

Gender Dynamics - Changing Role of Women Voters in India

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Abstract -- This paper examines the role of women in elections. The women constitute nearly 50% of the total population in India while their representation in politics is below 10%. Political parties in India are rallying around women issues in order to woo women voters who have already proved their decisiveness in 2014 general elections. So far Indian political scenario has been India is entering another milestone in elections in 2019 and the role of women is further significant. Despite their gross under representation as politicians women need to be considered as voters. Female voter turnout is increasing while compared to men voters. Indian which is considered as a patriarchal society is moving towards a change which is very significant from the national point of view. Gender dynamics is being viewed as a priority factor by all political campaigners. Women suffer from several issues and they are also the most vulnerable group .The increasing instances of gender based violence, caste based aggression and atrocities have been making women feel apprehensive and defenceless. They need support socially as well politically. The policy makers often neglect women and concentrate on general issues instead of gender issues. Hence the general elections of 2019 can be a path finder in addressing women issues through increased women participation.

Indexed Terms: Indian women voters, Gender dynamics, key issues, political party's agenda

I. INTRODUCTION

The role of women in contemporary politics is a more complex issue. Women are underrepresented as political candidates in both state and national level elections. Indian women comprise of nearly 50% of the total population yet their representations in Indian politics are very less. While women turn out is 64% for women it is 69% for men. Despite their gross under representation as politicians women need to be considered as voters. Female e turnout is increasing while compared to men. Indian which is considered as a patriarchal society is moving towards a change which is very significant from the national point of view.

In 2014, just 8.1% of the candidates for Lok Sabha were women candidates. Between 1962 & 1996 women did not once account for more than 5% of the candidate pool. Following a sharp increase in 1998 women have enjoyed modest incremental growth as a share of total candidates. This gradual rise in the candidacy has been pronounced in SC ST reserved constituencies between 1980 and 2014, 7% of the parliamentary candidates for these seats were women. During the same period women comprised only 4.8% of the candidates seeking general seats.

II. FACTORS HELPING THE GROWTH OF WOMEN CANDIDACY

An analysis of the election Commission in 2015 revealed that female voter turnout exceeded in 21 states out of 30 states in India. The following table shows the remaining nine states where there was a narrowing of male –female voter turnout ratio

Sl no	Name of the state
1	Andhra Pradesh
2	Assam
3	Delhi
4	Gujarat
5	Haryana
6	Karnataka
7	Kerala
8	Madhya Pradesh
9	Maharashtra

Source: Hindustan times dated 12-12-2015

III. THE ANALYTICAL FINDINGS OF THE GENERAL ELECTIONS OF 2014

1. There is a great increase of women voters in the states of Bihar and Odessa

2. Women voters are less their male counterparts in the states of Gujarat, Karnataka & Maharashtra.
3. In 2014 general elections, states with more female candidates did not enjoy greater female voter turnout.
4. States with more balanced sex ratios did have higher female turnout
5. In the states of Karnataka and Gujarat where the higher ration of literacy was found among female urban voters the run out was very less.

These findings illustrate profound illustrations towards changing role of women in Indian politics. India is entering another milestone in elections in 2019 and the role of women is further significant.

IV. IMPACT ON WOMEN ORIENTED POLICIES

1. Women have become more and more important for all political parties because women voters have become decisive in politics.
2. Women issues are prioritized by political parties such as policies on liquor ban, containing gender based violence, poverty , sexual violence, sanitation , hygiene , nutrition , health care , basic education etc. States such as Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Odissa, and Chhattisgarh have become alert to women demand for ban on liquor shops.
3. Even the major political party BJP has switched from economic reform and employment creation in its election manifesto of 2014 has turned towards women issues such as women welfare and Women sustainable strategies in its 2019 election campaigns.
4. It is more evident that Modi government has given stress ton women welfare through policies on Swachch Bharat, Aayushamman Bharath, and Ujjwala etc which focused clearly on women issues.

The following table shows the some of the women oriented policies which are unleashed by major political parties since 2000.

Sr. no	Scheme name	Focus area
1	Swachch Bharat	Improving sanitation facilities
2	Aayushamman Bharath	Provision for universal health care
3	Ujjwala Yojana	Provision for cooking gas cylinders for poor families.
4	Balika samrudhi yojana	
5	Mahila e-haat	Direct online marketing platform to support women self help groups
6	Beti padhavo beti bachavo	Focus on girl child
7	Nirbhaya fund	Counselling services for women
8	Swadhara scheme	To support women in critical situations
9	STEP	To support women towards self employment and empowerment

Source: Ministry of child and women welfare New Delhi 2018

V. FOCUS AREAS BY POLITICAL PARTIES

1. Congress party has declared that its party has always given prominence to women voters and has promised to make women as chief ministers in congress lead governments by 2024
2. BJP has declared that Women issues will be considered on par with other issues in 2019 general elections.
3. Political parties have been considering permanent ban on triple talaq issue. Muslim women voters will be supported by the legal ban on the practice of triple talaq. This issue has been
4. Women demand for permanent ban on liquor sales and marketing in rural areas have been very

detrimental to certain political parties as political parties are mandatorily aligning liquor ban in their political campaigns.

5. Women in north western states of India are demanding ban on increasing exploitation of forest resources. Several women voters during the state elections demanded complete ban on forest mistreatment as it deprived them of their livelihood.
6. Women in Vidarbha and Maharashtra dry basin demanded government intervention through policy intervention in farm produce marketing and demanded a check on MNCs in agro processing industry as this was taking away their livelihood.
7. Women from Coastal region of Konkani and Goa are demanding ban of over exploitation of for tourism related projects.
8. Women from terrorist hit Jammu and Kashmir are demanding government intervention in containing police hands in the name of search operations.

VI. CONCLUSION

Thus women have become more and more important for all political parties and women voters have become decisive in politics. As the general elections of 2019 are months away, women issues are becoming more vital for political parties. The so far vulnerable and neglected groups have suddenly come into focus for these political parties. Whatever may be the necessity women need to realize their role in emerging political scenario and act accordingly. They have to consider themselves as king makers and their number need to prioritize their issues.

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