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Women in Decision Making in India : Why It is Important

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Introduction - "**Women's vision for their societies often differs from men's because they understand clearly the impact of distorted priorities on their families and communities. The vision of women is one of inclusion not exclusion, peace not conflict, integrity not corruption, and consensus not imposition."- Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf**

Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf is a Liberian politician who served as the 24th President of Liberia from 2006 to 2018. Sirleaf was the first elected female head of state in Africa. She was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her non-violent efforts to promote peace and her struggle for women's rights.

Almost every class in every culture around the globe has projected an ideal of the woman who endures and sacrifices for her children, her family or her people. But worldwide there are also other visible images of women. In Viet Nam 1,000 years ago, two princesses overthrew Chinese oppression for the first time in that country's history. In seventeenth-century Jamaica, Nanny of the Maroons is reputed to have outwitted the British for three decades. And from contemporary India comes the modern folk heroine Phoolan Devi, the "Bandit Queen". Despite adverse circumstances, she fought for the oppressed and later became a Member of Parliament. When we look at stereotypes of male behavior, exceptions can also be cited. According to a number of experts, the vast outpouring of research since the 1980s has shown fewer differences between men and women based on gender than differences that grow out of disparities in income, household responsibility or access to power.

Despite their diversity, however, there appear to be specific kinds of issues women tend to champion, and they appear to bring distinctive styles to leadership. Arguably, such similarities can be traced to the different positions women hold in society, the ways in which different societies constrain women or enable them to fulfill their human potential and the distinct roles that society expects them to play in relation to men, rather than any supposedly "innate" female or male qualities. In this paper we discuss the female participation in key areas such as: Politics, Adminstration and Judiciary. These are major decision making platform that shape the future of any country or society. Their concerns and styles may vary from one society to another (and within societies), they tend to bring to governance and other public-sector affairs a perspective that in some measure reflects their social and cultural position and the prevailing gendered division of power.

Some differences in women's and men's leadership styles-

Men's Leadership Styles :

1. Maintained a complex network of relationships with people outside their organizations.
2. Identified themselves with their jobs.
3. Have difficulty in sharing information.
4. Biased approach towards women.

Women's Leadership Styles:

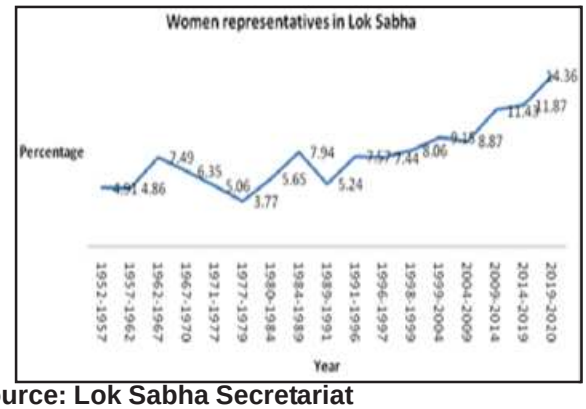
1. Maintained a complex network of relationships with people inside and outside their organizations.
2. Saw their own identities as complex and multifaceted.
3. Scheduled time for sharing information.
4. More inclusive approach in decision making.

Participation of women in Political Decision Making: The 2011 UN General Assembly resolution on women's political participation reiterated that:

*"**Women in every part of the world continue to be largely marginalized from the political sphere, often as a result of discriminatory laws, practices, attitudes and gender stereotypes, low levels of education, lack of access to health care, and the disproportionate effect of poverty on women."***

India remains a stable, thriving electoral democracy with a 75-year history of constitutional rule, regular elections, and massive voter participation, often described as the "mother of democracy". Our constitution gave equal rights of voting to both the gender from the very first general election that is 1951-52. But unfortunately only 4.9% females were elected in Lok Sabha. There is a very slow increase in the numbers of female representative in India. Among the 543 Member of Parliament in the 18th Lok

Sabha, only 74 (14%) are women. Only national parties and state parties managed to get



Source: Lok Sabha Secretariat

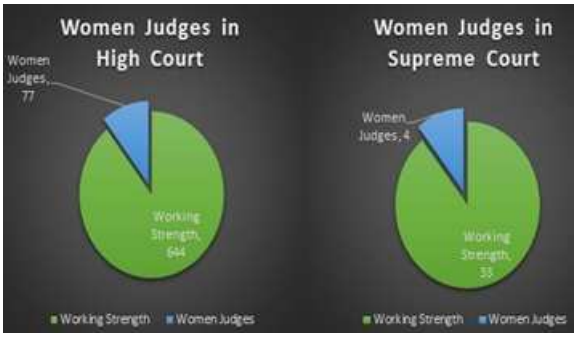
their women candidates elected. No woman candidate from any unrecognized political party or Independent woman candidate won the elections. Women's participation in the Indian Council of Ministers has historically remained low, typically wavering around 10–15%, with a peak of 17.8% in 2015. While the 18th Lok Sabha (2024) included 7 women in the Union council (approx. 9.7%), women are often concentrated in junior minister roles (MoS) rather than senior Cabinet positions, reflecting a persistent gender gap in political decision-making.

However, since the early 1990's, the 73rd and 74th amendments, which necessitates 33 per cent reservation for women in rural and urban local bodies made it possible for lakhs of women to enter in the political decision making of the country. Since then, there has been a dramatic change in women's representation in local administration. Twenty states have made provision of 50% reservation for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions which is a welcome step. All these states except Punjab and Tripura have achieved this mandate. Further, in Manipur also, 50.7% of the elected representatives are women even though the state has no such legal provision. As on date, the three tier local bodies had more than 1 million women as elected representatives from various facets of social background and become part of the political decision-making process. Women's participation in decision-making is critical for achieving gender equality, as it directly leads to more inclusive, diverse, and effective policies. Including women in leadership—from households to governments—shifts priorities toward social welfare, strengthens democratic governance, reduces conflict, and fosters economic growth, benefiting society as a whole.

1. **Improved Quality of Decisions:** Women in leadership bring different perspectives, fostering creativity and innovation, which leads to better outcomes in corporate and public settings.
2. **Shifting Policy Priorities:** Women in power tend to prioritize education, health, childcare, and social issues, creating policies that reflect the needs of their communities.
3. **Driving Equality and Development:** Active participation in decision-making acts as a catalyst for empowering women, breaking down harmful gender norms, and ensuring women's voices are heard.
4. **Strengthening Democracy & Peace:** Involving women makes governance more legitimate and representative, and in peace negotiations, women's presence results in more durable agreements.
5. **Economic Impact:** Increased participation of women in decision-making roles is associated with better company performance and economic outcomes.

It is the responsibility of the society to ensure that women are given the opportunity to participate equally in all decision making levels and that the institutions have a variety of people and communities that they represent.

Participation of women in Judicial System: No one can deny the fact that more representation of women in the judicial system will tend the women community to seek justice and enforce their rights through the courts. Achieving equality, in terms of representation at all levels of the judiciary should be the goal, not only because it is right for women, but because it is to ensure a more just rule of law. Women judges also live their lives as women, with all the social and cultural norms and obligations of the society.



So, women judges are more likely to bring those lived experiences to their judicial actions, experiences that tend toward a more comprehensive and empathetic perspective-one that encompasses not only the legal basis for judicial action, but also awareness of consequences on the people affected.

As per diagram pertaining to the year 2022, in Supreme court of India, out of 29 judges sitting in the office, only 3 are women. In high courts also, only 13% of the judges are women. Such a small representation of women in Judicial decision-making process of the country forces us to think about the need to bring about institutional, social and behavioral change by sensitizing India's population on inclusion of women in every sector. This poor representation of women in judicial systems is a global phenomenon. Noting that a relatively small number of women have been judges including at senior judicial leadership positions at all level, 10th march was proclaimed as the International Day of Women Judges in 2021 by the UN. The UN Resolution was supported by India which is a positive step.

1. **Diverse Perspectives & Better Reasoning:** Women judges bring unique life experiences and viewpoints to the bench, which can lead to different interpretations of the law, particularly in cases involving gender-based issues.
2. **Enhanced Public Trust & Legitimacy:** A judiciary that reflects the gender composition of society increases public confidence in its impartiality.
3. **Gender-Sensitive Justice:** The presence of women ensures that the legal system is more responsive to the specific social contexts and needs of women, aiding in fair trials for victims of crime.
4. **Breaking Stereotypes & Bias:** Women in positions of power help dismantle deeply ingrained gender stereotypes and structural biases within legal institutions.
5. **Role Modeling & Equality:** Increased representation inspires the next generation of women, as highlighted by and, fostering an inclusive legal profession and advancing overall equality.

Participation of women in Management: When women become leaders, they provide a different set of skills and imaginative perspectives. More importantly, female leaders bring structural and cultural differences to the table, which drive effective solutions. This creative standpoint and unique sense of awareness will also allow them to study and uncover the finer details that may go missed by others. As we've established, the working landscape is changing, and the business world is no longer just a man's game. However, competing in this challenging environment is no walk in the park. In case of participation in Management, there are several barriers for women such as lack of education, awareness, criminal and violence, health problems and illnesses, lack of participation, discriminatory treatment, etc.

WOMEN IN ALL INDIA, GROUP 'A' SERVICES

The stream	Year	Female	Male	Total	Percentage
Indian Administrative Service:	2016	838	4,088	4926	Female 17 %
Indian Forest Service	2016	207	2,346	2,553	Female 4 %
Indian Statistical Service	2016	173	556	729	Female 24 %
Indian Police Service	2016	349	3,429	3,778	Female 9 %
Indian Foreign Service	2016	207	2,346	2,553	Female 8 %

Source: Deccan Cronical

As per data of Periodic Labour Force Survey, among the officials working at managerial positions in India, 18.8% were women in 2020 and 18.1% in 2021. In 2021, the highest percentage is seen in Mizoram (41.5%) followed by Sikkim (32.5%), Manipur (31.1%), Meghalaya (30.9%) and Andhra Pradesh (30.3%). The lowest representation of women at managerial position was seen in Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu (1.8%), Uttarakhand (3.4%), Jammu & Kashmir (4.6%), Andaman & Nicobar Islands (7.2%) and Bihar (7.3%).

Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), Government of India, released its publication titled "**Women and Men in India 2023: Selected Indicators and Data**" says. The representation of women in corporate decision-making roles remains inadequate with only 34,879 women holding senior management positions in 2023 as compared to 1,86,946 men. A total of 7,62,712 women were part of the Board of Directors as against 19,75,487 men. Among the workers working as Legislators, Senior officials and Managers in India, 22.2 percent were females in 2022.Among the states, Mizoram, Manipur, Meghalaya and Andhra Pradesh are better off whereas Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman &Diu, Uttarakhand, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Punjab and Nagaland are lagging behind with a wide margin.

Conclusion: Women's participation in decision-making is essential for democratic governance, better organizational performance, and sustainable development. Despite progress, women remain underrepresented in political and corporate leadership. Achieving gender parity in decision-making improves policy outcomes and fosters inclusive growth, requiring the removal of structural barriers and active promotion of women.

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