were given constitutional status and one-third or 33% reservation was given for women. Accordingly, 50% reservation was given to women in Panchayats and Municipalities in Maharashtra. Due to these reserved seats, which have been in operation for more than three decades, the participation of women in the decision-making process in local matters has increased. Many good leaders have emerged through this system.

The good results of women's reservation at senior levels will definitely be seen in the coming days. The representation of women will not only be symbolic but will increase in real terms and democracy will become gender-inclusive and more representative in the true sense. Till now, women's issues were raised through the Ministry or the Women's Commission. However, now the right of women to self-decision will be preserved. They will be able to speak directly on security, education, health, and girl child welfare in the decision-making process. Issues like

maternity, education, nutrition, gender equality, child marriage and female foeticide will be given priority. Many such bills will be introduced in the coming days. Women will think of women in the actual budget and policy making will get a feminist approach. The hitherto neglected and important broad issues of society will get a voice, will find a place in policies and will provide for actual plans. This will make decisions more inclusive and balanced. This reservation will eliminate the opportunity for parties to fear whether women will be elected, tickets will not be denied. Women candidates and members in the front line will inspire young girls and the message that this field is not just for men will soon go to the society. This reservation will change the traditional gender role of women in general in a visible form and the next generations will get the right message and inspiration. Her entry into social work and politics will be easier and smoother. Leadership at the hereditary level will not only inspire women to enter politics but will also give a visible inspiration to enter social life, jobs and business in general.

Despite the Reservation Bill been passed there are still many social, economic, educational and political obstacles. Delimitation of constituencies is a major obstacle in the implementation of this law today. But apart from that, a lot of work will have to be done on social issues. Another thing that comes in the way of women's social participation is the practical difficulties that arise because child care and family responsibilities fall primarily on them. They will have to be removed at the family level. Today, many things are becoming easier due to the increase in the maternity leave legally from 12 weeks to 26 weeks. A major obstacle to a woman's participation in the social process is the fact that she has to face sexual harassment and crimes. The moral obligation to take care of women in this regard will only be created by the society when offices and organizations are put into practice and her public participation will increase as a prerequisite for political participation. She needs to have the opportunity to work in a free and safe environment.

Women are still mainly limited to the roles of home makers, mothers and wives. There is a prejudice that politics is a 'male domain'. Even if a woman is eager to enter politics, it is not her traditional field, so the family and society stand against her. It is also believed that women are not safe in politics. She feels insecure about herself and her family in campaigning, travelling and factionalism within the party. Contesting elections need money, resources for campaigning and technology. Most women lack these resources. Due to the traditional secondary role, women are often unable to make decisions about their own financial affairs. Many women do not have complete information about voting, candidacy, and political party structures. They do not have the necessary training for leadership qualities, oratory and campaigning skills, nor do they get enough time.

Today, we should also think about how and to what extent political parties will accommodate them. Most political parties do not choose women as candidates to contest elections. Today, even in local government bodies, there is a scene in many places where proxy women candidates are nominated, but their husbands look after the affairs. We also need to see if men really have the will to create a strong women leadership. With a few exceptions, parties restrict women only to the 'women's front'.

At personal level, a woman may lack self-confidence. Many women are confused and have a question in their mind, ‘Am I qualified for politics?’ Also, the concept, ‘a woman being ambitious’ is not accepted by society till date. She is also trapped in the thought that she should fulfill her ambitions after fulfilling her family responsibilities, that the house needs her more and society has also taken up the matter because it is beneficial. She herself will have to find a skillful way out of this and facilities like day care centers and the mentality for it will have to be created. It is equally important to control the criminalization and factionalism in politics. This environment is even more difficult for women and not all women will be able to work freely in such an environment. While paving the way in Parliament and the legislature, many such issues will have to be worked on to increase their public participation.

Talking about women, women are not a homogeneous group in society. It has internal compartments with women from different religious, caste, economic and social backgrounds. It has to be ensured that all of them get proper representation and if women’s issues are to be given priority and voice, they have to work together. Representatives and organizations of caste, religious communities have been present in the country for many years. However, women have to prioritize the issue of ‘women’ together.

Therefore, if we want to increase direct participation and quality contribution, political parties should give more opportunities to women. Economic cooperation, training, leadership camps, dialogue should be increased, financial assistance schemes or the concept of ‘women’s bank’ should be implemented at the party level, emphasis should be placed on safety, digital skills and self-reliance. Many programmes like awareness programmes, leadership development, skill development should be implemented to build leadership. Violence against women and sexual assaults should be stopped and a safe environment should be created. Many role models like Ex Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and Ex External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj should be put in front. Success stories of many queens and skilled women administrators in our history can be discussed. After the 73rd and 74th amendments, women were elected to Gram Panchayats and Zilla Parishads in large numbers. Their work was also effective, development work gained momentum in many places – this experience will have to be shown as a role model in Parliament and Legislative Assemblies as well.

Overall, the ‘Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam’ is not just about reserving seats and not just about bringing about a social revolution, but it is a step towards bringing about a real mental revolution.

It will not only make women ‘representatives’, but will also make them ‘decision-makers’ and bring about a change in traditional gender roles.





# भारत का राजपत्र The Gazette of India

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असाधारण

EXTRAORDINARY

भाग II—खण्ड 2

PART II—Section 2

प्राधिकार से प्रकाशित

PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY

सं० २४] नई दिल्ली, मंगलवार, सितम्बर १९, २०२३/भाद्रपद २८, १९४५ (शक)  
No. 24] NEW DELHI, TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2023/BHADRA 28, 1945 (SAKA)

इस भाग में बिना पृष्ठ संख्या दी जाती है जिससे कि यह अलग संकलन के रूप में रखा जा सके।  
Separate paging is given to this Part in order that it may be filed as a separate compilation.

## LOK SABHA

The following Bill was introduced in Lok Sabha on 19th September, 2023:—

### BILL NO. 124 OF 2023

*A Bill further to amend the Constitution of India.*

BE it enacted by Parliament in the Seventy-fourth Year of the Republic of India as follows:—

1. (1) This Act may be called the Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-eighth Amendment) Act, 2023. Short title and commencement.

(2) It shall come into force on such date as the Central Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, appoint.

2. In article 239AA of the Constitution, in clause (2), after sub-clause (b), the following clauses shall be inserted, namely:— Amendment of article 239AA.

“(ba) Seats shall be reserved for women in the Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi.

(bb) As nearly as may be, one-third of the seats reserved for the Scheduled Castes in the Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi shall be reserved for women.

(bc) As nearly as may be, one-third of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in the Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes) shall be reserved for women in such manner as Parliament may by law determine.”

Insertion of new article 330A.

3. After article 330 of the Constitution, the following article shall be inserted, namely:—

Reservation of seats for women in the House of the People.

“330A. (1) Seats shall be reserved for women in the House of the People.

(2) As nearly as may be, one-third of the total number of seats reserved under clause (2) of article 330 shall be reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes or the Scheduled Tribes.

(3) As nearly as may be, one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election to the House of the People shall be reserved for women.”.

Insertion of new article 332A.

4. After article 332 of the Constitution, the following article shall be inserted, namely:—

Reservation of seats for women in the Legislative Assemblies of the States.

“332A. (1) Seats shall be reserved for women in the Legislative Assembly of every State.

(2) As nearly as may be, one-third of the total number of seats reserved under clause (3) of article 332 shall be reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes or the Scheduled Tribes.

(3) As nearly as may be, one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in the Legislative Assembly of every State shall be reserved for women.”.

Insertion of new article 334A.

5. After article 334 of the Constitution, the following article shall be inserted, namely:—

Reservation of seats for women take effect.

“334A. (1) Notwithstanding anything in the foregoing provision of this Part or Part VIII, the provisions of the Constitution relating to the reservation of seats for women in the House of the People, the Legislative Assembly of a State and the Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi shall come into effect after an exercise of delimitation is undertaken for this purpose after the relevant figures for the first census taken after commencement of the Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-eighth Amendment) Act, 2023 have been published and shall cease to have effect on the expiration of a period of fifteen years from such commencement.

(2) Subject to the provisions of articles 239AA, 330A and 332A, seats reserved for women in the House of the People, the Legislative Assembly of a State and the Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi shall continue till such date as the Parliament may by law determine.

(3) Rotation of seats reserved for women in the House of the People, the Legislative Assembly of a State and the Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi shall take effect after each subsequent exercise of delimitation as the Parliament may by law determine.

(4) Nothing in this article shall affect any representation in the House of the People, the Legislative Assembly of a State or the Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi until the dissolution of the then existing House of the People, Legislative Assembly of a State or the Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi.”.

Amendment not to affect reservation in the House of the People, the Legislative Assembly of a State or the Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi.

6. The amendments made to the Constitution by the Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-eighth Amendment) Act, 2023 shall not affect any representation in the House of the People, the Legislative Assembly of a State or the Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi until the dissolution of the House of the People, the Legislative Assembly of a State or the Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi, as the case may be, in existence at the commencement of the said Act.

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**STATEMENT OF OBJECTS AND REASONS**

After completing 75 years of Independence, the nation has begun its journey into Amritkal with a goal of becoming 'Vikasit Bharat' by 2047. Realisation of this goal will require contribution of all sections of society in the spirit of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, Sabka Prayas'. The role of women, constituting a half of the population, is extremely important in realisation of this goal.

2. Government has taken a number of steps to bring 'Nari Shakti' to the forefront through women's empowerment and women led development resulting in substantial improvement in financial independence of women and availability of equal access to education and health. Government has also emphasised 'Ease of Living', especially of women, through various initiatives including Ujjawala Yojana, access to toilets under Swachh Bharat Mission, financial inclusion through the Mudra Yojna, etc. However, true empowerment of women will require greater participation of women in the decision making process as they bring different perspectives and enrich the quality of legislative debates and decision-making.

3. While women participate substantively in the Panchayat Raj institutions and municipal bodies, their representation in the State Legislatures as well as in Parliament is still limited. Providing for higher representation of women at State and National level has also been a long pending demand. There have been several efforts to introduce women's reservation in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies. The last such attempt was made in 2010, when the Rajya Sabha had passed a Bill for women's reservation, but the same could not be passed in the Lok Sabha.

4. In order to enable greater participation of women as public representative in policy making at State and National level, it is decided to introduce a fresh legislation for Constitutional amendment to provide for, as nearly as may be, one-third of total seats in the House of the People, the legislative assembly of every State and the Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi to be reserved for women.

5. The Bill seeks to achieve the above objectives.

New Delhi;  
*The 18th September, 2023.*

ARJUN RAM MEGHWAL.

## FINANCIAL MEMORANDUM

The Bill, if enacted, is not likely to involve any expenditure, either recurring or non-recurring, from and out of the Consolidated Fund of India.

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UTPAL KUMAR SINGH  
*Secretary-General.*

# How many more 'Sarpanchpatis'?

**Bhim Raskar, Director**

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It has been 27 years since our country India achieved the concept of 'Power to People' i.e. Swarajya. After the 1993 constitutional amendment, one and a half lakh women representatives are elected to local bodies with 50 percent reservation in Maharashtra every five years.

"Sarpanchpati" ( husband of sarpanch) has become a national issue and a topic of discussion in every village. This article takes a look at the political observations.

The Mahila Rajsatta Movement organized 'experience writing workshops' for elected representatives.

Here is a glimpse of the authentic experiences of those who have penetrated the 'Satta Chakravyuh' . ( the castle of power). Let us also understand how, after the 27th anniversary of women's reservation, women representatives are gradually succeeding in freeing the 'republic and democracy' from male domination, i.e. external forces.

"It is true that we came to power on the basis of reservation, but we are becoming 'Draupadi', with party leaders, village workers, panel in- charge, caste leaders and our own husbands ruling us!"

## **"Sometimes, there is a 'Jotiba' as a ray of hope."**

If a political leader's husband and family have the social and political awareness, then they can easily help the woman make political progress and this also increases her contribution to social and political development. Though some women are benefited with such ideal atmosphere, for most women the struggle begins with their families. This includes emotional and physical pressure as well as their disapproval of women being in politics. The husband and family constantly restrict the leader's activities and take decisions on her behalf. They also show distrust in financial transactions. In addition, the character of the leader is questioned by checking the phone numbers of panchayat co-workers. Women still have to take permission to attend village panchayat meetings. Some women still do not have the right to make decisions and if any decision has to be taken, it has to be taken in consultation with their husbands. If a woman has to go out of the

house for any work, it is mandatory for her to do all the household chores. After the election, women's participation in politics is not immediately accepted by their husbands, rather they are repeatedly told that politics is a time-consuming job. Whatever is the situation, women have definitely made their mark in politics!

While dealing with their husbands and family in the Panchayat, they adopted various strategies, such as doing all the household and farm work themselves, making family members self-reliant to fulfill their needs and demands, talking politely to their husbands in public places, trying to convince them that political work is not time-consuming, etc. To change their husbands' attitude, women increased their conversation with them on the topic of democratic values and equality to increase their understanding. Women understand the social situation through training and practical experience and to get the support of the society, it is important to increase the awareness of all the family members about human rights. Sometimes nothing is achieved by protesting against some differences with the spouse. Therefore, it is advisable to accept some differences with your spouse and move forward without their support. Some women used the fame of media interviews to get the support of their husbands. There have been attempts to question their character to discourage women from politics. To break their resistance, efforts are being made to involve these husbands in various programmes and trainings as well as to familiarize them with the work and activists of the women's rights movement. This "Jotiba Samvaad" is very useful. Domestic violence is an integral part of women's lives. In one such incident, an elected woman representative was physically abused by her husband. A group of women from the same village, collectively, questioned the abusive and violent husband. If such a dispute arises in the family of a woman representative, efforts are made to resolve it, which gradually leads to her gaining the support of that family and gives freedom to other elected women representatives to work. When some women representatives get freedom to work, other women also ask their husbands, "Why should I not be allowed to work too?" Women seek the help of their husbands in political work and if the husband does not support them, they try to persuade him. At times, women have to lie to their husbands to get work done. Women have tried to reconcile with their husbands many times, but they have not always been successful. In such cases, they seek the help of experienced experts from the organization.

Women face many problems due to family pressure. Women are expected to play a caring role, maintain relationships and take care of household and agricultural work. Although reservation has provided opportunities to women, they still face pressure from their families to avoid participating in everyday politics.

Some women learn politics from their families as they have a political family background. The caste system and social exclusion are still visible in villages. As a result, poor and scheduled caste women face opposition from their families. Even when women fulfill their family responsibilities and work for others, they often do not get support and appreciation from their own families.

Women always have to be polite and tactful when dealing with their family. While handling various aspects of the family, women used many simple methods, such as time planning, increasing

family participation in the decision-making process and bringing clarity in their work-related communication, etc. In some situations, women preferred to be tolerant to avoid stress. In case of dispute, they would cry and express their emotions. To find time to work in the Gram Panchayat, women would divide work among family members and ask them to take up some responsibilities. To gain the support and trust of family members, women involved them in various programmes and decisions. Women also introduced them to activists when possible.

Although the relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law has been a controversial issue in this modern-day traditional world, women have built strong relationships with their mother-in-law to avoid this conflict and make the relationship more trust worthy and supportive. This has benefited women in increasing their participation in work. Women often have to endure abuse from the family. Moreover, they have not informed others about this attitude of the family in anticipation of getting necessary support in the future. These women have benefited from having the support of their families in stressful situations. Reservation has given women the opportunity to enter political work and planning with the family has motivated them to move forward. Agriculture is part of the economy, so most women in the village have to participate in farming and agricultural work. Women are not able to participate in political work due to the heavy workload in agriculture. The solution is to hire labour for some work and earn income from agriculture which is their only source of livelihood. They have used advanced and modern technology to increase their income. Some women have reserved one day in a week for Gram Panchayat work so that justice can be made with both farming and work at Gram Panchayat. Some women help their families financially by working in social organizations or by adopting professions like tailoring. Women in self-help groups keep track of their daily expenses, so they can keep track of daily expenses for their families. They were able to learn to manage their finances. They also got information about unnecessary expenses and those that can be stopped. Men always have the first right on any property, but some women also fought with their families for property ownership.

The women representatives have proved their leadership ability by developing the village through proper implementation of government schemes. While working on various issues and problems of the village, they faced a lot of opposition from the ruling class, who were considered to be from the upper caste and upper class and were in power for years and also had control over the resources of the village. Such rulers had never faced opposition from the villagers. No one had challenged them at any level. However, due to reservation, women came to power and initiated change. It was very difficult for the opponents to even think about and accept the leadership of women. Therefore, they started creating obstacles in the way of progress proposed by women. The strategy of deliberately using abusive language to present women and their families in the Gram Sabha was always adopted by the opposition. The women challenged the opposition in a way by doing some important work in the village. This created fear in the minds of the opposition. During the elections, the opposition tried to influence the voters by luring them with money and liquor. Women did become public representatives, but when they had to act

according to the views of their opponents, they became scapegoats. The opposition tried to discourage them by filing cases against them like corruption under Section 14G.

On the other hand, the elected women representatives felt the need to increase their participation in the decision-making process related to village development. However, the opponents opposed 50 percent reservation for women in the Gram Samitis. To control this intellectual transformation of women, the opponents brought a no-confidence motion against them. They opposed the decisions of women and also cancelled some important and well-planned programmes of the Gram Sabha. They also did not give any information to women about the decisions to be taken in the Gram Sabha and financial matters. In addition to the above obstacles further, they also offered bribes to women to resort to pressure and violence so that they do not contest elections. When they felt that this was of no use, they questioned the character of women and forced them to stay away from politics.

To ensure women's participation in the decision-making process related to development work in the village, they increased the presence of women in the Gram Sabha. This helped reduce the protests. While the protesters were not providing information on some financial and other matters related to the Gram Panchayat, information was collected through government offices and the Right to Information Act, 2005. The selection of Gram Samiti members was done by the Gram Sabha, so the women had the support of the Gram Sabha. The elected women representatives fought for 50 per cent seats for women in the Gram Samitis.

By learning and adopting various tricks and tactics used by the protesters, the women responded to them in their own language. Some took the initiative and started a dialogue with the protesters and sought their help for the overall development of the village. Some created awareness among women on village development issues, focused on development work, maintained women's support and ignored the protesters. To reduce the intensity of the opposition, women established good relations with the family of the opposition. To ensure that women's leadership is acceptable, she adopted simple tactics that always worked, like raising common issues, solving issues that were important for the opponents. To get the support of the opponents on village issues, the women gave them credit for the work done by them. They started studying various government ordinances. Moreover, through these ordinances, they also started creating awareness among the people of the village.

'Caste' also plays an important role in politics. Discrimination on the basis of caste is a strange thing that is found everywhere. There is limited entry of women in Indian politics and if that woman is from the Scheduled Caste, she has to face caste discrimination in many ways. There are mainly two reasons for this: First, the moment a woman thinks of joining politics, her struggle starts from there. Women have to face many problems in filing nomination papers and campaigning. Even after winning the election, their struggle continues due to the non-cooperation of some so called upper caste people. During elections, people from the so-called upper caste propagate that women from the so called lower caste cannot balance their livelihood and work in the Gram Panchayat. If the upper caste women help or work for the lower caste people, their

own caste people oppose them. It is unfortunate that even educated people adopt an uncooperative attitude towards Dalit women. In politics, 'caste' becomes more important than the development of the village.

Elected women representatives adopted various strategies to reduce caste discrimination in the village. For example, increasing interaction with people from the so-called upper castes, forming and maintaining relations with caste-based self-help groups and creating a base for village development within the village itself. Some representatives ignored caste-based discrimination. They believed that society will change gradually. The respect and social status of widows in the society is extremely dismal. Social norms have always prevented them from participating in family and public activities. However, women have changed the situation a little by giving educational gifts to all women in religious and social events.

Women are democratically elected for the development of the village. They present various plans and get approval for them. However, they are implemented by government officials. The government officials have the right to decide the implementation plan and the expenditure on it. Government employees are organized through various organizations. Making them people-oriented is a challenge. In the decentralization of the state, the Gram Sabha has the right to take decisions for the development of the village. The implementation of the decisions taken in the Gram Sabha is the responsibility of government employees and elected representatives. Both of them are interdependent, while implementing important schemes for the development of the village, officials are known for not fulfilling their responsibilities, hiding information and not cooperating with the elected women representatives.

Some Gram Sevaks ignore the work of efficient women representatives. Moreover, they are also insensitive towards women. These women have to struggle to get information on financial matters. Many times, government employees have lured women with bribes to hide their corruption. Cooperation of the implementing system is necessary for the development of society. Village work can be done by informing people about their rights and reminding them that it is the duty of the officials to do this work. Study of government ordinances helped women in creating good pressure for the implementation of schemes. Government employees tried to hide information about the functioning of the Gram Panchayat, but women have obtained this information by using the Right to Information. Women tried to know the opinion of the villagers about government schemes and implemented them with the permission of the villagers. Gram Samitis of villagers have also been formed to monitor the implementation of these schemes.

In some places, government officials did not want people's participation in village development and hence they were reluctant to call Gram Sabhas. The women representatives raised awareness among other members and put pressure on the officials to organize Gram Sabha.

The women representatives showed transparency in giving information about the financial provisions sanctioned for the village to the villagers. They also appealed to the villagers to monitor the results of the implementation of the schemes. A support campaign was launched for changing

the complex government system, making it people-oriented and for school reforms. 'Mahila Rajsata Andolan' has made a distinct identity for itself in the administrative field of Maharashtra on the basis of its valuable and commendable work. They use this position to do justice to the role of women representatives.

The direct participation of political parties may not be visible in the Gram Panchayat elections, but these parties are indirectly active. Political parties contest elections through their groups and it is very difficult for women to get candidature through such groups. Making a place for themselves in a political party is a big struggle for women. Moreover, political parties approach them only during elections. Working women have to face opposition not only from political parties but also from party workers. Since the image of political parties in society is misleading, it is difficult for women to trust political parties and their workers. Sometimes, even if a woman is a member of a party, her personal values and the party's values are not the same. Where there is no support from parties for elections and at the Gram Panchayat level, a woman's desire to work with a party through elections is also not accepted. Therefore, it has become a difficult task for women to create a permanent and sustainable option for themselves in a political party.

There have also been cases when women have contested elections as independent candidates on not getting nominations from political parties. Women believed that hard work and honesty can help them to get a remarkable place in a political party. Women interacted with party workers and political scholars to understand the ideology of the parties. Women from different parties helped each other in resolving common issues to create political coordination.

In the context of politics, during discussions with husband, family, opponents, officials and party workers, women representatives always try to ensure that their behaviour does not turn into an argument, but is cordial.

But, it is also true that if civility is violated, they find other strategies besides 'saam- daam -dand-bhed'. These women have definitely started penetrating the castle of power!

- **Women have entered the regime of power, Will they be able to face the new challenges?**

- This will depend on how much we support them. We have to decide how we can give respect to these 1.5 lakh women village representatives in Panchayat politics. We want to change the fabric of politics... so let us definitely accept this challenge!

- **Numbers speak**

1. **Highs:** Today, about 31 lakh local body representatives are elected in India. Out of these, 14.5 lakh are women representatives. This is a global high.
2. **Recognition:** Today, 20 of our states have given constitutional recognition to 50% reservation for women in local self-government bodies.
3. **Highest Participation:** The state of Uttarakhand has the highest ratio of women representatives at 56.01%.

4. **Lowest:** Today, the state of Uttar Pradesh has the lowest ratio of women representatives, which is only 33.34%.
5. **Maharashtra:** The ratio of women representatives in Maharashtra has now increased to 53.47%.
6. **Ratio:** However, according to the World Economic Forum 2025 report, India has moved down a little to 131 in the list of 148 countries in terms of gender ratio.
7. **Challenge:** According to this report, the challenge is that the proportion of women in Parliament has also decreased from 14.7% to 13.8%.
8. **Decline:** The share of women in ministerial positions in Parliament has also decreased from 6.5% to 5.6%.
9. **Criteria:** However, now the criteria of political empowerment of women in any country is also being considered an important factor in global criteria.
10. **Hard work:** Increasing number of women in local self-government bodies and decreasing number of women in Parliament - this is a big challenge before us today. Even if women's political participation gets acceptance at the government level, we will have to work hard to get the acceptance of the society.

(Source : Articles of ORF- Observer Research Foundation.)

- People who do not have any political background have not got much success.
- From this phase of household work and farming to political power and after five years back to household work and farming...such a "U-turn" is happening with a large number of efficient women working for good results.
- Reservation has been approved at the government level, but social acceptance is still insufficient.
- **Today these women representatives have also achieved a lot –**
- The order of questions in local self-government bodies has changed.
- The environment is also becoming people-centric.
- Giving priority to the last person in the society has now been included in the state agenda.
- The average age of women coming to power here is decreasing, young women are coming happily, and the education and understanding of these young women is increasing a lot.
- They are also getting organized in the form of associations and are becoming effective trainers of Yashada.



# Increasing women's Voting rate, down of development led by women!!

**Vijaya Rahatkar**

Chairperson, National Commission for women



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A significant change has emerged from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's speeches in the last five to seven years, that is, Modiji says, 'not only women development, but women lead development!!', this single sentence is a profound statement of a very big change in India. This sentence was not uttered casually. On the background, the growing expression of Indian women power is being refined. Indian women power has always remained silent, but firm and consolidated. When the country needed it, women power revealed its presentation in all the fields. Indian politics could not remain isolated from the all-pervasive touch of women power. Even when everyone got the right to vote, statistics and experience show that from the first election to the 2024 election, Indian women power has always been at the forefront in choosing the country's leaders. Of course, the expression of women power remained limited in the first three elections.

Because the overall restrictions in the Indian social system were more restrictive at that time, but still the statistics show that only a limited number of women exercised their rights. For example, in the 1962 Lok Sabha elections, the male voting rate was 63%, while the female voting rate was only 47%. But the statistics show that the female voting rate has been increasing in every election since then. In 1998, 57.7% of women voted, but in the next two elections, that rate decreased somewhat, but in 3 elections from 14 to 24, the female voting rate remained more than 65%. In the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, the female voting rate surpassed the male voting rate in 19 out of the 36 states in India. In this election, the female voting rate was 65.8%, while the male voting rate was 65.6%. - Increasing participation in the decision-making process.

This revealed the increasing participation of women in various decision-making processes in India. After the implementation of women's reservation in local bodies in the 1990s, the development of villages and towns started under the leadership of women. But it started with the leadership of women in the family. Over the time, there was a little change in it, but it is still not possible to believe that the development of villages or towns has become truly women-led development. There is a lot of scope for improvement in it. \*Until few years ago, at the state and national levels, the portfolios in the cabinet that women got were women and child welfare, social

welfare and civil supplies, that was considered the full participation of women in politics, but under Modi's leadership, the country got a woman Foreign Minister, Defence Minister and a woman Finance Minister, who did not and do not come from the family legacy. But going beyond that, the important factor that women's participation in the overall daily decision-making process has increased should be noted here. The government recognized the fundamental difference between a man earning money to support a family and a woman earning money to support a family. Therefore, the government effectively implemented plans for the independent empowerment of women.

Women's self-help groups were supported by providing financial support. Women's dignity was ensured along with women's safety through the schemes like 'Ujjwala' and 'Har Ghar Shauchalay'. Practices like triple talaq that hindered women's freedom were banned by law. These were not cosmetic measures for women's empowerment, but the government implemented schemes that truly freed women from social bondage. - The impact of thinking ability beyond religious bonds was of course obvious to be seen independently on voting, and we witnessed it.

But there was a perception that women vote only by taking advantage of beneficiary schemes, which, even if considered true to some extent, cannot be considered completely true. Because women's independent thinking process also developed through women's empowerment. It should be noted that various factors had their impact. The spontaneous response given by the women's class to the anti-triple talaq law was an example of this. You cannot shackle women on the basis of specific religious bonds. India is a country that runs according to the Constitution. The government showed through the anti-triple talaq law that the Constitution will work here and by supporting that law, women made the entire country aware of their thinking ability.

### 33% Reservation - New Dawn

Women empowerment and the increasing thinking capacity of women have also reflected in the decision-making processes of the government at the national level.

The government passed the law in the Lok Sabha and in the Vidhan Sabha which gives 33% reservation for women. This step was very important in terms of ensuring that women should not remain only the administrators of villages or talukas or even big cities, but beyond that, the administration of the entire state and even the country should be in the hands of women. When this law will be actually implemented, it will be the dawn of women led development as said by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi.



# Status of Women Representatives

**Dr. Medha Kulkarni**

Member of Parliament (Rajyasabha) of BJP

Sansad Ratna Awardee - 2025



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औरों ने ही बोया मुझ को, औरों ने ही सींचा मुझ को ।  
एक दफा तो मुझ को अपना, जीवन खुद ही बाने दो।  
लिख लेने दो अपनी किस्मत, होता है सो होने दो।

‘Her’ heartfelt cry is,

“How long should I live a life of dependence

under the protection of others (men)? Let me make my own decisions,

I will be confused in the beginning, but let me groom myself...

let me write my future, let me build it.”

Any woman from every corner of the world was saying the same thing. There was a time like this. To some extent, the situation is the same even today. Today we say that women are proving themselves and earning a name for themselves in many fields. Still it is the issue that they have to prove themselves and keep giving tests, keep telling that they are capable, why does such a situation arise! But still they are in the process of proving themselves. There are countless issues related to inequality and injustice between men and women and to solve them, women will have to stand firmly in politics. This is the need of the hour, especially in high-level politics, where women will have the right to leadership and decision-making. With this thinking, the Modi-led central government has taken a big step by passing the ‘Nari Shakti Vandan Act’, a bill pending for 25 years.

## ● **Background and current situation**

In 1992, the then Prime Minister Hon’ble P.V. Narasimha Rao implemented women reservation at the local self-government level by the 73rd and 74th amendments, due to which 33% women representatives were elected at the village, district and city level such as Gram Panchayat, District Council, Municipal Council, Municipality etc. Women representatives at the rural level started talking about important but neglected issues like dowry, liquor sale, water

supply, sewage disposal, domestic gas etc. Seeing this effectiveness, many other states of the country including Maharashtra declared this representation reservation ratio to 50%. Out of a total of 32 lakh public representatives in local self-government bodies in the country, 14 lakh public representatives are women. In France, this ratio is 40%, in Britain 34%, in Germany 27%, while in India, the highest ratio of women representation in local self-government bodies is 44%. But this representation is not seen at higher level. The ratio of women representatives is low in the four places where important decisions are taken for the country and the states, namely Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council. Today, the ratio of women representatives in the Lok Sabha is less than 15% and in the Rajya Sabha it is less than 14%. Globally, the ratio of women representatives is 26.2%. We are far behind that. At the state level, the ratio of women representatives in the Legislative Assemblies and Legislative Councils of 17 states of the country is less than ten percent.

### ● **‘Why is the ratio of women representatives low?’**

Why is the ratio of women representatives so low? This question arises. Till now people had feelings of oppression, fear, hatred etc. towards this field, which was considered to be male-dominated. Some people still have these feelings. There may be a perception that this field is mainly dominated by men, who are highly intoxicated by the nexus of power and money. And then why should women get into such ‘dirty politics’? This type of mentality was there in every family of the society. Still, we see that many educated and socially conscious women contributed to it in both pre-independence and post-independence periods. But still, overall, the number of women in politics remained low. The reason for increase in numbers at the level of local self-government bodies is reservation, but even in the initial period, the women who came due to this reservation were someone’s sister, mother, wife. Therefore, the work of these women was limited to giving their signatures as per the requirement and in reality, the execution and leadership was done by the men of that family. Now we see that the situation has changed to some extent. Women themselves are doing impressive work, taking decisions. They are making their mark in politics due to their unique style of work. Yet, even today, elected women mostly work under the influence of a male-dominated culture in the work that is done at the panchayat level. Just last month, I received a letter from a village asking for financial assistance. The letter was on the letterhead of the woman ‘Sarpanch’ of the village. Her phone number was also given on it. I was very excited to see the letter from the woman Sarpanch asking for funds and after reading the letter, I called the Sarpanch to get more information. A man answered the Sarpanch’s phone. He said, “I am her husband ( malik ).” (Now who gave him this ownership right is a different matter).” I told her husband, “Did you pick up a call meant for your wife? Give her the phone.” He said, “This is my phone number.” I said, “Why have you written your phone number as Sarpanch’s number on the letterhead and if she is the Sarpanch, then I would like to talk to her and take a decision and based on that I will be able to provide the funds.” To this he said, “She is busy with the household work, I look into all these matters.” I was very disappointed and dropped the idea of giving funds.

I travel to many states. In some places I see women representatives who lead well using their decision making ability, while in some places their husbands make decisions. This is a big problem which is seen even today. Despite the laws being made, women do not get their rights. The women representatives, who are supposed to fight for justice, have not yet got their rights. However, in some places women are seen presenting their opinion very skillfully, arguing in favor of their voters in front of the administration, fighting for it using their leadership qualities. I also feel proud to see them. Women have a different style of working. Especially women can plan work very well.

They can work together by establishing good communication among themselves. Also, they are seen emphasizing on long-term development plans for the people of their constituency. Women are seen giving more and more priority to issues like education, health facilities etc. Women are more interested in long-term public interest than short-term temptations. The effectiveness of such an attitude as a public representative is always high. From this point of view, having a female public representative is very beneficial for the development of cities and villages in the interest of society and the country. The level of politics of female representatives appears to be very high. Many female representatives are seen spending their entire life in politics by staying away from addiction, obscenity, corruption, which are considered an integral part of male-dominated politics. In this way, pure and clean politics is seen which is necessary from the point of view of national interest.

Lack of knowledge, information and skills - However, these are some of the major problems faced by female representatives. In every village and even in the city, the education of girls is not on priority. If a girl is kept uneducated, then her knowledge is definitely limited. Therefore, it cannot be said with certainty that such a female representative will work very effectively. Therefore, education and supplementary training is the need of the hour. With the combined effect of knowledge of various subjects, knowledge of administrative techniques and knowledge of the means of political work, public representatives can get the work done from the administration. Otherwise, they need someone's help. In such a situation, the right to take decisions and leadership seems to be weakened and gets transferred to someone else. Therefore, if girls/women are educated and trained, there will be maximum possibility of getting good representatives for the society.

#### ● **Difficulties faced by women**

A man does not have to go through all the phases of pregnancy and delivery. But a woman has to reserve a long period for this. Even after the birth of the child, the child remains completely dependent on the mother for few years. The situation is still manageable if the father is not able to give time for child care, but if the mother is not with the child, then many difficulties arise as far as healthy development of the child is considered. Therefore, we naturally see a difference in the way men and women work. Women cannot delegate all their work to others. Although many working women leave their children in day care centres, there is a huge difference between

‘working man ‘ and ‘working women’ especially when the children are young. In our society women are expected to contribute more than men in terms of household festivals and other duties. A comprehensive support at the family and social level would be useful in overcoming all such difficulties.

### ● **Communication skills and oratory skills**

Many times women lack oratory skills. If we are not able to say exactly what we want to say, it will not have any impact on society. Therefore, the science, technique and skill of presenting issues in a precise manner is necessary. The way of giving speech in a public meeting is different, the way of speaking in an auditorium is different, the way of speaking in a cultural event is different, the way of speaking in a protest is different. Training, experience and practice can help us present our views in different situations differently. However, without this practice, one cannot be impressive in the society. A person who does not have communication and oratory skills, no matter how intelligent he is, lags behind in politics. I think the women need help in developing their oratory skills, especially at the local self-government level in rural areas. Practice and training can be the solution.

### ● **Mindset in society**

Once we attended a programme arranged for women representative. There a speaker was giving a lecture on how women representatives should behave in society and at home. His lecture was really good. During his speech he gave an example. He expressed the expectation that after entering the house, you should leave politics and become a pure housewife. When Prakash Padukone, the father of famous actress Deepika Padukone, called her home, he immediately explained to her that, “After coming home you are not a celebrity, you are an ordinary girl and you have to pick up your clothes, your bedsheet, your plate of food yourself.” By giving this example, the speaker expressed the expectation that after entering the house, the female representatives should also follow the same rule and principle and maintain their conduct. I found this expectation right, as a person, I understood that no matter how glamorous a person is outside, his relationship with the family at home should be completely affectionate and simple. The effect of external positions should remain outside. I agree with this and have been following it. But my mind wanted to ask him a question, do you raise this issue in the meeting of male representatives? I know the answer was no. When male representatives come home, they are accompanied by many followers. The family members have to be busy in their hospitality and service. This issue is not raised by the thinkers of the society. But if the public representative is a woman, we let her go out, it means that we have done a favour to her and she should realize this, the male chauvinistic society never forgets to tell her that she should appreciate this favour. Another example is that when there is a meeting, women are expected to be in traditional attire wearing beautiful saris and manage the reception services, registration, greeting guests etc. Women also feel proud in performing this duty. Actually it would be appropriate to see whether a woman has the ability to give a good speech? Can her persuasive and effective speech style be given an opportunity? This should be the thought and I feel that this type of

thinking is visible these days. She has not entered politics only for the clerical work like registration. We should not forget that just like male politicians handle other responsibilities, women too have the ability to handle those responsibilities. And women too will have to prove their ability by devoting themselves to difficult and challenging tasks, moving away from the safe, easy path. Only then the party and society will understand their importance.

Training is very important for all such things. This includes giving information about how various administrative matters, water supply and electricity system, road construction etc. are managed at that level. Apart from this, information about speech style, time planning, dress code, communication skills, letter writing, making requests, study of law, styles of various establishments, use of social media in modern times etc. can be given during training. All these things can be taught through training. We have also been benefited by such trainings. The entire system of the Bharatiya Janata Party includes study circles and workshops. Many study circles are also organized for men and women, public representatives and organisational officials at the Late Rambhau Mhalgi Prabodhini located in Uttan in Thane district.

### ● **Opinions and criticisms about politics**

Even though women are doing great work in various fields, the level of oppression in those places with respect to women cannot be ignored. In the field of politics, the scope for malpractices and corruption may be very high. How can a woman work in the field of politics being a part of this dirty politics? How much opportunity will she get to work? Will she be harassed? Will she become a victim of this dirty politics? Will she be insulted? Will she be taken advantage of? In a way, there is a legitimate fear in families and hence it seems to be deep rooted in the minds that women should stay away from that dirty politics. Thus the possibility of women being active in politics withers away.

A study shows that women in politics have to face many derogatory comments or sexual remarks. This study found that one in every seven tweets is derogatory towards women. Therefore, women stay away from politics thinking that they should not get involved in such criticisms. Family and society also discourage women from entering politics. Is it correct? Earlier, when women got educated and started working in various fields even then there were criticisms and imaginary accusations. They had to face criticisms such as ‘if a woman steps out, she is spoiled, she is out of control’. Today, a similar attitude towards women politicians is seen in the society, especially when a responsible and determined woman representative takes any concrete step for the welfare of the society despite the opposition of male leaders and in a way invites the anger of male leaders, then she has to face such obscene comments. In fact, when male representatives are not able to face healthy competition, they intensify their unjustified attacks on the character of women, due to which sometimes the female representatives become confused and weak. This is the success of the strategy of the competitors. They succeed in making their arbitrary decisions by making false criticisms and forcing women to back down. A study has revealed that “money, muscle, threat, abuse and personal attack” are the things that women representatives fear more than their male representatives.

It is important to find a solution to all these situations. Women need to change their mindset and the society also needs to encourage them. In such a situation, a timely and satisfactory solution to such type of opposition within the party and between different parties is necessary.

- **Victims of convenient tickets**

Many a times, there is an interest in putting a puppet woman in that place rather than a woman who is really competent. There is a trend of giving a ticket to a woman who will always follow orders without complaining. Or giving a ticket to a woman from a political family is considered safe in terms of getting the work done smoothly, according to their convenience. In the last election, 41 % of women candidates were from political families, of which 30% were elected, but then the real grassroot workers, the real worker who has worked hard for the party, for the society, for many years, and who is passionate about social service, is left out. This should not happen. The criteria for selection is an important issue here. It is believed that men are more likely to be elected than women, women candidature is seen in a lower proportion.

On one hand, the number of women representatives is low due to the low participation of women in the internal work of the party. Proportion of women candidature is also low. Though women get candidature, there is no guarantee that all the party workers will put in total efforts collectively for her victory. Thus the number of women representatives remain low.

- **Organisational appointments within the party**

Many times, it is noticed that women leadership has been given secondary importance in organisational positions in various parties. Especially in the current situation, the demand for giving a certain number of positions to women in organisational positions is gradually rising. Not just in 'Mahila Morcha', i. e. women wing, many parties are taking initiatives to ensure that women are represented in the party's main organisation (parent body) and are able to participate in the decision-making process. This idea came to the fore in the recent organisational appointments of the Bharatiya Janata Party. While announcing various Mandal presidents, the emphasis was on appointing at least one woman and one SC/ST Mandal president in every four Mandals of a constituency. Women leaders in such places may not have obvious opportunities, but such responsibilities are given to women. The senior leadership of the organisation specifically mentioned that 'without giving them an opportunity, how can they (women) prove their capability?' Therefore, it can certainly be said that in all parties, especially the Bharatiya Janata Party, a positive picture is slowly emerging which is reinforcing the idea that women need opportunities to prove their potential. Since only a few women work in the party, only a few of them get nominated and only a few get elected, this ratio is decreasing.

- **Men's mindset towards reservation**

What do women want to do with all these posts? Do they want to work only for women? Do they want to show off? Such questions come up. What do men want to do with all these posts? This question is never asked. 'We are here to solve the women issues' on the contrary

this is what is said. Some men get irritated on the topic of reservation for women. ‘What will they do and what will they achieve by coming into politics now?’ What have they achieved by entering into politics so far?’ Such sarcastic comments are made. But what have men achieved by coming into politics so far? This question is not asked. I am not talking about everyone, but there are many men who do not have subject knowledge, skills, oratory skills or interest in social service. But what have they achieved by joining politics is not asked. But where women are seen building themselves with hard work, they are asked, ‘What have they achieved by joining politics?’ I wonder if their work is limited to just greeting leaders, welcoming them, getting them registered, and managing reception and dining halls in very big events. The women leaders sitting on the stage are rare, and among them what is the proportion of women leaders addressing the meeting or the gathering? It is negligible. Unless we give them a chance to speak, how will their contribution to society building be assessed? Such questions arise in my mind.

### ● **Need for women representatives**

Even today, there are a large number of women in villages who are single-handedly supporting the entire family, who are victims of dowry, whose husbands are incompetent or an alcohol addict. There is economic and educational inequality. There is educational inequality in the education of boys and girls. Even when both men and women earn, there is economic inequality. While all these social imbalances are visible today, if there are sufficient number of women representatives representing them, they can work for issues like dowry ban, alcohol ban, economic and educational equality, equal status to women in the family. A large number of women representatives are needed to bring 50% of India’s population into the mainstream of society with confidence by eliminating old practices.

Also, women representatives are needed to create a comprehensive social work. According to a report, women representatives working in high positions work better and differently than men. It has also been observed that women representatives seem to work better for far-reaching reforms like improving the economy and eradicating corruption. They are also less susceptible to political opportunism.

### ● **Conclusion**

I believe that a large number of women should participate in organizational and social work within the party and develop their qualities. The party should also encourage them, there should be a system of guidance, they should be provided security and they should also be given the opportunity to be candidates. Because of her inherent unique working style, her work will not be limited to women alone but she will work for the wider society as well. I believe she will build her respectable position on the political stage and contribute to the progress of the country on the basis of her commitment.



# Representation of Women in Politics A Comparative Global Account

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## ● Introduction

1975 was declared the International Year of the Women (IYW) by UN. Since then, the world has witnessed significant institutional reforms in various countries to facilitate women's participation in the "public" domains. Even though the women's movement demanding right to vote, right to work, right to equal wages date back to the late nineteenth century, it took at least a century to translate these movements into the institutional apparatuses. IYW expediated the pace of these institutional reforms. However, the gender gap in various domains of life and particularly in political representation is quite wide. Despite global advancements in gender equality, the underrepresentation of women in politics remains a pervasive issue. Moreover, women's political representation should not be linked merely with their presence in national parliaments or municipal governing bodies. It is vital to evaluate their rise to the highest public office, their capacity to make significant contributions to legislation and policy formulation, and the availability of equal representation opportunities. This article undertakes a comprehensive comparative analysis to examine the representation of women in politics across different countries and regions.

## ● Historical Background and Global Trends

The history of political representation of women has been marked by a long struggle for inclusion, equality, and recognition. Historically, most political systems across the world excluded women from formal political participation. In ancient societies, governance was male-dominated, and women's roles were largely confined to the domestic sphere. The emergence of democratic ideas in the 18th and 19th centuries, particularly in the West, led to early movements for women's suffrage. The suffragette movements in the United Kingdom and the United States during the late 19th and early 20th centuries were critical in securing women's right to vote. The struggle for women's political rights dates back to the 19th century with the suffragette movements in the United States, the United Kingdom, and New Zealand—the latter being the first country to grant women the right to vote in 1893 (Paxton et al., 2007). Gradually, women began to enter parliaments and political offices, though their numbers remained low for decades. The post-World War II

period saw increased participation, especially in socialist and post-colonial countries. The rise of feminist movements in the 1960s and 1970s further pushed for equal political representation. Over time, women's suffrage spread globally, leading to gradual increases in political participation. Nonetheless, representation in political office has lagged behind electoral enfranchisement.

Recent decades have witnessed increased advocacy and policy interventions to improve women's representation. The Beijing Platform for Action (1995), adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, is a landmark global agenda for achieving gender equality. Attended by 189 countries, it outlines strategic objectives across 12 critical areas, including education, health, violence, economic participation, and political representation. The Platform emphasizes the full empowerment of women and the elimination of all forms of discrimination. It remains a key reference point for global gender policy and is reviewed regularly through mechanisms like Beijing+25. Its comprehensive vision continues to guide governments and civil society in advancing women's rights and gender justice worldwide.

Similarly, The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. It seeks to eliminate discrimination, violence, and harmful practices like child marriage, while promoting equal participation in political, economic, and public life. SDG 5 also emphasizes access to reproductive health, recognition of unpaid care work, and equal rights to economic resources. Ensuring gender equality is not only a matter of human rights but also a foundation for a sustainable and inclusive future. Empowering women and girls is vital for progress in all areas of development and global well-being. It has emphasized the importance of equal participation in political and public life (UN Women, 2019). Women's participation in governance is crucial for the development of inclusive policies, democratic legitimacy, and social justice (Phillips, 1995). However, as of 2024, women comprise only about 26.5% of national parliamentarians worldwide (IPU, 2024).

- **Regional Comparisons**
- **Europe**

Europe exhibits significant progress in women's political representation; nonetheless, gaps remain across different regions and political systems. In 2024, women occupy an average of 33.9% of seats in national parliaments throughout Europe, surpassing the global average of 26.5% (Inter-Parliamentary Union [IPU], 2024). This advancement is supported by female quotas, proportional representation systems, and robust feminist advocacy. Nonetheless, significant disparities are seen between Western and Eastern European nations.

The Nordic nations—Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark, and Iceland—are esteemed as global frontrunners in promoting women's political representation. In 2024, women represent an average of 45.7% of national MPs in the region, the greatest proportion globally (Inter-Parliamentary Union [IPU], 2024). This achievement is ascribed to a confluence of proportional representation election systems, party-specific gender quotas, and robust welfare states that promote gender

equality (Freidenvall, 2020). Sweden boasts a 46.4% female presence in the Riksdag, leading the area (IPU, 2024). Prominent political parties, such as the Social Democrats and the Left Party, have deliberately implemented “zipper” systems—alternating male and female candidates on party lists—to achieve gender parity (Krook, 2009). Norway has 45% female representation in the Storting, bolstered by party quotas and a longstanding social commitment to gender equality established since the 1970s (Teigen, 2012). Finland and Denmark claim 46% and 44% representation of female Members of Parliament, respectively. Denmark is recognized for its substantial proportion of women in ministerial positions (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2023). Iceland is notable for attaining near-parity in its parliament, with a representation of 47.6%.

These elevated levels female representation have been maintained over decades through institutional reforms, gender-aware party politics, and inclusive civic cultures. Furthermore, the political representation of women in the Nordic region has resulted in more inclusive policy formulation, especially concerning childcare, maternity leave, and gender-based violence (Wängnerud, 2009). The Nordic model is a persuasive example of how political systems, institutional frameworks, and social norms can align to promote gender-equal political representation.

In comparison to the Nordic region, other areas of Europe are comparatively underperforming. The political representation of women in the United Kingdom has markedly improved, however it remains inconsistent. In 2024, women occupy 35% of seats in the House of Commons, an increase from 28% in 2010 (Inter-Parliamentary Union [IPU], 2024). Nordic countries surpass 45% representation, underscoring the UK’s comparative deficiency. Although symbolic milestones, such by Margaret Thatcher and Theresa May serving as Prime Ministers, indicate advancement, entrenched inequities and intra-party opposition persist in constraining wider gender parity (Lovenduski, 2005).

France has had substantial increase attributable to the 2000 parity rule, which requires equal representation of male and female candidates on party lists, resulting in 39.5% female representation (Murray, 2010). Conversely, Southern and Eastern Europe exhibit more subdued advancement. Italy, despite recent reforms, has 34% representation of women in parliament, whilst Poland and Hungary have lower figures at 28% and 13% respectively (IPU, 2024). The restricted implementation of effective quotas and the enduring presence of patriarchal political cultures obstruct women’s entry to power in these nations (Verge & de la Fuente, 2014).

The European Union (EU) has significantly contributed to advancing gender parity through its institutional structures and policy incentives. As of 2024, the European Parliament comprises 39.3% female members (European Parliament, 2024). Nevertheless, women continue to be underrepresented in senior executive positions throughout the continent, indicating a disparity between descriptive and substantive representation. Europe’s experience demonstrates that legal reform necessitates accompanying cultural transformations and political commitment to attain significant gender parity in governance.

## ● **Sub-Saharan Africa**

Numerous Sub-Saharan African countries have achieved significant advancements in political gender equality. They have achieved considerable progress in enhancing women's political representation, frequently surpassing more economically advanced regions. In 2024, women hold an average of 27.3% of seats in national parliaments in the region, just exceeding the global average of 26.5% (Inter-Parliamentary Union [IPU], 2024). This advancement is primarily due to the implementation of constitutional and legislative gender quotas, regional pledges, and the impact of post-conflict reconstruction initiatives that have prioritized inclusivity (Bauer & Britton, 2006).

As of 2024, Rwanda leads the world in women's parliamentary representation, with women holding 61.3% of seats in the lower house (IPU, 2024). This accomplishment arises from constitutional mandates, a proportional representation system, and the nation's post-genocide dedication to inclusive administration. Senegal demonstrates significant advancement, as gender parity legislation enacted in 2010 has resulted in women occupying 43% of parliamentary seats (Fall, 2015).

South Africa has formalized gender equality under the African National Congress's (ANC) 50/50 gender policy, leading to women constituting 46% of its National Assembly (Geisler, 2000). Conversely, nations like Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo exhibit considerable deficiencies, with female representation in parliament falling below 10%. These inequities are frequently associated with the lack of quotas, patriarchal attitudes, and elevated election expenses (Tripp, 2015).

The comparatively elevated levels of women's political representation in Sub-Saharan Africa are frequently linked to nations experiencing democratic transitions or post-conflict reconstruction, whereby new constitutions have enshrined gender equality. Nonetheless, representation has not consistently resulted in political influence, since institutional and cultural obstacles persist in restricting women's access to pivotal leadership roles and decision-making authority (Tamale, 2020). Ongoing reform and societal transformation are essential to guarantee substantial rather than merely formal representation.

## ● **MENA Countries**

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has traditionally fallen short of worldwide standards in women's political representation due to deep-rooted patriarchal norms, restrictive legal frameworks, and authoritarian political regimes. In 2024, women represent merely 19.4% of parliamentarians in MENA countries, far lower than the global average of 26.5% (Inter-Parliamentary Union [IPU], 2024). Nonetheless, considerable disparity occurs within the region, with several countries achieving remarkable advancement.

Tunisia distinguishes itself as a regional leader, with women holding 47.7% of parliamentary seats subsequent to the 2014 constitution and the implementation of vertical and horizontal gender

balance in party lists (Krause, 2020). Morocco and Algeria have instituted legislative quotas for female representation, set at 17% and 26% respectively, in response to international pressure and domestic activism; however, implementation is inconsistent (Bauer & Britton, 2006).

Conversely, Saudi Arabia permits only restricted involvement. Women were initially appointed to the Shura Council in 2013, and in the 2015 municipal elections, they were permitted to vote and run as candidates. However, female representation is below 20%, primarily symbolic owing to the council's advising capacity (Doumato, 2013). Despite a 25% quota for women in the House of Representatives, Egypt has had inconsistent outcomes due to alterations in the electoral system and the prevalence of male-dominated parties.

Political liberalization and post-conflict reconstruction have sometimes created opportunity. Iraq and Libya established quotas during transitional phases, with Iraq instituting a 25% quota, leading to a persistent representation of women in parliament (Al-Ali & Pratt, 2011). Nonetheless, conservative opposition, inadequate enforcement, and political instability persist in undermining women's substantial political power throughout the region.

## ● **Latin America**

Latin America has become a global leader in advancing women's political representation, primarily due to legal quotas and political reforms. In 2024, women occupy an average of 35.4% of seats in national parliaments within the region, markedly surpassing the global average of 26.5% (Inter-Parliamentary Union [IPU], 2024). Numerous Latin American nations were trailblazers in implementing gender quotas, and several have progressed towards parity legislation that requires equal representation of women and men on electoral lists.

Mexico illustrates this transition, as women comprise 50% of the two houses of Congress in 2024, subsequent to constitutional revisions requiring gender parity in candidacies for legislative and executive positions (Piscopo, 2020). Argentina, the inaugural nation to implement a gender quota rule in 1991, currently has over 44% female representation in its lower house, attributable to persistent legal and party-level enforcement (Marx, Borner & Caminotti, 2007). Costa Rica has implemented a "zipper" system, alternating male and female candidates on electoral lists, which has led to 47% female representation in its parliament (Htun & Piscopo, 2014).

Nevertheless, nations like Brazil are deficient, with women representing merely 17.7% of the lower house, despite a 30% mandate. The inefficacy of enforcement mechanisms and a robust patriarchal political culture impede genuine advancement (Sacchet, 2008). Chile has achieved significant progress by enacting a 40/60 gender parity electoral statute, resulting in 35% female participation in 2024.

The existence of robust women's movements, judicial action, and regional frameworks like the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence Against Women (Belém do Pará) have facilitated gender reforms. Despite inconsistent development, Latin America illustrates that legal mandates, when properly executed, can markedly enhance women's political representation.

## ● **North America**

Women's representation in politics in North America, specifically Canada and the United States, has been improving in recent decades; however, both nations still lack gender parity in their national legislatures. In 2024, Canada has 30.5% representation of women in the House of Commons, whereas the United States has 28.9% in the House of Representatives and 25% in the Senate (Inter-Parliamentary Union [IPU], 2024). These results continue to be lower to those in other Latin American and European nations, where gender quotas and parity legislation have exerted a more substantial influence.

Canada has achieved moderate progress through party-driven efforts rather than mandated targets. The New Democratic Party (NDP) and Liberal Party have utilized informal gender quotas and candidate recruitment tactics, resulting in a progressive increase in women's participation (Thomas & Bodet, 2013). Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's 2015 declaration of a gender-balanced cabinet—"because it's 2015"—was symbolically meaningful but did not encompass parliament in its entirety (Bashevkin, 2019).

The 2018 and 2020 elections in the U.S. resulted in unprecedented advancements for women, especially women of colour. Yet, structural impediments such as single-member districts, incumbency advantages, and party gatekeeping continue (Lawless & Fox, 2010). In contrast to Canada, the USA does not possess a national plan or gender quotas to advance women's participation in politics.

In comparison to global leaders such as Rwanda or Sweden, North American nations exhibit slower and more inconsistent advancement. Cultural ideas on gender fairness are evolving, however institutional reforms are progressing slowly. In the absence of thorough election reforms or legal constraints, North America persists in its inadequate attainment of both procedural and substantive gender parity in political representation.

## ● **Pacific Region**

In the Pacific region, political representation of women is among the lowest worldwide, despite international pledges to gender equality and democratic government. Structural impediments, including patriarchal traditions, clan-oriented political frameworks, and the lack of gender quotas, have led to this ongoing underrepresentation. In 2024, the Pacific Islands exhibit an average of merely 10.5% female representation in national parliaments, in contrast to the global average of 26.5% (Inter-Parliamentary Union [IPU], 2024).

As of 2023, New Zealand is an anomaly in the area, with women occupying more than 50% of parliamentary seats, attributable to enduring political changes, the mixed-member proportional (MMP) system, and robust party pledges to gender equality (Curtin, 2022). Australia, although more moderate, has 38.4% representation of women in the House of Representatives, facilitated by the Labor Party's implementation of voluntary quotas and gender equity measures (Sawer, 2012).

Conversely, Pacific Island nations like Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, and Papua New Guinea continually have some of the lowest levels of female parliamentary representation globally. After the 2017 elections, Papua New Guinea had no women in its parliament; nevertheless, two women were elected in 2022, marking a minor advancement (Spark & Cox, 2023). Attempts to implement reserved seats for women have predominantly faltered due to political opposition and cultural resistance.

## ● **Asia**

Women's political representation in Asia remains uneven, reflecting a complex interplay of socio-cultural norms, electoral systems, and state-led reforms. As of early 2024, women held approximately 20% of parliamentary seats in Asia, significantly below the global average of 27.2% (Inter-Parliamentary Union [IPU], 2024). This regional average, however, masks stark contrasts between countries.

Countries such as Nepal and the Philippines demonstrate progressive trends. Nepal, following the 2015 constitution, mandates that at least 33% of the federal parliament comprise women, resulting in nearly 32.7% representation (UN Women, 2023). The Philippines, despite lacking formal quotas, has maintained over 28% female representation in recent years, aided by strong civil society and female political dynasties (Jalal, 2020).

In contrast, South Korea and Japan, two of Asia's most advanced economies, continue to lag behind. As of 2024, women hold only about 19.5% of seats in Japan's lower house and 19% in South Korea's National Assembly (IPU, 2024). Cultural conservatism, male-dominated party structures, and the absence of strong quota mechanisms contribute to these low figures (Dalton & Jung, 2021).

South Asian countries show mixed outcomes. India, with 33% quotas in local governance, has resulted in over 1.4 million women in Panchayati Raj institutions (Rai, 2017). Bangladesh has reserved 50 seats for women in parliament, pushing female participation to approximately 21% (UNDP, 2023). Overall, while some Asian countries have made commendable strides, the region as a whole remains far from achieving gender parity in politics.

## ● **Factors Affecting Women's Representation in Politics**

As the 21<sup>st</sup> century is often regarded as a century of aspirations, women too are aspiring for legitimate and equitable representation, and opportunities in all walks of life. Women's representation in politics is a critical measure of gender equality and democratic inclusiveness. The political arena has remained male-dominated despite several intuitional, legal and policy initiatives. Women continue to face significant underrepresentation in political spheres. Several interrelated factors affect women's political participation, including socio-cultural norms, economic barriers, political structures, and institutional discrimination.

## ● **Socio-Cultural Norms, Gender Roles and Patriarchal Structures**

Traditional gender roles and societal expectations play a central role in shaping women's access to political opportunities. In many societies, politics is still perceived as a male domain,

and women are expected to prioritize family responsibilities over public engagement (Inglehart & Norris, 2003). Patriarchal attitudes often discourage women from pursuing leadership positions, limiting their ambition and public presence. These cultural stereotypes are perpetuated through education, media, and religious teachings, which can collectively shape perceptions about women's capabilities in governance (Paxton & Hughes, 2014). And even when women aspire to play a significant role in the political sphere, often they lack the opportunity and resources for political representation and further hold the highest public offices.

- **Economic Constraints**

Economic dependence significantly affects women's ability to participate in politics. Campaigning for political office requires financial resources, and women often lack access to the necessary funding and networks compared to men. The gender pay gap, unequal asset ownership, and limited access to credit all contribute to this disparity (Ballington & Karam, 2005). In addition, burden of the domestic and routine chores restricts their time and capacity to engage in political activities, further widening the gap between male and female participation.

- **Political and Electoral Systems**

The structure of political systems and electoral rules greatly influences women's representation. Proportional representation systems tend to result in higher numbers of women in elected office compared to majoritarian systems because they often include party lists that can be structured to ensure gender balance (Matland, 1998). Political parties also act as gatekeepers to candidacy; when parties lack internal gender quotas or affirmative action policies, women face greater barriers to nomination and election (Krook, 2009). Additionally, the lack of female representation within party leadership roles can hinder the advancement of gender-sensitive policies. In certain polities, where money and muscle power play a major role in electoral politics, women tend to remain aloof from political activities.

- **Institutional and Legal Barriers**

In many countries, discriminatory laws and practices continue to limit women's political participation. For instance, restrictive citizenship or electoral laws can prevent women from voting or standing for office. Even where legal rights exist, poor enforcement and gender-biased institutions can render these protections ineffective. Quota systems have emerged as a strategy to combat these barriers, but their effectiveness varies depending on design and implementation (Dahlerup & Freidenvall, 2005).

- **Violence and Harassment in Politics**

Political violence and gender-based harassment are growing concerns. Women in politics often face verbal abuse, threats, and even physical attacks, both online and offline, which deter many from engaging in political life (Krook, 2020). This hostile environment reinforces the perception that politics is unsafe for women and discourages future participation

## ● Conclusion

The above-mentioned barriers necessitate multifaceted interventions to create enabling environments. This includes reforming electoral systems, providing economic and institutional support, and challenging deep-rooted gender norms and patriarchal structures. Legal and institutional reforms mandating quotas, enforcing anti-discrimination laws, and reforming political finance regulations can create equitable access. Capacity building training programs for women candidates, leadership development, and mentoring can enhance women's political readiness. Gender-sensitive education, media advocacy, and community mobilization can go a long way to shift cultural attitudes.

Global institutions should continue supporting initiatives that promote gender parity, such as UN Women's programs. Only through a multifaceted and inclusive approach can true gender parity in political representation be achieved. While significant progress has been made in advancing women's political representation, considerable challenges persist. Cross-national comparisons reveal that context-specific strategies, particularly the use of quotas and inclusive electoral systems, are instrumental. Achieving gender parity in politics is not merely a matter of fairness but a prerequisite for sustainable development and democratic legitimacy.



<b>Deputy Governor</b>	<b>Tenure</b>		
1. Chandrawati	19/02/1990	18/12/1990	
2. Rajendra Kumari Bajpail	02/05/1995	22/04/1998	
3. Rajani Rai	23/04/1998	29/07/2002	Pondicherry
4. Kiran Bedi	29/05/2016	16/02/2021	
5. Tamilisai Soundararajan	16/02/2021	18/03/2024	

wikipedia

# Women Rulers of India

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References to rulers in India have been found since ancient times. The initial references are found in the texts. References of later times are found in inscriptions and copper plates. These references are considered more reliable. Inscriptions and copper plates mention donations given by queens and wives of officials. And there are also references that they had also looked after the administration of the state. There must have been many such women rulers who may not have been mentioned in the pages of history, but due to lack of sufficient information, it has not been possible to mention all of them in this article. In the following article, an attempt has been made to give brief information about some such influential rulers.

- **Nagnika (2nd century B.C.)-** After the death of King Siri Satkarni of the famous Satvahana dynasty of Maharashtra, his queen Nagnika ruled till her sons grew up. She performed many yagyas and gave donations. Coins in her name have been found. She was the first woman ruler of the Indian subcontinent who had her own coins. The inscription at Naneghat gives information about her reign and charity.
- **Prabhavati Gupta (4th century B.C.)-** Prabhavati Gupta, daughter of Gupta emperor Chandragupta II (Vikramaditya), was married to Vakataka king Rudrasen of Vidarbha. At the time of Rudrasen's death, his children were quite young. Prabhavati Gupta ruled for 13 years till her children grew up. A copper plate mentioning her has been found in Pune and information about her is available from Vakataka inscriptions.
- **Rani Mrugavati (6th century BC) -** Rani Mrugavati was the daughter of King Chetak of Vaishali and the wife of King Shatanik of Kaushambi. According to Jain tradition, she was related to Lord Mahavir. She had also received education in governance along with other subjects. After the death of her husband in the war, she ruled the kingdom for some time.
- **Vijayabhatarika (7th century AD) -** Vijayabhatarika, queen of Chalukya king Chandraditya, ruled parts of southern Maharashtra near Mumbai. She was also known as Vijaya-Mahadevi. Inscriptions mention donations made by her in the fifth year of her reign.

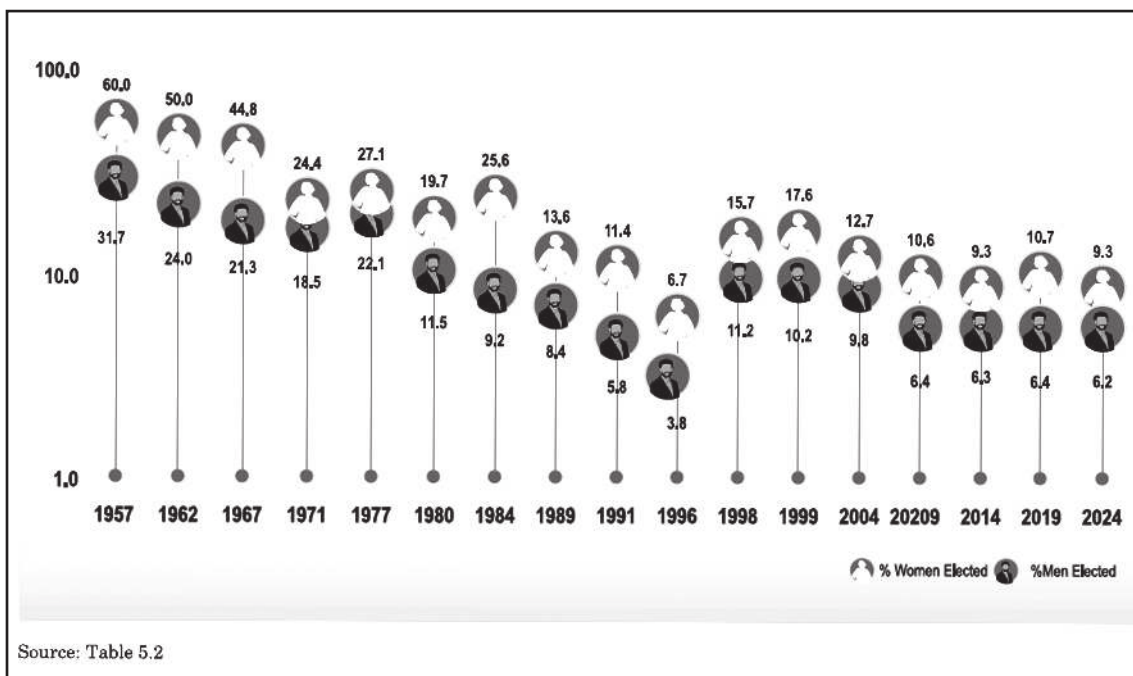
- **Sheelamahadevi (8th century AD)** - An inscription mentions that Sheelamahadevi, wife of Rashtrakuta king Dhruva, donated land under her control in 786 AD. Her husband's name is not mentioned in the inscription. Therefore, it can be said that she must have had significant powers of ruling and giving donations.
- **Queen Tribhuvanadevi (9th century AD)** - Queen Tribhuvanadevi was the wife of King Lalitabharnadev of Orissa. After the death of the king, the chief persons and ministers requested Queen Tribhuvanadevi to ascend the throne. She was the first woman ruler of the Bhaumakar dynasty in Orissa. It is mentioned that she sat on the throne like Goddess Katyayani. It is mentioned in copper plates that she ruled very well and destroyed the enemies.
- **Queen Sugandha (9th-10th century AD)** - Queen Sugandha ruled Kashmir after the death of King Shankarvarman of Kashmir. At that time her son Gopalvarman was a minor. She declared her kingdom in 904 AD as 'Shri Sugandha Devi - Queen of Kashmir'.
- **Queen Sembiyan Mahadevi (10th century AD)** - Sembiyan Mahadevi, wife of King Gandaraditya of the famous Chola dynasty of Tamil Nadu, was the most influential queen of that time. In sixty years she built many temples and made donations. After the death of her husband, she also ruled Thanjavur in Tamil Nadu for some time.
- **Kundavai Nachiyar (10th century AD)** - Another important Chola queen was Kundavai Nachiyar, who was the daughter of Chola King Parantaka II and sister of the famous Chola king Rajaraja Chola (Arumolivarman). She was married to Vallavaraiyan Vendiradevan of the Bana dynasty. She had a profound influence on the Chola dynasty and the rule of South India during that period.
- **Queen Didda (10th-11th century AD)** - Princess Didda of King Sinharaja was married to King Kshemagupta of Kashmir. She ruled from 980 to 1003. Coins in her name have been found. Information about her is found in the book 'Rajatarangini' written on Kashmir. She is also called 'Catherine of Kashmir' after the famous Catherine Queen of Russia.
- **Attimabbe (10th-11th century AD)** - Attimabbe was the wife of Nagadeva, a prominent general and minister in the court of the Western Chalukya king. After the death of her husband, she took over the administration. She gave a lot of donations. She built many Jain temples in Karnataka. She is known as 'Dana Chintamani'.
- **Mailadevi (11th century AD)** - Queen Mailadevi of Chalukya king Someshwara ruled over a large area of 'Banavasi'.
- **Ketaladevi (11th century AD)** - The second queen of this king, Ketaladevi, held a leading position under his rule in Ponwad. She looked after the entire administration there.
- **Kumkuma Devi (11th century AD)** - Kumkuma Devi, sister of Shilahara King Vijayaditya, ruled the Dharwad region of Karnataka.

- **Lakshmi Devi (12th century AD)** - Lakshmi Devi was the queen of King Vikramaditya IV of the Kalyani Chalukya dynasty. There were eighteen religious places under her jurisdiction. When the Italian traveler Marco Polo came to India, the queen was ruling a part of Guntur district, Marco Polo has recorded this.
- **Kumra Devi (12th century AD)** - In 1193, Prithviraj Chauhan died along with his army chief Samarsi. His wife Kumra Devi took over the kingdom of Mewar and opposed Qutubdin.
- **Raziya Sultan (13th century AD)** - Delhi was ruled by Muslim sultans. At that time, Raziya Sultan, daughter of Sultan Shamsuddin Iltutmish, ruled Delhi for some period. Unable to bear her dominance, the courtiers revolted and she was killed. She is known as the only Muslim female ruler.
- **Rani Karnavati (16th century AD)** - Karnavati was the wife of King Rana Sanga of Mewar, Rajasthan. After Rana's death she ruled from 1527 to 1533 AD. She was the grandmother of Maharana Pratap. When Sultan Bahadur Shah invaded Chittor, Rani Karnavati resisted him. Rana Sanga's second wife, Jawahirbai, also died on the battlefield while fighting the war.
- **Rani Abbakka Chowta (16th century AD)** - Jain Queen Abbakka Chowta ruled Ullal in Tulu province. She fought several times against the Portuguese and protected her kingdom. During this period, there was extensive trade on the Malabar coast.
- **Queen Chinnamma of Keladi (17th century AD)** - In 1667, Chinnamma was married to King Someshwar Nayak of Keladi in Shimoga district of Karnataka. After the death of her husband, she ruled for about 26 years. After the death of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, the queen gave shelter to Chhatrapati Rajaram Maharaj when he was on the way to Jinji. At that time, he defeated the Mughal army that reached there.
- **Maharani Yesubai (1658 to 1730 AD)** - Maharani Yesubai, daughter-in-law of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and wife of Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj, was blessed with a supernatural personality. She was the first 'Kulmukhtar' of Swarajya. Sambhaji Maharaj himself got her the seal 'Sakhi Radnyi Jayati' to be used while handling the administration of the state. After the death of Sambhaji Maharaj, Yesubai took extremely bold decisions to save the Maratha Empire. Despite being in the captivity of the Mughals for thirty years, she paid attention to the education and 'sanskar' of Shahu Maharaj. She has an important contribution in maintaining the Maratha Empire.
- **Maharani Tarabai Bhosale (AD 1675-1761)** - She was the wife of Chhatrapati Rajaram Maharaj. After the death of Chhatrapati Rajaram Maharaj, Tarabai took over the reins of the Maratha Empire. At the age of just 25-26 years, she led the troops for 7 to 8 years in the absence of the king and fought the Mughal army.
- **Anubai Ghorpade (AD 1745-1775)** - She was the daughter of Peshwa Balaji Vishwanath and sister of Thorale Bajirao. She participated in many strategic campaigns with Shrimant Nansahab Peshwa and later independently. Anubai ruled Ichalkaranji for thirty years.

- **Punyashlok Ahilyabai Holkar (AD 1725 to 1795)** - After the death of her husband, her father-in-law Malharrao Holkar handed over the rule of Malwa province to her. She was 24 years old at that time. After the death of Malharrao, she ruled from 1766 to 1795. She ruled with utmost justice and brought prosperity. She restored many temples across India and built ghats on rivers. Ahilyabai is known as a welfare ruler.
- **Rani Channamma of Kittur (AD 1778 to 1829)** - She was married to King Mallasaraja of Kittur, Karnataka. In the year 1816, after the death of her husband and then her son, she adopted a son and started her rule. The then Governor of India Lord Dalhousie rejected it. The queen fought the British army with great bravery. But later she died in captivity.
- **Rani Lakshmibai (1828 to 1858)** - Lakshmibai, wife of King Gangadhar Rao of Jhansi, ruled with an adopted son after her husband's death. But the British tried to capture the kingdom by cancelling the adoption order. In the 1857 war of independence, she tried to save her kingdom by displaying great courage and bravery, but she died in Gwalior after being injured in the war. She is known as a symbol of bravery.



## Percentage of Women & Men Elected in various Lok Sabha Elections



Source : [https://mospi.gov.in/sites/default/files/reports\\_and\\_publication/statistical\\_publication/Women\\_Men/mw24/DecisionMaking.pdf](https://mospi.gov.in/sites/default/files/reports_and_publication/statistical_publication/Women_Men/mw24/DecisionMaking.pdf)

# The Great Ruler Ahilyabai

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Politics is a male domain. What do women know about politics? This viewpoint is always there. Until the social reforms of the nineteenth century, a woman's world was limited to cooking and taking care of children. Not only this, but the approach specified that she should not go beyond this, she should not get education. Some people feared that this would spoil her. But if we look at history, we find many examples where women, though not directly involved in government work, were indirectly doing a good job of giving advice. They did not have the opportunity to take charge of total administration. But if they get the opportunity, they can run the state well. They can acquire good skills. If they get education, they can take due advantage of good opportunities. This is proven by experience. These women focus on the topics of public interest. They protect the state well.

Ahilyabai Holkar was one of those great politicians. If we observe the achievements of women in different periods, we see many powerful women. Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj said, "Foundation of the State i. e. 'Hindavi Swarajya' is the divine will, the wish of the Great God" It was his mother Jijamata who sowed the seeds of this 'sanskar', thought in Shivaji's mind. She inspired Shivaji Maharaj to be brave and to stand against injustice. She taught Shivaji Maharaj many skills of state administration in his childhood itself.

There were many accomplished women in the Peshwa period too. Ahilya Bai Holkar was one of those women who risked her life even in the battlefield. We also know about the bravery of Rani Lakshmbai. Many women participated in the freedom struggle. Even after that, many women have proved their abilities in politics.

Women play a key role in the family. They have half the share in democracy. Similarly, they are also playing an important role in society, in social movement, in public life, in power and in political life. Since women are naturally sensitive, they fulfil their responsibilities in their family very well and perform their duties in other fields in the same manner.

It is necessary that a society or a family should understand a woman, her intelligence and skills should be reconised. Only those who understand this importance can provide opportunities

to women. Even today, to some extent, we see that women are not assured of equal opportunities in a male-dominated society. Ahilyabai got political opportunities in a family which understood her capabilities.

In those days boys and girls used to get married at a young age. Therefore, even if a girl went to her in-laws' house as a daughter-in-law, the elders of the family would guide this young daughter-in-law and teach her the necessary things. Ahilya was married to Khanderao at the age of eight. Holkar was a 'Subedar' family. Therefore, since childhood Ahilyabai became familiar with the atmosphere of the house, the type of work etc. Seeing the abilities of little Ahilya, Malharrao used to entrust her with important tasks. She grew up in this environment. Her father-in-law Malharrao recognised her intelligence, innate skills, alert and quick response and decision-making ability. She carried out the tasks assigned to her at a young age with precision. Knowing this, Malharrao prevented Ahilya from performing the Sati ritual after Khanderao's death. He had complete faith in Ahilyabai. After Khanderao's death, he would talk to Ahilyabai if he had to discuss any matter.

The usual order of succession was Malharrao, followed by Khanderao and later son Malerao. But after the death of his son Khanderao, Malharrao considered Ahilya as the real heir. He saw Khanderao in Ahilya. Malharrao, who was suffering from the grief of his son's death, started seeking constant help from Ahilya, due to which Ahilya's graph in administration was rising day by day. Since she was closely following all the instructions of the Subedar and the objectives given by him/the affairs of all the parganas, Malharrao no longer had to worry about the Malwa/Indore provinces. He also noticed that Ahilya was also closely monitoring the political situation.

When Malharrao used to be on field Ahilya would take care of the administration. She would make all the arrangements as per Malharrao's instructions. She heard about Abdali's exploits. When she came to know that Abdali had murdered people in Mathura and Vrindavan and piled up their heads, she thought that now Hindus needed safe shelters. She built Dharamshalas at many places.

At the same time, the influence of the British was increasing everywhere, in such a situation, along with the state administration, Ahilyabai was trying to maintain the existence of her society. She was trying to preserve the culture. She improved the water system in the state. She opened 'Annachhatras', built 'Dharamshalas', dug wells, arranged water for the people travelling through the state in summer, built buildings for their residence, built temples, built ghats on rivers, made necessary arrangements for bathing and changing clothes, renovated the temples destroyed in attacks from time to time. Many other matters were taken care of, such as construction of bridges, construction of roads, road repairs, postal system, education system for the people, collection of books and book production, hospitals for health, medicinal gardens, irrigation facilities for agriculture, 9/11 Act for land, tree plantation, reserved forests for cow fodder, tax system, royal patronage for scholars and artists, etc.

Till Malerao's death, though Ahilyabai was not actually holding the post of the ruler, she was taking care of the administration of the state. It was only after Malerao's death that she became the ruler in the real sense. Therefore, Ahilyabai had the experience of handling many issues even though she was not the direct in-charge of the state affairs. Ahilyabai had to face many good and bad events before taking over the reins of the state independently. Being a woman, she had borne the burden of many customs and traditions at the social and family level. She had seen women falling prey to practices like Sati in her own family. Ahilyabai had personally experienced the suffering that women had to endure due to many practices like Sati Pratha, dowry system and regarding right to inheritance, widows' rights etc. Being a woman, she was quite aware and sensitive. Therefore, Ahilyabai was considered as an assured support for the women of the society in her state. It appears that Ahilyabai freed many women from the shackles of tradition and gave them an opportunity to develop their personality. It seems that Ahilyabai gave them freedom. This reflects her reformist ideas.

Ahilyabai used to solve all the problems of state administration with ease. Economic system, social issues, decisions in the interest of the people, the judicial system, even the issues of the battlefield or war and taking related decisions, accounting, all these were handled by Ahilyabai skillfully. She had experienced various ups and downs in the family and also witnessed the attack on her kingdom. She had seen the defeat in the battle of Panipat and its sorrow and consequences. At such a time, Ahilya's father-in-law was very supportive. Understanding that performing duties of a subedar is also her responsibility, Ahilya stepped forward. After Panipat, her mother-in-law Gautamabai passed away. She was a friend, philosopher and a guide for Ahilyabai. Her last words for Ahilya were, "Now you will have to take care of your family and the state administration. You have to take care of your father-in-law too, He is getting old." Thus Ahilyabai was a strong support system for everyone. Along with the welfare of her subjects, she was also concerned about others.

Ahilyabai as a ruler thought about the lives of the subjects as well as animals and birds. Her work was not limited to Indore and Ujjain only. It was spread in all four directions from Kedarnath, Rameshwar, Jagannath Puri to Dwarka. Especially, she had the art of connecting people of all provinces. She started the practice of transporting Ganga water to the provinces by car on Mahashivratri. This helped in connecting the various provinces of India. This did not happen out of any compulsion, but it was the result of her genuine efforts. Along with humans, she also thought about animals, birds and living creatures. Medical treatment was arranged for them as well. She appointed doctors to treat snake bites. She arranged food such as sugar and flour tablets for ants and aquatic creatures. She distributed food, clothes on festive occasions and donated blankets to the poor and needy to protect them from cold.

She had a collection of rare manuscripts. She honoured scholars and artists and gave them due respect. She invited scholars, Pandits, 'Vaidyas' and Vedic scholars from other provinces to pilgrimage sites and arranged for their stay. Thus in a way, it helped in protecting and safeguarding their life and helped in enriching knowledge. For example, Brahmapuri in Kashi.

She also worked in the right direction in the field of law and justice. She was so clever that she made necessary changes (reforms) in the law during that time. These reforms were necessary in the interest of the society. She also handled the economic policy of the state with the same efficiency. Ahilyabai Holkar is recorded in world history as an excellent administrator.

Ahilya Devi was a versatile, diplomatic, courageous, brave, clever, pious and farsighted woman ruler of the 18th century, who successfully ruled the state for 28 years. Her reign (1767 - her accession to the throne to 1795 - her death) is a golden page in the history of the Marathas.

She made the right policies to create employment for the people. While running the government, she ensured the basic needs of the people like food, clothing and shelter as well as values like equality, peace, brotherhood, justice, freedom of thought and self-respect.

Due to Ahilyabai's intelligence, diplomacy, public awareness and dedication, religion and culture were protected. Art was encouraged. Means of livelihood were made available. With her achievements, she immortalized the name of her father-in-law, the Holkar family in history.

We know the versatile woman ruler of the 18th century, who successfully ruled the state for 28 years, who was a diplomat, who was courageous, brave, clever, religious and far-sighted. We got to know her only because of Malharrao Holkar who knew these qualities. Otherwise, if like all other ordinary women, Ahilya would have followed sati tradition after Khanderao's death, we would have been deprived of an efficient leader like Ahilya Bai. Her reign has set many standards for today's rulers, presented many ideal examples. She has shown what the duties of a ruler should be. She has taught the coming generation that an ordinary woman can preserve religion and culture using her intelligence, diplomacy, public awareness and piety. I bow down to such a great ruler!



### **At a glance**

- 1) Since 1963 India has 18 Female Chief Ministers
- 2) The first woman Chief Minister was Sucheta Kripalaini, serving as the head of the Uttar Pradesh Government, from 1963 to 1967
- 3) The longest serving female Chief Minister was-  
Sheila Dikshit (Delhi) 15 years,  
Jayalalithaa – C.M. of Tamil Nadu – 14 years 124 days.  
Mamata Banerjee (W. Bengal) current Chief Minister since 2011.

# Indian Women in Politics

**Achala Sharma Rishishwar**

Social Worker



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“What was the status of women in politics before independence and after independence till the first Lok Sabha? “Considering this issue, it seems that Indian politics cannot be imagined without the female form. Our national anthem is ‘Vande Mataram’; it is not a salute to India, it is not a salute to any country, it is not a salute to kings or women, it is a salute to Mother. Women have an impact on politics and government. India is the birthplace of political thought and women have a huge contribution in it. Elections, people’s representatives, government, voters are all important in politics. It is not that the British came to India and women entered politics during their time. We had a polity, institutions and princely states, with many women as rulers. The British imposed slavery on the Indians. Then they tried to bring in the republic. In 1917, the Montague-Chelmsford Reform Act was passed, but women were not given full suffrage at that time. This is a big farce. There was a sense of equality in India from the very beginning. Abroad, especially in Western countries, a woman is given a second-class position. In the early days, women did not have the right to vote and thus Indian women had to struggle a lot for the right to vote. In 1935, the Government of India Act was passed and elections to the Legislative Assemblies were held. In the 1937 elections, only 14% of the 30 million people voted. Only 4.25 per cent of the voters were women. Women were given the right to vote, but ordinary women did not have this right. Only those who owned property and women who fulfilled political qualifications were granted the right to vote. The hatred and duplicity of the British is seen here. Indians never discriminated against women; they could own property. But even that has improved. Until 1939 and after, male voters had the right to vote. His wife was also given the right to vote. If the man had died, his widow could also exercise her right to vote.

When Lord Chelmsford came to India in 1917, educated women like Sarojini Naidu, Muthulakshmi Reddy presented the entire agenda of women’s suffrage before him. In the same year, when the Congress National Convention was held in Mumbai, Sarojini Devi gave an impressive speech on women’s suffrage. The following year, in 1918, Sarala Devi Chaudhuri presented a complete proposal for women’s suffrage. In the British era, only 14% of the people

had the right to vote. Sarojini Devi and Sarala Devi demanded that universal suffrage means that all men and women should have the right to vote. Later, Rajkumari Amritkaur also staged a massive agitation on this issue. Margaret Cousins and Dorothy Jinarajadasa took the initiative to establish the 'All India Women's Assembly'. Sarojini Naidu also proposed women's suffrage in front of the House of Commons in Britain in 1919 and held a meeting with the British Parliament. Women didn't even have the right to vote in Britain until 1919. All over the world, women were fighting for their rights. At that time, the House of Commons decided how much the vote would be for both men and women. In 1919, Dorothy Jinarajadasa, Margaret Cousins and other women came together to make this demand in the House of Commons. The result was that the Lord Chelmsford Committee decided that some of the arrangements would be handed over to the Indian people. In 1918, he formed a committee called the South Barrow Committee. He discussed with eminent people of India and decided that there should be women's suffrage, but no concrete decision was taken. Since 1918, these women started spreading awareness on this issue all over India. In 1919-20, the British gave the Legislative Council the power to decide whether women should have suffrage or not. In 1920, Anusuya Kale founded the Bhagini Mandal in Nagpur, which raised awareness for women's suffrage.

In 1921, the Madras Legislative Assembly passed the proposal for universal women's rights by a majority vote. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay and Rukmini Lakshmi pathy were the first women to be elected to the Madras Presidency. Rukmini ji was also the Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Assembly and a woman minister. In 1923, for the first time, women were allowed to vote in both the Legislative Council and the Parliament.

In 1920, women got the right to vote in Jhalawar and Rajkot. At the same time, many women were struggling in the United Kingdom. "In an article published in The Hindu on July 2, 1921, she wrote," "Congratulations to the women of India on this unprecedented victory!" The whole world is getting inspiration from your struggle. "Indian women, their political capabilities and their status are among the best in the world."

In 1937, elections were held in 11 provinces. In Uttar Pradesh, 3% reservation has been given to women. At that time there were about 201 assembly seats. Six seats were reserved for women. Vijayalakshmi Pandit and Begum Habibullah won. Surprisingly, 8 women were elected from seats that were not reserved for women.

The Lothian Committee was established in 1935. The committee was headed by Ramson Macdonald. He was the first to demand separate areas for the Scheduled Castes, Muslims, Sikhs, Anglo-Indians, Indian Christians and women and the British government accepted it. Because the long-term policy of the British was 'divide and rule'. They wanted to divide the country. But that policy was vehemently opposed by many enlightened women leaders, including Rajkumari Amrit Kaur. The women leaders of that time clearly said that the reservation that is being given today for the Scheduled Castes, Muslims, it will become a cause of great fragmentation going forward, we do not want reservation even for women. **"After World War II, the British**

**government dismissed Indian governments, which limited women’s political participation.”**

It is clear from this that our political awareness was not limited to gaining any power or power, nor was it limited to just being empowered to be influential. But the Indian woman has always been thinking about what is necessary in the interest of the country, national interest and social morality. The opposition to the ‘Lethian Committee’ is a clear proof of the fact that they opposed the demand for special reservation for Muslims, Scheduled Castes and women at that time. Although he didn’t agree.

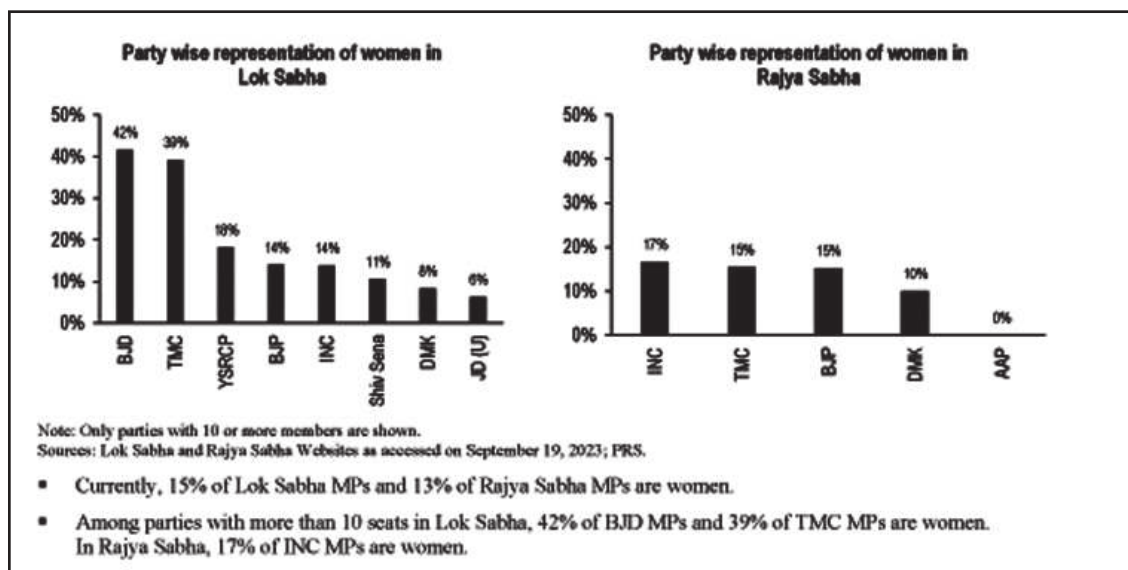
After independence, national elections were held in 1952. In the first Lok Sabha, 22 women MPs were elected. When all elections were held in 1952, Renu Ray, an MP from Bengal, was the first to raise the question of women’s reservation. The seed of 33% reservation for women was sown by Renu Ray in 1952.

The first meeting of the Rajya Sabha was held on 13 July 1952 and was attended by six women. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur was the first minister to set up the AIIMS. Along with Amrit Kaur, there were 15 other women in our Constituent Assembly.

This journey of reservation has been a long one and in 2024, 33% reservation has been achieved in Lok Sabha and state assemblies. Many states have 50% reservation for women in urban bodies. Whenever there will be a discussion of Indian women and politics, it will definitely be proved that politics without women is not possible, not complete.



### Party wise representation of women in Lok Sabha & Rajya Sabha



# Women Participation in Politics from 1947 to the Present

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When we talk about women and their participation in politics, this topic can be viewed from many perspectives. Since 1952, women's involvement in politics—whether as voters or politicians—has been steadily increasing. It is also important to examine what personal motivations drive women to enter politics and what various factors influence their participation. What is the atmosphere like at home? How has it helped them develop their social skills? What has their political journey been like? Considering these points is essential when reflecting on their participation.

Women's participation in politics is increasing. Their percentage is rising in every election. In the 2024 election, there is not much difference between male and female voters. The percentage of female voters is growing. According to a study, in the upcoming 2029 election, women's participation will be much higher than that of men.

Increasing women's participation in politics is not just about taking part in elections; it also means actively voting, campaigning door-to-door, promoting candidates, and raising funds for these activities. Women are increasingly listening to political news, discussing political issues and participating in rallies. Notably, a large number of women are joining rallies and engaging with public institutions. When women become involved in various political or non-political organizations and take part in the political process, it represents a positive development.

When we try to understand women voters in Indian politics, it becomes clear that the gap between the number of female and male voters has significantly narrowed. Since independence, many laws related to women have been amended. For example, women have been granted rights in patriarchal property, permanent commissions have been introduced for women in the armed forces, and the government has proposed raising the minimum age of marriage to consider women's health. These efforts aim to improve the status of women. To increase women's participation in politics and decision-making processes, the government has passed the Nari Shakti Vandana Act. Additionally, there are already reservations for women in local self-government institutions, such as gram panchayats, which has led to greater involvement of women in politics.

In the 1962 general elections, the number of male voters was 12% higher than that of female voters. However, in 2019, there was no significant difference between the number of male and female voters; the proportion of male voters was approximately 66.7% and that of female voters was 66.6%.

When studying women's participation in political activities, the first aspect that stands out is how successful women candidates are and the extent of their involvement. Differences among women as candidates can also be observed. From 1952 to 2019, the number of women candidates and the number of elected female members have steadily increased. After 1990, there was a significant change in the registration of women voters. The most notable change was seen in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, where women's participation increased by 8%. By 2019, the gender gap among voters had greatly diminished. Looking at state elections today, the gender gap is more pronounced compared to national elections. For example, states like Bihar, Kerala, Mizoram, Odisha, Punjab, West Bengal and Jharkhand show higher female participation. Discussing the assembly elections in Bihar and Mizoram, the gender gap between men and women has nearly closed in both places.

In the 1996 Lok Sabha elections, more than 7% of women participated in election meetings. By 2019, this participation had increased to over 18%, reflecting a rise of more than 10% in women's involvement. This is considered a successful development. Efforts are being made to encourage women to become politically active, but this remains a challenging task. The growing number of women voters participating marks the beginning of positive change. If we categorize this participation into three groups—1) highly active, 2) moderately active, and 3) less active—there is a clear increase in women's involvement across these categories. According to data collected through the National Election Study Survey in 2019, women voters in states like Gujarat, Punjab, and Delhi were less active compared to other states. In legislative assembly elections, these states showed disparities between male and female voter participation. Conversely, statistics from states such as Kerala, Telangana, and Jharkhand indicate that women were more active in electoral politics. Notably, in states like Kerala and Jharkhand, women's participation exceeded that of men, which is a remarkable observation.

When comparing states, it becomes evident that there is a difference between rural and urban women as voters. This difference is clearly visible at both the state and local levels. In terms of socio-demographic factors, participation levels also vary. Urban women tend to be more active participants based on these socio-demographic factors compared to rural women. However, at the rural level, women show greater involvement as candidates in politics because the powers granted to them through the Panchayati Raj system have empowered them politically. As a result, their participation in Gram Sabhas is increasing, and a large number of women are being elected to the position of Sarpanch. The reservation of seats for women in Gram Sabhas has been enhancing their involvement and activism in politics.

Studies have shown that there is a correlation between higher education and political participation. Women with a strong educational background tend to have a greater sense of

social awareness and responsibility, which leads them to be more engaged in politics. The relationship between women's education level and political participation is influenced by various factors. For instance, age has a positive correlation with political involvement. Research indicates that participation increases with age, with older women being more active voters. This suggests that as women grow older, their political knowledge and interest also grow, motivating them to take part in active politics. Women from higher social classes receive more encouragement to participate in political activities. Compared to women from lower economic backgrounds, factors such as age, caste, economic status, education level, and locality help establish correlations between urban and rural women. Nowadays, online platforms, social media, Facebook and WhatsApp have made accessing information easier, positively impacting women's participation. These media enable them to obtain information quickly, and government schemes reach women faster. For example, the government's decision regarding the triple talaq issue had a noticeable impact on the elections in Uttar Pradesh. Previously, most women did not have independent bank accounts, but today many women have their own accounts and use UPI for transactions. Awareness among women has increased, and its effects will be evident in the upcoming elections.

Women are playing a significant role as members of various organizations. From this, we can infer that increased participation in social organizations also leads to greater involvement in political groups. For example, whether it is a self-help group, a student union, or a political party, leadership often lies with women. Looking at the statistics, one out of every five women is connected to some organization and actively participates. Considering cooperative participation, in Mizoram, one out of every four women is a member of such organizations, compared to about one in five in Jharkhand, and 18% of women are involved in Odisha. In Mizoram, there is a notably high level of women's participation in NGOs. Many women are also actively involved in rural self-help groups on a large scale.

Talking about rural women, they have less education. They mostly come from lower economic strata, their marital status, employment issues also affect them. If we look at the proportion of women in such self-help groups, the participation of unmarried women is higher than that of married women. Women are seen less as candidates due to the prevailing male-dominated system in politics. As far as Kerala, Telangana and Jharkhand are concerned, more women have approached government offices to avail the benefits of government schemes.

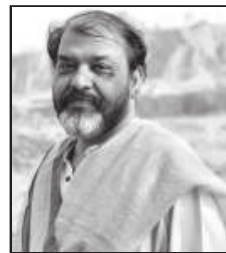
Women also have to take care of household responsibilities more, which creates difficulties in participation in politics. Women's participation in women's organizations and political parties is increasing, but their participation in the decision-making process is less visible. Organizations have to make efforts that how to increase the participation of women and their participation in the decision making process, more efforts are needed.



# Participation of Women in 2024 Lok Sabha elections

**Shri. Ajit Kumar**

Political Analyst, Social Worker



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Women have played an important role in Indian politics. How do women voters behave in Indian democracy, how do they vote, what are their thoughts when they go to the polling booth? What do they vote for? It needs to be studied.

In the first election in 1951, only 8% of women voted. In the 2024 elections, 64.2 per cent of women voted. There are a total of 97 crore voters in our country today, out of which 64 crore have voted. Of these, 31.2 crore are women voters. If we study the previous elections, we will get good information about the increase in the number of women voters. If you do a comparative study of five years 2004, 2009, 2014, 2019 and 2024, you will understand the important information.

When the Lok Sabha elections were held in 2015, women voters were seen in a position to understand their issues, keep their issues in mind and change the voting pattern. The MGNREGA policy was launched in 2006, after which the Manmohan Singh government changed its name to MNREGA (in 2006) This policy changed the voting pattern of people working in the unorganized sector. Labourers started getting 100 days of work and this affected the voting percentage. The percentage increased rapidly.

The tenure of two-three chief ministers will have to be studied carefully. Naveen Patnaik (Odisha), Raman Singh, Shivrajji Chouhan (MP), Narendra Modiji (Gujarat) made efforts to improve the condition of women. Narendra Modi ji tried to make Gujarat a policy-driven state. Thane implemented an initiative to make the state policy-centric. The result was good. Women voters turned out in large numbers. When Narendra Modiji was re-elected in 2024, he focused more on empowerment. Women's empowerment has also led to changes in the behaviour of women voters.

A total of 797 women candidates were in the fray for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, out of which 74 were elected. In the 2019 elections, 78 women candidates were elected. Earlier, it was seen that women in India used to vote for the candidate for whom their husband, children or

elder family members asked them to vote. But women's attitudes are changing. She also enquired about the schemes being implemented by the government. They vote independently.

There are 543 members in our country's parliament, but only 74 of them have been elected in the 2024 elections. Surprisingly, there is not much difference between women and men in the total number of voters; there are 33 crore women voters, yet the number of women getting elected is very low.

The 33% reservation bill has been passed to increase the number of women MPs in Parliament, but it has not yet been implemented. The population of our country has increased and the number of representatives has to be increased in proportion to the population, so that they can solve the problems of more people. At present, the workload of elected representatives has increased significantly. Therefore, there is a provision to increase the number of delegates, which will take it to 800. The new Parliament building 'Central Vista' has a capacity of 800 people. Women will make up at least 33% of the electorate in 2029.

In the 2014 elections and other elections held later, it was seen that more women voted than men. In the 2014 elections, there were 16 states where women voted more than men. In Bihar, Nitish Kumar's government gave dresses and bicycles to girls studying in class 11 and 12, which increased the number of women voters. In the 2020 Bihar assembly elections, women voted 3% more than men.

In 2019, the BJP had given tickets to 56 women, out of which 13 were elected. The Trinamool Congress had given tickets to 12 women, out of which 11 were elected. In the 2024 elections, more women than men voted in 19 states. These States are Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Kerala, Ladakh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Sikkim, Tripura and Uttarakhand. Kerala is the only state in the country that has never elected a woman member of parliament.

In the 2024 elections, the BJP gave tickets to 69 women out of which 31 were elected. The Congress gave tickets to 41 women, out of which 11 were elected. In Bihar, the turnout of women voters was very high. Talking about the state of Assam, its Chief Minister promised scooters to girls, which had an impact on women voters.

In a country where democracy exists, efforts are made to remove the differences in society in various ways. For this, policies are made, programs and plans are made to implement them. There are many problems in our country - caste, economic differences, language differences, urban-rural differences, problems of people living in forest areas and gender differences. The government is taking various steps to address this issue. The government is trying to create harmony, equality in the society. For the same reason, the government is trying to provide 33% reservation in Parliament to remove the inequality in the politics of women.

Only 25% of the world's parliamentarians are women. Only 21 countries have female heads of state. The United Nations was founded in 1945, but no woman has ever served as Secretary-General. And there's a difference between men's and women's pay. In Rwanda, 61.3 percent of

members of parliament are women. Women are 56% in Cuba, 52% in Nicaragua, 51% in New Zealand, 50% in the UAE, 44.4% in Australia, 35% in the UK, 30.6% in Canada. There are fewer women in our parliament. A proper strategy needs to be put in place.

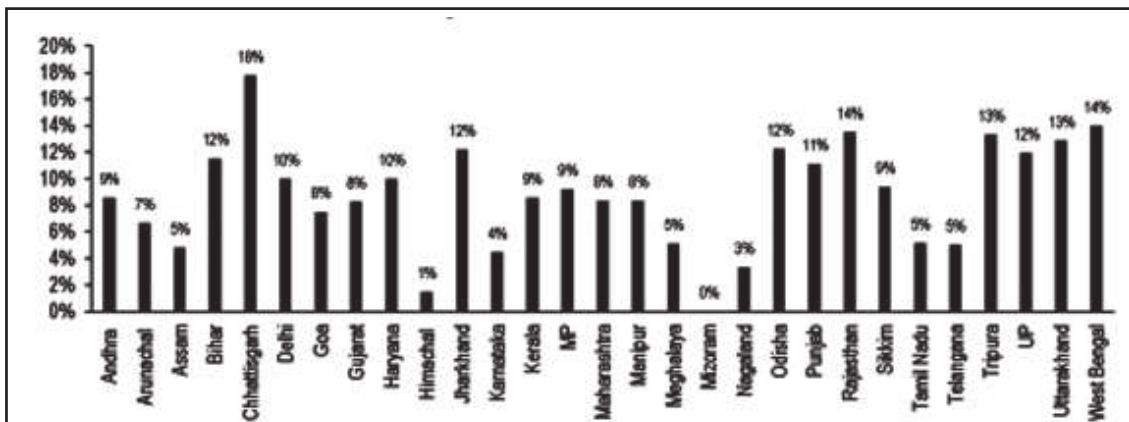
Every government made efforts to improve the status of women, but since 2014, many schemes have been implemented which have made the development of women possible. Under Jan Dhan Yojana, Ujjwala Yojana, Awas Yojana, Swachhta Abhiyan, schemes to build toilets in every household, i. e. women-centric schemes have been formulated.

The Chief Ministers of various states have formulated many schemes keeping women at the centre, which have benefitted the common women. Nitish Kumar has imposed a complete ban on liquor in Bihar. In Gujarat, more emphasis was laid on women’s safety so that women feel safe. Gujarat, Bihar, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh were considered very bad for women. In Uttar Pradesh, Kalyan Singh, Uma Bharti ji and now Yogi ji have paid more attention to women’s safety.

Since 2014, the Padma Bhushan has been awarded to women from the lower strata, who have made seminal achievements, including in social work. This reflects the mindset of the Modi government.



### Percentage of Women MLAs in State Assemblies



Note: This does not include data for Puducherry and Sikkim.

Sources: Websites of State Assemblies; PRS.

No state has more than 20% women representation in its Assembly. Chhattisgarh has the highest representation with 18% women MLAs, while Himachal Pradesh has just one woman MLA and Mizoram has none.

## List of Women Governors in India

Name	Assumed Office	Left Office	State
Sarojini Naidu	15 August 1947	2 March 1949	Uttar Pradesh
Padmaja Naidu	3 November 1956	31 May 1967	W. Bengal
Vijayalakshmi Pandit	28 November 1962	18 October 1964	Maharashtra
Sharda Mukherjee	5 May 1977	14 August 1978	Andhra Pradesh
Jothi Venkatachalam	14 October 1977	27 October 1982	Kerala
Kumudben Joshi	26 November 1985	2 February 1990	Andhra Pradesh
Sharda Mukherjee	14 August 1978	5 August 1983	Gujarat
Ram Dulari Sinha	23 February 1988	12 February 1990	Kerala
Sarla Grewal	31 March 1989	5 February 1990	Madhya Pradesh
Chandravati	19 February 1990	18 December 1990	Pondicherry
Rajendrakumari Bajpayi	3 May 1995	22 April 1998	Pondicherry
Sheila Kaul	17 November 1995	23 April 1996	Himachal Pradesh
Fathima Beevi	25 January 1997	1 July 2001	Tamil Nadu
V. S. Ramadevi	26 July 1997	1 December 1999	Himachal Pradesh
Rajani Rao	23 April 1998	29 July 2002	Pondicherry
V. S. Ramadevi	2 December 1999	20 August 2002	Karnataka
Pratibha Patil	8 November 2004	23 June 2007	Rajasthan
Prabha Rao	19 July 2008	24 January 2010	Himachal Pradesh
Margaret Alva	6 August 2009	14 May 2012	Uttarakhand
Kamla Beniwal	27 November 2009	6 July 2014	Gujarat
Prabha Rao	25 January 2010	26 April 2010	Rajasthan
Urmila Singh	25 January 2010	27 January 2015	Himachal Pradesh
Margaret Alva	12 May 2012	7 August 2014	Rajasthan
Sheila Dikshit	11 March 2014	25 August 2014	Kerala
Kamla Beniwal	6 July 2014	6 August 2014	Mizoram
Mrudula Sinha	31 August 2014	October 2019	Goa
Droupadi Murmu	18 May 2015	13 July 2021	Jharkhand
Najma Heptulla	21 August 2016	10 August 2021	Manipur
Anandiben Patel	15 August 2018	28 July 2019	Chhattisgarh
	19 July 2019	Incumbent	Uttar Pradesh
Baby Rani Maurya	26 August 2018	15 September 2021	Uttarakhand
Anusuiya Uikey	23 February 2023	26 July 2024	Manipur
Tamilisai Soundararajan	8 September 2019	18 March 2024	Telangana

wikipedia

### List of Women Chief Ministers of India

<b>Name (Birth – Death)</b>	<b>Assumed Office</b>	<b>Left Office</b>	<b>State / Union territory</b>
Sucheta Kripalani (1908-1974)	2 October 1963	13 March 1967	Uttar Pradesh
Nandini Satpathy (1931-2006)	14 June 1972	16 December 1976	Odisha
Shashikala Kakodkar (1935-2016)	12 August 1973	27 April 1979	Goa
Anwara Taimur (1936-2020)	6 December 1980	30 June 1981	Assam
V. N. Janaki Ramachandran (1923-1996)	7 January 1988	30 January 1988	Tamil Nadu
J. Jayalithaa (1948-2016)	24 June 1991 14 May 2001 2 March 2002 16 May 2011 23 May 2015	12 May 1996 21 Sept. 2011 12 May 2006 27 Sept. 2014 5 December 2016	Tamil Nadu
Mayawati (B. 1956)	13 June 1995 21 March 1997 3 May 2002 13 May 2007	18 October 1995 21 Sept. 1997 29 August 2003 15 March 2012	Uttar Pradesh
Rajindra Kaur Bhattal (B.1945)	21 Nov. 1996	12 February 1997	Punjab
Rabri Devi (B. 1955)	25 July 1997 9 March 1999 11 March 2000	11 February 1999 2 March 2000 6 March 2005	Bihar
Sushma Swaraj (1952-2019)	12 October 1998	3 December 1998	Delhi

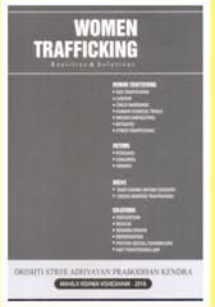
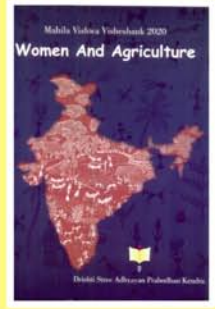
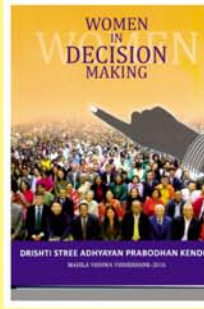
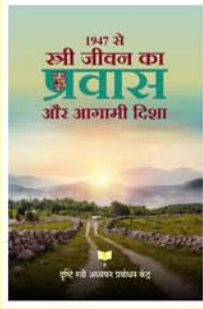
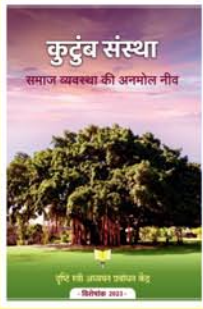
## List of Women Chief Ministers of India

<b>Name (Birth – Death)</b>	<b>Assumed Office</b>	<b>Left Office</b>	<b>State / Union territory</b>
Sheila Dikshit (1938 – 2019)	3 December 1998	28 December 2013	Delhi
Uma Bharti (B. 1959)	8 December 2003	23 August 2004	Madhya Pradesh
Vasundhara Raje (B. 1953)	8 December 2003 13 December 2013	13 December 2008 17 December 2018	Rajasthan
Mamata Banerjee (B. 1955)	20 May 2011	-	West Bengal
Anandiben Patel (B. 1941)	22 May 2014	7 August 2016	Gujarat
Mehbooba Mufti (B. 1959)	4 April 2016	19 June 2018	Jammu and Kashmir
Atishi (B. 1981)	21 Sept. 2024	20 February 2025	Delhi
Rekha Gupta (B. 1974)	20 February 2025	Incumbent	Delhi

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<b>Sr. No.</b>	<b>Name of State / UT</b>	<b>Year of Last General Election to Legislative Assembly</b>	<b>% Of Women Contestants</b>	<b>% Of Seats won by Women</b>
1.	Andhra Pradesh	2019	9.96	8.00
2.	Arunachal Pradesh	2019	5.98	5.00
3.	Assam	2021	8.03	4.76
4.	Bihar	2020	9.91	10.70
5.	Chhattisgarh	2018	10.40	14.44
6.	Goa	2017	7.57	5.00
7.	Gujarat	2017	6.89	7.14
8.	Haryana	2019	9.24	10.00
9.	Himachal Pradesh	2017	5.62	5.88
10.	Jammu and Kashmir	2014	3.37	2.30
11.	Jharkhand	2019	10.44	12.35
12.	Karnataka	2018	8.31	3.14
13.	Kerala	2021	10.97	7.86
14.	Madhya Pradesh	2018	8.62	9.13
15.	Maharashtra	2019	7.38	8.33
16.	Manipur	2017	4.13	3.33
17.	Meghalaya	2018	8.86	5.08
18.	Mizoram	2018	8.61	0

<b>Sr. No.</b>	<b>Name of State / UT</b>	<b>Year of Last General Election to Legislative Assembly</b>	<b>% Of Women Contestants</b>	<b>% Of Seats won by Women</b>
19.	Nagaland	2018	2.56	0
20.	Odisha	2019	9.94	8.90
21.	Punjab	2017	7.07	5.13
22.	Rajasthan	2018	8.24	12.00
23.	Sikkim	2019	10.66	9.38
24.	Tamil Nadu	2021	10.33	5.13
25.	Telangana	2018	7.69	5.04
26.	Tripura	2018	8.08	5.00
27.	Uttarakhand	2017	9.73	7.14
28.	Uttar Pradesh	2017	9.93	10.55
29.	West Bengal	2021	11.34	13.70
30.	NCT of Delhi	2020	11.76	11.43
31.	Puducherry	2021	11.11	3.33



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Spacial Edition 2025