

Women's Participation in Lok Sabha Election from 1952 to 2009

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Abstract

Women have always been an important part of Indian politics and their participation in politics is still not very impressive. The under representation of women in the lok sabha and from crucial decision making positions such as in the cabinet, are pointers of their systematic exclusion from the political structure and the deeply embedded gender basis in Indian society. The number of women politicians is small as compared to men. The current article is based on the election commission's report on electoral participation and representation of women from 1952 to 2014. It offers a detailed analysis of women's political participation and representation in lok sabha elections. The majority of women are indifferent to politics; this is clear in their low participation in voting, in public demonstration, and in public debates.

Keywords: Women, participation, lok sabha

Introduction

The number of women contestant has largely shown an increasing trend, the percentage of women contestant as compared to the total contestants has increased marginally. In 2009, 556 women contested for the lok sabha elections, about 6.9% women contestants this is a marginal increase from the 6.5% women contestants who stood for 2004 lok sabha election. From 1952 to 2014 general elections saw the domination of men in total electorate have increased from 9.6 crore in 1952 to 43.6 crore in 2014. On the other hand women electorate also increased from 7.7 crore in 1952 to 39.6 crore in 2014, despite better women electorate, traditionally the participation of women in the voting was less compared to men due to different socio cultural factors under lined by gender. In the recent elections, women have increased their voting percentage from the first general elections there is a steady increase in the voting percentage of women. In 1957 general elections women's voting percentage was 39% compared to 56% of men. In the last six out of sixteen general elections women's voting percentage has increased 55% which highlights their potential partnership in the voting arena. In 1967, 1977, 1989, 1998, 1999, and 2009 elections witnessed an increase in the women's voting percentage. The 2014 elections have witnessed the record increase in the voting percentage of women as compared to men. Women's voting percentage has increased from 55.8% to 65.71% in the last two elections; increased women's voting percentage over different elections does indicate the growing enthusiasm and belief of women in the election.

Greater participation of women in voting in voting does not suggest improvement in the women candidature and representatives in lok sabha. The percentage of women candidate never beyond 7% of the total candidates which was witnessed in the last lok sabha election. From 1952 to 1989 general elections, the total women candidates were only 3 to 4%. The last five general elections witnessed a steady increase in the women candidates from 4.2% in 1996 to 7.5% in 2014, but the difference in the candidature still continuous to be high. One major finding is there was more number of men candidates in 2014 elections alone than the total number of women candidates to lok sabha from 1957 to 2014. There were 7590 men candidates in the 2014 which is nearly double of total women candidates put together in all general elections

2 Objectives

- 1 To enquire into the participation of women in lok sabha election.
- 2 To train women state wide in the strategies and tactics of running to win.
- 3 To understand thoroughly the reasons behind women's level of participation in lok sabha elections.
- 4 To suggest suitable suggestions for uplifting women's participation in political activities

3 Methodology

The study is mainly based upon collection of secondary source of publication such as magazines, books, journals, research articles, and records of government of India.

4 Women as contestant

The number of women candidates contesting for the lok sabha has been extremely discouraging. It has not been much above 5% of the total number of male candidates. The number of women contestants however, has increased since 1952 with the exception of 1957 when it comes down to 45 from 51. There has been steady increase in the number in 1991 to 1996 to fall again in 1998. The difference between male and female contestants of the lok sabha seats has also shown declining trend from 94.17% in 1977 to 93.82% in 1980 and 90.23% in 1984. As for as women contestants is concerned, the highest number of women aspirants

599, were fray in 1996, followed by 556 women candidates in 2009, 355 in 2004 and 402 in 2014.

The number and percentage of the women candidates increased in 1957 from 19% to 25% and from 37% to 62%. Since then there has been a steady decline. In 1971 only 21 were successful out of a total of 86. In 1971, a sudden spurt in the number of independent candidates fared very poorly only 1 succeeded and thus the overall percentage fell from 42.4 to 25.9 and all time low. The number of contestants rose steadily from 1980 onwards from 142 in 1980 to 599 in 1996 to fall again in 1998. In the 11th lok sabha election about 2/3 of the total 599 female candidates were independent. Experience has shown that women have rarely been successful as independents. Rarely build up support in necessary for women to win elections. In the 1971 elections, a relatively novice candidate Rita Verma from Dhanbad in Bihar won due to the massive support of BJP. Not exactly similar but such experience has been often repeated. The election Alka Nath (1976) from chindwara in MP is another example.

Table 4.1: Women as contestants during various lok sabha elections

| Year | males wining% | Females | Total | Females% | Males wining % | Females wining % |
|------|------------------|---------|-------|----------|-------------------|---------------------|
| 1952 | 1831 | 43 | 1874 | 2.30 | 26.08 | 51.16 |
| 1957 | 1473 | 45 | 1518 | 3 | 31.7 | 60 |
| 1962 | 1915 | 70 | 1985 | 3.50 | 24 | 50 |
| 1967 | 2302 | 67 | 2369 | 2.80 | 21.3 | 44.8 |
| 1971 | 2698 | 86 | 2784 | 3 | 18.5 | 24.4 |
| 1977 | 2369 | 70 | 2439 | 2.8 | 22.1 | 27.1 |
| 1980 | 4478 | 142 | 4620 | 3 | 11.5 | 19.7 |
| 1984 | 5406 | 164 | 5574 | 2.9 | 9.2 | 25.6 |
| 1989 | 5962 | 198 | 6160 | 3.2 | 8.5 | 13.6 |
| 1991 | 8374 | 325 | 8699 | 3.7 | 5.9 | 12 |
| 1996 | 13353 | 599 | 13952 | 4.2 | 3.8 | 6.7 |
| 1998 | 4476 | 274 | 4750 | 5.7 | 11.2 | 15.7 |
| 1999 | 3976 | 278 | 4254 | 5.8 | 12.3 | 17.3 |
| 2004 | 5050 | 355 | 5405 | 6.5 | 9.8 | 12.6 |
| 2009 | 7514 | 556 | 8070 | 6.8 | 6.4 | 10.7 |
| 2014 | 7851 | 402 | 8251 | 4.8 | 6.2 | 15.2 |

Source: Parliamentary Information Bureau, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India.

The table 4.1 shows number of women contesting elections is very low compared to men. It increased from 2.3% in 1952 to 6.5% in the year 1999, compared to the population, the percentage of women contestants is very low. Even today, more than 93% of the total contestants are men. But interestingly the percentage of women winning elections has always been higher than men. This can be seen from the table 4.1 the percentage of males who won elections in 1952 is 26.05% whereas women were 51.16% in the year 1999, 12.3% men won the elections out of the total male contestants and 17.3% women won out of the total female contestants. In the 14th lok sabha elections 12.6% female contestants won the elections. In the 15th lok sabha elections 10.6% and in the 16th lok sabha elections 15.17% women won the elections. Political parties deny tickets to women candidates presuming that they are not capable of winning elections. These results show that the percentage women winning elections is more than the percentage men winning.

Many factors are responsible for this state of affairs. Gender roles have become major obstacles in women's political participation. Traditional division of labour, illiteracy, economic barriers, the type of electoral system, lack of sufficient training etc have been keeping away from politics. Apart from this, elections have become a very costly affair. Women are not able to generate large amount of money required to fight elections. Centralization of powers and corruptions has become major obstacles for women to participate in politics.

Table 4.2: number of women ministers in various cabinets of the government of India

| year | No of Women Ministers |
|------|-----------------------|
| 1952 | 3 |
| 1957 | 3 |
| 1962 | 5 |
| 1967 | 5 |
| 1971 | 3 |
| 1977 | 2 |
| 1980 | 8 |
| 1984 | 5 |
| 1989 | 1 |
| 1991 | 5 |
| 1996 | 5 |
| 1998 | 4 |
| 1999 | 9 |
| 2004 | 10 |
| 2009 | 9 |
| 2014 | 7 |

Source: www.parliamentofindia.nic.in

The table 4.2 shows the representation of women in the council of ministers, Government of India since 1952. The representation of women has been very low in the ministries that were formed and women were given less important portfolios like health, welfare, local government etc. The case has been same in the state governments as well. The table 4.2 depicts the total percentage of women who have contested the lok sabha elections since 1952 till 2014.

Table 4:3 Representations of women in lok sabha from 1952 to 2014

Note: including one nominated member

| Lok sabha | Total no. of seats (Elections held) | No. of women Members who won | % of the total |
|------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------|
| First(1952) | 489 | 22 | 4.4 |
| Second(1957) | 494 | 27 | 5.4 |
| Third(1962) | 494 | 34 | 6.7 |
| Fourth(1967) | 523 | 31 | 5.9 |
| Fifth(1971) | 521 | 22 | 4.2 |
| Sixth(1977) | 544 | 19 | 3.4 |
| Seventh(1980) | 544 | 28 | 5.1 |
| Eighth(1984) | 544 | 42 | 8.1 |
| Ninth(1989) | 529 | 28 | 5.3 |
| Tenth(1991) | 509 | 36 | 7.0 |
| Eleventh(1996) | 541 | 40 | 7.4 |
| Twelfth(1998) | 545 | 44 | 8.0 |
| Thirteenth(1999) | 543 | 48 | 8.8 |
| Fourteenth(2004) | 543 | 45 | 8.1 |
| Fifteenth(2009) | 543 | 59 | 10.9 |
| Sixteenth(2014) | 543 | 61 | 11.2 |

Source: Election Commission of India

As for as representation of women in lok sabha is concerned it has increased from 4% in 1957 to 5.5% in 1971. The post emergency election saw the lowest share of women in lok sabha. In 1984 for the first time women's representation has increased 8% when 42 MPs were elected to the lower house. However 2009 election brought the 59 representative out of 556 candidates. The current lok sabha undoubtedly has observed the highest share of women in lok sabha. Total women members have increased to 61, two more than previous. The total share of women in the 16th lok sabha is 11.2% compared to 89% men. If this trend continuous to remain it would take another 50 years to achieve the critical mass of 33% forget about equal share.

Conclusion

Reservation is a short cut to ensure the participation of women in politics. Reservation at the bottom is needed to bring about social change but is it really needed at the top level. It is important to stress that like the equal right to vote, participation and representation in legislative bodies may not in itself be enough for women's

empowerment. Equality and equity is a goal which may not easily be achieved only by the high representation of women in legislature and other public bodies but has to be buttressed by other supportive measures. The two historic 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments could make a shift from the politics and an opportunity for women to shape the agenda at the local level.

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