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ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION

A Comparative Study on Women Participation in Indian Parliamentary Election: Voter and Contestant

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ABSTRACT

Election offers the best chance to ensure women's voices, potential contributions to peace and democracy. Women's participation in decision-making is essential for women's interests to be incorporated into governance. It has been widely experienced that governance structures which do not provide special opportunity for adequate participation of women, often suffer from state interventions which are neither inclusive nor democratic. Out of 188 countries regarding participation in lower house India's position is 99th in the list where Afghanistan and Iraq is placed in better position than India, 30th and 36th rank respectively. Women turnout during India's 2014 parliamentary general elections was 65.63%, compared to 67.09% turnout for men. India ranks 20th from the bottom in terms of representation of women in Parliament. The truth is that there is no adequate representation of women in the political life of the country even after the six decades of Indian independence. Women play twin role in election politics as voter and political representatives. The participatory trends of women in Parliamentary Election of India are the topic of this study.

KEYWORDS— Contestant, Election, Political Participation, Voter, Women

1. INTRODUCTION

Election offers the best chance to ensure women's voices and their potential contributes to peace and democracy. Women's participation in decision-making is essential for women's interests to be incorporated into governance. It has been widely experienced that governance structures which do not provide for adequate participation of women, often suffer from state interventions which are neither inclusive nor democratic. Including women, especially in local governments are an essential step towards creating gender equal opportunities and gender sensitive policies. Since women have different needs and perspectives on social and political issues, it is important to involve women in governments to incorporate all of the

societal viewpoints in policy and decision-making processes. Women are actively involved in household and community work and hence well aware of real issues faced by common people. This gives them insight and perspective which can be instrumental in sustainable overall development.

The presence of women in local governments serves as an encouragement for other women to enter diverse professions and leads to breaking stereotypes of women's roles in society and public space. People had gained confidence in women as good public administrators and local government representatives after seeing women making a positive difference in other people's life. The society acknowledges the sincerity and

commitment of women to their duties and their resistance to criminalization of politics. The measurement of women political participation is essential to identify the need of policy intervention to improve the same. India had understood the need to

record gender statistics on political participation since its independence. The process of capturing women participation at the local level is an evolving area and efforts are being done to improve the present infrastructure

Women Political Participation In Indian Politics: Historical Context

The status of women in India has seen many ups and downs since ancient times - from at par status in ancient history to be in veils (Parda System) during the medieval period. In the post independent India, the status of women regained its strength and has been on a rise ever since. Women in post independent India have been participating in almost all types of economic activities, day-to-day household chores, voting for better governance and also in active politics. India has elected a woman prime minister, Indira Gandhi, and a woman president, Pratibha Patil.

Indian Electoral System

India is the largest democracy in the world with a three layer governance structure: central government, state government and city/village government. The election to all these three is done by an independent body of Election Commission which is constituted separately at state and central level. At the national level, the head of government, prime minister, is elected by the members of Lok Sabha, lower house of the parliament of India. All members of Lok Sabha except two, who can be nominated by president of India, are directly elected through general elections which take place every five years, by universal adult suffrage. Unlike most of the other democracies of the world, India gave women voting right since the first election. Members of Rajya Sabha, upper house of Indian parliament, are elected by an Electoral college comprising of Members of Lok Sabha, elected members of the legislative assemblies of states and Union Territories of India. Similar structure is in

place in various states of India with two bodies called Vidhan Sabha and Vidhan Parishad. Data of successive central and state elections show that Indian democracy is truly representative of women when it comes to their participation in elections but it significantly lacks women participation as legislature and executive.

Significance of the Study

Out of 188 countries regarding participation in lower house India's position is 99th in the list where Afghanistan and Iraq is placed in better position than India, 30th and 36th rank respectively. Women turnout during India's 2014 parliamentary general elections was 65.63%, compared to 67.09% turnout for men. India ranks 20th from the bottom in terms of representation of women in Parliament. The truth is that there is no adequate representation of women in the political life of the country even after the six decades of Indian independence. Women play twin role in election politics as voter and political representatives. The participatory trends of women in **Parliamentary Election of India** are topic of discussion of this project and study.

The constitution of India guarantees equal right to men and women as voters and citizens. Women forms an influential vote bank that political parties can ill-afford to ignore as there now about 342 million registered women voters, only marginally less than 376 male voters. In all elections held since independence, women had the voting rights. In India registration and participation of women as voters is less than that of men.

Objectives

- To study the gap between men and women participation Parliamentary Elections of India
- To analyze women’s participation as voters in Parliamentary Elections of India
- To analyze women’s participation as contestant in Parliamentary Elections of India

The present study is restricted to the men and women voters and contestants in parliamentary elections of India. The study is confined to cover the time period 2004 to 2014 and parliamentary election and its result. The study is based on the EIC (Election Commission of India) reports only. 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 but this study is delimited in parliamentary elections of India only. Scientific methods are used in the research to find out the truths and to achieve the knowledge. Human being has curiosity about the happenings around him. To satisfy this curiosity and to get the knowledge he uses his sense organs. The achieved knowledge is systematically collected and

arranged by research method. The researcher collects the information and references related to research through different resources and mediums, and arrange it in a systematic and scientific way. For the present research secondary resources are used. In the present research the stated statistical data is obtained from a secondary source EIC for the last ten years the number voters and contestants in parliamentary election of 2004 to 2014.

2. DATA AND ANALYSIS

In this present study the investigator has collected required data from various sources about Electorate, Voter turnout, Number of contestant in parliamentary election and seats allotted to women by national parties in general elections. The collected data is systematically arranged and analyzed applying statistical technique.

Men and Women participation Parliamentary Elections of India as Voter:

The participation of men electorate in parliamentary election as electorate has increased from 34.95 cores to 43.7 cores during the last decade from 2004 to 2014. The number of women electorate has also increased by 7.50 cores in the last decade. The men voter turnout increased by 7.56 cores and women voter by 8.31 cores.

Table 1: Summary of Electorate and Voter turnout (in Cores)

General Elections	Electorate(cores)				Voter Turnout (cores)			
	Men	Women	Difference	Total	Men	Women	Difference	Total
Fourteen (2004)	34.95	32.2	2.75	67.15	21.72	17.71	4.01	39.43
Fifteen (2009)	37.48	34.22	3.26	71.7	22.58	19.1	3.48	41.68
Sixteen (2014)	43.7	39.7	4.00	83.4	29.28	26.02	3.26	55.3

Source: EIC website

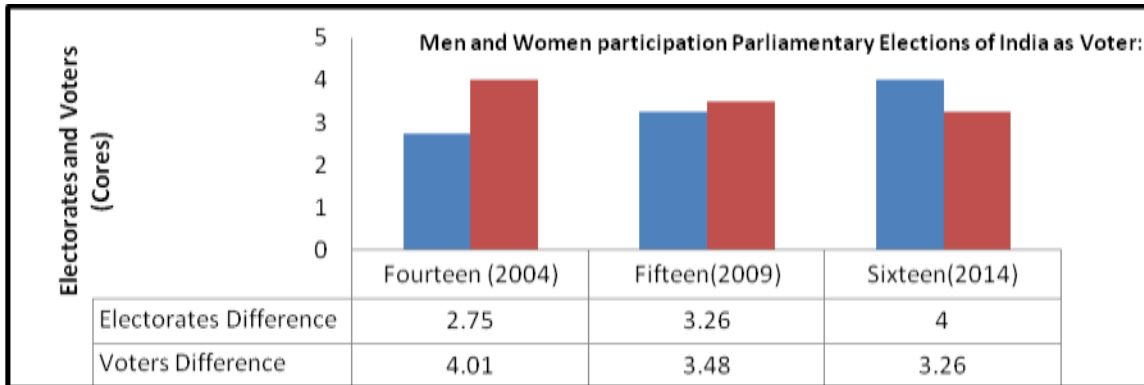


Figure 1: Gap between Men and Women as Voter (cores)

The difference between men and women electorate increases in each parliamentary election where as in case of number of voters the difference is reducing in the year 2004 it was 4.01(cores) in 2009 it was 3.48 cores and in 2014 it was 3.26 cores. The number of female voters increases which reveals that the awareness among women regarding election and voting increased women’s participation as a voter in parliamentary election in the last decade. The higher participation of women in recent years is also contingent on the mobilization efforts made by political parties, non Governmental Organizations, Action groups and the General awareness among community of the importance of women exercising their franchise. The trend shows that number of women voters’ increases whereas men voter decreases.

Men and Women as contestants:

Though voting is an important indicator of political participation and mobilization, it is not necessarily indicative of representation.

Voting is simply a tool of political equality and it mobilizes women but it not result in the desired end of equality. All most all parties vie with each other in appealing to women’s votes at the time of election but very few women get to contest in elections. The data given in table-2 represents the trend of men and women contestant in parliamentary elections during the last decade from 2004 to 2014. During the fourteenth general election out of over 5435 contestant, only 355(6.5%) were women(Table 2),in fifteenth general election out of over 8070 contestant, only 556 (6.9%) were women(Table 2) and in sixteenth general election out of over 8251 contestant, only 668 (8.1%) were women(Table 2). The result shows clearly that the gendered biasness in selection of women candidates for election in India. In figure-2 it is observed that the number of selection of women candidates is increasing but in very feeble manner. The percentage of women success rate is more in comparison to men.

Table-2: Summary of Parliamentary participant: The Number of contestant in parliamentary election

Lok Sabha	Total contestant	Men	No of Seats	Men Own	% of Men	No. of Women	Women Own	% of Women Own
Fourteenth (2004)	5435	5081	543	498	9.80	355	45	12.68
Fifteenth (2009)	8070	7514	543	484	6.44	556	59	10.61
Sixteenth (2014)	8251	7577	543	481	6.35	668	62	9.28

Source: EIC website

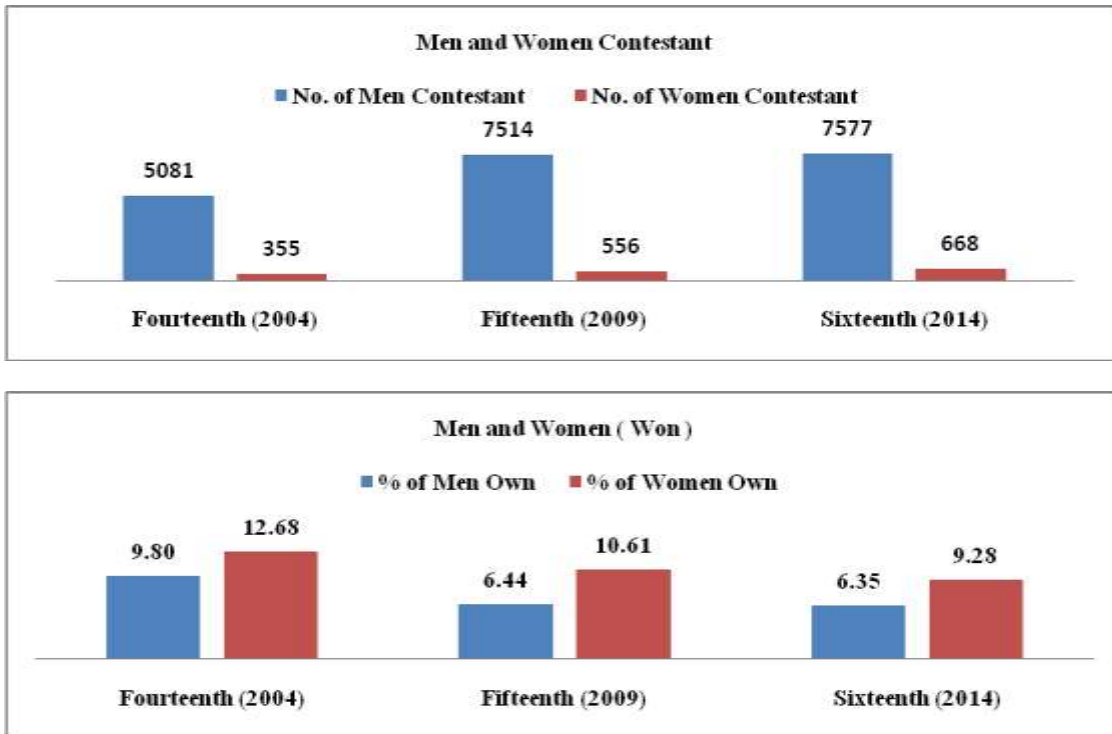


Figure-2: Women's participation as contestant in Parliamentary Elections of India

From the bar diagram it is clearly observed that the female contestants are less in comparison to men contestants though the number of women contestants increasing in 2009 and 2014 election but it is very less in comparison to men contestants whereas the number of women voters and electorate nearly same as shown in the table-1. The trend indicates that the probability of winning is higher for women than men, being almost double. In the 14th Lok Sabha election women candidate elected 12.68% where men candidate elected was 9.80%. Again the trend of elected women candidates in 15th and 16th Lok Sabha is also shows the same trend which is represented in the figure-2. Thus the Hypothesis II is discarded and observed there is a significant difference between number of men and women contestants was obtained.

3. CONCLUSION

In the light of facts observed at the time of conducting the study and findings obtained after analyzing the data. To conclude, there has been a marked increase in voter turnout and election campaigning among women in India. While there have been significant gains among Indian women in these two areas of electoral

participation, they continue to be under-represented in legislative bodies both at national and state level and within political parties. The under-representation of women in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies and in crucial decision-making positions like important cabinet berths are clear pointers of their systematic exclusion from electoral competition on a gender basis. Though women head a significant number of national and state level political parties as party leaders, their representation within the rank and file of prominent political parties is not in significant numbers. Women who have made their presence felt in inner party structures are also relegated to the second rung leadership and have failed to break the "glass ceiling".

Women should be promoted and encouraged by the concerted effort of government in partnership with civil society for enhanced and quality participation in formal politics. An increased political participation by women in all spheres of political life and electoral competition in particular will not only ensure political parity and equality with men, but would also serve the larger issues concerning women. Participation in electoral processes involves much more than just voting. Political participation derives from the

freedom to speak out, assemble and associate; the ability to take part in the conduct of public affairs; and the opportunity to register as a candidate, to campaign, to be elected and to hold office at all levels of government. Under international standards, men and women have an equal right to participate fully in all aspects of the political process. In practice, however, it is often harder for women to exercise this right. In post-conflict countries there are frequently extra barriers to women's participation, and special care is required to ensure their rights are respected in this regard. Political parties are among the most important institutions affecting women's political participation. In most countries, parties determine which candidates are nominated and elected and which issues achieve national prominence. The role of women in political parties is therefore a key determinant of their prospects for political empowerment, particularly at the national level. Because political parties are so influential in shaping

women's political prospects, Governments and international organizations seeking to advance the participation of women in elections justifiably tend to focus on the role of political parties. Political participation extends beyond parties. Women can also become involved in certain aspects of the electoral process through independent action—particularly at the local level—and by joining civil society organizations. Some women in post-conflict countries have gained political experience by participating in non-elected transitional assemblies. Women's networks, trade unions, non-governmental organizations, and the media can all provide avenues for women's political participation.

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