



## WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN INDIA

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### Abstract:

*The ratio of participation of women lawmakers in politics is a need of an hour in order to pass many unbiased and gender-neutral laws by the legislatures. As we are celebrating 75<sup>th</sup> year of Independence as "Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav", we need a Mahotsav where women's participation in politics could be equal to their male counterparts and this participation is not required to show the supremacy of women's or to decrease the supremacy of men's in politics, but to have equal say and share in passing any legislation. We as a union and democratic state of India must consider and hear every citizen's voice and point of perception before making and implementing any decision so the social fabric of the country be maintained and remain intact. We will be analyzing turnouts of both male and female voters from since the first Loksabha election in India till the latest election held in the year 2019 and would be understanding the participation of women's asectoral as well as elected lawmakers in parliament. We will try to understand whether the participation of women in parliament is according to the population of women in India and whether they have been appropriately represented in our Indian democracy and would also like to direct some suggestions in order to resolve the disbalance in the representation of women in politics, if any.*

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### INTRODUCTION:

Recently the President of India, Smt Droupadi Murmu graced the 31<sup>st</sup> Foundation Day Celebrations of the National Commission for Women in New Delhi on dated 31<sup>st</sup> January 2023. Speaking on the occasion, the President stated "that it is not possible to imagine a strong and healthy society without women empowerment. Together we have to work towards creating an environment where all women can fully participate and contribute in the socio-economic, cultural and political spheres significantly. Women's empowerment is not just an issue of social justice

but it is also crucial for economic development. India is the fifth largest economy in the world and now moving towards becoming a five trilliondollar economy. The active role of women would be helpful in achieving this goal.

Speaking about gender discrimination, the President said that even today the situation of gender-ratio in many parts of the country is worrying. She emphasized that it is not only the responsibility of the government but of the whole society to change this situation. She said that while ensuring gender justice, we have to make our development equitable".



In order to understand the participation of Women in politics, first we have to ascertain what is politics and what role women had played since inception of our society.

*The Cambridge University dictionary defines Politics as,*

“the activities of the government, members of law-making organizations, or people who try to influence the way a country is governed”

*Whereas, The Britannica Dictionary defines Politics as,*

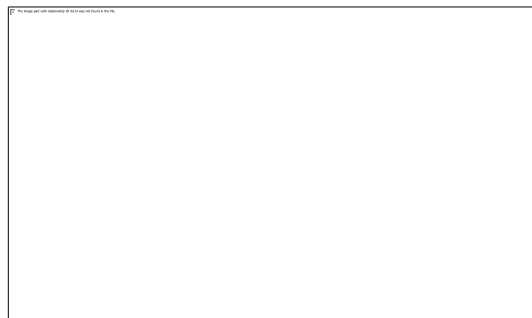
“activities that relate to influencing the actions and policies of a government or getting and keeping power in a government”.

Since time immemorable women had their say and participation in decision-making, running the administration, and, in political activities in our Indian Society. The history of India also talks about participation of women as Administrator (ruler) of the kingdom be it Jhansi ke Rani Lakshmi Bai, Razia Sultana, Ahilya Bai Holkar, Rani Chennamma and many others who had made the Indian soil proud for their bravery as well as for the administrative ability that too at that time period when the scope of education and going to places like schools for

women were limited and basically was not preferable.

But with the change of the time, whether it was the participation in the freedom movement of India or be it running the administration after the independence of India, the Indian women’s role cannot be ignored or neglected. When India got its independence and when the first Cabinet Ministers were appointed, Rajkumari Amrita Kaur was the only female Cabinet Minister appointed and was awarded Ministry of Health in the year 1947 respectively. Further, it’s been observed that initially there was a gender gap between male and female voters, but now the said gender gap in electoral politics in India has been declining for over 70 years. Till 2010 the number of female voters was less than male voters. But with the change of the time, in the 2019 General Lok Sabha elections, the male and female ratio of voting was near about equal. This clearly indicates women’s increasing active participation in the electoral process in forming a democratic government. We can understand the same voting percentage from time to time and from election to election with the diagram and charts mentioned below –

**Table 1. Voter Turnout in Lok Sabha Elections: 1962-2019 (%)**



Source: Sanjay Kumar (eds.) Women Voters in Indian Elections: Changing Trends and Emerging Patterns, Routledge, 2022, 20. (Data Source: Election Commission of India)



**GENERAL ELECTIONS 2014: HIGHEST EVER VOTER TURN-OUT**

General Election 2014 has seen the highest ever voter-turnout in India with 66.4 % of the electorate casting vote. The previous highest was 64.01%, recorded in 1984. In the previous General Elections

held in 2009, voter turnout was 58.21%. In absolute numbers, out of the total 834,101,479 electors, 553,801,801 people cast their vote in General Election 2014. Out of this, 65.3% were female voters and 67.09 % were male.

**Table 2. Voting Percentage in General Elections 1951-52 –2014**

General Elections	Year	Male %	Female %	Total %
First	1951 - '52	NB: Gender-wise break-up of electors of General Elections conducted before 1971 is not available.		61.16
Second	1957			63.73
Third	1962		46.63	55.42
Fourth	1967	66.73	55.48	61.33
Fifth	1971	60.09	49.11	55.27
Sixth	1977	65.63	54.91	60.49
Seventh	1980	62.16	51.22	56.92
Eighth	1984 -'85	61.2	58.6	64.01
Ninth	1989	66.13	57.32	61.95
Tenth	1991 -'92	61.58	51.35	55.88
Eleventh	1996	62.06	53.41	57.94
Twelfth	1998	65.72	57.88	61.97
Thirteenth	1999	63.97	55.64	59.99
Fourteenth	2004	61.66	53.3	58.07
Fifteenth	2009	60.24	55.82	58.21
Sixteenth	2014	<b>67.09</b>	<b>65.30</b>	<b>66.40</b>

Source: Election Commission of India

**Table 3. Election Commission of India, Elections, 2019 (17 LOK SABHA)**

Participation Of Women Electors in Poll									
STATE	NO. OF SEATS	TOTAL ELECTORS	WOMEN ELECTORS	% OF WOMEN ELECTORS OVER TOTAL ELECTORS	Total Voters	WOMEN Voters	% OF WOMEN VOTERS OVER VOTERS	% OF WOMEN VOTERS OVER WOMEN ELECTORS	TOTAL POLL% IN THE STATE/UT
Andhra Pradesh	25	39405967	19880957	50.45164099	31674526	15818269	49.94003383	79.56492738	80.38002468
Arunachal Pradesh	2	803563	403816	50.25318488	659766	326188	49.43995295	80.77639321	82.10507452
Assam	14	22050059	10756988	48.78439554	17992753	8748413	48.62187015	81.32771925	81.59956851
Bihar	40	71216290	33532797	47.08585213	40830453	19980370	48.93497018	59.58456135	57.33302451
Goa	2	1136113	580054	51.05601291	853724	441780	51.74740314	76.16187458	75.14428582
Gujarat	26	45152373	21697273	48.05345004	29128364	13214160	45.36526665	60.90240004	64.51125836
Haryana	10	18057010	8340340	46.18893161	12701029	5800424	45.66892966	69.54661321	70.33849458
Himachal Pradesh	4	5330154	2605996	48.89157049	3859940	1936405	50.16671244	74.30575488	72.41704461



Jammu & Kashmir	6	7922538	3777176	47.67633806	3562744	1649547	46.29990255	43.67143601	44.96973066
Karnataka	28	51094530	25248925	49.41610188	35159448	17080302	48.57955108	67.64764044	68.81254804
Kerala	20	26204836	13468657	51.39760081	20397168	10611007	52.02196207	78.78296255	77.83741902
Madhya Pradesh	29	51867474	24836647	47.88482084	36928342	17054749	46.18335965	68.66767885	71.1974946
Maharashtra	48	88676946	42249192	47.64394119	54111038	24852972	45.9295791	58.82472735	61.02041223
Manipur	2	1959563	996452	50.85072539	1620451	838345	51.73528851	84.1330039	82.69450893
Meghalaya	2	1914796	965174	50.4061007	1367759	713584	52.17176418	73.93319754	71.43105584
Mizoram	1	792464	404218	51.00774294	500347	252218	50.40861642	62.39652861	63.13813624
Nagaland	1	1213777	598503	49.30913998	1007437	494895	49.1241636	82.68880858	83.00017219
Odisha	21	32497762	15835141	48.72686618	23817169	11749761	49.33315542	74.20054548	73.28864369
Punjab	13	20892673	9832287	47.06093375	13777295	6451544	46.82736343	65.61590401	65.94318975
Rajasthan	25	48955813	23395485	47.78898269	32476481	15335166	47.21929694	65.54754475	66.33835496
Sikkim	1	434128	212018	48.83767	353415	166645	47.15278073	78.59945854	81.40801791
Tamil Nadu	39	59941832	30273230	50.50434561	43419753	21883813	50.40059302	72.28767132	72.43647975
Tripura	2	2614718	1285744	49.17333341	2154550	1053907	48.91541157	81.96865006	82.40085547
Uttar Pradesh	80	146134603	67055997	45.88646058	86531972	39940959	46.15745842	59.56358982	59.21388242
West Bengal	42	70001284	34048666	48.64005923	57230018	27849638	48.66264064	81.79362446	81.75566894
Chhattisgarh	11	19016462	9482222	49.86322903	13622625	6689325	49.10452281	70.54596486	71.63595941
Jharkhand	14	22404856	10667069	47.61052247	14966781	7281044	48.64802926	68.25721292	66.801505
Uttarakhand	5	7856318	3713219	47.26411278	4861415	2390956	49.18230597	64.39038473	61.87905072
Telangana	17	29708615	14776307	49.73744821	18646856	9245494	49.58205287	62.56972057	62.76582062
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	1	318471	149188	46.84508166	207398	97671	47.09351103	65.46840228	65.12304103
Chandigarh	1	646729	304507	47.08417281	456637	215557	47.2053294	70.78884886	70.60716312
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	1	250029	117629	47.04614265	198984	95479	47.98325494	81.16960954	79.58436821
Daman & Diu	1	121740	60743	49.89567932	87473	45841	52.40588524	75.46713202	71.8523082
NCT OF Delhi	7	14327649	6444347	44.97839806	8682366	3875512	44.63658869	60.1381645	60.59867882
Lakshadweep	1	55189	27136	49.1692185	47026	23549	50.0765534	86.78139741	85.20900904
Puducherry	1	973410	513811	52.78464368	790895	418834	52.95696647	81.51518749	81.24993579

### Source – Election Commission of India

Currently, Lok-Sabha has a total of 542 members of which there are 78 female members, while Rajya Sabha has total of 224 members of which there are 24 female members. Which eventually brings the representations of female members to 102 (78+24) in both houses of Parliament. Combinedly this brings a total of 13.32% approximately of women's representation in both houses of the Parliament. Individually women's representation is near about 14.39% in Lok-Sabha and near about 10.71% in

Rajya Sabha. This clearly indicates that today when we are celebrating 75 years of our Independence and also terming as "Azadi ka Amrit Mahatsov" the women's representation in both houses combined is below 14-15% of the total membership. Although the percentage of representation is increasing with every election, the pace of the said increment has to be further accelerated in order to achieve equal representation of women as per their share in the total population of India.

**UN ASSEMBLY AND 73<sup>RD</sup> AND 74<sup>TH</sup> CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS:**

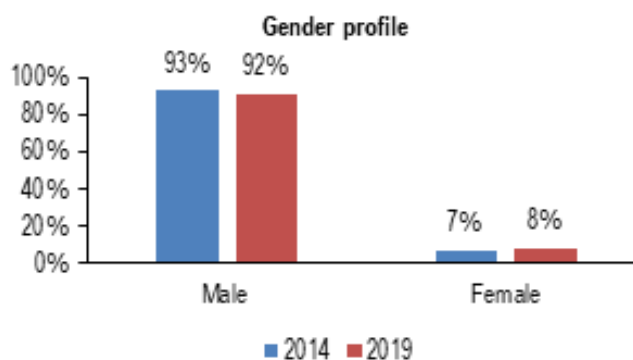
Although various steps had been taken from time to time by the government to increase the share of representation of women in the political arena in India. Prior, the UN General Assembly too in 1979 adopted the Convention of Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women(CEDAW), considering it an International Bill of Rights for Women. In the Convention Article 7 upholds Women’s right to hold political and public office. Similarly,the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendments and Reservation for Women introduced in the year 1992 played a pivotal role to increase the representation of women in the political arena at various levels of its hierarchy. The aforesaid mentioned both the amendments made provision of reservation of one-third of the total seats of local body elections for women. This revolutionary step helped to increase women’s participation in the local body elections which had slowly and gradually helped women’s participation both asectoral, as a participant or/and

representative in the local, municipal, state and central elections.

**WOMEN’S POLITICAL REPRESENTATION WITH RESPECT TO MAHARASHTRA STATE ASSEMBLY:**

Currently, there are 24 women Members of Legislative Assembly (MLA) out of total of 288 seats in the state assembly from the last 2019 Assembly election. If we calculate the same by percentage-wise representations by the women in the State Assembly 2019, then it is near about 8% of the total Assembly seats of the Maharashtra State Assembly. The percentage of women’s representation in the previous assembly election was near about 7% of the total 288 seats in the Maharashtra State Assembly. Although the percentage of women representation has increased by 1%, still the share of representation of women lawmakers in very miniscule. Whereas the sex ratio of Maharashtra in 2023 is 929 for each 1000 males, which is below the national average of 940 as per the latest census.

**Table 4. Gender profile of women’s representation in Maharashtra Assembly**



Source - PRS Legislative Research

**STEPS NEEDED TO INCREASE WOMEN’S POLITICAL REPRESENTATION:**

In India where the current male-female sex ratio is 930:1000,women’s representation in politics as a



lawmaker appears to be further low. Although every election in center and state of India indicates the increasing percentage trend of female representation, still the total representation of women's lawmakers needs to be increased in order to be as per the necessity of the time, for the betterment and upliftment of the women and of the society as a whole.

Although Women's Representation Bill was introduced in the year 2008, which talks about 33% reservation for women in Loksabha and the legislative assembly, till today i.e., the year 2023, the bill had not seen the light of day and has even not been introduced as a law or we can say that the said bill was never converted into the Act. After 25 years of the said proposed bill on women's reservation in upper houses on line of 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment and Reservation for Women introduced in the year 1992, to increase the representations of women in the political arena at various levels of its hierarchy and on talks about the provision of reservation of one-third of the total seats of local body elections for women the said bill never came into existence in spite the said bill was passed by Rajyasabha in the year 2010 but was lapsed after the dissolution Loksabha and the same was never introduced before the Loksabha again. The Supreme court recently asked Centre to file their reply/response against the petition filed by an NGO for the re-introduction of the said Women's Representation Bill 2008 before the Loksabha. Recently, the President of our India Droupadi Murmu on this Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> of March, 2023 Wednesday on the occasion of Women's Day said "that the country has a good representation of

women in decision-making institutions at the grassroots level but as we move up in the hierarchy, we see fewer women", this clearly indicates the great need of women lawmaker's representation not only in politics but also in various other fields of decision making and policy framing fields.

From time to time opposition parties in the centre too had appraised the ruling government, of the need for the introduction or re-introduction of Women's Representation Bill in the Parliament for discussion for providing reservations for women in Rajyasabha and Loksabha, but the same has not been done due to unwillingness of both ruling and opposition parties at the centre as, both till today had never shown their keen interest to introduce, discuss and pass the said Women's Representation Bill which talks about nearly 33% reservation for women in both the upper houses due to their political unwillingness.

#### CONCLUSION:

The scenario of women's participation in politics is worrisome and their participation in the same is much needed to pass many gender-neutral laws with unbiased opinions. Women's share of thought can and must be included while making, discussing, and passing any laws for the welfare of the state, and the same law be passed with the unanimous decision. It's a high time people must understand the gravity of the situation of women's participation in politics and must encourage their participation in clean politics. The Mahatma Jyotirao Phule, India's pioneer of women's education held the view that as women failed to get an education, the society as a whole would not be educated. The way an educated mother could mould a child in wisdom and character, thousand teachers or masters could not.





So, the need for an hour is the introduction or Re-introduction and passing of the Acts like Women Representation Bill 2008, which gives women the power to show their representation, the majority and share in any decision-making and shouldering the development of India which will help to enact gender-neutral law and will help to understand women's perceptions at the time of enacting and law.

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