

Women's Political Participation in India: A Harsh Reality

Dr Mamata Patra

Asst Prof of Political Science, Bhuban Women's Degree College,
Bhuban, Dhenkanal, 759017, Odisha

Abstract

We live in a democratic country and freedom is a gift of democracy to us. Our constitution gives us the right to freedom and most importantly to exercise this freedom in an equitable manner. At the same time it is incumbent on the part of the state to ensure that equality prevails in all sections of the society. However in today's time one of the major roadblocks to this equality is Gender Inequality. India being a developing nation is currently facing many challenges and gender inequality being one of them. Gender acts as a division, as a difference in our society. In India, gender equality is seen in movements, in write-ups but not in reality. Even after so many years of independence, gender inequality is widely recognized as the most prevalent form of social disadvantage in India.

Keywords: *Women, Political Participation, Democratic Country, Gender Inequality, Political Empowerment*

INTRODUCTION

Women in India continue to suffer socially, economically as well as politically at different levels and in different forms. Comparison to men, women have lower status in the family, community and public spheres and have less political power, less economical autonomy, less earning power, and less access to the resources. The framers of the constitution perhaps believed that law would lead to social change and bring about equality between the sexes. Yet inequality and discrimination continues to persist in all spheres of public and private life. The quest for greater political participation of women is, therefore, still relevant for 21st Century India. Thus this study makes a humble attempt to analyze the present status of women in Indian politics. The study further discusses the holistic assessment of electoral participation of women and issues, challenges of participation and it concludes with suggestions on strengthening women's role in politics.

Statement of the Problem:

Gender Equality Development has become one of the most important concerns of 21st century. Much is

discussed by various commissions, committees and conferences on gender equality development. But practically it is still an illusion of reality. The pursuit of democracy is incomplete without policies, measures and practices that seek to reduce inequalities between men and women in all spheres of life. So Gender Equality must be treated as an explicit goal of democracy building. Achieving the goal of equal participation of women and men in decision making provide a balance that more accurately reflects the composition of society and is needed in order to strengthen democracy and promote its proper

Address for correspondence:

Dr Mamata Patra, Asst Prof of Political Science,
Bhuban Women's Degree College,
Bhuban, Dhenkanal, 759017, Odisha,
Email- mamatapatra04@gmail.com

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non Commercial Share Alike 4.0 License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work non commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

For reprints contact: voiceforvoiceless2013@gmail.com

Received 07-Jan-2022	Reviewed 29-Feb-2022	Accepted 07-Apr-2022	Published 10-May-2022
Volume No. 4	Issue No. 1	May 2022	ISSN 2583-1852(P)

How to cite this article : Patra M. 2022. Women's Political Participation in India: A Harsh Reality. *THE THIRD VOICE REALITY AND VISION*. Vol No-4, Issue No-1, May; P: 34-43

ACCESS THIS ARTICLE ONLINE

Quick Response Code:



Website:
thirdvoice.voiceforvoiceless.in

DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.7029316](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7029316)
Article No - TVRV0005

functioning. Women represent more than half of the world's population and just less than half of the global electorate. But their representation in the parliament, political parties and other decision making bodies remained low. So it is a big question, where women constitute half of the population in a political system which supports equality and where both women and men are legally eligible for political office, women's participation should be equal to that of men. If this is not the case, it signifies deep flaws within the political system.

Women's political participation is a fundamental prerequisite for gender equality and genuine democracy. Political accountability to women begins with increasing the number of women in decision-making positions. It facilitates women's direct engagement in public decision-making and is a means of ensuring better accountability to women. The equal participation of men and women in decision-making has been identified as important prerequisites for attaining equality and equity through democratic means. Political participation is not only related to 'Right to Vote', but simultaneously relates to participation in decision making process, political activism, political consciousness, etc. Political participation of women can be measured in three different dimensions: 'their participation as a voter, their participation as an elected representative and their participation in the actual decision making process' (Despande 2009).

The 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments brought about significant changes in the political scenario of the country with regard to women's reservation in political participation. At least one third of the seats and eventually statutory women's Panchayats at the village level were recommended to take care of the neglect of women in rural development programs. Women's Reservation 108th Amendment Bill is a pending bill in India which proposes to reserve 33 per cent of all seats in the Lower House of Parliament of India, and in all state legislative assemblies for women. The seats to be reserved in rotation will be determined by draw of lots in such a way that a seat shall be reserved only once in three consecutive general elections. Women's Reservation Bill, was passed in Rajya Sabha on March 9, 2010. But Lok Sabha could not clear the bill due to resistance of some regional parties on certain provisions of the bill.

However, in India, attempts to secure political representation in higher political arenas have not been

successful. Yet the participation of women in politics has actually declined since the days of the freedom movement, both in quality and quantity. Democratic India is based on the principles of equality and its constitution guarantees in article 14 Equality before law and equal protection to all citizens. Article 15 prohibits discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex and place of birth. Article 325 guarantees political equality and equal right to participation in political activities and article 326, guarantees right to vote (Basu 1998).

Women have not benefited from these constitutional provisions. The political climate as it exists 21st Century continues to be male centred and is therefore perceived to be conducive to male participation. As such women have been denied social, economic, civil and political right in many spheres. For true equality to become a reality for women the sharing of power on equal terms with men is essential. But the reality is that there is still a great gap between constitutional guarantees at the actual representation of women in the political system in India. The government has attempted to empower women politically through affirmative action by providing for one-third reservation for women in local bodies, to ensure their participation at the local and the district levels of governance. While these initiatives for women, they have not been able to guarantee a non discriminative or conducive environment for women to participate. However, even this legislative intervention in higher political bodies i.e., state assemblies and parliament is absent. Thus it is necessary to examine the gender inequality in political participation and the reasons for the variation need to be studied.

OBJECTIVES

- To understand the true status of Women Political Participation in 21st Century India.
- To highlight the barriers that limit women's Political Empowerment and its effect on women's Political Participation.
- To identify the indicators and substantiate the existence of disparity and disadvantage women face in their Political Empowerment.
- To examine the obligation of the state to facilitate the participation of women in Politics and the initiatives taken by the state in terms of constitutional provision.
- To suggest the Mechanism which initiatives of the study to increase the involvement of women in all activities of the political processes.

METHODOLOGY

The study has attempted to provide an analysis based on a representation of various states and parliament in India. Political Participation for this study has been defined to mean and include participation of women in terms of their numbers, the quality of their participation and their involvement in effective decision-making in political institutions and the electoral processes as candidates, elected representatives and constituencies. This study is basically descriptive and analytical in nature. The information for this study was primarily collected from secondary sources. The data used in it is purely from secondary sources according to the need of this study. Data will be analyzed by the using of the quantitative analytical method through descriptive calculation of percentage.

Gender Disparities in Political Participation:

This part of the study concentrates majorly on the research strategy used in collecting the relevant data to map out gender disparities in participation of women in terms of their numbers, the quality of their participation and their involvement in effective decision-making in political institutions and the electoral processes as candidates, elected representatives and constituencies, which is our principal objective. The various data collection techniques primarily collected from secondary sources and used quantitative method of data analysis. For the purpose of analysis, tables and figures have been used to give clear understanding of the data. In a nutshell, this part of the study is designed basically to give the readers an overview of the research data.

The Constitution of India guarantees both men and women are equal in the eyes of the laws and hence they have equal right. But, unfortunately, legal & political bias has prevented the law to attain the success of equality in gender (Rai, 2011). This is another reason for inequality. The number of women in political participation is abysmally low in both the parliament and the state legislature. Lack of space for women in these political institutions and decision making bodies has resulted in the perpetuation of inequalities and discrimination against women (Agarwal 2006). We are talking about women empowerment, but how much you concern about their political participation compare to the male candidates

was very less. In the first general election (1952) their strength was only 4.41%. In the next general election it reached to 5.4%. In the sixth Lok Sabha election (1977) women's representation was meagre 3.49%. In the ninth Lok Sabha election 1989, the number of women M.Ps drastically dropped to 5.22% from 8.09% in the previous Lok Sabha. The number of women M.Ps touches 9.02 % in 1999 election, in 2009, 10.9 % and in 2014 election, 11.41 %, and 14.39 % the highest ever. But it had nothing much to do with effective political mobilization of women in the 2019 elections (**Table-1 & Figure-1**). **Table -2 & Figure-2**, shows that, in Rajya Sabha, proportion of female members started with 7.3 percent in 1952 and rose to 15.5 percent in 1991, but again declined to 6 percent in 1998 and rose to 10.3 percent in 2005, again slightly declining to 9.9 percent in 2006, again declined to 8.97 in 2009 and slightly increased in 2014 to 9.95 and 11.58 in 2019 the highest ever.

Table- 1:
Women MPs in Lok Sabha with Comparison of Men

Lok Sabha	Year of Election	No. of Total Seat	No. of Males won	No. of females won	Total % of Female members
I	1952	499	477	22	4.4
II	1957	500	473	27	5.4
III	1962	503	469	34	6.7
IV	1967	523	492	31	5.9
V	1971	521	499	22	4.2
VI	1977	544	525	19	3.5
VII	1980	544	516	28	5.1
VIII	1984	544	500	44	8.1
IX	1989	517	490	27	5.2
X	1991	544	505	39	7.1
XI	1996	543	504	39	7.1
XII	1998	543	500	43	7.9
XIII	1999	543	494	49	9.1
XIV	2004	543	499	44	8.1
XV	2009	543	484	59	10.9
XVI	2014	543	481	62	11.41
XVII	2019	542	464	78	14.39

Source: Election Commission of India, various years Website (www.eci.gov.in)

Figure-1

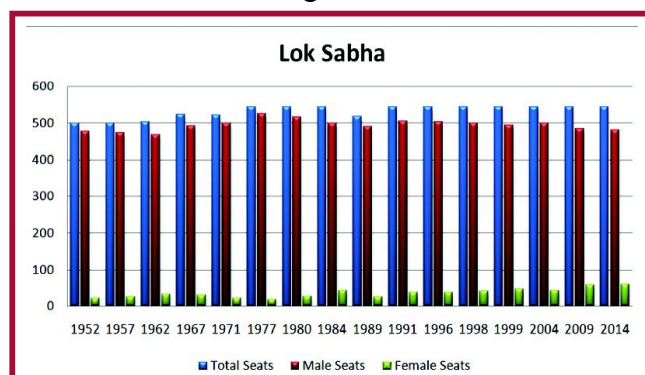


Table- 2 :

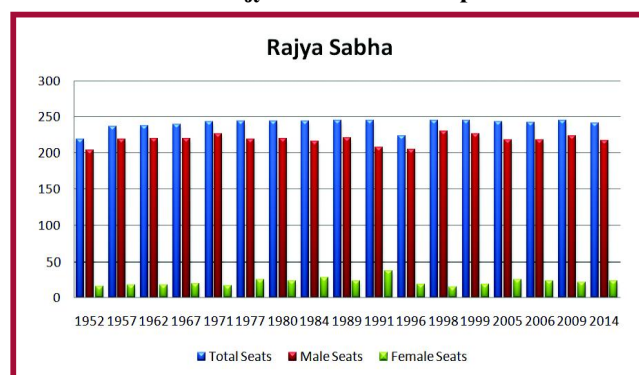
Women MPs in Rajya Sabha with Comparison of Men

Rajya Sabha	Year	Total No. No. of Seat	Total No. of Male	Total No. of female	% of Female
I	1952	219	203	16	7.3
II	1957	237	219	18	7.6
III	1962	238	220	18	7.6
IV	1967	240	220	20	8.3
V	1971	243	226	17	7.0
VI	1977	244	219	25	10.2
VII	1980	244	220	24	9.8
VIII	1984	244	216	28	11.4
IX	1989	245	221	24	9.8
X	1991	245	207	38	15.5
XI	1996	223	204	19	8.5
XII	1998	245	230	15	6.1
XIII	1999	245	226	19	7.7
XIV	2005	243	218	25	10.2
XV	2006	242	218	24	9.9
XVI	2009	245	223	22	8.97
XVII	2014	241	217	24	9.95
XVIII	2019	233	206	27	11.58

Sources: Election Commission of India, various years (www.eci.gov.in)

Figure- 2

Women MPs in Rajya Sabha with Comparison of Men



Women's political representation at the state level which is presented in **Table- 3**, as gauged by their membership in the state legislatures is abysmally low. The data from the states shows that, In 2018 Assembly election 22 women MLAs have been elected, 189 women candidates contested. It is also the highest number of women candidates contesting in the last 10 years, with 69 in 1998, 11 in 2003, 154 in 2008 and 166 in 2013 (Economic times, 2018) Women members of Rajasthan have the highest proportion (14.00 percent) in 2013 followed by Bihar (13.99 percent) and Madhya Pradesh (13.4 percent). Other states with relatively high proportions of women in the state Assemblies include Sikkim (12.50 percent), Himachal Pradesh (10.00 percent) Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal (11.56 percent). 13 women have been elected to Chhattisgarh Assembly in 2018, a rise from 10 to 11 women who have become MLAs after 2013 and 2008 polls respectively (Ibid). **Table-4 & Figure- 3** presented the percent of women voters, comparison with men voters since First General Election, 1952 to Sixteenth General Election, 2014.

Table- 3: Women MLAs in States of India

Sl. No	Name of the State	Year	Total No. of Seats	Women Members	%
1	Andhra Pradesh	2009	294	34	11.56
2	Arunachal Pradesh	2009	60	2	3.33
3	Assam	2011	126	14	11.11
4	Bihar	2010	243	34	13.99
5	Chhattisgarh	2018	90	13	11.11
6	Delhi	2013	70	3	4.29
7	Goa	2012	40	1	2.50
8	Gujarat	2012	182	16	8.79

9	Haryana	2009	90	9	10.00
10	Himachal Pradesh	2012	68	3	4.41
11	Jammu & Kashmir	2009	87	3	3.45
12	Jharkhand	2009	81	8	9.88
13	Karnataka	2013	224	6	2.68
14	Kerala	2011	140	7	5.00
15	Madya Pradesh	2013	230	30	13.04
16	Maharastra	2009	288	11	3.82
17	Manipur	2012	60	3	5.00
18	Meghalaya	2013	60	4	6.67
19	Mizoram	2013	40	0	0.00
20	Nagaland	2013	60	0	0.00
21	Odisha	2009	147	7	4.76
22	Panjab	2012	117	14	11.97
23	Pondicherry	2011	30	0	0.00
24	Rajasthan	2018	200	22	14.00
25	Sikkim	2009	32	4	12.50
26	Tamil Nadu	2011	234	17	7.26
27	Tripura	2013	60	5	8.33
28	Uttarakhand	2012	70	5	7.14
29	Uttar Pradesh	2012	403	35	8.6
30	West Bengal	2011	294	34	11.56

Sources: Election Commission of India

(www.eci.gov.in) & www.economicsties.com

It is clear from the data that women's participation in the parliament (Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha) as well as in the state legislatures is very low. Women's participation in the state legislature is even lower than their participation in the parliament While it is considered important to bring women to positions of power, it is equally necessary to sensitize those in power whether men or women about gender. Along with this the importance of women's economic independence, education and awareness and their improvement in the socio economic sphere can hardly be stressed. The restructuring of gender relations within both the family and society is an equally important step towards freedom, equality and justice. What is clear, however that is given the situation as presented in table- 1, 2, 3 and 4 an affirmative state initiative is necessary to facilitate and enable women to participate at these levels of political action. In this context the 85th constitutional Amendment Bill seeking one-third reservation for women in the parliamentary and legislative seats becomes an extremely

important possible alternative. Women's participation in formal politics like voting and campaigning is lower than of men either because 'they have been socialized differently, especially as far as marriage, motherhood, employment, and property ownership are concerned, or because they have fewer resources' (Burns et al 2001).

Table-4:

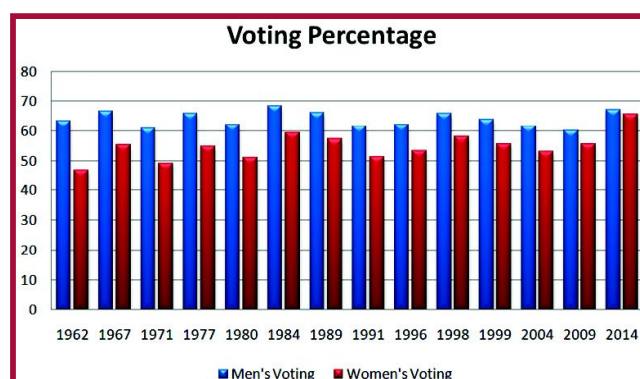
Women Voters in Comparison with Men Voters

General Election years	Total Voting Percentage	Men's Voting Percentage	Women's Voting percentage	Difference in Voting Percentage
1962	55.4	63.3	46.6	16.7
1967	61.3	66.7	55.5	11.2
1971	55.3	60.9	49.1	11.8
1977	60.5	66.0	54.9	11.1
1980	56.9	62.2	51.2	11.0
1984	64.0	68.4	59.2	9.2
1989	62.0	66.1	57.3	8.8
1991	57.0	61.6	51.4	10.2
1996	58.0	62.1	53.4	8.7
1998	62.0	66.0	58.0	8.0
1999	60.0	64.0	55.7	8.3
2004	58.0	61.7	53.3	8.4
2009	58.2	60.2	55.8	4.4
2014	66.4	67.1	65.6	1.5

Source: Election Commission of India, various years Website (www.eci.gov.in)

Figure-3:

Women Voters in Comparison with Men Voters



Source: Election Commission of India, various years Website (www.eci.gov.in)

Table-5: Representation of women Ministers

General Election Years	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
2019	6

Sources: www.parliamentofindia.nic.in

It is a matter of shame that the representation of women ministers has been very low in government of India since 1952 (Table- 5). The State Government also running through in the same case. The portfolios getting by women who are from elite families, who are related closely to the political leaders and women who are high-profiled in their professions and their glamour is considered to be a plus point with their entry into the increasing glitter of politics.

Reason behind imbalanced participation:

The socioeconomic, cultural and political environment is to a great extent responsible for women's marginal participation in politics. The low range of women's political participation is due to:

- **Low status in society:** The socio-economic position of women in societies negatively affects their participation. Typically, women earn less

than men, and the sexual division of labour in society also imposes burdens on women that are normally faced by men. Women often face a triple burden when participating in politics. They have a responsibility to their work or profession, to their family, and if they become involved in politics they are effectively taking on a third full-time job. Most societies fail to organize in a manner that enables both men and women with families to share these responsibilities, particularly considering that child-rearing responsibilities tend to fall disproportionately on women.

- **Violence:** a significant barrier to women's capability of participating in politics to be the threat of violence. Women who have entered the political process are faced with a lot of resistance. There are many instances where they have been subjected to physical violence, threats and intimidation. This has especially occurred when 'elected women representatives aspired to be articulate, assertive and effective in discharging their responsibilities' (Banerjee, 2003). Sexual violence in India is exacerbated by issues of education and marriage. Women are sexually abused. Child marriage, domestic violence and low literacy rates have lowered Indian women's economic opportunities and contributed to sexual violence in India. A 2011 study found, '24% of Indian men have committed sexual violence at some point in their lives, 20% have forced their partners to have sex with them 38% of men admitting they had physically abused their partners' (Munck & Hume eds. 2008). 'In the larger society, violence and the threat of violence affects many women's ability to participate actively in many forms of social and political relationship, to speak in public, to be recognized as dignified beings whose worth is equal to that of others' (ibid).
- **Illiteracy:** India has one of the largest illiterate populations. In January 2014, the United Nations reported 287 million adults in India are illiterate. Literacy among Indian women is 53.7%, which is much lower than literacy among men reported at 75.3%, (MHRD, Report 2014). Illiteracy limits the ability of women to understand the political system and issues. Problems with exploitation, such as women being left off of voters lists, have been reported as illiteracy limits the ability of

women to ensure their political rights are exercised. Political participation stated, 'Because literacy is connected in general with the ability to move outside the home and to stand on one's own outside of it, it is also connected to the ability of women to meet and collaborate with other women' (Singh, 2000). It has been held that women are not independent voters, a majority of them are illiterate, a majority of them make their choice on the basis of suggestions from male members, women lack information and political awareness or that women are not politically conscious. Women are not treated as a political entity in their own right. They have been treated by political parties and other power groups as a means to further their own interests and gains (Baseline Report 1998). This is evinced by the declining number of women candidates fielded during the elections

- **Unhealthy Political Environment:** all political parties across India treat women as decorative pieces, relegated to women's wings, with not much importance given to them in mainstream activities. It has been often seen that the women with some glamorous background are given backdoor entries whereas a large number of women spend their lives struggling to get to the deserving seat. Political parties are the major gatekeepers in determining who will be candidates in elected office. They play a critical role in advancing women's participation in decision-making bodies. Though the processes of candidate selection, women face a number of obstacles. Another deterrent for women to enter politics is the very nature of politicking. Money and muscle power are used to threaten opponents and the voters, and impose their decisions on the electorate and to raise the kinds of funds required to get into and stay in power. Violating women's dignity is an integral part of politics instilling fear in women, thereby restraining their entry into politics. In addition corruption is also institutionalized systematically. Criminalization and corruption are not part of women's value systems and therefore they are kept away from politics in general. Ones in power they are unable to withstand these forces and their attempts in the political activities are frustrated. This impairs women exercising their right to participate in politics.

- **Low Economic Status.** Even after selection as candidates, women seeking decision-making positions can be constrained by different factors. This can include a lack of financial support and time for campaigning because of difficulties in balancing family and public life, of confidence about relevant skills, of fewer connections to politically relevant networks. Additionally, the environment of political institutions is not gender-friendly and deters some women from considering entering political life.
- **Religion:** The nexus of religion with politics often becomes a convenient tool to divide the women's constituency. Women by large are religious in nature and hence by injecting the venom of communalism they are unable to transcend their religious identity. On the one hand while women supported communal riots, it was again women who were the main victims of such communal violence. This has adversely affected women's political empowerment. Restraining cultural norms by the nature of patriarchal value system, any woman bold enough to come out in the open and into politics is viewed with suspicion. It is natural that she is particularly targeted for slander and character assassination. Furthermore, it is always her sexuality that is first questioned. The transition from the roles of housewife and mother to the role of political decision-maker is not easy and has not been frequently attempted.
- **Absence of Qualitative Data:** The quantitative data of political participation of women at local level is available but the qualitative data on the aspects of their active participation including their interest in politics, no interest in politics, the utilization of the decision-making functionality provided to them is not being quantified properly. The data on their sensitization about their rights and its usage is still missing.
- **Participation as a Proxy Candidate:** There have been evidences that due to reservation policy, certain women got elected into the setup, but they acted merely as the mouth-piece of their male family members. This indicates that there is a possibility of on-roll women participation to be higher than what it actually exists on ground.

- **Pending Women Reservation Bill:** Last but not least, the enactment of the 85th constitutional amendment bill is still a distant dream. Reservation is of course, a means of providing the opportunity to participate. But 'women reservation bill' is pending since ages and no discussion takes place for the same. After so many years of 'women reservation bill' it was finally introduced in the Rajya Sabha during the last of the Budget Session, 2008. As it is a Constitutional Amendment Bill, it must now acquire a two-thirds majority to be passed in the parliament. So far women have only been provided reservations not less than 33% of the total seats in local governance. However, this reservation quota is misinterpreted to imply that women can contest only 33% seats and not against the general seats. This interpretation by the vested interest groups has limited women from exercising their right to contest beyond the reserved quota.

Mechanism for Overcoming Barriers to Political Participation:

Addressing barriers to political participation are critical to achieving gender equality and female empowerment. Equality with equity is a goal which may not easily be achieved only by high representation of women in legislature and other public bodies but has to be buttressed by other supportive measures:

- The most common mechanism for increasing women's political participation is a reservation quota, which is defined a mandatory percentage of women candidates for public elections. Women must be in crucial decision-making positions if they are to impact on the course to change and transform the lives of women and the society to uphold the principles of equality. There is no affirmative legislation to enable women to participate in the higher levels of political governance at the state and central levels. Despite the reservation of seats at the local levels, there are no similar quotas in relation to elected seats at the national and state level. In practice, as well, the representation of women in the highest legislative organs has been nominal. Women's Reservation Bill (The Constitution 108th Amendment Bill), it proposes to amend the Constitution of India to reserve one third of all seats in the Lok Sabha, and in all

state legislative assemblies for women. The Rajya Sabha passed the bill but the Lok Sabha has not yet voted on the bill. This will be helpful in increasing the political participation of women. Therefore, until the reservations introduced at the lower levels of governance are extended to the higher levels of political governance, that of the state and the federal, there really cannot be much change in women's political participation. Reservation of seats is a basic, consistent logical step towards both women's emancipation and inclusive development. Particularly for a government which promised that the 'equal access to participation and decision making of women in the social, economic life of the nation' (Meheta Committee Report, 2001).

- To overcome issues of discrimination and violence, women's organizations should be focused on the empowerment of Indian women. Empowerment is tied to the support of family and improved status within the household, which is undermined by the threat of domestic and sexual violence. Training is also an essential input in ensuring that women leaders who do not have prior experience in politics are imparted information on the rules, procedures, functions; finances etc. training encompasses the dissemination of information, skill development, confidence building, role clarification and raising gender awareness. To eliminate gender description and promote women empowerment, women's decision making capacity must therefore be enhanced within the household, the workplace and the political sphere. Increased political influence should have reverberations for women's equality in other two realms, which will in turn have implications for India's performance against all milestones for social progress.
- Women's political participation can provide the inspiration for women to take action on a vision of a better and more equal society, and to make meaningful contributions towards inclusive national development. Women are and have been politically active throughout India, and the large and expanding mass of women's groups and advocacy efforts are testament to this. However, their participation has been within movements, not structural politics. The questions of women cannot be asked, certainly not

answered, by individual groups and women's questions need to be seen as a matter of public interest not matters of specifically female concern outside of the political sphere. They must be raised and debated at all levels, with women's issues becoming public issues. At the same time women will become visible as competent individuals capable of holding positions of power, enacting laws and demanding accountability for their implementation within political spaces. There can be no equal society until women help to elect lawmakers and make laws.

- The women's movement and gender politics in India is currently divided over the question of affirmative action for women in parliament, state legislatures and in local bodies. It centers on many issues. Thus, affirmative action for women in legislative bodies is the need of the hour as it would go a long way in removing obstacles that inhibit their participation. It would bridge the wide men-women gap in the electoral set-up and pave the way for gender-inclusive electoral politics.
- Long-term success against gender inequality will require the adoption an interdisciplinary operational framework by incorporating a wide spectrum of crosscutting strategies and enhancing multi-stakeholder engagement in the overall development process. Political commitment are vital to minimize policy related barriers and developing a gender-friendly political environment. Creating a greater synergy between government and civil society organizations is equally essential to understanding the barriers to implementation of policies and how they can be overcome.
- Socio-economic conditions, such as poverty and illiteracy, prevent the entrance of women into running for public office, and even voting. Poverty is considered the greatest threat to peace in the world, and eradication of poverty should be a national goal as important as the eradication of illiteracy and inequality. Due to abject poverty, women are exploited as domestic helps and wives whose incomes are usurped by the man of the house. If poverty were not a concern, then the girl child will be able to follow her dreams without concerns of sexual exploitation, domestic abuse, Security threats,

Sex selective abortion, Harassment, Trafficking, Superstition, Displacement, Migration, Deprivation, Vulnerability and Gender inequality.

- The marginalization of women in electoral politics is deeply embedded in the party system and the imbalanced gender power relations in the main political dispensations in India. They continue to be discriminated against not only in terms of seat allotments to contest elections but also within the rank and file of major political parties. Even today best women parliamentarians feel sidelined and powerless within their parties except a few. Political parties and other organizations should encourage women's participation in politics and in the exercise of political responsibilities. The strategy should be to encourage a still greater number of women in decision – making power. In this background the demand for 33% reservation for women in legislature becomes important.

SIGNIFICANCE

The significance of the present study will no doubt portray that the gender inequality has been a threat to democracy of India, The equal right to vote, participation and representation in legislative bodies may not in itself be enough for women's political empowerment or to remedy the problems of discrimination faced by women in Indian politics. So the present paper leads to questioning what the benefits of democracy for women? From this the planners, administrators, Politicians, members of the civil society and researchers will find the means to solve the issue which raised in the present study.

CONCLUSION

In recent times women have been awakened to the fact that in order to break gender barriers and overcome social and political bias, women participation in the political process is essential. Further laws alone cannot bring social transformation. There must be a revolution of consciousness in the minds of women about themselves. They must realize that they have constitutional rights to equality, health care, economic security, and access to education, employment opportunity, pay equality and political power. The political parties that played a destructive role in scuttling the Women's Reservation Bill in the last Lok Sabha have become redundant after the general elections in 2014. The current government has given a positive signal for

women-inclusive politics, providing six cabinet ministerial positions to women, raising hopes that it would build an all-party consensus and pass the long-standing Bill in due course. But electoral quotas do not have long term solution. An environment should be created wherein women choose to come into power bereft of their men's support, but on their own right, on their own terms and in a position to build and sustain their constituencies. Then after the quest of gender equality in political participation will be end in 21st Century India.

Financial Support and Sponsorship:

Nil.

Conflict of Interest:

There are no conflicts of interest.

REFERENCES

1. Agarwal, Bina (2006) "Social Exclusion", Plenary Comments, Asia 2015, March. Census of India, various years
2. Banerjee, Sikata (2003) 'Gender and Nationalism: The Masculinization of Hinduism and Female Political Participation in India', Women's Studies International Forum, 26(2): 167–79.
3. Baseline Report on Women and Political Participation in India", prepared by NIAs, et.al. and co-ordinated by IWRAW, Asia Pacific, Advanced Unedited Version, p.8 ,accessed at www.IWRAW-ap.org/aboutus/pdf/FPwomen-and_pol_pax.pdf.
4. Basu, Durga Das (1998): "Introduction to the Constitution of India ", Prentice- Hall of India, New Delhi.
5. Burns, Nancy, Kay Lehman Scholzman and Sidney Verba (2001): The Private Roots of Public Action: Gender, Equality, and Political Participation, Cambridge Harvard University Press.
6. Deshpande, Rajeshwari (2004) 'How Gendered was Women's Participation Women in Election 2004?' Economic and Political Weekly, 39(51): 5431–6.
7. Deshpande, Rajeshwari (2009). How did Women Vote in Lok Sabha elections 2009? Economic and Political Weekly, vol. 44
8. Election Commission of India, various years (www.eci.gov.in), Web accessed on 4.12.2018
9. Election Commission of India Election Statistics Pocket Book 2014: Election Commission of India.
10. Meheta, Committee 2001, Report of the committee on panchayati raj institution, New Delhi.
11. MHRD, Report 2014.
12. Munck, R. And M. Hume (eds) (2008). 'Violence power, Force and Social Transformation'. Latin American Perspectives, Vol, 35, No. 5.
13. Rai, Praveen (2011) 'Electoral Participation of Women in India: Key Determinants and Barriers', Economic and Political Weekly, 46(3): 47–55.
14. Singh J.P. (2000) "Indian Democracy and Empowerment of Women", The Indian Journal of Public Administration, Oct-Dec, Vol. XLVI, No. 4, pp. 619.