

STUDY ON PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN STATE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS IN RAJASTHAN (1952-2018)

Purnima Singh

Assistant Professor in Geography
Government Meera Girls College, Udaipur (Rajasthan) India
Email: purnimasinghbunkar@gmail.com

Abstract: *In ancient and medieval periods, females were considered as second-class citizens. Females had limited rights in family, society and politics. The level of political participation is a good indicator to measure empowerment of women. The Constitution in India has granted universal adult franchise to all citizens. The participation of women in assembly (Vidhan Sabha) elections in Rajasthan was very poor at the time of Independence. The female participation has slowly increased since then. Participation in voting is almost at par with male voters. Female participation as contesting candidates is not very encouraging. The paper analyses the participation of women in voting and as candidates since first assembly elections to latest assembly elections in 2018. Women still have to cover a long way before they get equal political participation with males.*

Key words: Women Empowerment, Political Participation, Voting, Assembly Constituency

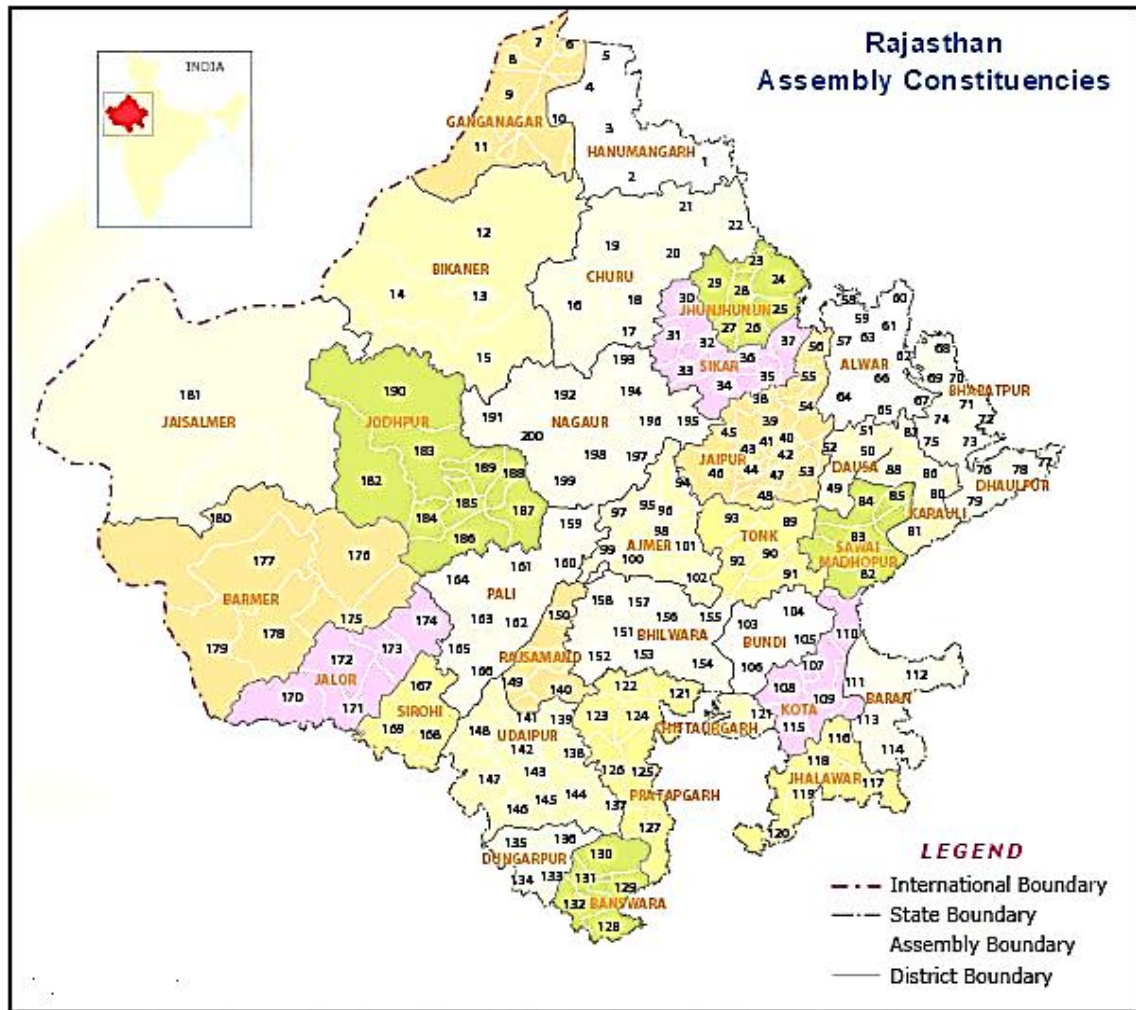
Introduction

India is the largest democracy in world according to population and Rajasthan is largest state in India according to area. It is enshrined in the Preamble to the constitution of India "to secure to all its citizens Justice, social, economic, political". Article 15 of Indian constitution prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth. After independence, the Indian Constitution in 1950 officially granted universal suffrage to all adult Indian citizens. Universal adult franchise has been provided by Indian constitution to all citizens of India but the term 'political participation' has a very wide meaning. It is not only related to 'Right to Vote', but simultaneously relates to participation in: decision-making process, political activism, political consciousness, etc. Political activism and voting are the strongest areas of women's political participation. Participation of women in elections is key indicator of women empowerment.

Location of Study Area

Rajasthan is largest state of India. There are 33 districts in state. Rajasthan is located in the north-western part of the country. It is bounded on the west and northwest by Pakistan, on the north and northeast by the states of Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh, on the east and southeast by the states of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, and on the southwest by the state of Gujarat. The Tropic of Cancer passes through its southern tip in the Banswara district. The state has an area of 132,140 square miles (342,239 square kilometres). The capital city is Jaipur. Initially there were 176 seats in legislative assembly from 1952 to 1962 and then 184 seats from 1967 to 1972. At present there are 200 seats since 1977.

Figure 01: Assembly Constituencies in Rajasthan



Objectives

The main objectives of the study are:

- To study participation of women in Vidhan Sabha elections of Rajasthan from 1952 to 2018.
- To assess participation through female voting percentage and female contesting candidates.
- To find out causes for their poor participation.

Research Methodology

Entire research is based on Secondary data obtained from the office the Election Commission of India (ECI), Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), Rajasthan and data obtained from their websites. Compilation, tabulations, and analysis of data has been done using statistical methods and techniques. Data has been depicted through suitable maps and diagrams. Standard census and ECI definitions have been followed.

Participation of women in election as candidates

The participation of women has continuously increased from 1952. With the passage of time the mind set of people is changing and women have started to come out of purdah system in Rajasthan to contest the elections.

Table 01: Total Contestants, Women and Elected Women in Vidhan Sabha Elections in Rajasthan 1952-2018

Year	Total Contestants	Women	Elected
1952	757	4	0
1957	653	21	9
1962	890	15	8
1967	892	19	6
1972	875	17	13
1977	1146	31	8
1980	1406	31	10
1985	1485	45	17
1990	3088	93	11
1993	2438	97	10
1998	1439	69	14
2003	1541	118	12
2008	2194	154	28
2013	2096	166	28
2018	2294	189	24

The table shows that the total number of women candidates out of total contestants is steadily increasing but it is still below 9 percent (8.24 percent). The number of winning female candidates are fluctuating. But since last three assemblies 14 percent, 14 percent and 12 percent. The party wise bifurcation of elected female members of legislative assembly in Rajasthan are shown in Table 2.0

Table 02: Party wise Bifurcation of Winning Female Candidates in Rajasthan Vidhan Sabha

#	Year	INC	BJP	Others	Total Women MLAs
1.	1952	0	0	0	0
2.	1957	09	00	01	09 (+1)
3.	1962	08	00	00	08
4.	1967	06	00	00	06
5.	1972	13	00	00	13
6.	1977	02	00	06	08
7.	1980	07	03	00	10
8.	1985	10	05	02	17
9.	1990	02	05	04	11
10.	1993	03	05	02	10
11.	1998	13	00	01	14
12.	2003	01	10	02	12 (+1)
13.	2008	13	13	02	28
14.	2013	02	22	05	28
15.	2018	13	10	02	24 (+1)

The table shows that the majority of females winning candidates belong to party getting majority in assembly.

Turn Out of Women Voters

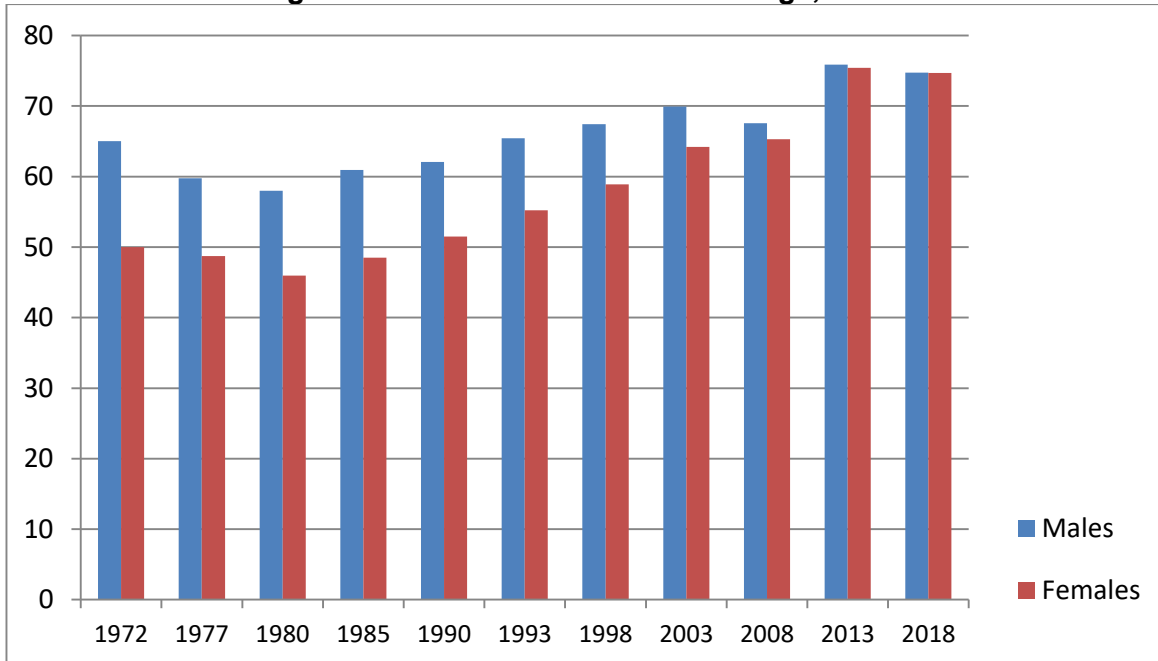
The ECI has sought to increase voter turnout by cleaning up electoral rolls and removing missing or deceased members. The Election Commission of India has worked on the principle that no eligible voter should be left out and no ineligible voter should be included in voter list (electoral roll).

Table 03: Women Voters Per 1000 Male Voters, Sex Ratio and Female Literacy In Rajasthan

Year	Women Voters Per Thousand Men Voters	Gender Ratio in Electoral Rolls	Sex Ratio	Female Literacy Rate (percent)
1972	723		911	8.5
1977	763			
1980	744			
1985	728		919	11.4
1990	736			
1993	755		910	20.4
1998	786			
2003	841		922	43.85
2008	874			
2013	892	899	928	52.1
2018	914	919		

The gender ratio is number of female voters per thousand male voters registered as voter on electoral rolls. The gender ratio has increased from 899 to 919. The voting percentage has also increased significantly for women. The percentage increase for female voters is more than that of male voters. Women voters per thousand male voters in Vidhan sabha elections have increased from 723 in 1972 to 914 in 2018. Female literacy and female sex ratio have also increased over the years. The following figure shows the percentage of male and female voters in various Vidhan Sabha elections from 1972 to 2018. It is clear that the gap has continuously reduced.

Figure 02: Gender wise Poll Percentage, 1972-2018



Participation in Conduct of Polls

Historically, there is almost no participation. Generally, females are not employed for conduct of election duties except for identification of purdah clad women and as booth level officers. First time in 2018 elections 259 out of 51965 polling stations were all women managed polling stations where all polling personnel deployed at that particular booth were females.

Results

Women voter turn up per 1000 men voter increased from 723 in 1977 to 914 in 2018. It has witnessed sharp increase over the years. Contesting candidates increased from 0.53 percent in 1952 to 8.24 percent in 2018, which is much below the 50 percent mark. Elected women candidates have increased from zero in 1952 and 5.11 percent in 1957 to 14 percent in 2013 and 12 percent in 2018 elections. This is a good indicator of women empowerment. Overall participation of women has increased but the winning percentage of elected candidate to contestants was 42.86 percent in 1957 has come down to 12.7 percent largely due to increase in number of female contesting candidates. It is still better than winning percent of male candidates which is only 8.36 percent in 2018. Voter participation of female voters has reached at par with male voters. Although women have held the posts of Governor, as well as chief minister of state of Rajasthan but low percentage of females in total elected and contesting candidates show the true picture of women participation.

Reasons for Low Representation

Patriarchal family system and male dominance history of Rajasthan, sense of gender subordination, low levels of literacy and low political awareness among women are main reasons for historical low representation and low position of women in Rajasthan. Gender based violence, sex selection, child marriage, preferential treatment to male child, discrimination against girls, dowry, marriage laws, family and agricultural responsibilities are various reasons which have kept women on margins and have deliberately alienated from key power positions and decision making. Political parties also do not prefer females to males in distributing party tickets. Females with political background only get tickets.

Conclusion

Females continue to be under represented in Rajasthan Vidhan Sabha. Low representation of female points out to systematic exclusion of females on a gender basis from key positions of decision making. Female participation as voters in assembly election over the year has increased and has reached almost at par with the sex ratio and gender ratio of electoral roll. Political parties do not promote female candidates. Reservation of seats for females in Vidhan Sabha can help bridge the gap of poor representation of females.

References

1. Arora (2012). "Gender inequality, economic development, and globalization: A state level analysis of India". *The Journal of Developing Areas*. 46 (1): 147–164.
2. Political Reservations and Women's Entrepreneurship in India Ghani et al. (2014), World Bank and Harvard University/NBER, pages 6, 29
3. Sen, Amartya (2001). "Many Faces of Gender Inequality". *Frontline*, India's National Magazine. 18 (22): 1–17.
4. Praveen, Rai (14 January 2011). "Electoral Participation of Women in India: Key Determinants and Barriers". *Economic and Political Weekly*. XLVI (3): 47–55.
5. Chief Electoral Officer, Rajasthan, India. "15th Vidhan Sabha General Elections".
6. Rukmini, S. "Who is behind the rise in voter turnouts?". *The Hindu*.
7. Rukmini, S. "Rising female voter turnout, the big story of 50 years". *The Hindu*. Retrieved 22 December 2019.
8. Rout, Akshay. "Women's Participation in the Electoral Process". Election Commission of India.
9. Raman, Vasanthi. "The Implementation of Quotas for Women: The Indian Experience". Centre for Women's Development Studies. International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance.
10. Basu, Amrita. "Women, Political Parties and Social Movements in South Asia". United Nations Research Institute for Social Development. Retrieved 22 December 2019.
11. Raman, Nachammai. "In India, a party for women only". *The Christian Science Monitor*.
12. Spary, Carole (2014). "Women candidates and party nomination trends in India - evidence from the 2009 general election" (PDF). *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*. 52 (1): 109–138.