

## POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN INDIA:

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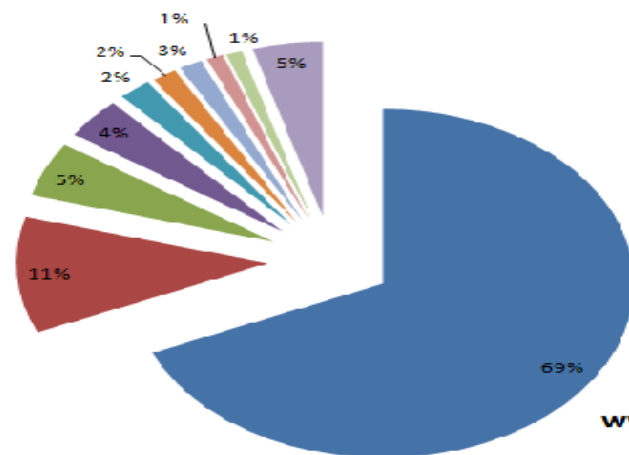
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participation reiterated that “women in every part of the world continue to be largely marginalized from the political sphere, often as a result of discriminatory laws, practices, attitudes and gender stereotypes, low level of education, lack of access to health care and disproportionate effect of poverty on women. Therefore, to eliminate the multi-faceted problem like gender inequality, a multi-pronged approach must be adopted; and among the various initiatives, political empowerment of women could act as a catalyst. Political empowerment could lead to opening more opportunities for women and as a result, create a level playing field for them.

**Working Women in India (% terms)**

■ Farming   ■ Manufacturing   ■ Construction   ■ Schools   ■ Grocery Stores  
■ HouseWork   ■ Personal Services   ■ Health Care   ■ Bureaucracy   ■ Others



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**References**

<http://blogs.wsj.com/indiarecltime/2012/11/14/by-the-numbers-where-indian-women-work/?mod=WSJBlog&mod=irt>

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Globally, several international commitments have been made, for achieving gender equality and these have emphasized on enhancing women's representation in political sphere. While the **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979** upheld women's right to participate in public life, the Beijing

Platform for Action, 1995 called for removing barriers to equal participation. The **Millennium Development Goals, 2000** also took into account women's representation in parliament to measure progress towards gender equality.

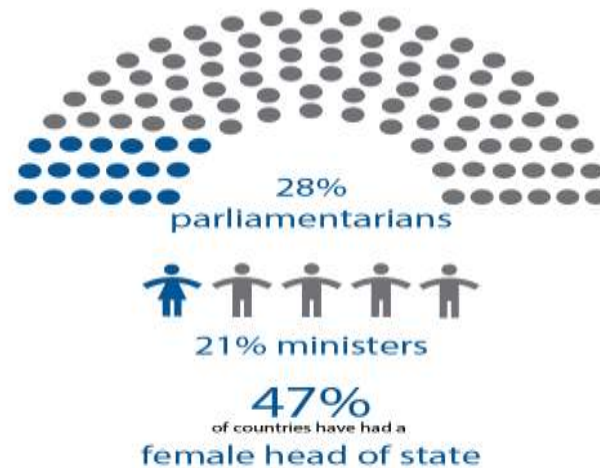
Over the past two decades, gender gaps have narrowed in various areas, viz., education, health, employment, legal rights of women, participation in governance, and so on. But, despite the improvement, substantial inequalities, with varying degrees, still persist across all the areas across countries. It would be noteworthy to mention that India is a signatory to all the international commitments mentioned above. However, India is far behind in achieving gender equality, especially in terms of representation of women in political decision making, among others.

Representation of women in executive government and parliament is extremely low in India, both in absolute numbers as well as globally. Only a miniscule progress is observed in the entire post-independence era. In the cabinet, formed after the general election in 2014, there were **only 5 women ministers out of total 27 ministers. India's global rank is 88 in this regard as per the 'Women in Politics Map 2017'**, published by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and UN Women.

Between the First Lok Sabha (1952) and the Sixteenth Lok Sabha (2014) women's representation has increased from 4.4 per cent to 11.9 per cent. Similar trend of low representation of women is also observed in the Rajya Sabha (Upper House) during the entire period of post-independence era. Women's representation in Rajya Sabha has increased from 6.9 per cent in 1952 to 11.4 per cent in 2014 . Again, these figures are substantially lower compared to the global average of 22.9 per cent and Asian average of 16.3 per cent of women representatives in Upper House. Considering the share of women (**49.5%**) in the total population of India, their representation in Parliament represents a skewed statistic, which does not befit the world's largest democracy.



## Women's political empowerment



Source: Global Gender Gap Index 2017, World Economic Forum

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India's performance on female representation in parliament is also not satisfactory compared to the global average of **23.4 per cent and Asian average of 19.6 per cent** of women's representation in parliament, as shown in the Women in Politics Map 2017.

In this global mapping, India's 148<sup>th</sup> rank is very low; and even several Asian countries, viz., Nepal(48<sup>th</sup>), Afghanistan(54<sup>th</sup>), Pakistan(89<sup>th</sup>), Bangladesh(91<sup>th</sup>), United Arab Emirates(96<sup>th</sup>), and Saudi Arabia(98<sup>th</sup>), among others, are far better than India.

Out of 47 Asian countries, India holds the 31<sup>st</sup> position. Among 8 SAARC countries, India's position is 5<sup>th</sup> and India holds the 4<sup>th</sup> rank among 5 BRICS countries. A relatively poor performance is evident, if India (11.9 per cent) is compared to the best performer Rwanda (61.3 per cent) in terms of women's representation in the parliament.

As per the situation on January 1, 2017, it was observed that in 12 countries (out of 193) women's representation in parliament was 40 per cent or more. Rwanda tops the list with 61.3 per cent women representation in the parliament.

Political power is still a male domain in India. Women's representation in Parliament in India is lower than even that of much smaller nations like Nepal and Afghanistan. Political

representation does not have any direct correlation with literacy or other related parameters. This is indicated by a comparison of female political participation in Kerala and Rajasthan, which lie at two opposite ends of the literacy bandwagon, with the female literacy rates being 92 per cent and 53 per cent in Kerala and Rajasthan, respectively, as per the 2011 Census.

### **There are many challenges that faced women in politics-**

#### Proxy Candidate:

There have been evidences that due to reservation policy, certain women got elected into the setup, but they acted merely as the mouthpiece 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. Awareness programs and increase in female education is now taking care of such happenings and women active participation is on an increase. Still, there is a need to record data at a more micro level so that women who only act as a proxy can be identified.

#### Socio-cultural factor:

There is a conventional belief that, girls are created to require care of youngsters and do room works than taking part outside home activity. Hence, there's division of works between men and ladies, which suggests home activities belongs to girls and outdoors home activities are belongs to men. Girls are weighed down with completely different home activities like preparation, take caring children, laundry and then on. These all activities create girls busy within the home and impede their involvement within the politics of the country.

Women's lack of self-assertiveness is a few barriers that hinder the participation of ladies. During this regard, ancient attitudes towards gender equality influence women's advancement in political participation. Most significantly within the country, girls are thought about subordinate to men and second category members/ voters each within the family and within the society, particularly in most components of rural areas.

#### Religious:

Religion is another important source of cultural beliefs in most countries. Arguments about women's inferiority to men are present across all dominant religions. In India the major religion is Hinduism, the other minority religions are Islam and Christianity. Hindu people mostly not allow women to lead as a head. They consider women are subjected to men. In a

country like India this is very common among people but now-a- days the time has changed, women began to lead political parties. Several states currently have women Chief Ministers and ministers, chairperson for more years etc.

Economic:

The Lack of economic resources is one among the most important obstacles that forestall girls from collaborating in politics in bigger numbers. Creating it easier for ladies to access economic resources, therefore, may be a key in increasing women's presence within the political realm. Of course women's participation in political life depends for the most part on their access to employment which supplies them not solely material independence, however additionally bound skilled skills and kitchen utensil confidence. So, access to production and finances contains a direct relationship and influence on the participation of women in political establishments.

Conclusion :

Without equal participation of women to political process, the hope for democracy and democratization is nonsense. Thus, the democratic process is able to grow and develop effectively when all people are given equal encouragement to exercise their democratic rights, and when women can experience benefits equally with their counterparts. Additionally the active participation of women, on equal terms with men, at all levels of decision-making is essential to the achievement of equality, sustainable development, peace and democracy and the inclusion of

their perspectives and experiences into the decision-making processes can result to the solutions that satisfy larger number of the society, which have social benefits, better and more appropriate social, political, legal, and economic solutions for their problems.

One of the key challenges faced by women is lack of education which hinders their political involvement. We recommend bridging this gap by providing quality education to women in the country. Awareness about their rights and privileges as mentioned in the Constitution can only be ensured once women are appropriately educated. The issue of gender-based violence and provision of safety and security of women should also be addressed on a priority basis to promote gender equality in the social and political arenas.

Although the Government of India has initiated the National Mission of Empowerment of Women in 2014 with the broad objective of gender empowerment, the progress of this programme is not up to the mark. It is imperative to strengthen its functioning and

implementation. In addition, there is need for capacity building of prospective women leaders by imparting leadership training to the female members of political parties.

To secure women's rightful place in society and to enable them to decide their own destiny and for the growth of genuine and sustainable democracy, women's participation in politics is essential. This will not only uplift their personality but will open the way for their social and economic empowerment. Their participation in public life will solve many problems of society.

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