

Loksabha Election 2014 and Women Participation

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ABSTRACT

In 2014 LokSabha elections political parties' nominated low number of women candidates recommends that not much has changed since 2009. The participation of women in Indian politics needs electoral and parliamentary modifications. The number of women standing for elections also needs to increase. For the movement reservation seems to be the fastest way of increasing the number of women contestants elected. The current article is based on the election commissions report on electoral participation in 2014 LokSabha election. It offers a detailed analysis of women's participation as voters, candidates, and winners.

Keywords: LokSabha, election, women, participation

Citation of this article

Wani, M. H. (2017). Loksabha Election 2014 And Women Participation. *International Journal of Higher Education and Research*, 7(1), 166-173. www.ijher.com

Introduction

The multi-phase LokSabha elections for 2014 LokSabha were held in 28 states and 7 union territories. The 36 day long voting process began on 7th April 2014 and conducted on 12 May. The result was declared on 16th May 2014. The elections conducted with a voter turnout of 66 percent which is highest recorded after 1984. Women turn out during India's 2014 general election was 65.63% compared to 67.09% turn out for men. In 16 out of 29 states of India, more

women voted than men. A total of 260.6 million women exercised their right to vote in April May 2014 Lok Sabha elections. Indian women, who form 49% of the population, have constantly been under-represented in the parliament. The 16th Lok Sabha is no exception. Out of 644 women candidates 61 women seats to the Lok Sabha, only two more than 2009.

Objective

- ❖ To bare women candidates to mentors, campaign professionals, skilled offers and other resources that can help them win.
- ❖ To work collaboratively with current state wide women's organizations and build upon their strength.

Methodology

The information for this paper has been primarily collected from secondary sources i-e journals, books, government reports.

Women as voter

Registered women voters in India have increased from 45% in the 1952 elections to 47.6% in the 2014 elections that is by a pitiful 2.7%. The general tendency has been an increase in total number of voters each year, but the percentage of men and women voting has endured almost constant, with men creating more than 52% of the total electorate. This means that in 2014, intotal numbers, they are 38,740,183 more men than women in electorate. This gap is only expanded if we look at the actual percentage of votes polled by women. The tendency for all the past years shows that this is less than the percentage of registered women voters, in 2009, 47.7% registered women voters accounted for 45.8% of the total votes polled.

Moreover in the Lok Sabha election 2014 the percentage of new women voters in the 18 to 19 years age group is only 41.4%. 15 states and union territories fall below the national average in this age group, with Haryana having the lowest percentage at 28.3% only Nagaland has more female electors than male among the new electorate at 50.4%.

The fairer sex has a great share in the splendor for highest ever turn out ever recorded in general election 2014. According to statistics released by the election commissioner, nearly 65.31% of the total women electors in the country voted in this election, as compared to 55.82% in 2009 poll. The gender gap in terms of turnout is just 2.14% points as compared to 4.42% points recorded in 2009. As many as 16 states and union territories recorded higher women turnout this time, as against six states and union territories in 2009 polls.

The commission has recognized the jump in women's turnout in this election to its attentive initiatives under the regular voter education and electoral participation (SVEEP) programme. Improving electoral participation among women has been a major SVEEP objective. To target rural women, the election commission has organized Rangoli and folk art competition and accepted interpersonal message through Aangawadis and ASHA workers. At the state level, Uttar Pradesh, for one set up Mahila Metadata Chaupal to sensitive women about electoral participation. In Assam, pregnant women were sent personal letters informing them that they would be given priority in voting and not be required to stand in the queue. Many district level initiatives were launched to encourage women to come out and vote.

Increasing women's political participation and representation: Increasing women's political participation and representation in Indian politics requires electoral and parliamentary changes. Engaging more Indian voters has been mentioned already. The number of women standing for elections also needs to increase. For the movement reservation seems to be the fastest way of increasing the number of women contestants elected. The quota system as proven to be the fastest and most effective way of ensuring women's satisfactory representation in parliament all over the world. 16 of the 20 countries that have at least 30% women in their national parliament have used some form of quota system or another. The women's reservation bill, therefore, is a crucial first step towards both electoral and parliamentary reforms. In addition the role played by political parties is also very important to ensure that women are sufficiently represented and policies favoring women are passed. Women's group had suggested for this election that parties take women's demands on board in their manifestos and campaigns, sanction women candidates and ensure they do not give ticket to candidates who have charge of gender based violence or male remark reflected gender discrimination.

Women candidates and the 2014 Lok Sabha elections

Not much has changed since 2009 as the political parties has chosen low number of women candidates in 2014. Many parties articulated support for increasing women's participation in electoral politics at the national level, but frequently this has not happened in greater opportunities for wishful women candidates. During the last two parliaments, the congress party toiled hard to pass women's reservation bill in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies. The aim is to provide a legal quota where only women candidates can contest in selected constituencies, guaranteeing the election of a larger number of women to the Lok Sabha and state assemblies. As

the two largest parties in parliament the congress and BJP both parties have uttered support for women's reservation. In 2014, both parties have re-nominated nearly all of their sitting women MPs. However, in 2014 both parties have not significantly increased their amount of women candidates compared to nominations in 2009. In 2014, the congress party has nominated a slightly higher quantity of women, and it's highest at least since the early 1980s, but this is still only 13% of its candidates associated to 10% in 2009. The BJP has nominated slightly less (9% compared to 10% in 2009). If anti-tenure affects results in a poor performance for the congress party and a positive result for the BJP, this may decrease the percentage of women elected to the 16th Lok Sabha compared to 2009.

To begin with the opportunities for women candidates are highly rough across states and more concentrated than combined party figures suggest. Both the congress party and the BJP have nominated no women candidates in many of the states and union territories where they are contesting. In states like Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, a number of parties have nominated very few women candidates (the BJP and congress in Karnataka has 4% and 7% women candidates respectively). Women candidates are also concentrated in a handful of particular states. An outstanding statistic is that more than half (20) of the BJP's women candidates in 2014 are contesting from only three states: Uttar Pradesh (11), Gujarat (4), and Madhya Pradesh (5). Women candidates for the congress are still concentrated in a few states, including in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, but not to the same extent. The significance of this attentiveness is that while Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh are presently strong states for the BJP, the possibility of the party's success in Uttar Pradesh is tentative. If the BJP does well in the election overall but fares poorly in Uttar Pradesh, the number of women candidates to the Lok Sabha is likely to be affected. Even if the BJP does well in all three states, and accordingly returns majority of its women candidates to the Lok Sabha, issues of roughness and requirement on a small number of states will remain.

Women as winner

There is a marginal improvement in the number of women candidates winning parliamentary elections. In parliamentary election in 2009, there were 59 candidates who won the election. In 2014 Lok Sabha election, 61 women have secured seats in Lok Sabha. This is the highest ever number of seats won by women ever and comprises 11.23% of the total 543 seats. The lowest ever was in 1977 when only 19 women representatives won elections.

People of West Bengal have elected maximum number of women parliamentarians, the state has elected 14 women MPs compared to 7 in the 2009 parliamentary election, Mamta Banerjee led Trinamool congress fielded maximum number of women candidates as compared to other political parties this election. Tamil Nadu that elected only one women MP in the last election has elected four MPs this time. Not a single woman has won an MP seat from Jharkhand, Haryana, and Meghalaya. There around 17 women candidates in the last election fight in Jharkhand. But as many as 16 candidates lost their security bond because they could not secure the mandatory one sixth of the valid votes. Two women candidates had won in Haryana and one in Meghalaya in the 2009 election. In the current election there were 636 out of the 8136 in the fray were women. In the 2009 elections there were 556 women contestants out of total of 8070.

Uttar Pradesh has maintained its record. In 2009, 13 women MPs won election. Jammu and Kashmir, Kerala, Orissa that had no representation of women in parliament has done better. One women candidate each from Jammu and Kashmir and Kerala and two from Orissa in parliament. According to PRS legislative research, an independent research organization based in Delhi, women candidates had a better strike rate than male candidates. Ten percent of women candidates won election against the strike rate of six percent for male candidates. Women candidates have also an advantage over male candidates when it comes to education. Thirty two percent of women MPs have a postgraduate or Doctoral degree, 30% of male MPs have same educational qualifications. PRS survey also discloses that women MPs elected in the present election are younger than the male MPs. Average age of women MPs is 47 years but average of male MPs is 54 years. Also, there are no women MPs who are above the age of 70 years. Seven percent of male MPs are over 70 years.

Table 1. Women MPs across India, 2014

State	Female candidates won 2014	Female candidates won 2009
Andhra Pradesh	3(42)	5
Assam	2(14)	2
Chandigarh	1(1)	0
Chhattisgarh	1(11)	2
Gujarat	4(26)	4
Jammu & Kashmir	1(6)	0
Karnataka	1(28)	1
Madhya Pradesh	4(29)	6
Maharashtra	3(48)	3
Punjab	1(13)	4
Tamil Nadu	4 (39)	1
Bihar	3(40)	4
Kerala	1(20)	0
Delhi	1(7)	1
Orissa	2(21)	0
West Bengal	14(42)	7
Uttarakhand	1(5)	0
Uttar Pradesh	13(80)	13
Haryana	0	2
Meghalaya	0	1
Rajasthan	1(25)	3
Total	61(543)	59

The Table 1. (above) is expressive of the low representation of female candidates elected in the country. However, the 16thloksabha will see the highest number of female MPs since the 1977 general election which saw only 19 women MPs being elected. The winning percentage of women has actually in this general election to 9.4% while it was 10.1% during the 2009 elections.

Among states, West Bengal has done very well with 14 women MPs, which is doubled of the 2009 tally followed by UP with 13 seats which does not show any change since 2009.

Table 2. Female/ Male MPs across parties

Party name	Women MPs(Male MPs)
Apna Dal	1(19)
AIADMK	4(33)
BJD	2(18)
BJP	28(254)
CPI(M)	1(8)
INC	4(41)
LJP	1(5)
NCP	1(5)
PDP	1(2)
SAD	1(3)
SP	1(4)
TMC	13(33)
TRS	1(10)
YSR Congress	2(9)

Source: Election commission of India

BJP has done well when it comes to the women candidates. It has also improved its performance with 28 MPs as against 14 MPs after the 2009 elections. TMC has also seen a good increase over its past performance from 4 to 13 in 2014 elections. Congress on the other hand, has seen a fall from 23 in 2009 to only 4 in 2014. We can also see that when it comes to comparison with male MPs, TMC score better with 39% of its candidates being females. However, when it comes to the major parties, one can see that women representation is quiet low, for BJP, it is only 11%.

Conclusion

Despite the loud talk of women empowerment by major political parties, women participation in Loksabha polls has not even increased by 1% this time. It is unlikely that the tendency would get reversed since major parties have already announced their majority of their candidates. Low percent of women candidates to each Loksabha is a serious concern which needs to be addressed.

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