

WOMEN AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN KARNATAKA**Kamalaxi G. Tadasad**

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18848922>**ABSTRACT:**

The growing awareness of the untapped female potential and leadership skills portends a revolutionary chance to the political scenes of Karnataka with many positive gains. Their involvement brings new insights and gender friendly policies into play and their ability to interact between the parties on networking brings about cooperation with social welfare goals. It is important because global development emphasis on meaningful participation of women in other leadership positions has resulted in real benefits to the democracies such as responsiveness to the needs of the citizens, party and ethnic unity, and sustainable future. Inevitable inclusion of women in every facet of the political procedure is needed in the promotion of inclusive governance and a help towards a steady and successful society.

KEYWORDS:

Participation, Representation, Development, Empower, Election, Resource Skill, Under Representation, Policy Making.

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Introduction:

The participation of women in politics is very imperative in seeking gender equality, or in rectifying societal problems depending on the presence of solutions that are imperative. The positive impact of gender diversity in the national legislature is described in different works, including the supply of policies that take into account the interests of women and their families, ethnic or racial minorities. The consideration that women are heterogeneous and have unique life experiences that define their priorities is a fact that cannot be overlooked and hence their participation in various sectors is inevitable. This takes care of the fact that the state has the capacity to gender equality and serve the interests and needs of women through elected female leaders because it is needed to establish inclusive, responsive, and transparent democracies. The representation of women is an important aspect as it is not the sole requirement, but it should be paid more attention to so that sense of

progress can be achieved in society.

The issue of women in politics is significant in that they end up developing and empowering themselves. The role of women in politics has been emphasized and repeated by the research and other gurus such as Kofi Annan. With the involvement in politics, women gain power within the social circles and communities; this fosters a massive awareness on what they are capable of. It is unfortunate that the existing political regimes underestimate the resourceful efforts of women a lot; this has been identified to have led to poor representations. To have a better governance inclusive and representative, women must be empowered politically, obstacles that cause women to be excluded must be eliminated and women leadership encouraged to exploit their potentials to have a just and progressive society.

Women and Political Development in Karnataka

In modern days, the Indian women are also taking representative positions in Parliament and Village Panchayats. However, women of the country are yet to be represented in different State Assemblies and Parliament. The Parliamentary Election of 2013 report noted the following: Gender justice is well entrenched in the constitution, yet it is not satisfying compared to the number of females in the nation. In the case of the representation, one can find that at the Rajya Sabha level, the issue of women representation in India is improving overall in the years 2012–2021.

Although in 2012 some 9.8 percent were women, now, in 2021, there were 12.24. The statistics of the years of Lok Sabha beginning in 1999 and continuing till now depict a slow rise in female involvement. During the 1999 General Election, there were 4,648 contestants who had registered to contest representing 543 seats out of which 284 of the contestants who had registered were women and this was a representation of 6.1. Among these contestants 49 women were elected and made 9.0%.

During the 2004 General Election, 355 women had registered to fight the election, which was 6.5 percent of the total number of women and 45 women were elected to the Lok Sabha which was 8.3 percent. In 2009, 556 women registered to contest and 59 elected, that is 10.9 percentage. In the year 2014, 668 women had enrolled to contest and 62 elected, which is 11.4 percent of Lok Sabha. During the 2019 General

Election, 726 women had registered to run, an all-time high of 9 percent, and 78 elected to the Lok Sabha, an all-time record of 14.4 percent.

Women in Lok Sabha Elections (National Level)

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| Year | Total Seats | Women Contestants | % of Women Contestants | Women Elected | % of Women MPs |
|------|-------------|-------------------|------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| 1999 | 543 | 284 | 6.1% | 49 | 9.0% |
| 2004 | 543 | 355 | 6.5% | 45 | 8.3% |
| 2009 | 543 | 556 | 6.9% | 59 | 10.9% |
| 2014 | 543 | 668 | ~8.1% | 62 | 11.4% |
| 2019 | 543 | 726 | 9.0% | 78 | 14.4% |
| 2024 | 543 | 797 (approx.) | ~10% | 74 | 13.6% |

There were only 74 women MPs in the scenario of General Election held in 2024 and this number is around 13.6 percent of the total Lok Sabha of the 536 members. It is a little bit lower than the situation experienced in 2019 and even more than that experienced over the past decades. Therefore, the period of 1999–2024 witnessed the increase of female participation in the national politics even though political parties are not ready to take seriously the role of women in the field. It is interesting to observe that the winning percentages of the female contestants are higher than the one they had during the election, which is an indicator of their viability when presented with a chance. In the case of Karnataka, the situation is more alarming when we consider. During the 2018 Karnataka Assembly elections around 8.31 percent of the contenders were women, though only about 3.14 percent of them were elected which is lower than the national average. In the 2023 Karnataka Assembly elections, 10 women were elected back to the 224-member House, approximately 4.5 percent in the Assembly. It is a little better than it was in the past decades, but it remains below the proportionate presence of women in their demographic.

Women in Karnataka Legislative Assembly Elections

| Year | Total Seats | Women Contestants | % of Women Contestants | Women Elected | % of Women MLAs |
|------|-------------|------------------------------------|------------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| 1999 | 224 | 62 (out of 1340 total contestants) | ~4.6% | 6 | 2.7% |
| 2004 | 224 | ~73 | ~5% | 6 | 2.7% |
| 2008 | 224 | 132 women contested | ~6% | 6 | 2.7% |
| 2013 | 224 | 175 women contested | ~7–8% | 6 | 2.7% |
| 2018 | 224 | 219 women contested | 8.31% | 7 | 3.1% |
| 2023 | 224 | ~185 women contested | ~8% | 10 | 4.5% |

In the past women rarely represent more than 5% of the Karnataka Legislative Assembly. Between 1983 and 2008 the number of elected women MLAs who did not cross more than 3 percent of total seats was 4. In the 1999 Assembly election, there were 62 female out of 1,340 total contestants. In 1999–2004, 6 women MLAs came into office of 224 seats. In 2013, despite a total number of 224 constituencies, it was only six women who won and a huge number of women parties lost deposits. In the year 2018, out of the 219 women who offered a challenge, ten were successful. This was similarly not successful in the 2023 election that had higher awareness and participation.

In comparison, in the states such as Chhattisgarh (2018–14.44), Haryana (2019–10), Maharashtra (2009–8.33), and Kerala (2021–7.86), the states had recorded various figures in terms of women representation in the houses whereas in states such as Jammu and Kashmir (2014–2.30), Mizoram and Nagaland (2018) had been recording zero numbers in terms of the representation of Karnataka is not performing satisfactorily in the state representation. Women form almost half of the population in Karnataka and female literacy has gone up to large extent than it was previously recorded as females were found to be only 57.7% literate whereas now their literacy rates are increasing higher than that before as per census projections and survey findings. Despite social and educational advancement, women representatives have few representatives in Karnataka Assembly and Parliament.

According to the parliamentary history, Karnataka women candidates never challenged the 1952 and 1957 election. Dr. In 1962, the state of Karnataka saw the election of the first women MP, Sarojini Mahishi to the Parliament in the Dharwad constituency. She served a number of terms until 1977. The empowerment of women in the state of Karnataka was less than three women in 28 even after six decades. In the state of Karnataka, only three women have been elected in the 2024 Lok Sabha Elections.

Women MPs from Karnataka (Lok Sabha)

| Year | Total LS Seats from Karnataka | Women Elected | % Representation |
|-------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1999 | 28 | 1 | 3.6% |
| 2004 | 28 | 0 | 0% |
| 2009 | 28 | 1 | 3.6% |
| 2014 | 28 | 1 | 3.6% |
| 2019 | 28 | 2 | 7.1% |
| 2024 | 28 | 3 | 10.7% |

Rajya Sabha (National Trend)**Period % of Women Members**

| | |
|------|----------------|
| 2012 | 9.8% |
| 2016 | ~11% |
| 2021 | 12.24% |
| 2024 | ~13% (approx.) |

The underrepresentation of women in the more critical posts of the Cabinet would also be reflected in a glance at the standings of the Ministers in the Karnataka government. The most notable women leaders in the government serving as the Minister or Minister of State in the government include; Smt. Yashodhara Dasappa, Smt. Leeladevi R. Prasad, Smt. Manorama Madwaraj, Smt. K.S. Nagarathnamma, Smt. Motamma, Smt. Chandraprabha Urs, Smt. Renuka Rajendran, Smt. Bhagirathi Marulasiddanagouda,

Contrarily, the 73 rd and 74 th Constitutional Amendments played a large role in encouraging the increase in women participation in the very grass-root levels and there is already a substantial representation of women in the Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies in Karnataka. This is, in itself, sufficient evidence on how the integration of this mechanism has been significant towards empowering women.

Introduction of the Women Reservation Act 2023 giving 33 percent reservation in Lok Sabha and State Assemblies- which will be put into practice after delimitation- is a historical move. But not until it is put into effect, is it a matter of party willingness and structural opportunity to be

represented in Karnataka, or anywhere. Thus, even though women in the electoral process have been growing in terms of participation since 1999 to 2024, the growth is not astronomical, but incremental. The state of Karnataka is quite a puzzling paradox high rates of female voters' turnout, high rates of grassroots involvement, still low legislative representation. The lack of structural reforms, the lack of internal party quotas, and the inability to act upon the constitutional provisions in an effective manner indicates that the substantive gender equality in the context of political representation will continue to exist on the agenda.

Regarding the legislation of the involvement of females in the politics, it is yet to be passed, yet when it will be implemented, the political landscape of Karnataka might change drastically and numerous positive results will be realized. The women have been busy trying to transform the minds and good gender policies in the state of Karnataka, and this is possible because they can relate at various forums of political parties, and stand up in favor of social welfare programs at the national level. As an example, in 2008, the Rwandan Parliament was dominated by women MPs; they made up 56 percent of the problem issues raised which they were in a position to solve even controversial issues like the ownership of land and food security

Karnataka Vision, Women's Leadership and Political Development.

The Karnataka Vision 2025 document had a target of the state being a leader in Human Development Index. Concurrently, it aimed at having the national average quality of life in every zone. Nevertheless, a number of obstacles are being brought before its attainment through the criminalization of politics, corruption, and socio-economic imbalances. With the state moving above the 2025 target, the pressure of inclusive governance has been experienced even more.

The representation of women and men equally is essential to the creation of the rational political culture. When there is a critical mass of women in the positions of power, this may lead to the paradigms of leadership changes, policy making, and development outcomes. The emerging empirical studies are confirming the argument that women political leadership enhances welfare, investment and participatory policy making. Although women constitute close to half of the Karnataka electorate, and have been registering high turnout figures during recent

state and national elections (such as the 2023 Karnataka Legislative Assembly, and their 2024 equivalents), the state is yet to get a woman Chief minister. The government has few women who have been representing the government in the recent past, at the Karnataka Cabinet level. Even though other leaders like Umashree and Geeta Mahadeva Prasad have held the ministerial position in the past, the current administrations have still only a few women in the Cabinets.

The Women Reservation Act 2023 which has stipulated constitutionally 33 percent quota of women in Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies remains to be enforced. Representation of women in Karnataka is at their own will unless the implementation is done. Nonetheless, their representation at grassroot institutions is quite successful with the 73 rd and 74 th Amendment of the Constitution which had gigantic success in the representation of women by the Institutions. However, women involvement in Karnataka has been an ideal example to the Indian democracy particularly at the ground level. The strong sense of Indian democracy is reflected in the high-profile position of women in Indian politics, including along with the leadership of the Indian Parliament, as well as local government. As a matter of fact, women have held the top constitutional positions in India and the figures of women in its Parliament have steadily grown over the years; though, where it comes to such states like Karnataka, there is still a lot to be done.

As such, structural interventions, party quota, women development in leadership, financing and instating constitutional provisions are necessary to empower, provide women with gender justice and equality. Without these interventions, then meaningful development and attainment of the long-term vision of Karnataka would only remain to be incomplete.

Conclusion

Indian women are in a situation where they encounter numerous obstacles on their way to gaining better socio-political status in politics, academics, and administrative jobs. Hurdles which arise out of systemic and institutional factors, and socio-cultural factors. In order to achieve gender equality among women in higher education and politics, micro and macro level factors should be considered as well as quantitative factors.

Thus, the problem of women representation is not simply that of quantitative equality, but a major aspect of democratization,

institutionalization and sustainable development of the Karnataka state and the entire India. Indian women still have a considerable hurdle to jump when it comes to taking up such roles as political, academic, and administrative leadership. Systemic barriers, institutional constraints, and well-established socio-cultural norms that facilitate access to power give birth to such barriers. Equality in the gender representation in the institutions of governance and in institutions of higher learning therefore requires more than just quantitative levels; it requires structural change both at the micro level as well as the macro level.

According to Feminist Institutionalism, political institutions are not gender-neutral in nature, but are instead institutionalized with both formal and informal rules and norms that perpetuate male dominance in leadership and decision-making. As in the case of Karnataka, although there are provisions in the Constitution to have equal political participation, the nomination process by parties, election funding systems and even informal networks of patronage mostly favor male candidates.

Therefore, the problem of the underrepresentation of women is not one of personal ability but rather a symptom of institutional structure and normalized patriarchal practices. Even in cases where women are challenging elections more frequently, they are not supported by their parties, access political capital is less and they are not included in inner decision-making circles which limits their progress. The idea that a critical mass of women in power can drive the change is fully agreeable to the Critical Mass Theory as suggested by Kanter (1977) and Dahlerup (1988). The Critical Mass Theory is based on the assumption that once women reach a specific percentage of power set solidly at 30–33% their presence ceases being tokenism to become substantive. The current percentage of women representatives in the Karnataka legislature district wise and keeping the percentage between 4–5% is by no means anywhere near achieving the critical mass that would result to the kind of transformation you have suggested would be achieved once the incremental movement culminates into the formation of new political culture.

The Feminist Institutionalism theory reiterates that any reforms that are being made must have a formal and informal aspect. The Critical Mass Theory suggests that the critical effective levels of the representation of women will lead to the substantial changes. In main argument is true: unless and until more and better inclusion of women in the space of

decision-making takes place, the notion of developmental governance in Karnataka is never going to be achieved. This is because political activities, political capitals, political party structural changes, leader-making and proper execution of constitutional obligations must be realized. Gender equality in respect to representation means not just equality of numbers, but it addresses the principle of inclusive governance, answerable and efficient establishments in democratic governance in Karnataka and India in general.

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