

Missing Women: A Picture of Indian Parliament

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Abstract: Gender discrimination has always been a part and parcel of Indian society. There has been significant social, economic and cultural progress of the society in the last century still discrimination, biasness and inequality against women persists. Women in every field have to face the reality of discrimination either it be in education, employment, health or politics. Missing women is the concept developed by Novel Laureate Amratya Sen to show decreasing number of girls. In true sense there is Missing Women in every field like literacy, employment and political participation. Gender discrimination in political participation is very prevalent and visible in India. Democracy is that it should be participatory and representative in nature but in case of India, women participation as voters is increasing while their representation as parliamentarians is still low. As the political arena is dominated by males, and it is the males who make the rules and define the standard for assessment of political processes, it leads to less participation by women. Women political participation in India reveals that there is significant increase in number of female voters and number of female in election campaigning but when it comes to their representation in Parliaments, their presence is very low. It's the need of the hours to take positive action in the form of women reservation in parliament to come out with favourable results.

Keywords: Gender discrimination, Political participation, Representation, Male dominance, Under-representation, Barriers and Reservation.

"Whatever the shortcomings of representative democracy in the world today, one issue that remains only partially resolved is the political participation and the policy impact of one half of the population- Women" (Goetz and Hassim, 2003)¹.

INTRODUCTION

Indian society is full of paradoxes where on one hand women are treated as goddess and are kept at high pedestal while on the other hand they have to face the problems of patriarchy, poverty, violence and powerlessness. The major issue that exists in the core is gender discrimination which can be defined as the departure from parity in the representation of women and men in different spheres of life [2] like literacy, health, employment, political participation and decision making.

Gender discrimination in political participation is very prevalent and visible in India. There has been significant social, economic and cultural progress of the society in the last century still discrimination, biasness and inequality against women persists. Women in every field have to face the reality of discrimination either it be in education, employment, health or politics. Missing women is the concept developed by Novel Laureate

Amratya Sen to show decreasing number of girls. In true sense there is Missing Women in every field like literacy, employment and political participation. Gender discrimination in political participation is very prevalent and visible in India. For Gandhiji, *swaraj* can be attained only when women participate in political spheres as it is the most vital step towards their empowerment[3]. As the political arena is dominated by males, and it is the males who make the rules and define the standard for assessment of political processes, it leads to less participation by women[4].

According to Milbrath and Goel [5], the traditional mindset of society makes politics only a male affair and discriminate female. It is one of the poorest states in India where poverty is widespread and in this situation women are totally dependent on men and there is clear division of work in the family wherein women are given the responsibility of nurturing and taking care of children and husband's parent while men

are active participants in public and political life and restrict female movement out[6].

Democracy, according to Palmer [7], is that it should be participatory as well as representative in nature but in case of India, women participation as voters is increasing while their representation as parliamentarians is still low. How can we call it a democracy when women in India constitute around fifty percent of population while their representation in parliament is around 12 percent only? India stands 148th among 193 countries in the representation of women in parliament, data provided by Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) up to 1st January 2017(Women in Politics: 2017; UN Women). The ranking of neighboring countries are far better than India like Nepal (48), Afghanistan (54), China (74), Pakistan (89) and Bangladesh (91). The neighboring countries whose ranking is even worse than India are ranking of Bhutan (169), Maldives (177) and Sri Lanka (179).

OBJECTIVES

The objective of this paper is to show gender discrimination in various strata of political system like:

- Women as voter
- Women as candidates in Lok Sabha Election
- Women who won the Lok Sabha Election

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Stratum 1 – Women as voters

Women as voters is said to be the starting point in the struggle of women for their political equality and development. Number of women as voters is increasing gradually with every next election and the gap between male and female turnout is gradually decreasing. The political participation of women as voters at national level has shown a good upsurge. The percentage of women voters has consistently increased from 53.64 percent in 2004 to 65.63 percent in 2014 (Table 2). The difference in voter turnout among men and women that was wide as 8.06 percent in 2004 has narrowed down to 1.46 percent in 2014 (Fig. 1).

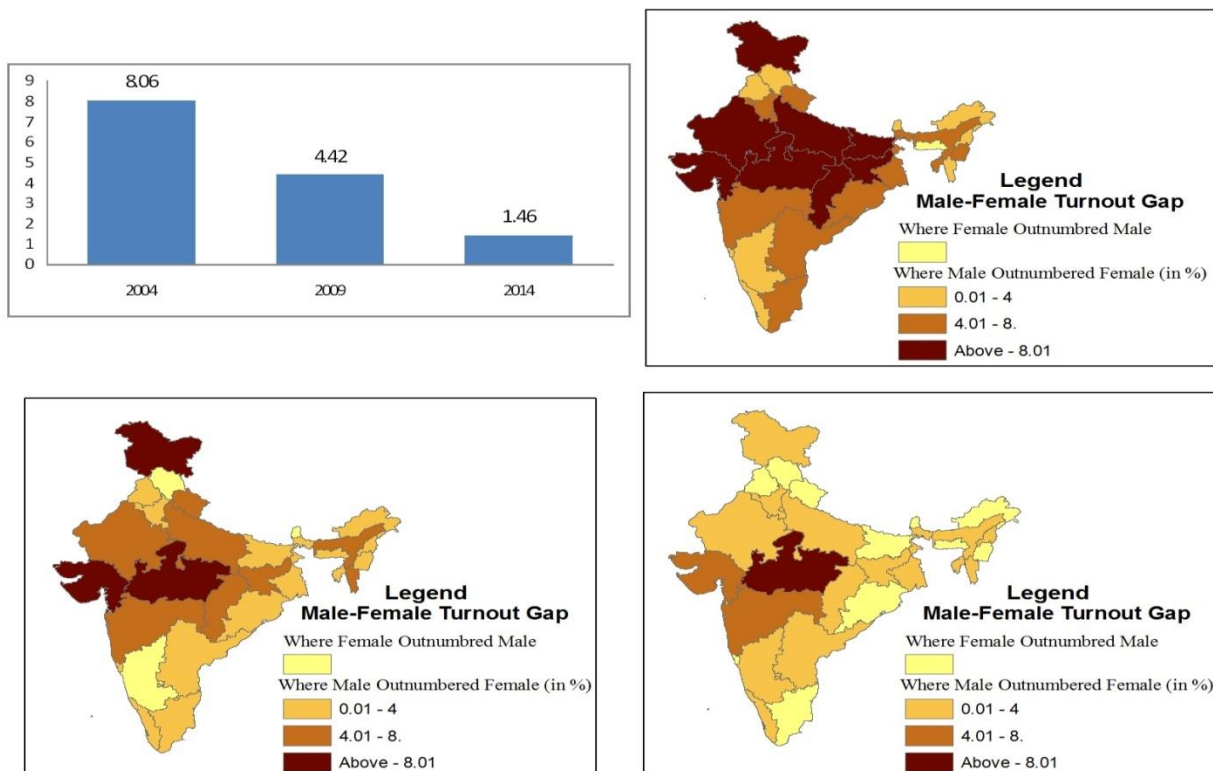


Figure 1: Male-Female Turnout Gap in Lok Sabha Elections (2004-2014)
Source: Election Commission of India

There is inter-state variation in male-female turnout in India. In 2004 Lok Sabha election, there was only one state where women outnumbered men in turnout i.e. Meghalaya. In other states men

outnumbered women with maximum difference in Madhya Pradesh followed by Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh. In 2009 Lok Sabha election, number of states where women outnumbered men increased to

three (Karnataka, Himachal Pradesh and Sikkim). Women in 2014 Lok Sabha election became more active as electoral voters and number of states where they outnumbered men increased to nine i.e. Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Goa, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Orissa, Punjab, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu and Uttarakhand. From 2004 to 2014 Lok Sabha election, male-female turnout gap decreased from 8.06 points to 1.46 points. From the Table 2 it can easily be depicted that the male-female turnout gap is decreasing gradually. Other than Madhya Pradesh every state has shown good improvement. The initiatives taken by Election Commission to conduct fair and violence free elections can be attributed in larger number of women turnout in the recent elections as it inculcates a feeling of safety and security among women. The reservation for women in Panchayat election gave women a sense of power sharing with men in the country that acts as catalyst and lead to larger upsurge of women in the electoral participation

Stratum 2-Women as candidates

At the second stratum of the electoral process, women participation as candidates in election process is

very low. There are many inherent restriction and barriers imposed by the patriarchal mindset where women are not allowed to fight election. They are bound to move according to the dictate of men and do not have their freedom in political spheres. Most of the women participate as independent candidate where they do not have backing from any political parties. In most of the cases they lose the election as they do not have either money or power to win the election. In 2004, out of total 5790 candidates who were contesting the election, women were only 355 which were just 6.13 percent of the total. Even after 10 years, the situation does not change much. In 2014, women candidates constituted only 8.10 percent of the total candidates (Fig. 2). In 2004, six states did not have any female contestants (Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura) which reduced to four (Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Nagaland and Sikkim) in 2009 and 2014 Lok Sabha election. Chhattisgarh had maximum percentage of female contestants of the total contestant in 2004 and in 2014 it was Himachal Pradesh.

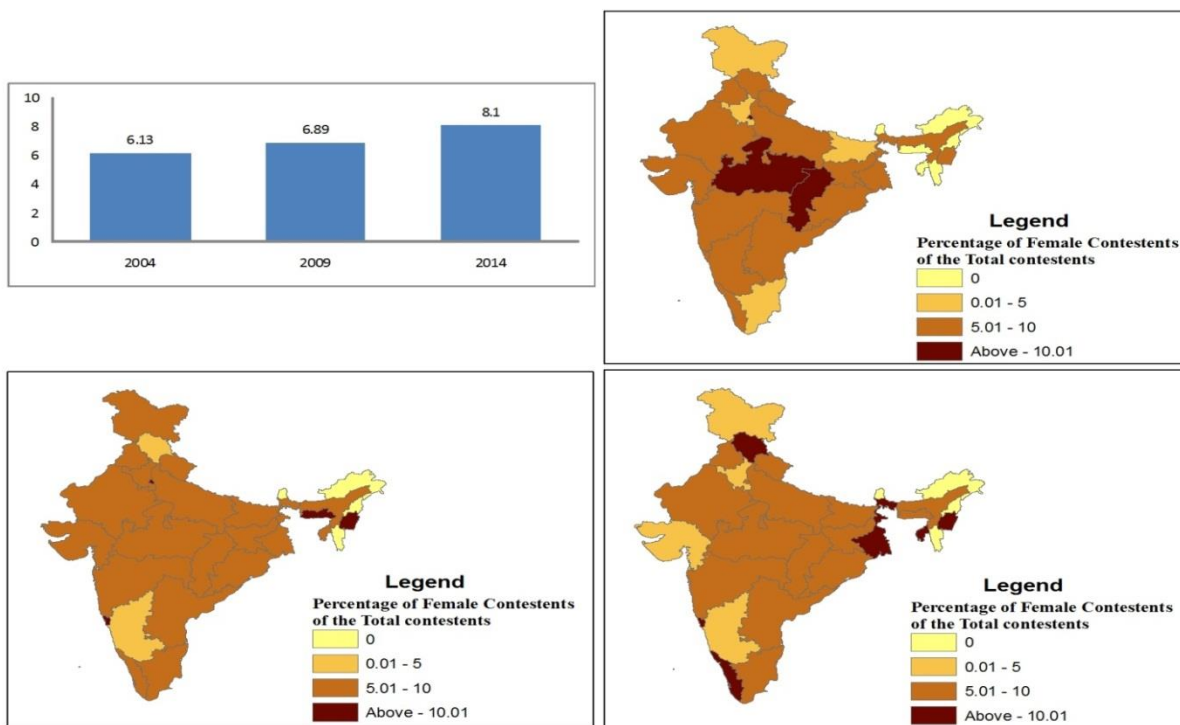


Figure 2: Percentage of Female Contestants of the total Contestants (2004-2014)
Source: Election Commission of India

Various political parties restrict candidature of female in the election. The numerical analysis of seats allotted by two prominent parties in the last three Lok Sabha election (2004, 2009 and 2014) shows that these political parties do not gives tickets to women

candidates and these political parties are less committed towards the betterment of women in political spheres.

Table 1 shows the poor condition of seats allotted to women candidates by two major parties in India. The participation of women as candidate have

merely increased from 2004 to 2014 Lok Sabha election in both the parties. In case of Congress, it has increased from 10.79 percent to 12.93 while in Bhartiya Janta

Party (BJP) it has increased from 8.24 percent to 8.88 percent.

Table-1: Number of Women Candidates given ticket by Congress and BJP

Political Parties	2004		2009		2014	
	Total Candidates	Women Candidates	Total Candidates	Women Candidates	Total Candidates	Women Candidates
Congress	417	45 (10.79)	440	43 (9.77)	464	60 (12.93)
BJP	364	30 (8.24)	433	44 (10.16)	428	38 (8.88)

Source: Same as Fig. 1

Stratum 3 – Female representation in Parliament

Women in India are very poorly represented at the higher level in political field. History proves that the participation of women as Member of Parliament always remained very low. Women are under-represented in political sphere as Parliamentarians that would help them to be active in political life⁸. From the first general election, women representation in Lok Sabha reveals that they continued to be discarded from electoral participation even after so many years of Indian Independence. In the subsequent elections after 1952, the number of women parliamentarian fluctuated. In the later years the percentage of women parliamentarians increased but there was not as such revolutionary change in the number. In 2004 Lok Sabha election, women constituted 8.29 percent of the total

members which was increased to 11.61 percent in 2014 Lok Sabha election which is very low as compared to other countries of the world.

There is inter-state variation in percentage of women candidates won the Lok Sabha election. In 2004 Lok Sabha election there was 10 such states that have not a single female Lok Sabha member. This number increased to 13 in 2009 Lok Sabha elections. The number of states with no female Lok Sabha candidates reduced to 11 in 2014. There are 8 such states in India that have never sent any female to Lok Sabha from 2004 and all are north-eastern states and other one is Goa. The state that has sent maximum percentage of women candidates to Lok Sabha in 2014 were West Bengal followed by Madhya Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir.

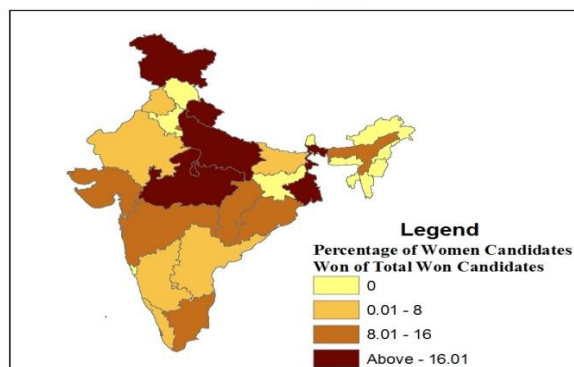
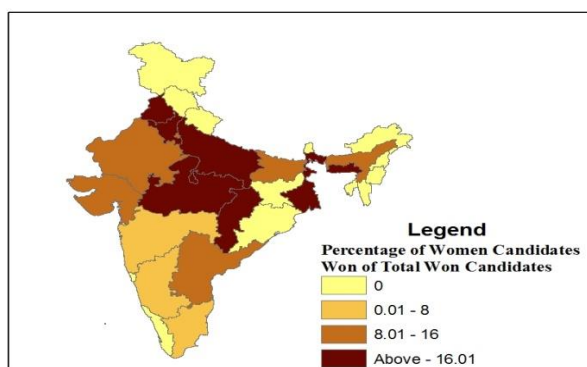
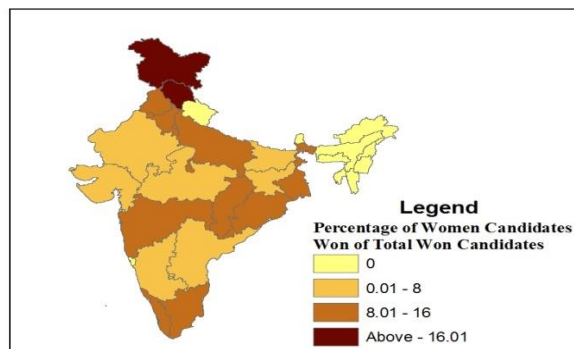
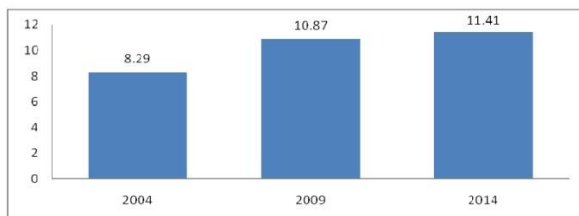


Figure 3: Percentage of Women Candidates won of total Candidates (2004-2014)

Source: Election Commission of India

Reasons of low Political Participation of Women

Women all over the India, at every level of political participation, find themselves less represented.

No one trust their political abilities either it be family, society or any political parties. Women who wish to enter politics do not find their political, cultural, social or public environment suitable for them and their

environment make them vey unfriendly. Women find many obstacles in their participation in electoral processes. Some of them are:

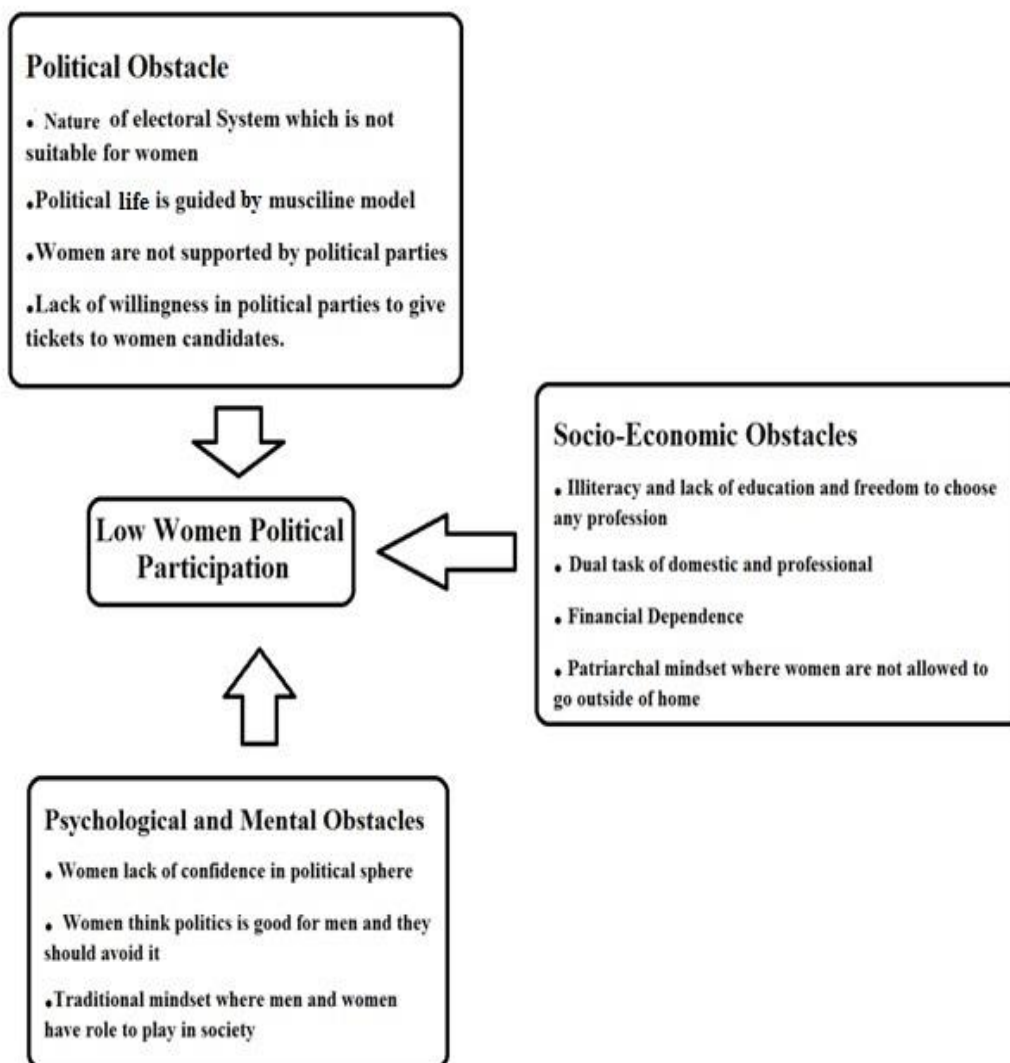


Fig-4: Reason of low political participation of women

Source: Prepared By the Author

Table-2: Male-Female Voter Gap, Percentage of Female Contestants out of Total Candidates and Percentage of Female who Won the Election out of Total Candidates in Lok Sabha Election (2004-2014)

States and Union Territories	Male-Female Voter Gap			Percentage of Female Contestants out of Total Candidates			Percentage of Female who Won the Election out of total Candidates		
	2004	2009	2014	2004	2009	2014	2004	2009	2014
Andhra Pradesh	4.85	2.02	0.16	7.52	6.85	7.19	7.14	11.9	7.14
Arunachal Pradesh	1.4	1.85	-4.4	0	0	0	0	0	0
Assam	7.15	5.3	1.2	5.17	6.96	9.88	0	14.29	14.29
Bihar	11.94	3.44	-2.8	3.03	6.85	7.42	7.5	10	7.5
Goa	3.2	2.84	-4.2	6.25	11.11	10.53	0	0	0
Gujarat	9.91	8.76	7.41	6.79	7.24	4.79	3.85	15.38	15.38
Haryana	5.31	2.98	3.17	5	6.66	4.78	10	20	0
Himachal Pradesh	0.61	-1.46	-2.2	8.7	3.23	13.16	25	0	0
Jammu And Kashmir	11.09	11.17	2.47	4.82	7.41	3.9	16.67	0	16.67
Karnataka	3.92	-2.24	2.71	5.81	4.45	4.61	7.14	3.57	3.57
Kerala	3.96	1.28	0.15	8.47	6.91	10.04	10	0	5
Madhya Pradesh	17.73	13.71	9.52	10.2	6.76	9.79	6.9	20.7	17.24
Maharashtra	7.32	6.28	4.26	7.04	6.72	7.69	10.42	6.25	10.42
Manipur	5.16	0.77	-1.8	8.33	18.75	11.11	0	0	0
Meghalaya	-11.98	0.43	-2.4	0	27.27	10	0	50	0
Mizoram	2.65	4.58	1.45	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nagaland	2.2	1.48	0.39	0	0	0	0	0	0
Odisha	4.67	1.67	-1.6	9	5.73	8.67	9.52	0	9.52
Punjab	2.64	0.62	-0.7	7.04	5.96	7.91	15.38	30.77	7.69
Rajasthan	11.13	6.77	3.3	9.2	8.96	8.44	8	12	4
Sikkim	1.59	-2.03	-1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tamil Nadu	7.61	2.04	-0.5	4.03	5.83	6.51	10.26	2.56	10.26
Tripura	6.52	2.91	0.68	0	5.26	12	0	0	0
Uttar Pradesh	12.76	6.47	1.78	5.36	7.41	9.78	8.75	16.25	16.25
West Bengal	4.48	2.04	0.23	9.58	7.88	10.81	9.52	16.67	28.57
Chhattisgarh	13.01	5.98	2.6	11.76	8.43	9.52	9.09	18.18	9.09
Jharkhand	14.25	6.13	0.53	7.14	5.62	7.5	7.14	0	0
Uttarakhand	7.84	4.9	-2.2	9.26	9.21	9.46	0	0	20
Andaman & Nicobar	-0.3	1.79	0.45	8.33	9.09	13.33	0	0	0
Chandigarh	1.84	1.01	-0.6	5.88	7.14	29.41	0	0	100
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	-3.67	-4.31	-3.1	10	0	9.09	0	0	0
Daman & Diu	-9.8	-8.33	-7.6	0	0	0	0	0	0
Delhi	4.45	4.05	2.17	11.63	11.25	8.87	14.29	14.29	14.29
Lakshadweep	-5.21	-4.06	-3.6	0	0	0	0	0	0
Puducherry	2.38	0.08	-1.4	4.76	0	10	0	0	0
India	8.06	4.42	1.46	6.13	6.89	8.1	8.29	10.87	11.41

Source: Election Commission of India

CONCLUSION

Political representation of women is not fair in India as they have been ignored from political participation inspite of having large population. According to Swarup [9], female all over India are the victim of five P's namely patriarchy, poverty, productivity inadequacy, promotional insufficiency and powerlessness. Women in India lack power as they are not well represented in political arena as member of state assembly that would otherwise had made them active and powerful participant in public sphere.

The traditional hereditary nature of politics in India needs great intervention at every level. The reservation of 33 percent is one important tool required to make women participate in electoral process not only as voters but also as candidates and parliamentarians. Even countries where there is high patriarchal mindset

like Afghanistan, reservation policy is given importance. Significant representation of women is possible through quota system and this will bring fundamental change in political life. It will even bring transparency, efficiency and decency in the functioning of the parliament. There is great need to give representation to women who constitute around fifty percent of population but have representation of only 10-12 percent. 'Quotas need to be ambitious and women candidates should be placed in winnable position on party lists', the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) said. In the Indian scenario, where the ratio of women candidates winning their contested seats is not yet optimal, this is suggestion that needs to be followed. Why we need women in Politics

There are various reasons given by many scholars as why we need women in politics:

- According to Hambrook [10], sound and good policies cannot be attained only from the input of male only as political participation of only men leads to one sided information regarding any matter leaving out issues concerning women resulting in their discrimination and inequality
 - According to Dolphyne [11], participation of larger number of women in politics would lead to addressing their various issues like, literacy, employment and decision making and will also help to initiate several welfare programmes concerning them and better implementation of them.
 - According to UNICEF (2006), more female legislatures can produce better policies to fight gender inequality rampant in the society.
 - World Bank report (1999) states that “that numerous behavioral studies have found women to be more trustworthy and public-spirited than men”.
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