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## Dynamics of Indian Political Scenario in the Context of Political Empowerment of Women with a Case Study on Participation of Women in Politics in Sikkim

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**Abstract:** *This paper examines the participation of women in politics and legislative interventions connected thereto for the political empowerment of women in India. The current study uses the descriptive method of analysis. The collected data from secondary sources symbolises holistic mindset for political participation of women and the findings of the study indicate that though progressing, women continue to be marginalised from the political environment. However, reversing policies and practices, being possible, may enhance the participation of women in politics and make them equal partner in the country's political development thereby bringing gender equality and equity in political sphere. The political empowerment of women could be achieved by creating opportunities for representation of women in decision making process and governance at least in proportion to their population.*

**Keywords:** *sex ratio, local-self-governance, decision making process, Elected Women Representatives, seat reservation, electoral participation, political participation, women in politics, political scenario, political representation, gender equality, political empowerment, legislative interventions, general election, women representation, Members of Parliament, Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, Sikkim Legislative Assembly, Member of Legislative Assembly.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The term 'political empowerment' in this paper implies participation and representation of women in politics comprising voting, representation at decision-making bodies and its process, political activities, etc. In India, the participation of women in politics has been gaining importance for their political empowerment and their quantum at voting is considered an important element to manifest their political consciousness, interest and awareness. The word female being used at several instances in this study does not differ its meaning as women.

The National Commission for Women was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1990 with objectives to safeguard the rights and legal entitlements of women. In order to combat issues of gender inequality in politics in India, the provisions of 33% seat reservation to women in local-self-governance since the year 1992 have created befitting opportunities for their political participation and several research studies confirms that Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) are making significant and positive contributions in decision making process despite of several odds and difficulties. The entrance of women EWRs into the grassroots polity through elections to the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in massive numbers is a relatively new political phenomenon in India (Lok Sabha Secretariat; 3<sup>rd</sup> report, 2007). The positive contribution made by EWRs needs to be sustained by ensuring the continued participation of women in the political process (Lok Sabha Secretariat; 14<sup>th</sup> report, 2007). In contrast to seat reservation to women's political participation in local-self-governance, no provision exists for their participation at state level and national politics.

Under such scenario, it is political institutions having significant role in making regulations and organisation of male dominated society to bring changes in the system for better opportunities to the women for their participation in politics or/and their political empowerment.

Sikkim being least populous state of the country is considered as one of the fastest developing state of the country with several milestones of achievements especially in tourism and organic farming, a record of having country's maximum of 33% women judges at High Courts level, the endowment of complete political empowerment of women could be another feather to add on its developmental roadmap.

## **2. RESEARCH PROBLEM**

Due to effectiveness and success at the grass root politics with 33% of seat reservation to women at local-self-governance, there has been a proposal for an increase of such reservation to 50%. However, more than 56% of Indian states have voluntarily increased the seat reservation for women beyond 40% but fourteen states have observed representation of women either equal to or more than 50% at PRIs. This has changed the political scenario of rural India with involvement of women at the decision-making process at the grass root level, thereby marching towards gender equality and equity but women lack reservation at mainstream national and state-level politics. In consideration of the changes brought by reservation of women at local self-governance, the dynamics of the political scenario of India at state and national level bears possibilities of vertical changes with similar legislative intervention for seat reservation, a measure for political empowerment of women.

## **3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

The present study aims to investigate into the dynamics of the Indian political scenario in the context of political empowerment of women with their participation and representation in politics with special reference to the state of Sikkim. The aims and objectives of the study are:

1. To analyse female population as a basis for their participation in politics.
2. To assess the quantum of female participation in the electoral politics to the Lok Sabha.
3. To analyse legislative interventions related to political participation and representation of women.
4. To evaluate representation of women at national and state-level politics and governance.

## **4. METHODOLOGY**

The nature of the current study is descriptive. The fact findings and analysis has been undertaken with data collected from secondary sources mainly with the government reports published by Census of India, Election Commission of India and Chief Electoral Officers of the states, websites of the Parliament of India, etc. and research articles published in journals, books, etc.

## **5. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Concerning participatory democracy, the 1990s marked the dawn of a new era by strengthening the women and making them an integral part in the decision-making process system (Markham, 2013). The political empowerment, therefore, aims to conform to this minority section of society by giving them their rights in political participation.

Sewa (2018) studied the constitutional provisions, legislative measures and similar other initiatives undertaken in the interests and benefits of women in India with special reference to empowerment of women in Sikkim. It has outlined the constitutional provisions of India towards gender equality on one hand and gender budgeting, creation of a Central Ministry for Women, legislative measures, and other initiatives undertaken by the central government towards welfare, protection, advancement, development and empowerment of women on the other hand. The study further outlined several initiatives undertaken by the Sikkim Government towards women empowerment in the state. Despite the existence of constitutional provisions for the benefits and interests of women, the gap between goal and situation of ground reality has remained vast apart (Sewa, N.; 2018).

### **5.1 Electoral participation of women and the legislative interventions**

Rai (2017) studied the key determinants and barriers of electoral participation of women in India and revealed that there had been an increase in the voting turnout and election campaigning of women. This study identified that positive action for women in legal bodies works in removing obstacles that inhibit their participation in election competition. Besides, the existing gap present in the electoral political set-up is examined and the study identified that the existing societal value system, the private-public divide in terms of domain identification and male preponderance in political institutions are the factors that act as barriers in women's proactive participation in the electoral process (Rai, P.; 2011 & 2017).

Bhalotra, et al. (2017) highlights the women's participation in electoral politics in India. The study analyzed the effect of woman's electoral victory on women's subsequent political participation. They used the regression discontinuity by close elections between women and men in India's state elections; and found that winning of woman in electoral office leads to a subsequent increase in women's participation. The results of the study showed no spillover effects to neighboring areas, no significant entry of new female candidates, and no changes in female or male voter turnout. Also, reduction in bias in election parties against women candidates is reduced after an increase in the candidacy of women (Bhalotra, S.R., Clots-Figueras, I., & Iyer, L.; 2017).

### **5.2 Women empowerment through legislative intervention at local-self-governance**

The study conducted by Shrivastava (2019) focused on the path to political empowerment of Indian women. The paper has traversed through the political, social and economic empowerment of women in India. It has depicted the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendment acts which had a special emphasis on women empowerment. Several obstacles before the implementation of these acts too have been identified and discussed. The issues like systemic failure, red-tapism and chinks in suitable infrastructure for implementation of the given objectives are few. However, the psycho-social barrier and other fronts of social revolution have not been discussed in this paper (Shrivastava, V.; 2019).

Subba (2014) analysed the changing status of women over the years due to changes in policies and provisions like the Sikkim Panchayat (Amendment) Bill, 2011 which gives 50% reservation for women in Panchayat at the grass root level. The Sikkim Panchayat (Amendment) Act, 2011 became the first step in the northeast state to raise the women reservation seat from 40 percent (2007) to 50 percent (2011) in the Panchayat Raj Institution where proportionate reservation are aimed to constitute women in the post of Sabhapati and Up-Sabhapati in Gram Panchayats and Adhyaksha and Up-Adhaksya in Zilla Panchayats. This study concluded that Sikkimese women are reaching the stage of real empowerment (Subba, B.; 2014).

### **5.3 Political empowerment of women: Opportunities and Challenges**

Shettar and Rajeshwari (2015) analyzed the repute of women empowerment in India and also studied the challenges faced for the empowerment of women in India. The study was solely based on secondary sources. It was observed that Indian women are comparatively disempowered and themselves enjoy somewhat lower status than that of men despite the societal efforts. The factors influencing the women empowerment were identified as 'access to Education', 'Employment' and 'Change in Social Structure' which are still in the early stages of implementation. However, there is a significant gap identified between policy advancements and actual practice at the community level (Shettar, D., & Rajeshwari, M.; 2015).

The study by Chadha (2014) focused on providing support and encouragement for the enactment of the Women's Political Reservation Bill by stimulating the initiatives for election campaigns and creating awareness in the society, especially the women, to inculcate the values of gender equality and gender justice. The study was heavily based on United Nations reports, International norms and conventions, Indian Constitutional provisions and other statutory enactments. However, capacity gaps, the high gender gap in literacy, and gaps in policy and legislation were identified (Chadha, A.; 2014).

Sawer and Vickers (2016) provided evidence of the influence of political architecture on how women's movements organise and the language they use when they make gendered claims. The corporate board quotas in Norway were analysed by Bertrand et al. (2014), and it was found that these quotas have no impact on the political involvement of the next generation of women. On the other hand, the study conducted in Italy by Paola et al. (2010) found that a short-term gender quota in local government led to an increase in political participation of women. No improvements were found by Beaman et al. (2010) in subsequent candidacy or success of the political party after leading the village council for one term (five years) by a woman, but the same study showed that a woman heading the village council for two subsequent terms showed a significant impact.

Ballington and Karam (2005) posited that legislative recruitment refers to the process by which individuals serve in the parliament. Campbell and Childs (2015) asserted that making decisions by women for women's interests must be incorporated into politics. They also asserted that when women do not adequately participate in the governance

structures, they have to suffer from inclusive and democratic legislative interventions. Incorporating women in political and electoral governance aids essentially in gender-sensitive politics and gender-equal opportunities. As the needs and perspective of women in political issues vary from men, it is necessary to involve women to incorporate all the societal perspectives in taking a decision on behalf of the political party (Ballington, J., & Karam, A.; 2005).

Kirby and Shepherd (2016) found that psychological engagement like efficacy or interest of women with politics can be affected by the presence of female politicians. However, there were very few reports on active political participation of women, but previous research on the same outside the United States is rare. The potential of women role models impacts attitudes like efficacy and interest. However, the actual political involvement of women is of even greater consequence. Dolan (2006) reported either weak or non-existent links between women's political participation and presence of pre-existing female candidates. Clayton (2015) studied the impact of the presence of female MPs, and the findings of the study suggest that young women have a greater impact on political activities, rather than older women. Previous research has not accounted for age differences of the women selected for the study.

As asserted by Shea and Christian (2017), it is necessary for the policymakers to collect data on the participation of women in politics. Legal interventions require plenty of related and unrelated data to be converted into the indicators that might be used for identification of an indicator. The data, in this case, refers to women as an electorate, women as elected representatives and women as policymakers. Since independence, India has a rich history of measuring the political participation of women. The importance of measuring the participation of women in decision making has been observed to increase since the past two decades, due to the decentralisation of governance (Shea & Christian, 2017). Inclusive growth of women can be observed via proper gender budgeting for the women in all the schemes. Importance has been given to a great extent to utilise the real-time data for policy interventions by the Indian Government. The gender interventions can be improved by better initiatives for gender budgets to lean the country towards a gender-equal society.

Nisha (2018) analytically studied the political empowerment of women and asserted that empowerment is a process significant for development and progress. The paper studied the challenges, the secondary statistical data and compared it with other countries by using descriptive study methodology. The study found that economic, religious, social and cultural factors led to poor participation of women in politics. However, the lack of education acts as an obstacle in the political involvement of women, which can be bridged by providing education to women in the country and by spreading awareness about their rights and privileges. Also, the gender-based violence is recommended to be addressed on a priority basis, which will not only boost their personality but will pave their way for their empowerment (Nisha, MA., & Vezhaventhan, D.; 2018).

Maber (2016) studied Myanmar's political transition by mobilising community education to build women's participation. It explored the role played by women politicians in mobilising community education to support novel activities taken up by the Government for women activism. This reorientation led to a civilian-led democracy that emerged from a repressive military regime and furnished increased international contact. In Myanmar, hierarchical relationships are rejected by women activists, and the training practices are reproductions of idealised female citizenship.

Cassese and Holman (2017) studied the political participation of women in the US. They asserted that men and women have historically participated in a variety of political activities at different rates. For example, women, since the 1980s, have voted at higher rates than the men, but lag behind men in other activities, such as contacting public officials and donating money to political campaigns, although this does not apply to all groups of women (Cassese, E. C., & Holman, M. R.; 2017).

Similarly, Bhalotra, et al. (2018) studied on maternal mortality and political participation of women and found that faster maternal mortality decline was observed by raising women's political participation. They estimated that introducing quotas for women in parliament resulted into 9 to 12% decline in maternal mortality. It was also evident in the study that maternal mortality rapidly declined in the period in which the study was conducted in the United States (Bhalotra, S. R., Clarke, D., Gomes, J., & Venkataramani, A.; 2018).

Liu, & Banaszak (2017) also asserted that there is a fundamental problem of the lack of gender equality as legislatures and cabinets women continue to be largely underrepresented. The Inter-Parliamentary Union (2015) asserted that upper and lower legislative houses combined with being 22.1%. Barnes and Burchard (2012) asserted that civic encouragement was induced due to the inclusion of women in political institutions. However, most scholars focus on women's legislative presence instead of the substantial impact of women on the political office and policymaking.

#### 5.4 Political empowerment of women in Sikkim

As identified by Subba (2014), the headman-ship of the villages in Sikkim was mainly reserved for males, especially among the Bhutias in Lachen and Lachung areas and also Lepchas in Dzongu reserved areas. Besides, the headman of the village, excluding the reserved areas were also male preserve as women had no right to participate in the elections.

After the year 1975, the abolition of Mondal systems in Sikkim led to the emergence of democratic Panchayat system. Initially, even in the Panchayat elections, male domination persisted, however, in gradual course of time, the participation of women has been increased (Dighe & Wadhvaniya, 2013; Geiger, Abigail, & Kent, 2017). Another reference in the similar context can be found in the documentary titled "Sikkim" directed by Satyajit Ray focused on the participation of women at grass root levels, at urban and rural levels (Noronha & Aithal, 2016; Kumar, 2011).

#### 5.5 Research Gap

Based on a literature review, a research gap is derived to ascertain how the current research will contribute towards filling this gap, as illustrated in the table below.

**Table-1:** Review on research gap in some research papers on participation of women in politics

Sr.	Paper Title, author & year of publication	Technique adopted	Result	Gap
1	<i>A study on Issues and Challenges of Women Empowerment in India.</i>  Shettar and Rajeshwari (2015)	This paper is descriptive and analytical. The study was based on secondary sources.	Enhancing the economic and social status of women will lead to women empowerment. The initiative must be taken by society to create an atmosphere without the gender discrimination, and several opportunities must be presented to women decision making and participating in the social, political and economic life of the country with a sense of equality.	There is a significant gap identified between policy advancements and actual practice at the community level.
2	<i>Path-breakers: how does women's political participation respond to electoral success?</i>  Bhalotra, Clots-Figueras and Iyer (2017)	They used Regression Discontinuity Design to identify the effects of women's electoral success.	It was found that female functionaries are more likely to re-contest elections than males. It was also identified that demand-side barriers were faced by Muslim contestants rather than gender-specific preferences.	A significant gender gap that is against the favor of women in the baseline probability of women participating for re-elections.
3	<i>Political Empowerment and Participation of Women in India.</i>  Nisha & Vezhaventhan (2018)	The research paper used the descriptive method of study.	It is found that acceptance of unequal gender norms by women are still prevailing in the society. This gap can be bridged by providing education to women in the country and by spreading awareness about their rights and privileges.	The lack of education acts as an obstacle to the political involvement of women. Also, the gender gap has been identified to exist in relevance to access to education and employment

### 6. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In every democratic system, it is vital to make women as equal partner in decision making process to ensure that issues related to women are not ignored thereby eliminating gender disparities. The extent of political

empowerment of women in India can be broadly analysed from women's participation in electoral politics, legislative intervention for their representation in political system and quantum of participation in politics of the country, as discussed here-below.

### 6.1 Analysis on quantum of women population

This section of the study is intended to analyse quantum of female population of India recorded under Census conducted from the year 1901 to 2011 and also analyse the corresponding female literary rate.

As per 2011 census, women accounts 48.46% of country's population and 47.09% in the state of Sikkim thereby making gender ratio of 940 females per 1000 males in the country as a whole and 890 females per 1000 males in the state. In both the cases, the women population are lesser in number as compared to men and trend analysis of sex ratio reveals that it is unfavourable to females as from the highest record of 972 in 1901, it has been on declining mode and dropped down to lowest record of 927 in 1991 but marginally increasing thereafter (see Fig: 1).



Fig: 1: Trend of Sex ratio in India from census records: 1901 to 2011

Data source: Report on Gender Composition of Population, Census of India, 2011.

Despite of the unfavourable female sex ratios, there has been an increase in number of the female population under every successive decadal census from 1901 to 2011, however, at the growth rate lesser than that of corresponding male populations (see Fig: 2).

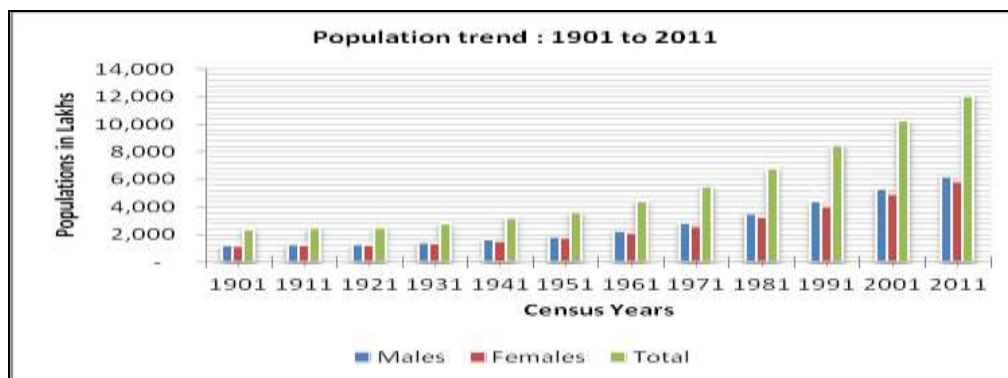


Fig: 2: Trend of growth of population in India from census records: 1901 to 2011

Data source: Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India

In the process of improving female sex ratios, it is noteworthy to observe an increasing trend in literary rate of females from below 1% to almost 66% in the span of eleven decades. Especially, in case of post independence scenario, the rate of increase in female literacy has been commendable and remarkable, which is an indicator of improvement on several aspects leading to their development; advancement and empowerment in the country, see Table-2.

**Table-2:** Trend of India's population, sex ratio and literacy rate: Census record 1901-2011

Census Year	Population (in Lakhs)			Sex Ratio	Literacy %		
	Males	Females	Total		Males	Females	Total
1901	1,207.91	1,173.59	2,381.50	972	9.80	0.60	5.40
1911	1,283.85	1,237.08	2,520.93	964	10.60	1.00	5.90
1921	1,285.50	1,227.70	2,513.20	955	12.20	1.80	7.20
1931	1,429.30	1,357.89	2,787.19	950	15.60	2.90	9.50
1941	1,636.90	1,546.90	3,183.80	945	24.90	7.30	16.10
1951	1,855.28	1,755.60	3,610.88	946	21.16	8.86	18.33
1961	2,262.90	2,129.42	4,392.32	941	40.40	15.35	28.30
1971	2,840.49	2,641.10	5,481.59	930	45.96	21.97	34.45
1981	3,533.70	3,299.55	6,833.25	934	56.38	29.76	43.57
1991	4,393.58	4,070.63	8,464.21	927	64.13	39.29	52.21
2001	5,322.23	4,965.14	10,287.37	933	75.26	53.67	64.83
2011	6,237.24	5,864.69	12,101.93	940	82.14	65.46	74.04

**Data source:** Compiled by author with information collected from various reports published by Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India

From the increasing trend of female population and improving literacy rate, it can be assumed that quality and quantity of women in the India has been increasing, which makes the base and creates scope for their political participation thereby creating necessity for their proportionate representation in politics and governance of the country to fulfil the principle of gender equity and equality.

### 6.2 Women's participation in electoral politics to Lok Sabha

This section of the study is intended to estimate the quantum and impact of electoral participation of women in India.

In consideration of nearly half of country's population being women and adaptation of universal suffrage in 1950 under Article 326 of Constitution of India, it is expected that all eligible women electors exercise their right to cast vote in every general elections held to elect the Members to Lower House of Parliament (Lok Sabha), Legislative Assemblies of the States and Union Territories (Vidhan Sabha).

The equal participation of women in electoral politics fulfils one of the primary requirements of making democratic system successful. The quantum of participation of women in electoral politics indicates level of their political awareness, interest in politics and formation of government of masses thereby enabling fairness in decision making process.

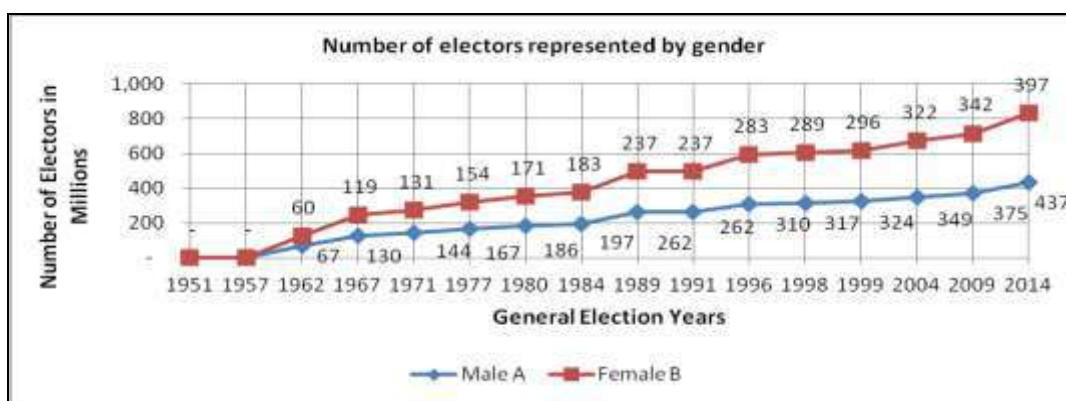
**Table-3:** Quantum of gender wise electors to general election: 1951 to 2014 and percentage of voter's turnout

Years	Number of Electors							Percentage of Voter's turnout			
	Male	Female	TOTAL	M-F Difference		Female Increase		Male	Female	Total	Diff.
				figure	%	figure	%				
	A	B	C = A+B	D = A-B	E	F	G	H	I	J = H+I	K=H-I
1951	-	-	173212343	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1957	-	-	193652179	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1962	67388166	60331304	127719470	7056862	5.53	-	-	-	-	-	-
1967	129568604	119335696	248904300	10232908	4.11	59004392	97.80	-	-	-	-
1971	143564829	130624303	274189132	12940526	4.72	11288607	9.46	60.80	49.11	55.27	11.69
1977	167019151	154155176	321174327	12863975	4.01	23530873	18.01	66.62	54.91	60.49	11.71
1980	185539439	170665890	356205329	14873549	4.18	16510714	10.71	62.17	51.20	56.92	10.97
1984	196730499	182810109	379540608	13920390	3.67	12144219	7.12	68.17	58.59	63.56	9.58
1989	262045142	236860987	498906129	25184155	5.05	54050878	29.57	66.13	57.31	61.96	8.82
1991	261832499	236531302	498363801	25301197	5.08	-329685	-0.14	61.58	51.34	56.73	10.24
1996	309815776	282756512	592572288	27059264	4.57	46225210	19.54	62.06	53.41	57.94	8.65

1998	316692789	289187403	605880192	27505386	4.54	6430891	2.27	65.86	57.69	61.97	8.17
1999	323813667	295723180	619536847	28090487	4.53	6535777	2.26	63.96	55.63	59.94	8.33
2004	349490864	321997066	671487930	27493798	4.09	26273886	8.88	61.98	53.63	58.07	8.35
2009	374758801	342226300	716985101	32532501	4.54	20229234	6.28	60.34	55.81	58.19	4.53
2014	437069175	397032304	834101479	40036871	4.80	54806004	16.01	67.09	65.63	66.40	1.46

**Data Source:** Compiled by author with information collected from several reports of the Election Commission of India. [Note: Gender wise break up is not available for (a) electors of 1951 and 1957, and (b) voter turnouts of 1951, 1957, 1962 and 1967]

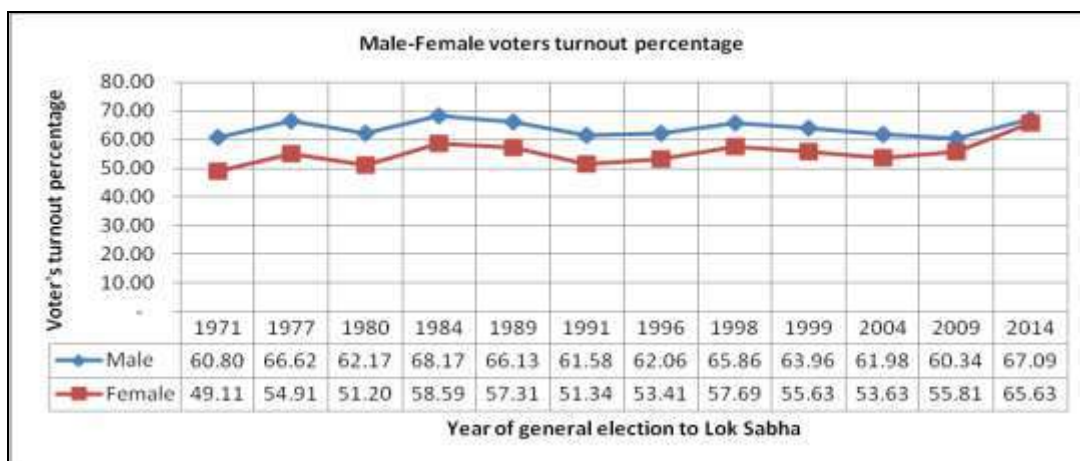
The statistical information in table above reveals that number of female electors has increased from 6,03,31,304 in 1962 to 39,70,32,304 in 2014 general election of Lok Sabha. The female electors have increased at an average of 4.53% in every general election held from the year 1962 to 2014. The increasing quantum of male and female electors of general election of the Lok Sabha held from the year 1962 to 2014 has been illustrated in a line chart below, see Fig: 3.



**Fig: 3: Trend of male and female electors of general election to Lok Sabha: 1962 to 2014**

Data Source: The Election Commission of India, New Delhi

In case of voting at General Election to the Lok Sabha held from 1971 to 2014, the percentage of female's turnout from lowest record of 49.11 in 1971 has reached to highest record of 65.63 in 2014 but the trend of increase has not been steady at times. The trend of male and female voters turnout in percentage at general election of the Lok Sabha held from the year 1971 to 2014 has been illustrated in a line chart below, see Fig: 4.



**Fig: 4: Gender wise percentage of the voters turnout at the General Elections to Lok Sabha: 1971 to 2014**

Data Source: The Election Commission of India, New Delhi

The gap between male and female voters turnout has been reduced from 11.69% in the year 1971 to 1.46% in the year 2014. The overall female voter turnout is seen marginally equal to male voter turnout in the year 2014 thereby indicating active participation of women in electoral politics.



Accordingly, it can be construed that in participation of women in electoral politics has not only been increased considerably but also became political conscious and aware of their voting right, played their vital role in electoral politics responsibly thereby manifesting their interest in politics. The state of equal participation of women in electoral politics forms a basis to determine their role and impact in political representation in decision making process and also their political empowerment.

### **6.3 Legislative intervention for participation and representation of women in politics**

This section of the study is intended to analyse legislative interventions related to political participation and representation of women in India.

With 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendments, the opportunity given with thirty three percentage of seat reservation for participation of women in local-self-governance have adequately exhibited their ability and capacity in decision making process, which has been a factor to bring changes in political dynamics of the local self governance. It is with such success in local-self-governance with women in decision making process that majority of the states and Union Territories of India have increased the percentage of reservation above minimum benchmark.

As per the constitutional provisions, the state should make necessary provision to combat gender inequality and studies have shown that greater representation of women at the highest levels of governance changed agendas related to gender and related legislative framework. However, in contrary to principle of equality of sexes inscribed in Article-2 of the Constitutional of India, the state has failed to provide reservation for participation and representation of women in Vidhan Sabha, Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.

The first bill for reservation of seat for women in Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha was introduced in the Parliament in 1996 and subsequently in the years 1998, 1999, 2008 and 2010. From the 81<sup>st</sup> Constitutional Amendment Bill, 1996 to recent one commonly known as the Women's Reservation Bill or the Constitution 108th Amendment Bill, 2008, either got lapsed or could not be passed by other house of the Parliament till date. The latest Women's Reservation Bill introduced in the Rajya Sabla on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2008 proposes following provision for seat reservation to women:-

- (a) one-third seats of the present strength of the House of the People and the Legislative Assembly of every State to be reserved for women;
- (b) one-third reservation for women to be inclusive of reservation of one-third the number of seats for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes in the House of the People and in the Legislative Assembly of every State;
- (c) reservation for women nominations from Anglo-Indian community in the House of the People and in the Legislative Assemblies of the States;
- (d) reservation for women in the Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi; and
- (e) seats reservations for women to be ceased on expiration of a period of fifteen years from the enactment of the Bill.

The Women's Reservation Bill was finally passed by the Rajya Sabha on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2010 but with the dissolution of the then Lok Sabha, the bill got lapsed and needs to be re-introduced in the Parliament again. Such bill being successful in both houses of the Parliament increases women's representation thereby leading to their political empowerment.

### **6.4 Political representation of women at the Parliament and State Assemblies**

This section of the study is intended to determine the change and current trend of women representation at both houses of the Parliament of India.

In both the houses of the Parliament of India, the representation of women Member of Parliaments (MPs) could be seen from its first term to current ones. The number and percentage of women members represented at the both houses of the Parliament of India is shown in the table below:-

**Table-4:** Number of women MPs at Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha: 1952 to 2019

Lok Sabha's term period		Number of the Lok Sabha (LS) members including nominated members			Number of the Rajya Sabha members during term period corresponding to LS		
Election	Term Period	Total	Women Members		Total	Women Members	
			No.	%		No.	%
1 <sup>st</sup>	1952-1957	543	24	4.42	399	31	7.77
2 <sup>nd</sup>	1957-1962	537	24	4.47	212	18	8.49
3 <sup>rd</sup>	1962-1967	540	37	6.85	274	24	8.76
4 <sup>th</sup>	1967-1970	553	33	5.97	205	10	4.88
5 <sup>th</sup>	1971-1977	553	28	5.06	265	29	10.94
6 <sup>th</sup>	1977-1979	557	21	3.77	112	9	8.04
7 <sup>th</sup>	1980-1984	566	32	5.65	266	27	10.15
8 <sup>th</sup>	1984-1989	567	45	7.94	204	23	11.27
9 <sup>th</sup>	1989-1991	534	28	5.24	84	7	8.33
10 <sup>th</sup>	1991-1996	555	42	7.57	228	21	9.21
11 <sup>th</sup>	1996-1997	551	41	7.44	41	4	9.76
12 <sup>th</sup>	1998-1999	546	44	8.06	72	4	5.56
13 <sup>th</sup>	1999-2004	568	52	9.15	183	22	12.02
14 <sup>th</sup>	2004-2009	586	52	8.87	224	22	9.82
15 <sup>th</sup>	2009-2014	560	64	11.43	157	17	10.83
16 <sup>th</sup>	2014-2019	573	68	11.87	28 (*)	3	10.71
Total		8889	635	Average 7.14	2954	271	Average 9.17

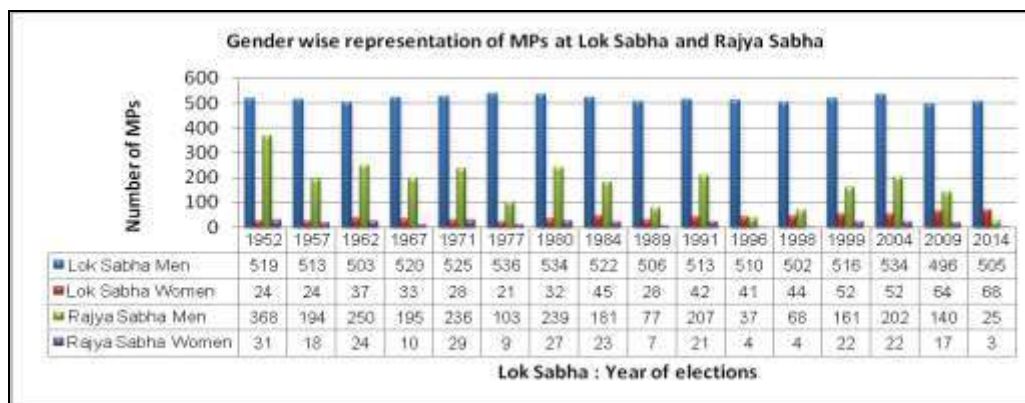
(\*) indicates members of the Rajya Sabha (RS) appointed for the period up-to 4-4-2018

**Source:** Compiled by author with information collected from websites of the Parliament of India, Lok Sabha, House of the People and Rajya Sabha, Council of State.

In case of the House of the People (Lok Sabha) having sanctioned strength of 545 members inclusive of two nominees from Anglo-Indian Community, sixteen general elections were held from the year 1951 to 2014 and number of women MPs including nominated members indicates that 21 (3.77%) in 6<sup>th</sup> general election and 68 (11.87%) in 16<sup>th</sup> general election respectively as minimum and maximum percentage of their representation. There has been unsteady trend of increase in women MPs at the Lok Sabha but an average of 39 (7.14%) only could be seen in every term.

Whereas, in case of the Council of State (Rajya Sabha), having sanctioned strength of 245 members inclusive of 12 nominees from the expertise of different fields of science, culture, art and history, an average of 23 (9.17%) women MPs members have been represented through single transferable voting system from the States and Union Territories during the period corresponding to every general election to Lok Sabha.

A comparative picture of gender-wise MPs at both the houses of Parliament since from 1<sup>st</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> general election to Lok Sabha has been presented in a bar chart shown here-below, see Fig: 5.



**Fig: 5:** Trend of men and women MPs of Parliament of India from 1952 to 2014

**Data Source:** <http://loksabhaph.nic.in/Members/lokprev.aspx> and [https://rajasabha.nic.in/rsnew/member\\_site/mptersms.aspx](https://rajasabha.nic.in/rsnew/member_site/mptersms.aspx)

The Union Council of Ministers of India exercises executive authority and in order of rank comprises of the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Cabinet Minister (member of cabinet leading ministry), Minister of State-Independent charge (junior minister) and Minister of State (deputy minister reporting to Cabinet Minister). As per Article 75(3) of the Constitution, the Council of Ministers is responsible collectively to the lower house of the Parliament called the Lok Sabha (House of the People), which is led by the Prime Minister. The total number of ministers in the Council of Ministers is mandated to not exceed 15% of the total number of members of the Lok Sabha. The Union Cabinet, a smaller executive body is the supreme decision-making body comprising of the Prime Minister and ministers of the rank of Cabinet Minister in accordance to Article 75. In pursuance to Article 78(c), a minister could not take any decision without being considered by the Council of Ministers and whenever a bill is introduced by a Minister in the Lok Sabha, the entire Council of Ministers is responsible.

After independence on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1947, Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru assumed office as the first Prime Minister of India and formed first ministry with fifteen ministers in his cabinet with Ms. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur as the only female Cabinet Minister, who was given charges of Health Ministry. She was instrumental in building All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in New Delhi, launching Tuberculosis Association of India and the Central Leprosy Teaching and Research Institute, Chennai.

In the formation of the first Union Council of Ministers, one woman minister was inducted but women had no place in successive Council of Ministers either in cabinet of Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri or under 5th, 6th and 9th cabinet of Smt Indira Gandhi. Under the 6th and 9th cabinet, eminent women such as Dr Sarojini Mahishi, Nandini Satpathy, Sushila Rohatgi and Saroj Khaparde was inducted as Ministers of State. Whereas, Smt. Mohsina Kidwai was only one woman Minister inducted under Shri Rajiv Gandhi's cabinet and thereafter, women participation in the cabinet got increased and their presence hovered between 0 to 7 per cent. For the first time since independence, the cabinet from the year 2004 to 2009 inducted more than one woman union minister thereby raising the women's representation to 10 per cent. The gender wise breakup of the Central Council of Ministers of India taken from the year 1985 to 2018 is presented in a table below, see Table-5.

**Table-5:** Number of women in the Central Council of Minister, India: 1985 to 2018

Year	Cabinet Minister			Minister of State (inclusive of independent charge)			Deputy Minister			Overall female	
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Total	%
1985	14	1	15	22	3	25	-	-	-	4	10.00
1990	17	-	17	26	1	27	4	1	5	2	4.08
1995	11	1	12	33	4	37	2	1	3	6	11.54
1996	18	-	18	20	1	21	-	-	-	1	2.56
1997	20	-	20	19	5	24	-	-	-	5	11.36
1998	20	1	21	18	3	21	-	-	-	4	9.52
2002	30	2	32	35	6	41	-	-	-	8	10.96
2003	28	1	29	33	6	39	-	-	-	7	10.29
2004	29	1	30	43	5	48	-	-	-	6	7.69
2009	37	3	40	34	4	38	-	-	-	7	8.97
2011	30	2	32	38	6	44	-	-	-	8	10.53
2012	29	2	31	37	6	43	-	-	-	8	10.81
2013	28	3	31	38	9	47	-	-	-	12	15.38
2014	17	6	23	21	1	22	-	-	-	7	15.56
2015	17	6	23	20	2	22	-	-	-	8	17.78
2016	21	5	26	45	4	49	-	-	-	9	12.00
2017	21	6	27	45	3	48	-	-	-	9	12.00
2018	20	6	26	45	2	47	-	-	-	8	10.96

**Data Source:** websites of the Lok Sabha Secretariat, Delhi

From the table above, it is observed that an average of 10.65% of women could have opportunities at Central Council of Ministers. The percentage of women ministers have remained in the range of minimum 2.6% in the year

1996 to maximum 17.8 % in the year 2015. With 8 women out of 73 total members in Central Council of Ministers, the women ministers constituted 10.96% in the year 2018.

As regard to the State Assemblies of India, a total of 16 women have served in the capacity as Chief Minister in 12 states and one Union Territory of Delhi. Whereas, two different women Chief Minister have served in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and UT of Delhi with Ms. Sheila Dikshit having served for longest period of 15 years followed by Ms. Jayaram Jayalalithaa who served for 14 years and Ms. Mamata Banerjee is only women currently holding the office of the Chief Minister in West Bengal since 2011.

The number and percentages of women Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) of the State Assemblies of India as on December 2017 are presented in a table below, see Table-6.

**Table-6:** Number of women in the State Assemblies of India as on December 2017

Sr.	State	Year of the		MLA			Female %
		constitution of State/Assembly	Assembly election	Male	Female	Total	
1	Andhra Pradesh	1955	2014	156	20	176	11.36
2	Arunachal Pradesh	1978	2014	58	2	60	3.33
3	Assam	1937/1951	2016	118	8	126	6.35
4	Bihar	1937/1951	2015	209	34	243	13.99
5	Chhattisgarh	2000/2003	2013	80	10	90	11.11
6	Delhi	1992/1993	2015	64	6	70	8.57
7	Goa	1987/1967	2017	38	2	40	5.00
8	Gujarat	1960/1962	2017	160	13	173	7.51
9	Haryana	1996/1967	2014	77	13	90	14.44
10	Himachal Pradesh	1951/1971	2017	65	4	69	5.80
11	Jammu & Kashmir	1934/1962	2014	85	2	87	2.30
12	Jharkhand	2000/2005	2014	69	8	77	10.39
13	Karnataka	1956/1957	2013	218	6	224	2.68
14	Kerala	1957	2016	132	8	140	5.71
15	Madhya Pradesh	1957	2013	200	30	230	13.04
16	Maharashtra	1960/1962	2014	268	20	288	6.94
17	Manipur	1967/1972	2017	58	2	60	3.33
18	Meghalaya	1972	2013	56	4	60	6.67
19	Mizoram	1972/1987	2013	40	0	40	0.00
20	Nagaland	1963/1964	2013	60	0	60	0.00
21	Odisha	1937	2014	136	11	147	7.48
22	Punjab	1937	2017	111	6	117	5.13
23	Puducherry	1963	2016	30	0	30	0.00
24	Rajasthan	1956	2013	172	28	200	14.00
25	Sikkim	1975	2014	29	3	32	9.38
26	Tamil Nadu	1937	2016	218	16	234	6.84
27	Telangana	2014	2014	111	9	120	7.50
28	Tripura	1972	2013	55	5	60	8.33
29	Uttar Pradesh	1937	2017	361	42	403	10.42
30	Uttarakhand	2000	2017	66	4	70	5.71
31	West Bengal	1937	2016	255	39	294	13.27
Total				3755	355	4110	Average 7.31

**Data Source:** websites of respective CEO of the states as on 06th December 2017

The table above reveals that maximum representation of women MLA is 14.44% in the state of Haryana followed by Rajasthan (14%), Bihar (13.99%), West Bengal (13.27%) and Madhya Pradesh (13.04%). Almost half of the States and Union Territories represented women MLAs at their respective states below national average of 7.31% but three states did not have women MLAs.

The overall quantum of women representation as MPs and MLAs in state legislature of India has been pitiable and despicable, which has continued till date. In absence of any legislative provision for seat reservations of women in both houses of the Parliament and State Legislative Assemblies, the complete political empowerment of women could not be achieved in India.

### 6.5 Political representation of women in Sikkim

Sikkim merged as 22<sup>nd</sup> state of the India with effect from 26 April, 1975 vide the Constitution 36th Amendment Act 1975 has 32 Assembly Constituencies with representation of one member each at both houses of the Parliament.

The number and percentages of women MLAs of the Sikkim Legislative Assembly and state's representation at the Parliament of India is presented in a table below, see Table-7.

**Table-7:** Number and percentage of women MLAs in Sikkim Assembly and MP at Parliament

Assembly Election Year	Member of SLA			Sikkim representation at the Parliament of India						
	Total	No. of Women	Women %	LS	RS	Total	No. of Women			Women %
							LS	RS	Total	
1979	32	-	Nil	1	1	2	-	-	-	-
1985	32	-	Nil	1	1	2	1	-	1	50
1989	32	1	3.13	1	1	2	-	-	-	-
1994	32	1	3.13	1	1	2	1	-	1	50
1999	32	1	3.13	1	1	2	-	-	-	-
2004	32	3	9.34	1	1	2	-	-	-	-
2009	32	4	12.12	1	1	2	-	-	-	-
2014	32	3	9.34	1	1	2	-	-	-	-

**Source:** Compiled by author with information collected from various statistical reports published by Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, Sikkim

In eight general elections held in Sikkim after its merger against 32 constituencies, the first two did not have any women MLA and only one woman MLA was represented each at three subsequent elections held in the years 1989, 1994 and 1999. The maximum number of 4 women MLAs was inducted in the general election held in the year 2009 and second highest number of 3 women MLAs was recorded twice in the general elections held in the years 2004 and 2014.

Sikkim with quota of having representation of only one member each at Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha could induct only one woman representation at Lok Sabha elected twice in the years 1985 and 1994.

### 7. SUMMARY

In view of constitutional provision inscribed for gender equality and equity in India along with nearly half of country's population being women, suitable provisions for an equal political participation of women would have endowed them with complete political empowerment and made an equal partner in decision making process thereby enabling existence of fair democratic and political governance in the country. However, inadequate provision in laws for complete political participation of women and barriers caused by prevalence of male dominated culture and patriarchal societal mindset in India has been a hindrance in complete political empowerment of women. Besides, quality education, awareness, motivation, capacity enhancement and confidence building are some factors identified to encourage women for their political participation. For the purpose of increasing political participation and representation of women in politics requires seat reservation for women and increasing the numbers of women contestants at state and national level politics. In fact, it has caused discrimination to women for their participation in the political sphere.

The attempts for seat reservation to women at state and national legislatures started since 1996 has ended up as Women's Reservation Bill in 2008, which could not be successful. Despite of the constitutional provision for gender equality, the women lacked equal representation in politics, which is necessary to build a strong democratic nation. Though participation of women in electoral politics has increased in last seven decade but they are under-

presented in decision making bodies at both the national and state levels. This has led to the question about the empowerment of women and importance of their key role and contribution towards democratic governance in the country. The political empowerment of women has ample possibilities to bring a drastic impact on overall current political scenario of the country.

Due to lack of adequate representation of women in politics and governance at state and national level, the concept of gender equality and equity in the political system has not been established yet. Given an opportunity through seat reservation to women in the legislatures at state and national level, the political scenario of the country may get changed and the world's largest democracy becomes unbiased in terms of gender equality and equity by creating equal opportunities for equal representation of women in politics and governance of the nation.

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