

The Significance of Women in Political Representation of Uttar Pradesh: An Analytical Study

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ABSTRACT

Uttar Pradesh is the largest state in Northern India with the highest population of over 200 million. Despite being home to a large number of women, their representation in political leadership roles has always been a cause of concern compared to men of the state because it is relatively low. A better democracy is a democracy where women do not only have the right to vote and to elect but to be elected (Michelle Bachelet, Head of UN Women)ⁱ. India is considered the largest democracy in the world, the country has several noteworthy female leaders in government and politics but according to a report by the inter-parliamentary union, India ranks 149th in the world for female representation in parliament. (Development, 2020)ⁱⁱ Women have been excluded from decision-making processes and are not given equal education, employment, or political opportunities. However, recent measures such as reservation in local government bodies have led to more representation, although the impact of these measures is yet to be fully realized. The paper deals with the current scenario of women in politics, the outcomes of implementing various government schemes, and initiatives to empower women to increase their representation in Uttar Pradesh politics.

KEYWORDS: Women, Politics, Representation, Uttar Pradesh, Government, Empowerment

INTRODUCTION:

Women's representation is an important issue that has gained global attention in recent years. In the context of Uttar Pradesh, the importance of women's representation cannot be overstated historically, women have been marginalized in the political sphere, and with a lack of representation in decision-making processes, unable to create a more equitable society that truly reflects the diversity and needs of its citizens. Inequality and discrimination have been deeply entrenched, with women often denied equal opportunities and rights. The Representation of women is vital for the progression and development of Uttar Pradesh. The need for equal representation for women in decision-making processes cannot be overemphasized, when women are included in decision-making at each and every level of society, they can bring a unique perspective and experience that can enrich policies and programs.

According to Political scientist, Anne Philips(2017) "Women bring different skills to politics and provide role models for future generations;" " they appeal to justice between sexes," and Their presence in politics promotes the representation of individual women's interests in state policy and creates circumstances for a "revitalized democracy that bridges the gap between representation and participation"ⁱⁱⁱ The representation of women is not only a matter of justice, but it is also essential for achieving sustainable development and ending poverty. women's representation has the potential

to transform politics, it can also be used as “window-dressing” to appease female voters or look progressive to the international community (Nistotskaya & Stensöta, 2018)^{iv}. Therefore, it is imperative to recognize the significance of women's participation in various sectors and work towards creating an inclusive society where women's voices and contributions are heard.

WOMEN IN PRE-INDEPENDENCE POLITICS:

The Government of India Act 1935 enlarged the electorate to approximately six millions of women, but they still constituted a meager (2.5 percent of the Indian female population). In the 1937 general elections, there were 10 women elected. In 1938, an Indian National Congress sub-committee comprised Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, Aruna Asaf Ali, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, Sarojini Naidu, Rajwade, Mridula Sarabhai, and Jahanara Shahnawaz. Their job was to define the path to women within society. All India Women Conference formed by Margaret Cousins in 1927, centered their attention upon a society based on an order that regarded men and women as equal partners demanding equal status in society and opportunities with complete political rights in the state.

However, there were some women from Uttar Pradesh who made their mark in pre-independence politics. Out of 15, there are 6 notable females from Uttar Pradesh who gave their contribution to making the world's largest constitution. 1. Vijay Laxmi Pandit played crucial role in Bharat Chodo Andolan and went to jail 3 times, worked for women's Rights, was the first female cabinet minister and She also became The first Asian Woman who gave a speech in the UN Assembly. 2. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur was India's first Health Minister and established the All India Institute of Medical Science. 3. Begum Ajaz Rasul worked for social welfare, she was the only Muslim woman of India in the Constituent Assembly that drafted the Constitution of India. 4. Kamala Chaudhary in 1930 she actively participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement led by Mahatma Gandhi, was also a Lok Sabha member and crucially worked to improve women's conditions. 5. Suchitra Kripalani was the first Women Member of Parliament who worked for Women, Poors, and labour-class people, increasing the chances for Women to come into Politics by establishing the Women's Wing in 1940. 6. Poornima Banerjee participated in the Salt March and the Quit India Movement, and was later imprisoned. She later served as a member of the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly and the Indian Constituent Assembly.

Sarojini Naidu, who was a prominent poet, and activist in the Indian National Congress became the first woman governor of Uttar Pradesh. Another notable figure was Annie Besant, an Englishwoman who became a head member of the Indian National Congress and supported Indian independence. In her first public lecture on "The Political Status of Women" in 1847, she started the movement for women's independence. It originated as a women's movement in 1850. It wanted more education, better employment, and changes to divorce laws and property rights for women. Women's participation in politics was still limited during this time, but these women paved the way for future generations to strive for equality and representation in the arena.

WOMEN IN POLITICS AFTER INDEPENDENCE:

In 1950, India's constitution granted universal suffrage to all adult citizens, including women. The constitution also includes policies to empower women, such as Article 14: It will Ensure Women's right to equality, Article 15(1): It will Prohibit gender discrimination, and Article 15(3): It will

Empower the state to take affirmative steps in favour of women. The constitution of India is an inspiration to many, it gave opportunities for the progress of women in India. In 1963, Sucheta Kripalani was an Indian liberation fighter and politician. She was India's first female chief minister, leading the Uttar Pradesh government from 1963 until 1967. Smt. Indira Gandhi was the first and only female Prime Minister of India hails from Uttar Pradesh and served the nation for two terms during her tenure India won the 1971 war against Pakistan. Kumari Mayawati, considered as the first Dalit chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, also served the state for four terms as CM.

In the present Lok Sabha, 78 out of 542 members are female, and in the Rajya Sabha, 24 out of 224 members are female. This means that women make up only 14% of India's parliament. The political parties have been very reluctant to give tickets to women candidates and grant only those with greater chances to win. In the words of Sushma Swaraj, **'It is very difficult for a woman to make up her mind to enter politics. Once she makes up her mind, then she has to prepare her husband, her children, and her family. Once she has overcome all these obstacles and applies for the ticket, the male aspirants against whom she is applying make up all sorts of stories about her. And after all, this, when her name goes to the party bosses, they do not select her name because they fear losing that seat.'** ^v Without the support of male mentors or leaders, women are likewise unable to advance in any political party's ranks.

Historically, political parties have fielded very few female candidates to the total number of women in the population. In the **2022 General Assembly election of Uttar Pradesh**, the BJP alliance with NISHAD party and Apna Dal granted 12.15% (49 out of 403), SP and its alliance granted 10.61% (43 out of 403), and BSP granted 9.1% (37 out of 403). In a bid to attract and consolidate women's power towards the grand old party in Uttar Pradesh INC granted 38.84% (155 out of 399) tickets to women candidates more than all other parties combined tickets because In-charge UP and Party National General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra announced officially that party will be giving **40%** of its tickets to women in the 2022 Assembly Elections^{vi}. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that elected women leaders experience a sense of neglect because they are rarely given prominent positions within their parties that would allow them to influence party policies. Instead, they are frequently assigned to the women's wing of a party, where they must handle cases involving dowries and rape, among other things that are deemed to be "women's issues."

ISSUES OF GENDER BIAS IN UP:

Uttar Pradesh, one of the largest states of Northern India, has a long and complex history when it comes to gender bias. Despite the country's progress in women's empowerment, gender-based discrimination and violence persist in the state. Women in Uttar Pradesh face major challenges, including limited access to education, healthcare, and jobs. Violence, sexual assault, and honor killings are prevalent, and the culture of patriarchy often hinders women from achieving their full potential. The "winner-takes-all" electoral system can be quite distressing for women considering a career in politics. It creates a high-pressure, winner-focused environment that may deter women from participating actively. The Concept of Pradhan-Pati is not unknown to any, by this main decision-making power was done by the male members of the family. This is an emerging issue that left a mark on women's capabilities politics.

Historically, women in Uttar Pradesh were expected to conform to societal expectations such as early marriage, limited education, and lack of involvement in decision-making processes. One key

figure who has made significant contributions to challenging gender bias in Uttar Pradesh is Dr. Savitribai Phule. She was a prominent social reformer in the 19th century and an advocate for women's education. Dr. Phule opened the first school for girls in Uttar Pradesh and worked tirelessly to empower women through education, ultimately challenging gender biases prevalent at the time. Another influential figure in modern times is Dr. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, a social activist and freedom fighter. Dr. Chattopadhyay played a crucial role in addressing gender inequality in Uttar Pradesh by actively participating in the women's centric movement and fighting for the women's rights. She worked towards women's empowerment in economic capabilities, political representation, and the eradication of discriminatory practices.

The issue of gender bias in Uttar Pradesh has far-reaching consequences on the lives of women. One of the most evident impacts of the gender gap in the state is significant, with higher rates of female foeticide, infant mortality, and poor nutrition among girls. Uttar Pradesh still has a very long way to go in recognizing gender equality and eliminating gender bias should be a priority for the government and society as well.

IMPORTANCE OF REPRESENTATION:

Women's political representation in Uttar Pradesh is still an issue that needs to be addressed. Women in the state mostly face challenges when it comes to education, employment, and in politics. There is a need for empowering women in Uttar Pradesh as it can help to break down gender stereotypes and improve gender equality in the state. Empowering women will provide them with equal opportunities for education and employment, which in turn can help to reduce poverty levels and improve the standard of living.

Women's empowerment can also lead to better health outcomes for them and their families, it's time to recognize the significance of women's empowerment in Uttar Pradesh and steps to bridge the gender gap. It is indeed essential for women's engagement and at the same time is important to recall the fact that women are not a homogeneous group. Hereby, the results demonstrate that women as a whole have significantly different experiences during their lifetimes, which in turn defines their needs and expectations depending on their age, level of education, and the area in which they currently reside – rural or urban area.

Furthermore, not every woman who gets into parliament or does not every legislative structure will necessarily prioritize women's causes or the issue of women's rights. Though women's representation is not the only thing that could define development in democracy, it is a significant feature that could contribute to the formation of Inclusive, Responsive, and Transparent Democracies. *women in power “can be counted on to raise issues that others overlook, to support ideas that others oppose, and to seek an end to abuses that others accept.”* In the words of the National Democratic Institute's Chairman Madeleine Albright.^{vii}

In 1990, the United Nations Economic and Social Council passed the measures to observe that 30% of women should be represented in national legislatures by the year 1995. However after 29 years, As of September 2023, 15.2 percent women have been appointed to lower house (Lok Sabha) and 13.9 percent to the upper chamber (Rajya Sabha). Women account for 26.5% of all legislative representation in the global Population. It can therefore be seen that the meaningful participation of women in the leadership positions at national, municipal, and community levels has been

recognized as policy concerns in international development. The current position of India in the overall list is 149th position out of 193 countries based on the representation of female parliamentarians.

The IPU publishes lists comparative tables on specific indicators such as the percentage of women in national parliaments; In India, women occupy only (12. 2%) significantly upfronts Sri Lanka and Japan, but is outstripped by Nepal (37. 3%), Indonesia (21. 91%), Pakistan (19. 0%), Myanmar (14.4%) and Bhutan with 12. 5% as of 1st of January, 2022^{viii}. Women are becoming more involved in politics on a variety of levels because of the reservation policy. Reservations would help improve the proportion of women contesting elections in the long run, despite facing initial backlash in the male-dominated profession. In 1974, a committee on the Status of Women published a report titled *Towards Equality*^{ix} that proposed that each political party set a quota for women candidates as a remedial measure.

RESERVATION OF SEATS:

The 73rd and 74th Amendments of the constitution were enacted in the year 1993 and required local government entities to set aside one-third of their seats for reservation of the women. By doing this, women's presence in local governments, both urban and rural, increased dramatically and they gained the ability to actively participate in grassroots governance. Some states like Kerala and Tamil Nadu panchayats fixed 50 percent reservation for women in PRIs through their amendments. The good impact of the 73rd amendment which has secured mandatory by reserving 33 percent seats for the women in local self-government of all over India.

The 73rd 74th amendment moved controversy on the issue of reservation for women in state legislatures and the Lok Sabha. Continuing on the path of constitutional reform and with a view toward the affirmative action for women, on September 12, 1996, the Union government introduced another amendment bill in the Parliament to enable the reservation of women in the state assemblies as well as in the Lok Sabha. To consider the bill, a thirty-one-member committee of both houses of parliament was set up under the chairmanship of Gita Mukherjee. The changes have recommended by the committee, while the suggestions were submitted in both the houses of parliaments on December 9, 1996. The Lok Sabha motion to consider the recommendations was moved on 16th May 1997.

However, much progress could not be made as the term of 11th Lok Sabha ended soon. The bill was tabled again as the 84th constitution amendment bill in the 12th Lok Sabha on July 13, 1998. The bill could not be pushed further following dissolution of the 12th Lok Sabha on April 26, 1999. The NDA government tabled the bill for the third time as the 85th constitutional amendment bill on December 23, 1999. The UPA government expressed its commitment to women's reservation and the bill was tabled as the 108th constitutional amendment bill in the Rajya Sabha on May 6, 2008. The bill was referred to a standing committee of parliament on May 8, 2008. The Union cabinet approved the bill on February 25, 2010 and the same was tabled again in the Rajya Sabha on March 8, 2010 and subsequently passed by Parliament on March 9, 2010

In this direction, the Women's Reservation Bill is a landmark at the national level. According to the constitution 106th Amendment Act 2023, One-third of the total number of seats in the Lok Sabha, the State Legislative assemblies and the Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi are reserved for women including those of SCs and STs.

However, the reservation will take effect upon the commencement of the Bill where the census is conducted after the passage of the Bill is published. The delimitation process will help in reservation of seats for women in accordance with the census taken place. 15-year reservation was decided. It will however remain effective until the date provided for in the bill as passed by Parliament. After each delimitation, the seats which are reserved for women are to be exchanged by rotation based on the law enacted by the Parliament of India. The bill mandates the reservation of seats to women in state and central legislatures, but it's still a distant dream.

POSITIVE IMPACT ON SOCIAL-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

Women's representation in politics significantly affects the social-economic development of India. The multifaceted effect of it can be seen in the different dimensions of governance and policy.

Breaking Stereotypes: The participation of women in politics negates the given traditional cultural beliefs about gender roles and what women are expected to do for the society.

Better Service Delivery: Women representatives in local governance give more emphasis to improving services like health, sanitation, and education, directly impacting the quality of life and communities.

Civic Involvement: Female leaders provide provisions that make more females appreciate their political rights in order to participate in various formations in their society. Some of the real world data used in the study have also shown that countries that have high Economic growth and Economic involvement are those that have Women in Parliament.

Role Modeling and Aspirations: Women in politics will add a diverse perspective in decision-making, leading to inclusion and effectiveness of governance. These women paved way for the future generation of females to show that they are capable of dominant occupations that were once dominated by males.

Promoting Social and Economic Development: Female leaders provide information on the opportunities that women require to access credit, engage in economic activities such as business, and gain employment or engage in income-generating activities. All these factors contribute to women's upliftment or we can simply say that all these factors result in women's empowerment.

Increased Crimes Reporting: The increased political participation of women has been associated with reporting crimes against women; this implies police sensitivity and an empowered citizenry.

Representation of Women's rights: Female politicians always propose bills that seek to address issues that relate to women including the welfare of women, for instance, violation of women, their health and education.

The appropriate level of women's political participation holds great positive impacts on the social and economic development of India. It breaks down traditional gender stereotypes, leads to more inclusive and effective governance, improved service delivery, and increased economic participation. There is no doubt that women also have a positive influence when it comes to politics.

Kofi Annan noted, "*Study after study has taught us, that there is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women. No other policy is as likely to raise economic productivity or to reduce child and maternal mortality. No other policy is as sure to improve nutrition and promote health, including the prevention of HIV/aids. No other policy is as*

powerful in increasing the chances of education for the next generation.”^x To this end, both male and female political figures have the responsibility to deal with a myriad of challenges in their countries. Women have to be empowered, fostered, motivated to ascend to political and other leadership in order to foster higher political governance and ensure the achievement of the set development frameworks as well as the entrenchment of enduring democracies.

CONTEMPORARY REPRESENTATION:

In the book , “*Uttar Pradesh Vidhan Sabha Mein Mahilaon ka Pratinidhitva evam Mantriparishad Mein sahabhagita* (Women’s representation in Uttar Pradesh Vidhan Sabha and their participation in the state cabinet)”, listed information on women’s seat in the state legislature or in the subsequent state governments in Uttar Pradesh. It revealed that they were not able to secure a satisfactory level of representation in power structures. In the first state assembly (1952-1957) of Uttar Pradesh selected 11 women as MLAs and among the total contestants, there were only 25 women in total of 2,604 candidates who contested the election. The second state assembly had 39 women members. The 13th state assembly 1996-2002 formed after Uttaranchal was established out of Uttar Pradesh on November 9, 2000 had 403 members compared to the previous 425. It had seated 20 women members. Out of them, has left the party shortly after she was sworn in as she was already a member of the Lok Sabha.

While in the 17th State Assembly, 2017 only 482 women out of 4853 candidates contested the assembly polls, 42 of them emerged victoriously along with 2 more getting elected in the by-polls, thus making the count of women MLAs reach to 44. However, all this is not just a matter of the political parties only. There are few independent legislatures who are women in the state. Among the 1462 independent candidates, only 142 were women and none of them emerges victorious in 2017. In the 10th, 13th, 16th, as well as 17th state assemblies, only one independent woman candidate emerged from the poll.

Even a glimpse at women representation’s in the state cabinet depicts that the number of women ministers in the state has not been high in the past years. There was no women in Uttar Pradesh’s first council of ministers headed by Pt. Govind Ballabh Pant. Sampurnanand succeeded GB Pant as the minister who also did not have a woman in his ministry during his first term as a chief minister from December 28, 1954 to April 10, 1957. Although, Sampurnanand in his second term as chief minister also had a woman deputy minister, Prakashvati Sood.

C. B Gupta became chief minister from 7 th December, 1960 to 14 th March , 1962 Had Sucheta Kripalani as cabinet minister and prakashvati Sood working as deputy minister. Congress from Uttar Pradesh came into power under the chief ministership of Vir Bahadur Singh (September 24, 1985 – June 24, 1988) and had six women ministers (16.6% of total ministry). This was the highest number since independence.

Seven female ministers were represented by ND Tiwari, constituting 14.6 per cent of the total strength of the council of ministers. In Uttar Pradesh, women’s representation in the Mayawati government was as low as 5.2 %, 3. 6% under the Mulayam Singh Yadav government, 2. 6% under the Akhilesh Yadav government, and 5. 5% under the Yogi Adityanath government. Out of the whole first Lok Sabha, six female MPs represented Uttar Pradesh. Uttar Pradesh was accountable for sending 11 out of the 78 members of the 17th Lok Sabha. In The 18th Legislative Assembly

(2022), Out of total 435 members ,48 members are females which constitutes 11.91 percent of the total membership of the House.

After long duration of 22 years at last there is a move to pass the Women's Reservation Bill in order to rise women's political participation in India. In this direction, a positive step has been made by the Indian government through the passage of the Women's Reservation Bill. Currently, women get 1/3 rd of the total seats in the Lok Sabha, State Legislative assemblies and the Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi however these 33% seats include the seats which are reserved for the SCs & STs and this also comes into force after the census taken after the commencement of the Bill has been published.

CONCLUSION:

Political parties' strategies are the key to improving women's representation. They must continue to contest more woman candidates irrespective of whether the Women's Reservation Bill has been pass and implemented. However, the bill has been actively debated for over 25 years mainly because of inadequate political will. In recent time, some parties like the Congress have tried, like reserving 40% of the seats in the 2022 election of Uttar Pradesh State Assembly for women. This also positively affects other parties as well because there are more opportunities for women candidates to win seats. The Women's Reservation Bill is something positive but that is not the end of it yet. It is the responsibility of the political parties to come up with a policy of coming up with more tickets for women candidates. This will enable women to actively participate in the exercise of political power and in decision-making processes to the same level as men. If adequate women are represented in the Uttar Pradesh it means that there are possibilities of change in the formulation of policies and appropriate spending patterns that can adequately address women's issues at the state as well as at the national level.

Through the study, it is found out that despite patriarchal norms, gender discrimination still a little progress has been made, representation of women increases but in a very slow rate, and there is still a long way to go in achieving gender equality in politics for inclusive development of the state. Women's political empowerment ensures their voices are heard in the "temple of democracy".

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