

Woman Empowerment Through Reservation In National And Local Self Governance Of India

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Introduction

The exposure of empowerment of women in the national hierarchy is determined for the most part by the three factors that of her economic, social and political uniqueness and their weightage. These factors are extremely intertwined and interlinked with numerous annoyed cutting linkages which involve that if hard work in even one dimension stay behind not present or weak, outcomes and momentum generated by the other components cannot be persistent as they will not be able to withstand any changes or upheavals. It is only when all the three factors are at the same time addressed and prepared similar in temperament with each other can the woman be truly empowered. Therefore for holistic empowerment of the woman to come about social, economic and political aspects impacting a woman's life must come together efficiently. The consequence of women as an important human resource was recognized by the Constitution of India which not only accorded equal opportunity to women but also empowered the State to espouse dealings of positive discrimination in their favour. A number of Articles of the Constitution specially reiterated the commitment of the constitution towards the socio economic development of women and upholding their political right and participation in decision making.

Women Empowerment in India

The status of women in India has been subject to great many changes over the past few millennia. Historically women have been treated as 'Home- Makers' are good in household chores. Though a few exception ruled kingdoms and recently become Prime Minister and Chief Minister. Generally the developing countries like India are far from in giving equal status to women in society, offices, governance etc1. The root cause for all this is backwardness and consciously keeping women with lesser education, illiteracy or poor education, poverty and social- cultural values have traditionally treated women as followers of men in the house and in society. In countries like Norway, Australia, Canada, USA, UK, Sweden, Japan, Denmark and Italy, women enjoy equal status to men in all spheres of activities. But in developing countries like India the status of women is very low in all spheres of activities.

Review of Literature

Shohid Mohammad Saidul Huq (2016)¹ Empowering and promoting women's active participation in the governance process, particularly through gender-sensitive policies, is an essential prerequisite for achieving sustainable development in developing countries such as Bangladesh. This issue has gained recognition in the context of policy reforms at both the national and local government levels. The Union Parishad (UP), a vital component of rural local governance in Bangladesh, boasts a history of 145 years. However, it is noteworthy that women's inclusion and participation in UP governance were only ensured in the past two decades. A questionnaire survey conducted with over 100 respondents revealed that meaningful development at the grassroots level is unattainable without women's active involvement. Statistical analysis, specifically One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) using SPSS v.22, demonstrated a significant correlation between strengthening local government institutions and the empowerment of women. Nonetheless, significant gender disparities persist in both governance policies and reform agendas. At the grassroots level, the Union Parishad stands as the most prominent democratic institution. Therefore, the status of women's participation at this level is of paramount importance and warrants special attention to empower them, as meaningful participation and empowerment are indispensable for sustainable and participatory development. Constitutional provisions in Bangladesh represent a milestone in ensuring women's equal access and increased participation in the political power structure at the Union Parishad level, which, in turn, contributes to the strengthening of local government institutions and the pursuit of sustainable development in Bangladesh.

Nayana (2014)² the involvement of women in political leadership and its impact on the progress of a nation has been a subject of debate since the inception of our constitution. Both the Union and State Governments have taken proactive steps to integrate women into mainstream politics. Karnataka notably led the way by implementing the Panchayat Raj Act in 1983, which mandated a 25% reservation for women. Subsequently, the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments established a 33.33% reservation for women in Local Governments. Furthermore, the Union Government has recently approved an increase in the reservation for women from 33.33% to 50% across all tiers of the Panchayat Raj system, with the expectation that this change will empower women. However, a pertinent question arises: has this policy shift succeeded in altering gender dynamics. Gender equity emphasizes the equal distribution of freedom, status, dignity, opportunities, and authority between men and women as its core principles. Legal guarantees of these values are not sufficient if they remain confined to statutes and constitution without practical implementation. Women in India today grapple with new challenges and issues within the Panchayat Raj Institutions. Despite the government's commitment and official attention to women's development, a significant portion of women, both in rural and urban areas, still confront stark inequalities, deprivation, exploitation, and violence. Official and unofficial data, as well as various indicators, point to the fact that only a minority of women have genuinely benefited from these policy measures. This paper aims to delve into an analysis of gender equity within the Panchayat Raj institutions and the challenges women face when participating in good governance.

Objectives

1. To analyse the representation of women in the Indian Parliament (Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha) over several decades, from 1952 to 2019.
2. To study the present information about the distribution of reserved seats for various categories in the context of District Panchayats, Panchayat Unions, and Village Panchayats.

Analysis and Interpretation

The provide below data to track the representation of women in the Indian Parliament (Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha) over several decades, from 1952 to 2019. The data includes information on the total number of seats in each house, the number of women members, and the corresponding percentage of women's representation for each year.

¹ Shohid Mohammad Saidul Huq (2016) "Women's Participation in Local Government: A Tool for Sustainable Development of Bangladesh", *European Journal of Business and Social Sciences*, Vol. 4, No. 11, ISSN: 2235 -767X, P.P. 169 – 183.

² Nayana (2014) "Local-Selfgovernance And Gender Equity: A Study Of Selected Panchayats In Udupi Taluk, Udupi District, Karnataka", *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts (IJCRT)*, Volume 2, Issue 4, ISSN: 2320-2882, pp. 839 – 844.

Table 1.1
Women Representation in Indian Parliament

Year	Lok Sabha			Rajya Sabha		
	Total Seats	Women Members	Percentage	Total Seats	Women Members	Percentage
1952	489	22	4.4	219	15	6.9
1957	494	27	5.4	257	18	7.0
1962	494	34	6.7	238	18	7.6
1967	523	31	5.9	240	20	8.3
1971	521	22	4.2	243	17	7.0
1977	544	19	3.4	244	25	10.2
1980	544	28	5.1	244	29	11.9
1984	544	44	8.1	244	24	10.2
1989	529	28	5.3	245	24	9.8
1991	509	36	7.0	245	38	15.5
1996	541	40*	7.4	223	19	8.5
1998	545	44*	8.0	245	19	7.8
1999	543	48*	8.8	245	19	7.8
2004	543	45*	8.1	245	28	11.4
2009	543	59	10.9	245	27	11
2014	543	61	11.2	245	31	12.7
2019	543	79	14.5	245	28	11.4

Source: Election Commission of India, New Delhi.

The provided data offers a historical perspective on the representation of women in India's Lok Sabha, the lower house of Parliament, over several decades. The information includes the total number of seats, the count of women members, and the corresponding percentage of women's representation for each year, beginning from 1952.

From 1952 to 2019, a clear trend emerges, indicating a gradual but persistent improvement in the representation of women in the Lok Sabha. In 1952, there were 22 women members out of 489 total seats, constituting 4.4% of the House. This percentage has steadily increased over the years, reaching 14.5% in 2019. This progressive growth highlights a significant shift towards greater gender diversity and women's participation in the Indian Parliament.

Key observations from this data include the acknowledgment of India's commitment to advancing gender equality and recognizing the importance of women's voices in the legislative process. The trajectory underscores the evolving role of women in politics and decision-making, with more women elected as Members of Parliament.

However, it is important to note that despite this progress, women remain underrepresented in the Lok Sabha, considering they make up approximately half of India's population. As such, the data also serves as a reminder that further efforts are needed to ensure that women's perspectives and concerns are fully integrated

into the country's governance and policymaking processes. In summary, this data reflects a positive trajectory towards increased gender diversity in India's Lok Sabha but also underscores the ongoing need for greater inclusivity and women's representation in the nation's political arena.

The provided data presents a historical overview of the representation of women in India's Rajya Sabha, the upper house of Parliament, spanning from 1952 to 2019. The information includes the total number of seats, the count of women members, and the corresponding percentage of women's representation for each year.

Over the years, the data reveals a consistent pattern of growth in the representation of women in the Rajya Sabha. In 1952, there were 15 women members out of 219 total seats, making up 6.9% of the House. This percentage saw minor fluctuations but generally maintained an upward trajectory, peaking at 15.5% in 1991. In recent years, it remained above 10%, with 12.7% in 2014 and 11.4% in 2019.

This data underscores the Rajya Sabha's progress in increasing gender diversity and women's participation in the legislative process. It highlights the recognition of the importance of women's voices in shaping national policies and laws. The consistent upward trend suggests a positive shift in the representation of women in the upper house.

However, as in the case of the Lok Sabha, it is important to acknowledge that women remain underrepresented in the Rajya Sabha, given that they make up approximately half of India's population. This data, therefore, serves as a reminder that continued efforts are essential to further enhance gender equality and inclusivity in the country's higher legislative chamber. In summary, this data showcases a commendable journey towards increased gender diversity in India's Rajya Sabha but also emphasizes the ongoing need for more inclusive representation in the nation's political institutions.

The data illustrates a commendable journey toward greater gender equality and women's participation in the Indian political landscape. It highlights the importance of continued efforts to promote inclusivity and diverse representation in decision-making bodies, ensuring that the voices and perspectives of women are adequately heard and considered in the country's governance and policymaking processes.

Reservation of Seats for Women in Rural Local Governance in Tamil Nadu

The number of reserved seats for Chairpersons and Ward Members, categorized by different groups, including ST (Scheduled Tribe) General, ST Women, SC (Scheduled Caste) General, SC Women, and Women. The total number of offices at these levels is also provided for reference.

Table 2

Reservation of Seats for Women in Rural Local Governance in Tamil Nadu

Sl. No	No. of Seats by Reservation	District Panchayat		Panchayat Unions		Village Panchayats		Total
		Chairperson	Ward Member	Chairperson	Ward Member	Presidents	Ward Member	
1	Total Offices	29	620	385	6,120	12,619	97,512	1,17,285
2	ST General	-	3	1	31	71	517	623
3	ST Women	-	-	-	11	35	277	323
4	SC General	4	79	43	781	1,876	13,046	15,829
5	SC Women	2	54	32	504	1,078	6,302	7,972
6	Women	8	163	107	1,643	3,154	26,264	31,339
7	General	15	323	202	3,150	6,405	51,106	61,201
Total								1,17,285

Source: Tamil Nadu State Election Commission Report, 2011.

In terms of the Chairperson positions, there are 29 total offices available. Notably, there are no specific seats reserved for ST (Scheduled Tribe) candidates, either in the General or Women category. However, there are reserved seats for SC (Scheduled Caste) candidates, with 4 for SC General and 2 for SC Women. The majority of the Chairperson positions are open to Women and General category candidates, with 8 and 15 seats, respectively. For the Ward Member positions, there are a total of 620 offices. Similar to the Chairperson positions, there are no specific reserved seats for ST Women. There are 3 seats reserved for ST General, 79 for SC General, and 54 for SC Women. The highest number of reserved seats, however, is for Women, with 163 positions set aside. The majority of the Ward Member positions are open to General category candidates, with 323 seats.

The data presented offers insights into the distribution of elected positions in Panchayat Unions and Village Panchayats, categorizing positions into Chairpersons, Ward Members, Presidents, and Ward Members. It is clear that these positions are integral to local governance and decision-making at the grassroots level.

Starting with the Chairperson positions in Panchayat Unions, there are a total of 385 seats. In Village Panchayats, there are 6,120 Chairperson positions. These roles signify leadership at the union and village levels, and their significant numbers emphasize the importance of local governance and administration.

Ward Member positions in Panchayat Unions number 12,619, while there are a substantial 97,512 Ward Member positions in Village Panchayats. These positions serve as the representatives of various wards and neighborhoods within the union and village. The high number of Ward Member positions reflects a decentralized and community-focused approach to decision-making.

Turning to the Presidents, there are 71 positions in Panchayat Unions and 517 in Village Panchayats. The President plays a vital role in local governance, often serving as the head of the Panchayat. The data shows that the number of Presidents is significantly lower compared to the Chairpersons and Ward Members, which is consistent with their role as leaders at the higher administrative level of the Panchayat Union.

Lastly, the Ward Member positions in Village Panchayats are more numerous, with 1,17,285 seats in total. These positions represent a considerable number of communities and neighborhoods and are essential for ensuring representation and participation at the local level.

The data highlights a commitment to promoting inclusivity and representation in District Panchayat offices, particularly for Women, SC, and ST candidates. While specific seat allocations vary by category, the provision of reserved seats for historically marginalized groups is evident. The distribution of reserved and open seats indicates a focus on ensuring diversity and participation in local governance, reflecting a democratic and inclusive approach in these institutions. This data underscores the significance of grassroots governance and the sheer scale of elected positions in Panchayat Unions and Village Panchayats. It reflects a commitment to local democracy and decentralized decision-making, ensuring that a wide range of communities and neighborhoods are represented in the governance and administration of their respective areas.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the provided data on the representation of women in both India's Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, spanning from 1952 to 2019, reveals a commendable and consistent trajectory toward greater gender diversity and women's participation in the Indian political landscape. The upward trend in the percentage of women members in both houses reflects the nation's commitment to advancing gender equality and recognizing the importance of women's voices in the legislative process. This progress highlights India's recognition of the pivotal role that women play in shaping national policies and laws.

The data highlights the decentralized and community-focused approach to governance, as seen in the high number of Ward Member positions. This approach allows for a more grassroots perspective on issues and concerns within the community. The data demonstrates a commitment to local democracy and decentralized decision-making, ensuring that a wide range of communities and neighborhoods are well-represented in the governance and administration of their respective areas. This commitment is a crucial element of India's democratic framework and emphasizes the importance of local government in addressing the needs and aspirations of its diverse population.

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