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"The Women Representation in India's Parliament: A Historical Perspective."

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Abstract:

The participation of women in India's parliament throughout history, from the country's 1947 independence to the present, is examined in this research study. Getting more women represented in legislative assemblies has proven to be a challenge for India, the world's largest democracy. Affirmative action policies, women's movements, and social and cultural factors are all taken into account as this study looks at the trends, roadblocks, and turning moments in women's parliamentary representation. The report also evaluates India's performance in comparison to global norms and highlights the need of having more women in leadership positions for democratic governance and gender parity. This research aims to expand our understanding of the mechanisms underlying women's political empowerment in India through an analysis of the complex issues involved.

Keywords: India, research study, women, understanding, underlying, turning, etc.

Methodology:

The present study used a mixed-methods approach to examine the representation of women in the Indian parliament from 1947 to the present. Primary sources of information include legislative debates, reports from electoral commissions, official government papers, and scholarly studies. Interviews with female lawmakers, as well as studies from the past, are used to obtain data. 1947–1960s, 1970–1980s, 1990–2000s, and 2010–present are the time periods covered by the study. The presence of women in parliament, the number of participants and winners, committee involvement, and policy efforts are all important metrics to consider. Data accessibility, media bias, and the intricate historical background are among the limitations.

Goals and objectives:

Affirmative action policies are assessed, women's involvement is examined, India's performance is compared to international standards, and the historical trajectory of women's representation in the Indian parliament is examined in this article from 1947 to the present. In addition to identifying significant turning points, analysing the impact of women's movements, examining the policies of political parties, evaluating the efficacy of initiatives, investigating the connection between women's representation and policy outcomes, and offering suggestions for enhancing participation quality, its objectives are to provide a thorough understanding of the obstacles and opportunities facing efforts to increase women's representation.

Introduction:

Though they are more prevalent in representative governments around the globe, women are still underrepresented in politics, as this article addresses. Thirty women headed 28 nations' governments as heads of state or government as of September 2022. Political empowerment depends on legislative representation, and gender equality is mostly determined by the number of women serving in the national parliament. An essential case study for enhancing women's participation in parliament is India, where there are 662.9 million women. In order to improve women's representation, the article proposes institutional reforms and draws attention to the paradox between the sharp rise in women's involvement and the comparatively modest rise in their representation.

I. The Need for Fair Representation

Female representation in national parliaments is averaged 26.2% worldwide as of May 2022. Whereas Asia, the Pacific, and the Middle East and Northern Africa (MENA) region are less represented globally, the Americas, Europe, and Sub-Saharan Africa are more represented than the mean for the world. The representation is smaller among South Asian nations like Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Afghan women made up 27% of the country's last parliament in 2021, whereas India's Lok Sabha has stayed just at 15%. Afghanistan is excluded from the study.

Table 1: Global Average of Women's Representation in Parliament

Global Averages			
	Lower chamber and unicameral	Upper chamber	All chambers
Total no. of MPs	37,248	7,062	44,310
Men	27,425	5,255	32,680
Women	9,823	1,807	11,630
Percentage of women	26.4%	25.6%	26.2%

Source: *IPU Parline: Global Data on National Parliament (as of May 2022)*

Table 2: Women's Representation in Parliament, By Geographical Region

Region	Parliamentary representation of women (in percentage)
Americas	***34.6***
Caribbean	39.7
North America	38.2
South America	30.1
Central America	29.5
Sub-Saharan Africa	***26.0***
East Africa	32.0
Southern Africa	31.8
Central Africa	22.5
West Africa	16.9
Middle East and North Africa	***16.8***
Middle East	17.1
North Africa	16.4
Europe	***31.1***
Nordic countries	44.7
Western Europe	35.2
Southern Europe	31.1
Central and Eastern Europe	24.3
Asia	***20.9***
Central Asia	26.1
Southeast Asia	21.8
East Asia	21.8
South Asia	16.7
Pacific	***20.9***
Australia and New Zealand	42.2
Pacific Islands	6.0

Source: IPU Parline: Global Data on National Parliament (as of May 2022)

The Political Gender Gap throughout History:

Women have historically been politically disenfranchised, while making up almost half of the world's population (49.58%). Equitable political participation is a core tenet of contemporary constitutional democracy. With the United Nations Organization (UNO) charter supporting women's rights since 1945, social movements have been successful in enacting broad reforms. Accepted in 1979, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is sometimes referred to as an international bill of rights for women.

The UN set forth eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to be accomplished by 2015 when member nations endorsed the Millennium Declaration in 2000. In order to ensure that all women and girls have equal access to leadership opportunities and full and effective involvement in political, economic, and public life, Goal 5 aims to achieve gender equality.

The advantages of more women serving in representative institutions have been emphasized by political scientists. These advantages include better representation of women's interests in state policy, equality between the sexes, and the creation of role models for future generations. Descriptive, substantive, and symbolic are the three types of political representation. For democratic reform and involvement, especially for and by women, a mixture of all three aspects is essential.

II. India's Political Involvement of Women:

In India, women have historically been marginalized and exploited, partly as a result of patriarchal societal institutions. The 19th century saw the achievement of social reform movements in advancing women's empowerment and well-being, however. Women organised political protests and raised funds during the Indian independence movement, which began with the swadeshi in Bengal (1900–1908). Men and women were given equal standing in all political, social, and economic domains by the Indian Constitution when the country attained independence. Gender equality is ensured under the Constitution's Part III.

Equality of income, fair working conditions, and maternity leave are among the ways that the Directive Principles of State Policy guarantee economic empowerment. The lower house of Parliament and state legislative assemblies are open to vie for election by any Indian citizen over 25. Equal political and voting rights are guaranteed under Articles 325 and 326.

The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes were not allowed to have seats reserved for them in Parliament or legislative assemblies when the Constitution was being drafted. Nonetheless, a 1974 study on India's Status of Women promoted more female presence in governmental organizations. Women were to be allocated one-third of the seats in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and municipal authorities, according to the 73rd and 74th amendments of 1992. Additional areas, including marriage and work, are additional areas where India has made progress toward empowering women. After a ruling by the Supreme Court, daughters in Hindu households now have the same rights as coparceners when it comes to inheritance. Furthermore, girls must now be 21 years old to marry; it was formerly only 18.

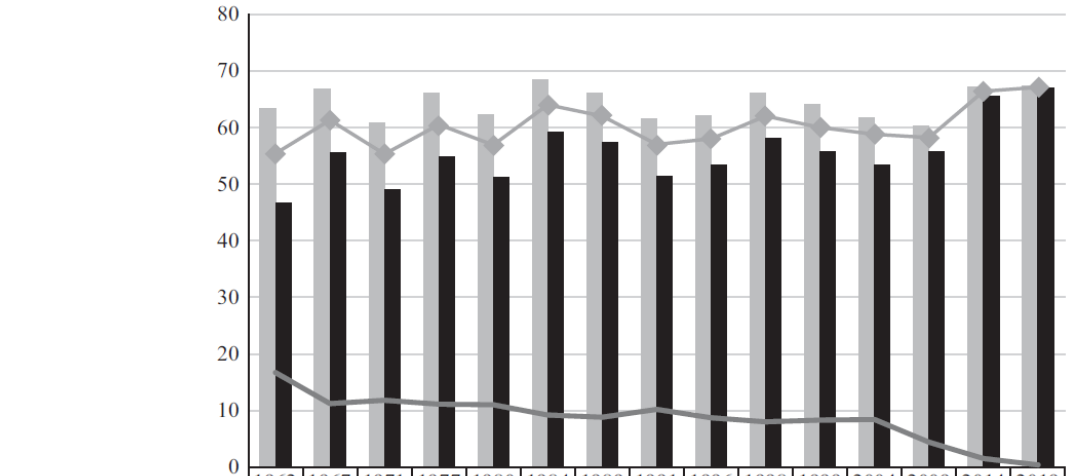
Evaluating the State of Advancement:

In addition to looking at women's representation in national, state, and municipal legislatures, their voting and election-related actions as party workers and supporters, and their frequency of contesting elections are also used to assess women's political engagement in India.

Voting by Women:

The 1990s saw a steady rise in women's voting participation, which has been indicative of India's progress towards gender equality in politics. Women's increased literacy rates, increased employment rates, the expansion of electronic media, institutional policies supporting women's voting rights, and the emergence of female-only "pink booths"—a place where all employees are female—are some of the factors driving this trend. A separate line for women at voting places and safety precautions against intimidation have also been put in place by the Election Commission. More women are included in local power structures thanks to reservations for them in panchayats and municipalities. More women are choosing to vote as a result of political changes, technology advancements, and ideas about women's rights gaining popularity. In terms of advancing female equality in Indian politics, this "silent revolution of self-empowerment" has been noteworthy.

Figure 1: Voter Turnout in Lok Sabha Elections: 1962-2019 (%)



	1962	1967	1971	1977	1980	1984	1989	1991	1996	1998	1999	2004	2009	2014	2019
Male Turnout (%)	63.3	66.7	60.9	66	62.2	68.4	66.1	61.6	62.1	66	64	61.7	60.2	67.1	67.3
Female Turnout (%)	46.6	55.5	49.1	54.9	51.2	59.2	57.3	51.4	53.4	58	55.7	53.3	55.8	65.6	66.9
Total voter turnout	55.4	61.3	55.3	60.5	56.9	64	62	57	58	62	60	58.8	58.2	66.4	67.1
Gap	16.7	11.2	11.8	11.1	11	9.2	8.8	10.2	8.7	8	8.3	8.4	4.4	1.5	0.4

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

Female Candidates:

Prior to a surge in the mid-1990s, there were very few female candidates in India's state assembly and parliamentary elections. After the 1996 general elections, all major political parties nominated more women candidates than they had previously, with reservations for women starting in 1992. In India, women run in two kinds of constituencies: those belonging to scheduled castes and tribes and those with a larger percentage of males. Due to the fact that gaining these seats is essential to having their voices heard, women choose to run in lesser constituencies. There could also be a factor in the growing demand on parties to nominate more women. Still, there are very few women running for office as opposed to men. Women made up fewer than 9% of the 8,049 candidates running in the Lok Sabha elections of 2019. A greater emphasis on inclusive and varied representation is shown by the growing number of female candidates in parliamentary elections.

Figure 2: Number of Women Candidates in the Lok Sabha Elections (1957-2019)

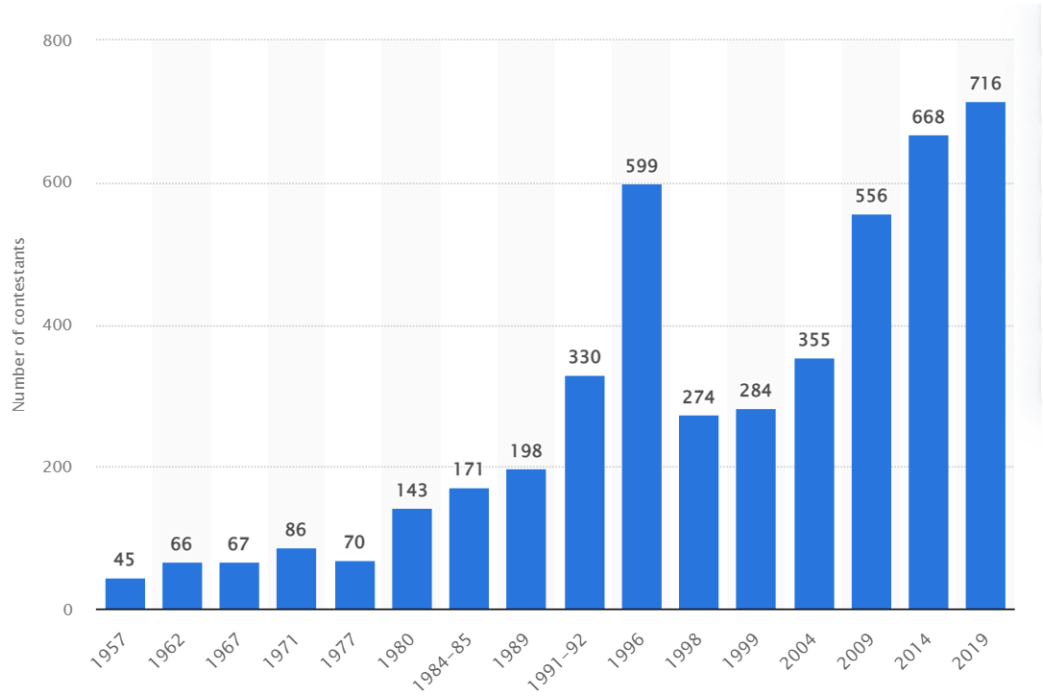


Table 3: Female Candidates in General Seats and Reserved Seats, Before and After 1996 (%)

	Before 1996	After 1996	Change
Congress Party, non-Reserved	7.7	9.5	1.8
Congress Party, SC-reserved	7.2	12.5	5.3
Congress Party, ST-reserved	9.5	14.8	5.3
BJP, non-reserved	4.8	8.6	3.8
BJP, SC-reserved	0.0	5.9	5.9
BJP, ST-reserved	4.2	6.7	2.6
Other parties, non-reserved	2.5	5.6	3.1
Other parties, SC-reserved	2.4	6.4	4.0
Other parties, ST-reserved	2.9	7.9	5.1

Source: Francesca R Jensenius, "Competing Inequalities? On the Intersection of Gender and Ethnicity in Candidate Nominations in Indian Elections", *Government and Opposition* , Volume 51 , Issue 3: Candidate Selection: Parties and Legislatures in a New Era , July 2016 , pp. 440 – 463

Parliamentary Representation of Women:

Making legislation and keeping the executive branch responsible are important functions of Indian parliaments and state legislatures. Women now make up a larger percentage of voters than males do in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, but their share of representation has grown considerably. In the Lok Sabha, women were elected to the greatest

proportion (less than 15% of total membership) in the 2019 elections. Parties and states differ in how many female MPs and candidates there are. The two states having the most percentage of female MPs in the current Lok Sabha are West Bengal (26%), and Uttar Pradesh (14%), respectively. In 2019 the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) nominated 53 women candidates while the Congress fielded 54.

While the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) in Odisha and the TMC in West Bengal nominated more women candidates in the Lok Sabha elections, Goa and Manipur had the greatest percentage of female candidates in each state. While they still make up less than 13% of the house's overall membership, women's representation in the Rajya Sabha is somewhat lower than in the Lok Sabha. Even lower average representation, typically less than 10%, can be found in state legislative assemblies, or Vidhan Sabhas.

Table 4: Women's Representation in the Lok Sabha

Year of Election	Number of Women Representatives	Percentage of Women Representatives (%)
1951	22	5
1957	22	5
1962	31	6
1967	29	6
1971	28	5
1977	19	4
1980	28	5
1984	43	8
1989	29	6
1991	39	7
1996	40	7
1998	43	8
1999	49	9
2004	45	8
2009	59	11
2014	66	12
2019	78	14

Source: *Election Commission of India*

Table 5: Women's Representation in the Rajya Sabha

Year of Election	Number of Women Representatives	Percentage of Women Representatives (%)
1952	15	6.9
1954	17	7.8
1956	20	8.6
1958	22	9.5
1960	24	10.2
1962	18	7.2
1964	21	8.9
1966	23	9.8
1968	22	9.6
1970	14	5.8
1972	18	7.4
1974	18	7.5
1976	24	10.1
1978	25	10.2
1980	29	12
1982	24	10.1
1984	24	10.3
1986	28	11.5
1988	25	10.6
1990	24	10.3
1992	17	7.2
1994	20	8.3
1996	19	7.8
1998	19	7.7
2000	22	9
2002	25	10.2
2004	28	11.4
2006	25	10.2
2008	24	9.8
2010	27	11
2012	26	10.6
2014	31	12.7
2016	27	11
2018	28	11.4
2020	25	10.2

Source: *Election Commission of India*

Female Political Workers:

Despite a rise in the last thirty years in women's political engagement, the Centre for Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) notes that total participation is still low. This shows that women's political mobilization has improved with

increasing political awareness and education, but that institutional and structural barriers still prevent them from fully engaging in electoral politics.

Table 6: Women's Participation in Political Activities: 1996-2019 (%)

	NES 1996	NES 1999	NES 2004	NES 2009	NES 2014	Women's Study (2019)
Attended an election rally/ meeting	7	11	10	7	12	18
Took part in procession		6	6	5	5	11
Took part in door-to-door campaigns	5	5	5	6	4	14
Distributed pamphlets		5	6		4	11
Donated or collected money		7	7		3	9

Note: *This table is based on responses in the surveys conducted by CSDS from 1996-2019. For purposes of comparison, the study extracted the data linked to women respondents and looked at their engagement in electoral activities.*

Source: Sanjay Kumar (eds.) *Women Voters in Indian Elections: Changing Trends and Emerging Patterns*, Routledge, 2022

Achievements in the Involvement of Women in Local Politics:

The rural PRIs and municipalities that make up India's third tier of local administration. Planning and monitoring of social and economic development projects at the local level was made possible by the 73rd and 74th amendments to the 1992 constitution. Reserving one-third of the total seats in local body elections for women was one notable modification. The local level of political engagement of women increased significantly as a result of this approach. The reservation has now been increased to 50% in 20 of India's 28 states. Because of skill-building initiatives and leadership training sessions offered by NGOs and the government, elected women political leaders are performing better, which has lessened the issue of "proxy representation."

III. The difficulties faced by women in state and national legislatures are as follows:

Woman-only seats were required, which encouraged more women to get involved in municipal politics. Notwithstanding, there are still many reasons why there is little participation of women in state and federal legislatures, such as institutional barriers, family responsibilities, patriarchal political parties, and social biases. For

women to be better represented in elections and to better understand these interconnections, thorough research is required.

Institutions Not Easily Accessible:

With minimal chances of success for independent candidates, political parties serve as the main conduit for holding state and parliamentary elections in India. To run for office, every candidate must first get a party ticket, which are distributed in a very organized manner. Election records indicate that women are not adequately represented by the majority of political parties in India; yet, in reality, women are not often awarded party tickets. According to political analyst Kanchan Chandra's research, many of the women who do receive party tickets and gain parliamentary seats are "dynastic" or have familial ties to politics. Due to their frequent lack of access to standard channels of accessibility, women frequently use this link as a point of entrance.

Women candidates have equal, if not better, prospects of winning as male candidates, contrary to the popular notion that women are less likely than males to win elections. Women lawmakers are less likely to commit crimes or engage in corruption, and they outperform their male counterparts in their districts on economic metrics. Though they are an "ineffective minority" in their parties and cannot promote gender inclusivity, some prominent women politicians have bemoaned this. The patriarchal attitudes that contaminate India's male-dominated party structures hinder women politicians from securing party nominations to contest in parliamentary elections.

Uncongenial structural circumstances:

The institutional difficulties that women in India confront make it extremely difficult for them to run for and win state and parliamentary office. Women politicians frequently struggle with childcare and family obligations, and election campaigns in India are hard and time-consuming. A strong family foundation is essential for female leaders to pursue a career in politics. Election participation and contesting are difficult in India due to the country's political arena's violent, dehumanising, and abusive nature. Obtaining funding for their campaigns is another challenge, since many women rely on their families for financial support. Reservable seats are less competitive and less influenced by money and muscular power, which encourages women to run for office in criminalized politics when strength of character becomes crucial. Moreover, women prioritize their family and household over their political aspirations due to patriarchal cultural conventions, such as "internalized patriarchy." Due to these reasons, women are less likely to see themselves as viable, engaged political participants.

IV. Why Institutional Reforms Are Needed:

Higher levels of education and rising financial independence are contributing to an increase in women's political engagement in India, notwithstanding entrenched patriarchal standards. There are still not enough women running

for state and parliamentary office, though. Even if there is now a greater proportion of women in politics, women can still not run for office in political parties. Politics that is inclusive requires two institutional changes. First, granting women a third of all party tickets given out in any election should be a legislative requirement for all political parties that are registered. This tactic has to be made possible by amending the Representation of People Act, 1950. This calls for political agreement, though, and it could be disproportionately given to women from powerful castes, well-established political families, and other financially successful groups. Second, the Women's Reservation Bill 2008—which required one-third of parliamentary and state assembly seats to be reserved for women—must be resurrected in the event that party-level reform proves to be challenging. Despite being enacted by the Rajya Sabha in 2010, the measure was unable to move forward in the Lok Sabha because of fierce opposition and differences about sub-quotas for castes that are socially and educationally disadvantaged.

In summary:

In India, women's political participation in legislative politics has advanced slowly due to institutional obstacles. Society and institutional change are necessary for inclusive politics to prosper. The increased educational opportunities, solid finances, declining societal biases, and increasing media knowledge have forced political parties to accommodate women's involvement. As the number of female voters rises, political parties have developed social programs that support women. As momentum for women's political emancipation builds, women's networks and organizations inside political parties and the community at large must keep pushing for women's inclusion. India might become a more inclusive and representative democracy and advance toward better governance and policymaking if more women enter the political sphere. Along with more female representation in state and parliamentary legislatures, it may also lead to institutional change.

In nations like India, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, the statistics concentrates on the representation of women in the lower or single chambers of parliaments. The lower chamber of the Indian parliament, the Lok Sabha, was chosen by popular ballot prior to the Taliban taking control of Afghanistan in August 2021. In the present government, women do not presently occupy any positions. Equal opportunity in public employment is provided by Articles 14 and 15 of the Indian Constitution, which also protect the right to equality and forbid discrimination on the basis of race, religion, sex, place of birth, or geography. The rights against exploitation and human trafficking are guaranteed by Article 23, whereas Article 21 safeguards life and personal liberty. Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Tripura, Uttarakhand, and West Bengal are among the states that have implemented a 50% reservation policy for women in PRIs and urban local bodies.

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