

WOMEN AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN INDIA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO UTTAR PRADESH

Dr. Chitwan Varma,

Associate Prof., Shri J.N.P.G. College, Lucknow

Women continue to be largely marginalized from the political sphere, often as a result of discriminatory laws, practices, attitudes and gender stereotypes, low levels of education, lack of access to health care and the disproportionate effect of poverty on women. Within India's characteristically plural society, in the hierarchy of politicised identities, gender equality is overridden by the pressing concerns of religion and caste and sits at an uneasy juncture between competing claims for equality of other forms of identity (Source #1)ⁱ. This has meant that women have been excluded from decision-making processes and their agency as political actors has been severely limited through the interplay of numerous socio-cultural norms and structures.

This research paper analyzes women's political participation in Uttar Pradesh, situating it in the Indian national context. The paper has also utilized data out of research work by social science scholar, Ms S. Bobde, besides the references given and governmental/other publications.

The review looks at the five key dimensions of

- (1) *Constitution and legal reform*
- (2) *Women in national parliaments*
- (3) *Participation in state legislatures*
- (4) *Participation in local governance and*
- (5) *Participation in elections.*

The paper concludes summarizing some salient causes and issues for women's political participation.

CONSTITUTION AND LEGAL REFORM

Article 14 of the Indian Constitution guarantees to all

men and women the fundamental right to equality. Articles 325 and 326 guarantee political equality - equal right to participation in political activities and right to vote respectively.

The Government of India, adopted an affirmative action for providing reservation for women in locally elected government bodies in the year 1993. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act provides not less than 33 per cent reservation for women in the Panchayat Raj institutions in the rural areas. The 74th Constitutional Amendment Act introduced similar reservation for women in Nagar Palika and municipalities in towns and urban areas.

The 81st Constitutional Amendment Bill (Women's Reservation Bill) proposes to amend the Constitution of India to reserve 33 per cent of all seats in the lower house of Parliament, the Lok Sabha, and in all state Legislative Assemblies. This was first introduced on 12th September 1996 by the United Front government, following effective implementation of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional amendments. The Rajya Sabha passed the bill on 9 March 2010. The 81st, 84th and 85th Constitutional Amendment Bills, providing for reservation for women in Parliament and State Legislatures, have not been passed by the Lok Sabha. One of the reasons is not having reservations within reservation for women on the basis of caste.

NATIONAL LEGISLATURES

The percentage of women in national, state and local legislatures has become a standard measure of a State's achievements in women's political participation.

WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT

While globally 20.9 per cent of national parliamentarians were female as of 1 July 2013, in the India in the two houses of Parliament- Lok Sabha and Raj Sabha was only 11 and 10 percent respectively. The average percentage of women's representation in the Parliament, Assemblies and Council of Ministers taken together in India has also been around 10%ⁱⁱ. India ranks 105th in the world for female representation in politics (Source #3)ⁱⁱⁱ.

A review through the 14 general elections conducted so far reflects a low representation of women in both houses of Parliament, State legislatures, in political parties and other decision-making bodies. Women's representation in Lok Sabha has remained low between 3.5 per cent to 9.02 per cent of its total strength since the first general elections in 1952. However for the first time a record 59 women (11%) were elected Member of

Parliaments in the 15th Lok Sabha. This is the highest since Independence, and 17 of them are less than 40

INDIA 1in10
parliamentarians is Female
1in 7 Uttar Pradesh
parliamentarian is Female

years. In the Rajya Sabha, even though this is through nominations, the representation of women has never crossed 12 per cent. In 2009 10.6 % (26 out of 245) seats were occupied by women. (Source #4)^{iv}

Women's participation as contestants overall remains also remains low (ranging from 17 to 10%), when compared to men (Source # 5)^v. In the fifteenth Lok Sabha 556 women had contested the 2009 general elections, of which 59 were elected.

Table 1 Trends in women's participation in the Lok Sabha

Lok Sabha Session/Year	Total No. of seats	Number of Women contestants	No. of Women Members elected	Percentage to the total seats	Percentage of total number of women contestants
Thirteenth-1999	543	284	49	9.02	17.25
Fourteenth-2004	543	355	45	8.29	12.67
Fifteenth-2009	543	556	59	10.82	10.61

WOMEN IN MINISTERIAL/POLITICAL LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

While for women as a whole, the playing field needs much more levelled, individual women in India have overcome obstacles with great acclaim. It is to be noted that one of India President, speaker of the Lok Sabha, Leader of opposition in the Lok Sabha had

been women. Presidents of three political parties in India- the Indian National Congress ,AIDMK the Bahujan Samaj Party were/have been women.

However, there are only 3 women in a Union Cabinet of 35 Ministers, 1 of 6 Ministers with Independent Charge, 3 of 37 Ministers of State in Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's government. Among other political leadership positions, there are 3 Governors/Lt. Governors/Administrators of 35

states and territories, and 2 Chief Ministers of 29 states and territories. Overall women occupy about 10 percent of all political leadership positions in India (Source #6)^{vi}.

WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS FROM UTTAR PRADESH

Women parliamentarians in Uttar Pradesh have fared slightly better than the national average overall and occupy 15% of the total 80 seats from the state (Table 4.2). Barring the fourteenth general elections women continued to have over 10 percent seats since 1998. (Source # 1 Parliament of India

Table 2- Trends in number and percentage of women parliamentarians from UP

Year	India			Uttar Pradesh		
	Total seats	won	%	Total seats	won	%
1998	543	40	7.33	85	9	10.6
1999	543	44	8.07	85	9	10.6
2004	543	48	8.8	80	7	8.75
2009	543	59	11	80	12	15

UTTAR PRADESH LEGISLATURES

Participation in the Legislative Assembly (Vidhan Sabha)

The Uttar Pradesh Vidhan Sabha is the lower house of the bicameral legislature of the [Indian](#) state of [Uttar Pradesh](#). It has a total of 404 members

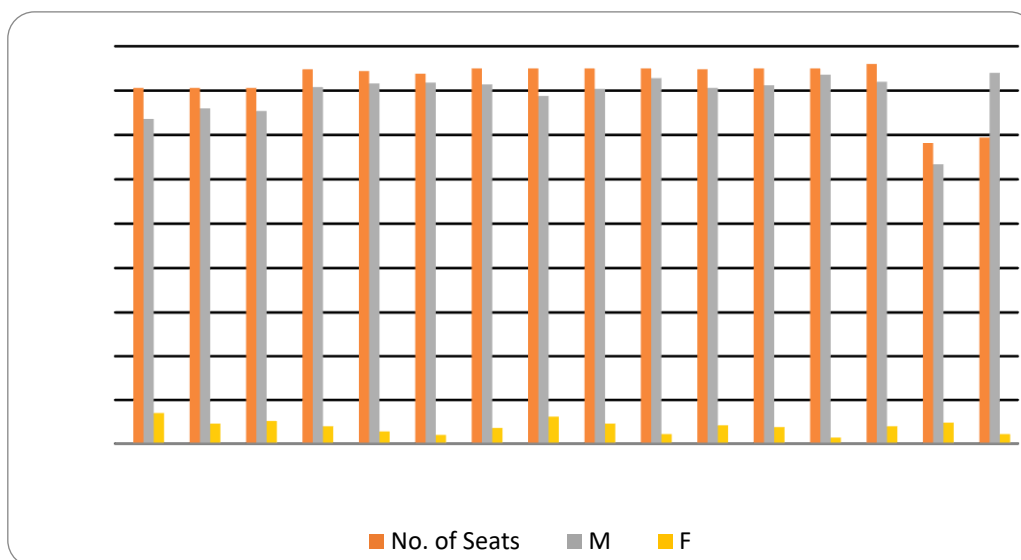
including one Anglo-Indian member who is nominated by the Governor. Till 1967, it had a strength of 431 members including one nominated Anglo-Indian member. After reorganization of the State on 9 November 2000, the strength of the Legislative Assembly has become 404 including one nominated member to represent the Anglo-Indian community. (Source # 7)^{vii}.

Table 3 - Women's Participation in Legislative Assembly Elections (Source #11)^{viii}

Year	Women Contested	Women elected		Men elected		Total
		No.	%	No.	%	
2002	344	26	6.45	377	93.55	403
2007	370	23	5.7	380	94.3	403
2012	583	35	8.68	368	95.78	403

As can be seen from tables 4.3 and 4.4, the percentage of women elected in UP's legislative assembly elections has been very low. However an increasing trend is noted with 8.7% representation (

35 out of 403), highest ever in 2012. The representation in 1996 was only 4.73% (20 out of 424 seats).

Table 4 - Total Share of Women in Legislative Assembly in Uttar Pradesh

(Source # 11- Statistical Report of Assembly Election 2012, Election Commission of India)

PARTICIPATION IN UP LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL – VIDHAN PARISHAD

In 1950 the total membership of the Vidhan Parishad (legislative council) of Uttar Pradesh state was increased from 60 to 72. With the Constitution (Seventh Amendment) Act 1956, the strength of the Council was enhanced to 108. After the re-organisation of Uttar Pradesh state in November 2000 and the creation of Uttarakhand state, this strength has now reduced to 100. The members to the Vidhan Parishad are nominated and its composition is as follows: 10 Members are nominated by the governor of Uttar Pradesh, 38 members are elected by the Uttar Pradesh Vidhan Sabha members, 36 members are elected by the local bodies, 8 members are elected by the teachers, 8 members are elected by the graduates^{ix}

There are only 6 women in 100-member Legislative Council of Uttar Pradesh.

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS IN STATE LEGISLATURES

Of the 21 chief ministers of the state, two have been women. Whereas of the 29 Governors in Uttar Pradesh only woman has been made Governor. The Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council are yet to see a woman chairperson, all 23 Chairpersons have been men.

Over the last decade in 3 governments since 2002, there have been only 8 women Ministers. The highest number was four women ministers in 2002 Shri Mulayam Singh Yadav's cabinet of ministers. Of these two women ministers were also give charge of non-traditional sectors like PWD and Irrigation, while the remaining two had the social sector portfolios such as child development, nutrition, welfare.

In 2007, while the chief Minister herself was a woman, Ms. Mayawati gave responsibility of State Ministers to two women who covered Khadi Gramudhyog and women welfare. Currently since 2012, Shri Akhilesh Yadav has only one woman minister in his cabinet with the charge of women welfare and cultural departments (See annex 4.3 for details).

LOCAL GOVERNANCE

Women's presence in high numbers in local government structures in India/UP can be attributed to the 73rd and 74th amendments which provided for increased participation of women in political institutions at the village, block and district levels. Women's representation in local governments makes a difference. Research on *panchayats* in India discovered that the number of drinking water projects in areas with female-led councils was 62 per cent higher than in those with male-led councils.

PARTICIPATION IN MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS

Municipal elections are the second-tier of the local urban elections and are carried out in the municipal wards and corporations. As can be seen from Table 4.4 below, the selection of women as members and chairpersons of Municipal Corporations and Municipal Councils in UP is much higher than national and state legislatures. 41% of Mayors and 45% of Chairpersons of Municipal Councils of UP are women. Their participation as members in these bodies ranges from 36 to 39 %.

Table 5- Women's participation in Municipal Corporations/Councils UP 2012

Participants	Mayor's of UP Municipal Corporations	Municipal Counselor's of UP	Chairperson's Municipal Corporation UP	Member's Municipal Corporation UP	Chairperson's Municipal Council of UP	Member's Municipal Council of UP
	No. %	No. %	No. %	No. %	No. %	No. %
Women	05 41.7	360 36.7	76 39.2	1961 38.5	189 44.6	1996 38.8
Men	07 58.3	620 63.3	118 60.8	3136 61.5	234 55.4	3192 61.9
Total	12 100	980 100	194 100	5097 100	423 100	5158 100

PARTICIPATION IN PANCHAYATI RAJ

Panchayati Raj, the foundation of India's political system, is a decentralized form of Government where each village is responsible for its own development work. The Panchayat is a system of village-level (Gram Panchayat), block-level (Panchayat Samiti), and district-level (Zilla Parishad) councils, members of which are elected by the people, and are responsible for the administration of local public goods.

Each Gram Panchayat (GP) encompasses 10,000 people in several villages (between 5 and 15). Voters elect a council, which then elects among its members a Pradhan (chief) and an Upa-Pradhan

(vice-chief). The candidates are generally nominated by political parties, but have to be residents of the villages they represent. The council makes decisions by majority voting (the Pradhan does not have veto power). The Pradhan, however, is the only member of the council with a full-time appointment (Source # 10)^x.

As a result of the 73rd/74th amendment millions of women have gained entry at different levels in the three tiers of the Panchayati Raj system^{xi}. 37.5% (10.5 million) of the nearly 28 million elected representatives in Panchayats in India are women. As can be seen from table 4.5 below, during the last decade from 2000-2010, the percentage of women gram panchayat members remained consistently at 38%. An increase in women members

is seen during the same period in membership of Zila Panchayat level from 37% in 2000 to 41% in 2010

Table 6 - Panchayat members in UP in the last three elections

Panchayat member	Zila Panchayat		Kshetra Panchayat		Gram Panchayat	
	number	%	number	%	number	%
2010						
Women	1082	41	24951	38	25097	38
Men	1522	59	39591	62	388053	62
2005						
Women	1069	41	24259	37	247160	38
Men	1559	59	40593	63	404158	62
2000						
Women	Data NA	37.06	Data NA	35.82	Data NA	37.95
Men		62.04		64.18		62.05

Increasing number of women are also being elected as officials in the Panchayati Raj elections. Chairperson zila panchayats and pramukh kshetra

panchayat have more women than men at 60% and 51% in the 2010 elections.

Table 7 - Number of Panchayat officials elected in the last three elections

Officials	Zila Panchayat		Kshetra Panchayat		Gram Panchayat	
	number	%	number	%	number	%
2010						
Women	43	60	417	51	20245	39
Men	29	40	404	49	31654	61
2005						
Women	53	76	414	51	26069	51
Men	17	24	402	49	25907	49

2000						
Women	Data NA	53.62	Data NA	36.71	Data NA	35.32
Men		46.38		63.29		64.68

PARTICIPATION IN ELECTIONS

Between the period of 1989 and 1993 women's voting percentage in formal elections shows a decline from 68% to 47% at national levels.

Women as Voters

Table 8- Voting patterns by sex (national level)

Year	Male Voting Percentage	Female Voting Percentage
1952	53.0	37.1
1957	56.0	38.8
1962	62.1	46.6
1971	66.7	55.5
1977	69.7	49.2
1980	65.6	54.9
1984	57.7	51.2
1989	63.6	68.2
1991	70.9	43.9
1993	52.6	47.4

Source: *Issues, Towards Beijing, New Delhi: Coordination Unit, 1995*

The share of women electoral in 2012 legislative assembly Uttar Pradesh is higher at 60% as compared to 58% for men (table 4.8 below)

Table 9 - Share of Women Electoral in Legislative Assembly UP 2012

	MALE	FEMALE	OTHERS	TOTAL
i. NO. OF ELECTORS (Including Service Electors)	70256859	57232002	3975	127492836
ii. NO. OF ELECTORS WHO VOTED	41225412	34500316	65	75725793
iii. POLLING PERCENTAGE	58.68 %	60.28 %	2 %	59.40 %

(Source # 11- Statistical Report of Assembly Election 2012, Election Commission of India)

Women face gaps in capacities and/or resources that prevent them from participating effectively. Awareness of electoral rights, processes and procedures is limited due to access to information/literacy status. If polling stations are located in remote or unsafe areas, women voters may be reluctant to use them. Electoral

management bodies are unaware of hindrances to women's participation because they do not have the knowledge, skills or data to analyse and correct these. A considerable percentage of women voters, vote as per family decisions and not as per their individual choices.

WOMEN AS CANDIDATES

In 2012 UP Legislative Assembly, 583 women contested as candidates out of total 6839 candidates; 8.5% candidature overall. 35 women

among these were elected on the 403 seats, interestingly in the same proportion 8.6%. The number of women contesting legislative assembly elections also shows a significant increase from 370 to 583.

Table 10 - Women candidates & Performance in 2012 Legislative Assembly UP

	MALE	FEMALE	OTHERS	TOTAL
i. NO. OF CONTESTANTS	6252	583	4	6839
ii. ELECTED	368	35	0	403
iii. FORFEITED DEPOSITS	5269	487	4	5760

(Source # 11 Statistical Report of Assembly Election 2012, Election Commission of India)

ANALYSIS OF CAUSES

The inter-linked dimensions of women's status particularly literacy, education levels economic empowerment, safety and security and social norms and practices play a key role and influence women's political participation. Access to information on political procedures and processes is impaired by low literacy. Literacy also has a strong impact on women's capacity to perform in political institutions such as gram panchayats. These factors combined limit women's capacity to engage even while they are in the elected offices and they may be subjected to exploitation due to lack of understanding on funding and other arrangements. Access through oral dialogue and information is restricted because of mobility, low participation in organizations, networks. Engagement in low wage and lack of land, home ownership further limits political participation. Also the primary area of subordination is the family where the patriarchal values are enforced and control over women's person hood is rarely questioned. Support from family members to play a dominant role in the public domain is usually not forthcoming. Younger women and unmarried women have further restrictions. Lack of space for participation in political bodies has not only resulted in women's presence in meager numbers in these

decision-making bodies but also in the neglect of their issues and experiences in policy making.

While the right to vote has been accessed, exercised and enjoyed by a large number of women, there are wide disparities to equal political participation, which is far from reflecting women's share in society. The discrepancy directly infringes on women's political rights, and can restrict rights in other areas, given the central role that national legislatures and local bodies have in formulating, implementing, and monitoring laws and budgets.

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