

Issues of Under-Representation: Mapping Women in Indian Politics

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Abstract

This article highlights the perpetual under-representation of women in Indian parliament. As the recently held 14th General elections in India situated a stable government at the centre, however, it still has lesser women representatives. The election commission reports from 1957 to the recently held general elections in 2014 highlights emancipation of women from mere absent electorate to active voters. Further, the data also underlines a shift from mere active voters to vibrant candidates, as the number of women candidates is increased manifold. Despite these positive shift from becoming ‘active voters’ and ‘vibrant candidates’, women are unable to capitalise the increase in number of candidates to members of parliament. Undoubtedly, the traditionally placed patriarchal society in India is still unwelcoming when it comes to elect women as the political representatives. Apart from patriarchy as the important reason other various political and non-political reasons is also responsible for this democratic deficit. The substantial representation of women is missing in proportion to their population. While we celebrate the vibrancy of Indian democracy, the issue of under-representation of women continue to be a major challenge for Indian democracy.

Key words: Women in Parliament, Political Participation and Representation, India

Introduction

South Asia, has provided some significant women leaders to the world. The world’s first women Prime Minister Ms. Sirimavo Ratwatte Dias Bandaranaike from Sri Lanka, Ms. Indira Gandhi, third Prime Minister of India, known as Iron Lady much before Ms. Thatcher of England for her strong political leadership, Ms. Benazir Bhutto regarded as dynamic leader and first women head of state of a Muslim country. Begum Khaleda Zia, first women Prime Minister of Bangladesh and second women head of state in Muslim country after Ms. Bhutto, and Ms.

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Aung San Suu Kyi, the prominent opposition leader and political prisoner of Burma are some women who have shaped the political course of their respective countries. Facing multiple odds and using strong political background these women leaders have carved a space for themselves. Their contribution in building democratic institutions is immense to be underestimated. However, while mapping the development indicators, social position and political participation and representation of South Asian women in general are dismal. The situation of women in India is no different. India, being one of the largest democracies in the world, and geographically large in South Asia, the political space for women in parliament remains noticeably limited. This article would throw some light on the perpetual under-representation of women in Indian politics which remains a major challenge to Indian democracy.

Dr. Ambedkar (1979), while speaking on democracy, mentions, for the establishment of popular democracy, two pre-requisites are essential, first, the 'representation of opinion' and second, 'representation of persons'. He further states, the Government in democracy is an important space for the exercise of individual capacities. It is in the interest of the people that no person should be denied the political representation and participation in the process of the Government. The early scholars working on women in politics emphasised participation over representation. The noted American political scientist Sidney Verba politics as an engagement of citizens in public institutions has three modes: voting, election campaigning, and influencing through pressure. However, Dr. Ambedkar identifies these modes as representation of opinion, and goes further to argue for representation of persons in the legislative process. The role of individual in politics is a two level process, first, participation and second, representation. Several contemporary scholars have emphasised on representation as a crucial step towards achieving gender equal society.

Pitkin (1967) identifies four different dimensions of representation: formalistic, descriptive, symbolic, and substantive. All these dimensions are interconnected and try to cover the landscape of political representation. *Formal representation* refers to rules and procedures through which the representatives are chosen. *Descriptive representation* refers to similarities between representatives and represented in terms of composition. *Substantive representation* stands for correspondence of action of representative and the people she is representing. The fourth dimension of representation, *Symbolic representation*, stands for the feeling on people's part as being effectively represented. Together, these dimensions provide a composite understanding of the political representation. Taking Pitkin's theory further, Schwandt-Bayer and Mishler (2005) present us a multi-dimensional concept of representation to understand women's representation. They highlight the fact that although formal representation does not provide the elections as a condition; but practice shows otherwise. Elections have been considered firming both accountability and authority of the representative. It strengthens the first dimension of representation, namely, formal representation. Similarly, descriptive

representation assumes representative mirroring of the represented. In this sense it is based on democratic representation. The substantive representation focuses on the performative role of the representatives in terms of their contribution in shaping policies and decision making. Symbolic representation is more concerned with what the represented masses perceive about the representative rather than what they actually do.

The central concept in all these forms is the idea of representation. Do we have adequate percentage of women in the legislature across the globe? Apart from few countries, women's representation continues to be low. Presence of critical mass in parliament would result in achieving the real objective of representation. India, since its independence is struggling to provide equal space for women in parliament. As a result, women's representation in India is a matter of grave concern. According to World Economic Forum Report on Global Gender Gap 2013, India is placed at 106th in *Women in Parliament Index*, way below than Nordic and some African countries. Women across social groups, religious communities and tribal identities were not provided opportunity to represent themselves in the Lok Sabha. The recently held elections for the 16th Lok Sabha (Lower House) has concluded with a voter turnout of 66 percent, highest recorded after 1984 across the country by men and women electorate. However, the representation of women in parliament has not reached beyond 11.2 percent which is way below proportion to their population. The verdict of 2014 Lok Sabha elections has once again kept the potential women representatives at the fringes. The number has increased to the record highest since independence; however, this number is 'negligible'.

In this background, it is significant to trace the participation and representation of women in Indian politics. Some significant questions emerge while doing so, such as, what is the level of political participation of women in Indian politics? What is the percentage of women's electorate? What is the voter turnout of women? Women's voting percentage in the Lok Sabha elections is almost equal to men, then, what is the percentage of their candidature? How many of them are elected as legislators? Would women in India ever able to increase their numbers in parliament or continue to remain as 'electors' and not as 'decision makers' in Indian politics?

Electorate in India: 'Women Hold Half the Sky'

The opportunity to participate in the realm of electoral politics begins after obtaining a status of an 'electorate'-eligible voters. Article 326 of the Indian Constitution grants the right to vote to every person who is above the age of 18 and the citizen of India. In terms of the percentage, women's share in the total electorate is in high 40's. The Election Commission reports from 1962 to 2014 general elections indicate that the share of men electorate in the total electorate was higher compared to women electorate. According to table 1.1, total men electorate has increased from 6.7 crore in 1962 to 43.6 crore in 2014 and have

been constantly between 52 to 52.7 percent of total electorate across the country. On the other hand, women electorate also increased from 6 crore in 1962 to 39.6 crore in 2014. The Gender Electorate Gap between men and women reduced from 5.4 percent in 1962 to 4.9 percent in the 2014 elections. It highlights the increase of total women electorate in the last 50 years. Gap in the electorate between men and women was lowest in 1984 elections. Due to the continuous decline in women sex ratio, 2014 elections saw the decline of women electorate compared to 2009 elections. Therefore, the electorate gap has increased from 4.4 to 4.9 percent between the 2009 and 2014 elections. The average electorate gap between men and women in the last fifty years is 4.5 percent. The graph 1.1 highlights the marginal increase and decrease in the percentage of men and women electorate from 1962.

Table 1.1: Electorate Percentage by Gender across different LS

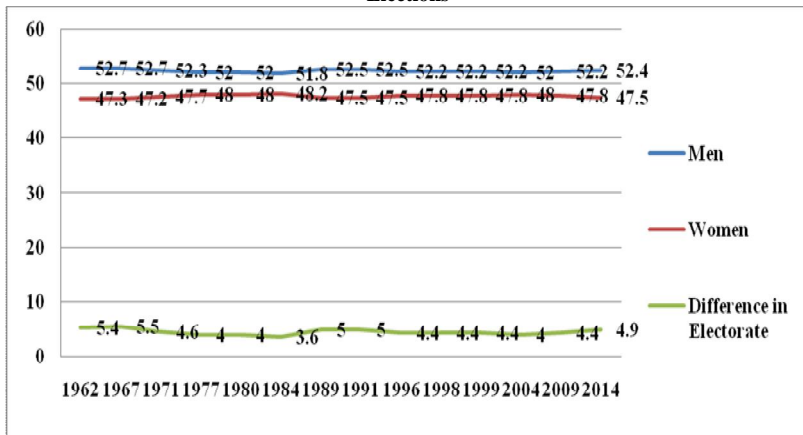
Year	Total Electorate	Men	Women	Difference in electorate
1962	127719470 (100)	67388166 (52.7)	60331304 (47.3)	5.4
1967	216102215 (100)	113944234 (52.7)	102157981 (47.2)	5.5
1971	274189132 (100)	143564829 (52.3)	130624303 (47.7)	4.6
1977	321174327 (100)	167019151 (52.0)	154155176 (48.0)	4.0
1980	356205329 (100)	185539439 (52.0)	170665890 (48.0)	4.0
1984*	379540608 (100)	196730499 (51.8)	182810109 (48.2)	3.6
1989	498906129 (100)	262045412 (52.5)	236860987 (47.5)	5.0
1991#	498363801 (100)	261832499 (52.5)	236531302 (47.5)	5.0
1996	592572288 (100)	309815776 (52.2)	282756512 (47.8)	4.4
1998	605880192 (100)	316692789 (52.2)	289187403 (47.8)	4.4
1999	619536847 (100)	323813667 (52.2)	295723180 (47.8)	4.4
2004	671487930 (100)	349490864 (52.0)	321997066 (48.0)	4.0
2009	716985101 (100)	374758801 (52.2)	342226300 (47.8)	4.4
2014	833062877 (100)	436538842 (52.4)	396524035 (47.5)	4.9
Avg.	479409017 (100)	250655354 (52.2)	228753682 (47.7)	4.5

Source: Election Commission of India 1962-2014, Government of India

(*) mentions the only 1984 LS election excludes election held in Assam and Punjab in 1985

(#) It excludes election held in Punjab in 1992

Graph 1.1: Electorate Percentage of Men-Women in Lok Sabha Elections



The constant and consistent presence of women electorate for over fifty years has also given rise to significant questions related to the impact of such electorate in Indian politics. Suffrage is a right to choose the representatives but at the same time, it is also a symbol of empowerment Do women vote in India? If yes, what is their voting percentage? Are they conscious voters to exercise their vote in right manner? Could they convert their electorate into voting percentage? The following section highlights that the women have increased their voting percentage over the years.

Access to Public Space as Vibrant Voters

Traditionally the participation of women in the voting was less compared to men due to different socio-cultural factors based on gender (John, 2007; Dhanda, 2000; Rai, 2011). Women's access to public space as voters gradually emerged two decades after independence. The realisation of themselves as equal citizen, awareness about voting rights and mobilization of women voters by political parties contributed to the increase of women's voting percentage. Table 1.2 suggests, 1957 general elections onwards there is a steady increase in the voting percentage of women. In 1957 general elections, women's voting percentage was 39 percentage compared to 56 percentage of men with 17.2 percent difference in the turnout. Due to the lesser voting percentage in the initial elections the average voting percentage of women is 53 percent, while the men's average voting percentage is 63 percent. In half a dozen out of fourteen general elections, women's voting percentage has crossed 55 percent, which highlights their potential participation in the voting area.

Table 1.2: Voting Percentage by Gender across different LS Elections

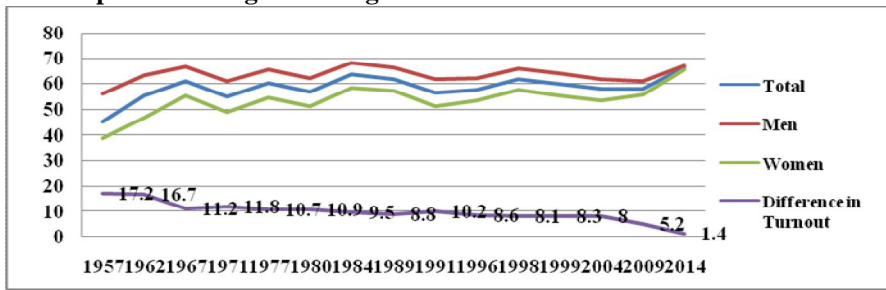
Year	Total	Men	Women	Difference in turnout
1957	45.4	56.0	38.8	17.2
1962	55.4	63.3	46.6	16.7
1967	61.0	66.7	55.5	11.2
1971	55.2	60.9	49.1	11.8
1977	60.4	65.6	54.9	10.7
1980	56.9	62.1	51.2	10.9
1984*	63.6	68.1	58.6	9.5
1989	61.9	66.1	57.3	8.8
1991#	56.7	61.5	51.3	10.2
1996	57.9	62.0	53.4	8.6
1998	61.9	65.7	57.6	8.1
1999	59.9	63.9	55.6	8.3
2004	58.0	61.6	53.6	8.0
2009	58.1	61.0	55.8	5.2
2014	66.4	67.1	65.7	1.4
Average	58.5	63.4	53.6	9.7

Source: Election Commission 1957-2014, Government of India

(*) mentions the only 1984 LS election excludes election held in Assam and Punjab in 1985

(#) It excludes election held in Punjab in 1992

Graph 1.2: Voting Percentage of Men-Women in Lok Sabha Elections



The 1967, 1977, 1989, 1998, 1999 and 2009 elections women witnessed an increase in the voting percentage. The Graph 1.2 shows, the 2014 elections have witnessed the record increase in the voting percentage of women compared to men. According to the election commission data (Statistical Report, 1957-2009), women’s voting percentage has increased from 55.8 to 65.7 percent in the last two elections. It is almost 10 percent. During the same period, the voting percentages of men have also increased but the increase in percentage is low compared to women. Can we assume that increase in men’s voting percentage also leads to the rise in the women’s voting percentage? However, it is not, the 2009 elections clearly refute this assumption. Despite the decrease in voting percentage of men, in 1999, 2004 and 2009 election, there was an increase in women’s voting percentage. Further, according to different National Election Study (CSDS Data Unit, 2009), Women’s voting percentage has been higher in the assembly elections than in general elections. Significantly, recent assembly elections have witnessed more voting percentage of women than men. The average women’s voting percentage in assembly and general elections has been 53 percent compared to 63 percent for men.

One significant development is narrowing of difference in turnout between men and women. In 2009, it was only 5 percent which is now just 1.4 percent. The graph below depicts the narrowing gap between men and women in the voting percentage. Women have successfully broken the barrier of gender marginalisation at least in exercising their voting rights. Increased women’s voting percentage over different elections does indicate the growing enthusiasm and participation of women in the elections. Nevertheless, participation is limited to barely voting and not able to change it into substantial numbers in Lok Sabha. Participation as contestants in the electoral arena is still a distant dream for the majority of them.

Struggle for Candidature in Indian Democracy: Women at Losing Side?

The 2014 election once again established that greater participation of women as not necessarily improve their candidature and representation in Lok Sabha. As mentioned by Dr. Ambedkar, the increase in voting percentage does reflect the ‘representation of opinion’ but the significant aspect of women’s political

participation is to convert the 'representation of opinion' into 'representation of persons'. He further says, 'any scheme of franchise and constituency that fails to bring this, about fails to create a 'Popular Government''. Although he expressed this opinion while addressing on the Southborough Committee on Franchise in 1919, nonetheless, the argument stands valid for women's political representation of independent India as well. Contesting elections are the initial step towards active politics. How many women prefer to join the active politics could be reflected from the number of candidature. The different social and cultural factors discourage women from contesting the elections. Their participation as candidates to parliament is also eroded due to muscle and money power.

According to Table 1.3, in the last 60 years, women candidate has been highly insignificant both in numbers and percentage. It is apparent from the fact that the share of women candidates has never run beyond 7 percent of the total candidates. Between 1957 to 1996 general elections, the total women candidates were only between 3 to 4 percent. Undoubtedly since independence, men have dominated the candidature for the Lok Sabha. The average total men candidate to all Lok Sabha is above 95 percent and for women it is under 5 percent.

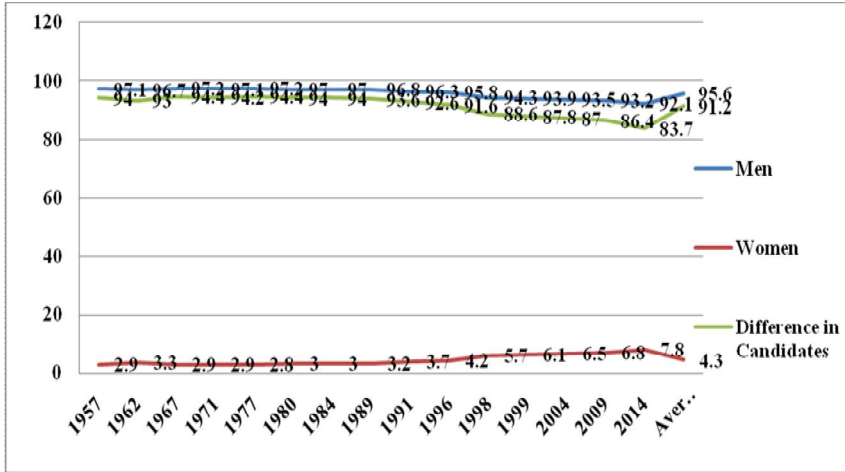
Table 1.3: Total Candidates by Gender across different Lok Sabha

Year	Total	Men	Women	Difference in Candidates
1957	1519 (100)	1474 (97.1)	45 (2.9)	1429 (94.0)
1962	1985 (100)	1919 (96.7)	66 (3.3)	1853 (93.0)
1967	2369 (100)	2301 (97.2)	68 (2.9)	2234 (94.4)
1971	2784 (100)	2701 (97.1)	83 (2.9)	2618 (94.2)
1977	2439 (100)	2369 (97.2)	70 (2.8)	2299 (94.4)
1980	4629 (100)	4486 (97.0)	143 (3.0)	4343 (94.0)
1984	5312 (100)	5150 (97.0)	162 (3.0)	4988 (94.0)
1989	6160 (100)	5962 (96.8)	198 (3.2)	5764 (93.6)
1991	8668 (100)	8342 (96.3)	326 (3.7)	8016 (92.6)
1996	13952 (100)	13353 (95.8)	599 (4.2)	12754 (91.6)
1998	4750 (100)	4476 (94.3)	274 (5.7)	4202 (88.6)
1999	4648 (100)	4364 (93.9)	284 (6.1)	4080 (87.8)
2004	5435 (100)	5080 (93.5)	355 (6.5)	4725 (87)
2009	8070 (100)	7514 (93.2)	556 (6.8)	6958 (86.4)
2014	8234	7590 (92.1)	644 (7.8)	6900 (83.7)
Total	80954 (100)	77081 (95.2)	3873 (4.7)	73198 (90.4)
Average	5397 (100)	5139 (95.6)	258 (4.3)	4881 (91.2)

Source: Election Commission of India 1957-2014, Government of India

As indicated in graph 1.3, for most of the period, the Gender gap between human races and women candidates was more than 90 percent. In the 1998 general elections, for the first time, the percentage of women candidates' reached beyond 5 percent of total candidates. Although women have increased their candidature, however, it is still under 8 percent of the total candidates. The last five general elections witnessed a regular growth in the women candidates from 4.2 percent in 1996 to 7.8 percent in 2014. The steady rise in the number of women candidates could be observed as a positive sign for the women in Indian politics. However, without removing the limitation based on gender such as domestic responsibilities, criminalisation of politics, excessive use of money and patriarchal outlook of voters, are few explanations towards understanding their low candidature.

Graph 1.3: Percentage of Men-Women Candidates in Lok Sabha Elections



The difference between men and women candidates has reduced from 91.6 percent in 1996 to 83.7 percent in 2014. An increase in the number of women candidates also have resulted in an increase in their representation in the Lok Sabha. In the total candidature, men hold the monopoly in the general elections against women. Meanwhile, 2014 elections, have witnessed significant increase as candidates. It is also the highest number of women candidates till date, but the difference in the candidature still continues to be in high 80's. The line graph demonstrates the 'persistent gap' between men and women. One major finding of the data over the years is the more number of men candidates in the 2014 elections than the total number of women candidates to Lok Sabha from 1957 to 2014. The men candidates in the 2014 alone are 7590 which is almost double of total women candidates.

Though very few women candidates contested in the general elections; however their winning percentage is more than the men candidates. In 1957 general election, out of 45 women candidates' nearly 50 percent of them got elected to the parliament on the other hand, out of 1474 men candidates only 26 percent of them won. The high winning ratio of the women candidates indicate their capability to articulate their agendas in the respective constituency. It is also that electorate believe women to be better candidates than men.

Table 1.4: Percentage of Women Candidate since 1951 in the Lok Sabha Elections:

Year	Candidates		% of Men winning out of total 'Men' Candidates	% of Women winning out of total 'Women' Candidates	Difference in Winning (in favour of Women)
	Men	Women			
1957	1474 (97.1)	45 (2.9)	25.8	48.8	23.0
1962	1919 (96.7)	66 (3.3)	24.1	46.9	22.8
1967	2301(97.2)	68 (2.9)	21.3	42.6	21.3
1971	2701 (97.1)	83 (2.9)	18.1	34.9	16.8
1977	2369 (97.2)	70 (2.8)	22.0	27.1	5.1
1980	4486 (97)	143 (3.0)	11.1	19.5	8.4
1984	5150 (97)	162 (3.0)	9.1	25.9	16.8
1989	5962 (96.8)	198 (3.2)	8.3	14.6	6.3
1991	8342 (96.3)	326 (3.7)	5.8	11.3	5.5
1996	13353(95.8)	599 (4.2)	3.7	06.6	2.9
1998	4476 (94.3)	274 (5.7)	11.1	15.6	4.5
1999	4364 (93.9)	284 (6.1)	11.3	17.2	5.9
2004	5080 (93.5)	355 (6.5)	9.8	12.6	2.8
2009	7514 (93.2)	556 (6.8)	6.4	10.6	4.2
2014	7590 (92.1)	644 (7.8)	6.3	9.4	3.1
Avg.	5139 (95.6)	258 (4.3)	13	23	10

Source: Election Commission of India, Government of India, 1951-2014

The trend continues in every election as women candidates have a better winning ratio compared to men. The data also highlight the 'glass ceiling effect' as women could not achieve much success despite an increase in the candidature. There is no substantial rise in the number of women representatives to parliament. The share of women elected representatives crossed beyond 10 percent once for the first time in the 2009 election. The difference in winning between men and women has favoured women. In the 1957 elections, it was 23 percent, while in 2014 it has reduced to the lowest with 3.1 percentages. In each election women's winning difference is improving. The average difference in winning remains over 10 percent. However, the winning difference is decreasing for both men and women due to an enormous growth in the amount of candidates for Lok Sabha. Earlier candidates were predominantly from national parties, now this trend is challenged by regional parties and in the coalition era independent candidates too have increased in number. The average winning percentage of men against total men candidates from 1957 to 2014 elections is 13 percent. In the same period, about 24 percent women out of total women candidates have won the election. Women have a better average in winning percentage against total women candidates. This analysis emphasizes the fact that despite odd political environment women have demonstrated the ability to win their seat.

Neither Symbolic nor Critical Mass: Under-Representation of Women in Indian Politics

According to Global Gender Gap, 2009 India is ranked 106th in 'Women in Parliament'. Despite high electorate, increased voting, improved candidature the gender 'representation gap' remains substantial. Over the years, the degree of gender equality in legislative representation has improved marginally but largely women's share in Lok Sabha remains low. The graph 1.4 reveals the political

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under-representation of women for more than six decades. Women are far behind the 33 percent, which is considered as the critical mass for women to exert a substantial influence on politics. According to Dr. Ambedkar expression on popular government, do women have substantial presence in the Lok Sabha? What is the percentage of women in the Lok Sabha over the years? Do they have steady growth in the representation in the Lok Sabha or there is a see-saw phenomenon?

Despite having influential leader such as Mrs. Indira Gandhi, India could not provide more national women leaders. The male dominated political space added with traditional mindset has reduced the chances of women as representatives. The table 1.5 on the representation of women highlight the greater 'inequality in representation' than in the electorate and voters. The average representation of men from 1957 to 2014 is 93 percent and 7 percent for women. Average representation gap for the same period between men and women is high as 86 percent. Representation of women has been little over 4 percent in 1957 and 5.5 percent in 1971.

The post-emergency election of 1977 saw the lowest share of women in Lok Sabha. During this period Mrs. Indira Gandhi was the Prime Minister of the country. Women admired her leadership skills, fearless decisions and outspoken nature. But it seldom resulted in the increase of women representatives. Activists of anti-emergency leaders, predominantly men, seized the opportunity for political power. Women activists too organized into groups on different issues such as dowry, violence, sati etc., but did not push for larger political representation. Nevertheless, the formation of women's groups did reflect in their growth of membership in Lok Sabha.

Table 1.5: Elected Women Representatives since 1951-2014 in the Lok Sabha

Year	Total Representatives	Men		Women		Representation Gap
		(In figure)	(In percentage)	(In figure)	(In percentage)	
1957	403 (100)	381	94.5	22	4.5	359 (90.0)
1962	494 (100)	463	93.7	31	6.3	432 (87.4)
1967	520 (100)	491	94.4	29	5.6	462 (88.8)
1971	518 (100)	489	94.5	29	5.5	460 (89.0)
1977	542 (100)	523	96.5	19	3.5	504 (93.0)
1980	529 (100)	501	94.8	28	5.2	473 (89.6)
1984	514* (100)	472	91.8	42	8.2	430 (83.6)
1989	529 (100)	500	94.6	29	5.4	471 (89.2)
1991	521# (100)	484	92.9	37	7.1	447 (85.8)
1996	543 (100)	503	92.7	40	7.3	463 (85.4)
1998	543 (100)	500	92.1	43	7.9	457 (84.2)
1999	543 (100)	494	91.0	49	9.0	445 (82.0)
2004	543 (100)	498	91.8	45	8.2	453 (83.6)
2009	543 (100)	484	89.2	59	10.8	425 (78.4)
2014	543 (100)	482	88.7	61	11.2	421 (77.5)
Total	7828	7265	92.8	563	7.2	6702 (85)
Avg.	522	483	92.8	37	7.0	447 (85.8)

Source: Election Commission of India, Government of India, 1951-2014

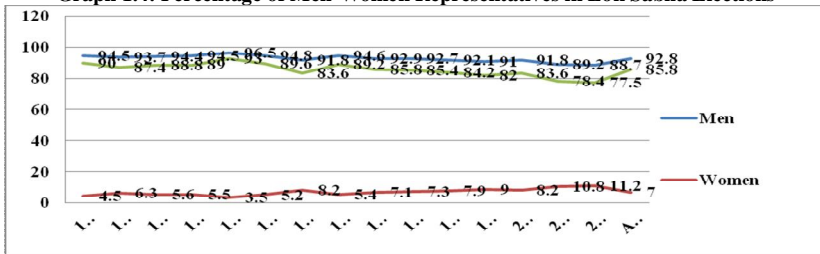
(*) mentions the only 1984 LS election excludes election held in Assam and Punjab in 1985

(#) Though LS seats were 524 but elections completed in 521 seats, it also excludes election held in Punjab in 1992

In 1984, first time women’s representation has crossed 8 percent when 42 women Member of Parliament (MP) were elected to the lower house. Around 39 women candidates contested from congress party out of them 37 won the election. The 1989 election saw the lowest number of women in post-emergency elections. Out of the 198 contested only 29 won the elections. Congress party distributed 56 tickets to women out of them only 15 won. The anti-incumbency against congress reduced the number of women representatives.

Coalition era in the 1990’s saw a consistent yet marginal growth in the number of women in Lok Sabha and the percentage remained 7.1 to 7.9 percent. In the 1999 elections, the state parties for the first time distributed highest number of tickets to the women candidates. Among the 284 women candidates contested, 49 won the elections taking the share of women in Lok Sabha to 9 percent. The 2004 elections again saw a slight decline in the number of women to the parliament with 8.2 percent. However, the 2009 elections brought the number to the highest with 59 representatives out of 556 candidates. There was a noticeable increase of 2.6 percent than previous Lok Sabha. The representation gap is still over 78 percent among men and women representatives.

Graph 1.4: Percentage of Men-Women Representatives in Lok Sabha Elections



The current Lok Sabha undoubtedly has observed the highest percentage of women in Lok Sabha. Women members have increased to 61, two more than previous. There is a ‘negligible’ 0.4 percent growth rate of women representative. While we celebrate the highest number of women representatives, it is equally significant to analyze their overall presence in the Lok Sabha. The total share of women in the 16th Lok Sabha is 11 percent compared to 89 percent men. Out of total 7828 representatives to the Lok Sabha, men comprise 93 percent of them and women 7 percent. If this trend continues it would take another 50 years to achieve the critical mass of 33 percent. These insignificant numbers of women seek for remedial measures to ensure an increase in women’s representation. Political parties are the agency for political mobilization and recruitment. It has to create a space for women to bring gender participation in politics.

There are several causes for the fewer candidature of women in government. According to the study conducted by Indian Institute of Dalit Studies and International Development Research Centre in 2012 on the participation of Dalit women in Indian politics highlights, women’s entry into politics is restricted due to several gendered social, cultural and domestic constraints. The causes range from increased violence in politics to the contributions of women in families. Less

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willingness of political parties is another significant reason for the lesser women candidates. Political parties rather than a balanced allotment of tickets, assume women as 'less winnable candidates', therefore fewer tickets are allotted to them. In some cases women are allotted tickets in 'less winnable seats'. Although political parties do mention gender progressiveness in their party agenda and election manifesto, but practice does not ponder same dedication. Despite large membership of women in political parties, participation in mass mobilization and other activities; they are not promoted in leadership positions in the party and least considered for tickets in elections.

Conclusion

To conclude, the political representation of women remains low in Lok Sabha despite the shrinking gender gap in their participation as voters. Low percent of women candidates to each Lok Sabha is a serious concern which needs to be addressed. The highest elected body in India remains male dominated both in opinion and person. The high gender gap in representation for the Lok Sabha over a long period of time also reflects the degree of political democracy which affects the women's chances of winning seats in democratic election. The level of democracy should be positively related to women's political representation since democratic process decrease the gender barrier. In order to raise the numbers of women in national legislature parities with an ideological commitment to political egalitarianism should actively provide opportunities for women. It seems coalition politics has provided fruitful ground for increased membership of women in Lok Sabha.

The role of women's movement is crucial as push factor for the increased political representation of women. The active women's movement will reflect on demand for critical mass to substantially influence the national politics. It is also argued that the capacity of women leaders in bringing substantial interventions also depends on actors who are chosen for the house by the electorate. The women representatives may bridge the gap between representation of opinion and person. The increase in women's representation with these representatives would make a substantive impact on the politics and policies. Moreover, opportunities to women might also improve policy making, construct democratic decision making, improve the level of competition for better governance, and contribute to the diversity of experiences and views in Lok Sabha. Significantly, women representatives would also have symbolic value for the growing young women population. The voting percentage of women has increased significantly over the years. Nevertheless, this political expression merely announces the representation of opinion of women. As Ambedkar (1979) stated, 'representation of opinions by itself is not sufficient to constitute the popular government. To cover its true meaning it requires personal representation as well'. Now, women in India need to convert this 'opinion' into 'persons' at the highest level. This would enable

women to directly place their demands in the system and convert them into policies. It is truly essential to establish political egalitarianism in India.

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