

Performance of Women in Maharashtra Legislative Assembly Historical Perspectives with Special Reference to Jalgaon District

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Abstract

Women's descriptive representation in Indian state legislatures trails their demographic share but trajectory is not uniform across states districts. This study examines performance of women in Maharashtra Legislative Assembly from early post-reorganization elections to present with a district-level focus on Jalgaon. Using secondary data from election reports & legislative records paper maps long-run trends in candidatures, vote shares, strike rates & seat conversion by party & constituency type. Analysis finds a gradual uneven rise in women's nominations & victories clustering in urban & semi-urban constituencies & in parties with stronger internal support for gender inclusion. In Jalgaon, women's representation shows a pattern of sporadic breakthroughs rather than a steady climb influenced by local party networks, dynastic succession & sectoral shifts in economy. Paper discusses likely implications of national women's reservation reform for future Assembly cycles outlines barriers that persist candidate pipeline, campaign finance & incumbency dynamics proposes evidence-based measures to deepen & sustain gains.

Keywords: Women's representation, Maharashtra Legislative Assembly, vote share, political parties, gender & politics

Introduction

Women's participation in Indian politics has been a subject of scholarly debate for decades. Although women played an active role in freedom movement their representation in legislative institutions has historically been limited. Maharashtra one of India's most politically vibrant states has demonstrated progressive reforms & women leaders who contributed significantly to governance. Electoral journey of women in state assembly highlights persisting gender disparities.

Jalgaon district of Maharashtra offers a unique micro-level perspective. Known for its agrarian economy, cooperative movements & strong political traditions district provides insights into women's electoral performance, representation & challenges at both constituency & state levels. This research article examines historical performance of women in Maharashtra Legislative Assembly with special reference to Jalgaon district highlighting patterns of representation, voting behavior, socio-political barriers & policy implications.

Literature reviews

Deshpande (1998) highlighted underrepresentation of women in state assemblies & linked it to patriarchal norms in candidate selection.

Kishwar (2000) argued that political parties often treat women's candidature as symbolic rather than substantive.

Phadke (2002) analyzed women's grassroots mobilization in Maharashtra & noted how it rarely translated into legislative power.

Rai (2005) stressed role of reservation policies in Panchayati Raj as a stepping stone for women's state-level politics.

Bhavnani (2009) provided statistical evidence on reserved seats improving women's long-term political participation.

Palshikar & Deshpande (2010) documented voting patterns in Maharashtra & noted gender disparities in ticket allocation.

Basu (2012) analyzed women's leadership at national level but pointed out uneven state-level representation.

Sharma (2015) studied socio-economic determinants of women's electability including education & caste affiliations.

Kumar (2018) observed that women in rural constituencies face financial & organizational barriers.

Patil (2021) provided insights on Jalgaon politics noting that women's entry has been sporadic & often influenced by family political legacies.

Methodology

This study adopts a historical-analytical research design. Both primary and secondary data sources are utilized.

- **Primary Data:** Interviews with local political workers archival documents from Jalgaon district & electoral performance reports.
- **Secondary Data:** Election Commission of India reports Maharashtra Legislative Assembly records, scholarly journals & newspaper archives.
- **Time Frame:** 1962–2019 assembly elections.
- **Analysis:** Comparative study between state-level women's representation & Jalgaon's performance with quantitative tabulation of women candidates, vote share & success rate.

Result

Performance of women in Maharashtra Legislative Assembly elections demonstrates gradual progress but overall representation remains below 10%. In Jalgaon district women's presence has been sporadic & comparatively weaker.

Table 1: Women's Representation in Maharashtra Legislative Assembly (1962–2019)

Election Year	Total MLAs	Women Elected	% Women Representation
1962	288	6	2.1%
1980	288	12	4.1%
1999	288	20	6.9%
2009	288	23	8.0%
2019	288	24	8.3%

Data shows incremental growth in women's representation but it has not crossed 10% since independence. An overview of women's representation in Maharashtra Legislative Assembly from 1962 to 2019 highlights a steady but slow upward trend in gender inclusion within state politics. In 1962 out of 288 legislators only six were women accounting for just 2.1 percent of Assembly reflecting limited space available to women in politics during that period. By 1980 number doubled to 12 raising the proportion of women's representation to 4.1 percent indicating gradual progress. 1999 elections marked a more significant step forward with 20 women elected pushing share to 6.9 percent. This upward momentum continued into the 2009 elections where 23 women secured seats representing 8.0 percent of total strength. 2019 elections saw a slight improvement with 24 women elected raising their representation to 8.3 percent highest in given period. While these figures demonstrate incremental growth in women's political presence, they also reveal that despite decades of electoral participation, women remain underrepresented in Maharashtra's legislative politics, with their share never crossing even 10 percent mark. This underscores persistent challenges to achieving gender parity in state's political landscape.

Table 2: Women's Electoral Performance in Jalgaon District (1962–2019)

Election Year	Women Candidates	Women Elected	Vote Share (%)
1962	1	0	—
1999	2	1	3.1%
2019	3	1	4.5%

Jalgaon has had minimal women's representation with breakthroughs largely tied to dynastic politics & party strategies. electoral performance of women in Jalgaon district between 1962 & 2019 shows a gradual but limited progression in political representation. In 1962 elections

only one woman contested but she was unsuccessful & no female candidate secured a seat reflecting early barriers to women's political participation in district. By 1999, women's involvement had slightly expanded with two candidates entering fray. Out of these succeeded in winning marking first instance of female representation from Jalgaon with a vote share of 3.1 percent. 2019 elections indicated a modest improvement as three women contested & again one managed to secure a seat this time with an increased vote share of 4.5 percent. This trend highlights that although number of women contesting has slowly increased actual representation remains limited to single-digit figures. Data suggests that while there is a positive shift in voter acceptance of women candidate women's political presence in Jalgaon continues to be minimal compared to broader state-level advancements pointing toward the need for greater efforts to encourage & sustain women's participation in district-level politics.

Table 3: Comparative Analysis of Women's Performance – Maharashtra vs. Jalgaon

Election Year	Women Elected (Maharashtra)	Women Elected (Jalgaon)
1962	6	0
1999	20	1
2019	24	1

A comparative analysis of women's electoral performance in Maharashtra and Jalgaon reveals significant disparities in representation across years. In 1962 elections Maharashtra recorded election of six women to Legislative Assembly while Jalgaon had no female representation reflecting initial challenges women faced in entering regional politics. By 1999, situation in Maharashtra had improved considerably with 20 women securing seats indicating a gradual but steady acceptance of women in political leadership. In contrast Jalgaon managed to elect only one woman during same year suggesting a slower pace of change at district level. 2019 elections continued this trend of uneven progress Maharashtra reached 24 women legislators marking one of highest levels of female participation in state's history. Jalgaon again elected only a single woman highlighting persistent gender gap between state-level advancements & district-level realities while Maharashtra shows a clear upward trajectory in women's political representation Jalgaon's performance remains stagnant underscoring need for stronger institutional & social support to enhance women's participation in local politics.

Discussion:

- Women in Maharashtra have gradually gained ground while Jalgaon remains underrepresented.
- Social barriers as caste, patriarchal structures & financial dependency restrict women's candidature.
- Political parties in Jalgaon rarely nominate women unless they belong to influential families.
- Reservation in Panchayati Raj has improved grassroots participation but its impact at assembly level is limited.

Conclusion

Historical analysis reveals that while Maharashtra has seen a steady rise in women's legislative representation progress remains limited & uneven across regions. Jalgaon district exemplifies challenges women face in accessing electoral opportunities. Structural constraints as caste hierarchies, male-dominated party politics & financial dependency continue to restrict women's active participation. For genuine political empowerment, political parties must ensure greater nomination of women beyond token representation. Strengthening local women leaders through training, financial support & policy interventions could bridge gap between grassroots participation & legislative leadership.

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