

Women Political Participation in India with Special Refernce to Tamilnadu Urban Local Bodies In 2022

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Abstract

After a gap of over 10 years, the Tamil Nadu urban local body polls will be held in a single phase on February 19, 2022. Major political parties, including the ruling party of DMK, the opposition political party of AIADMK, and BJP, Congress, NaamTamilarKatchi, PattaliMakkalKatchi, MakkalNeedhiMaiaam and AmmaMakkalMunnettraKazagam, have released their lists of candidates who will be contesting the polls to 21 corporations, 138 municipalities and 490 town Panchayats. The local bodies were empowered through the 73rd and 74th amendment Acts in 1992. The amendments were made to establish democratic, decentralized administration through local bodies and take the administration to the people's doorsteps to ensure economic and social justice. The primary duties include town planning, economic and social development, water supply, conservancy works, public health and ensuring the services rendered by the government reaches the citizens. In this connection, women are effectively participated in urban local government in Tamil Nadu which is held by 2022. The get a move on and commotion of election campaigns is different this time, largely because women are at the forefront. It's not just that, these are the first urban local body polls since 50 per cent of seats were reserved for women, but also that more women are participating in political activities overall. This papers tries to find that the realization of women participation and decision making.

Key Words: *Urban Body, Political Party, Administration, Amendments, election campaign and women participation*

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I. Introduction

India as a nation state adopted and enacted the Constitution in 1950 guaranteeing its citizens justice, liberty and equality of status and of opportunity and fraternity assuring dignity of individuals, and unity and integrity of the nation. In addition, the State is under obligation, as per the Directive Principles of State Policy, to provide enabling conditions and to secure minimum standards to its citizens, in furtherance of the fundamental rights, and, in accordance with its principles, the Government has undertaken many initiative legislatures and executive policies, schemes and programs towards women empowerment. India is also a signatory to several international treaties and conventions against women empowerment. One of the most important conventions impacting women is the International Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which has been ratified by a majority of the UN member nations. India also has ratified this treaty in the year 1993. The United Nation's initiatives, which include the three UN Decade for Women Conferences held at Mexico (1975), Nairobi (1985), Beijing (1995) and the CEDAW, have had a substantive impact on the status of women in India towards equality. The first National Commission for Women report outlining the status of women followed the Mexico conference. Following the Nairobi conference, the Government of India announced 'The Perspective Plan for Women' and it outlined policy directions and new administrative structures for the development of women. Indian history as well as the world history signify and document the gradual development of women empowerment, especially, their political empowerment during various periods. Even though various social security legislations have been enacted to

protect the socio-economic and political rights of women, in reality, they fail to give safeguard mechanisms for the marginal people. Moreover, the participation of women in Indian electoral politics and power politics in India, for the last 65 years is very negligible due to many factors. It has been well understood that political empowerment is the corner stone of other empowerment factors. Studying the political empowerment of women in a transitional conservative democracy like India is an important area of research.

Political Participation

Political participation is a term that is applied to the activities of people from all level of a political system. Sometimes the term is applied more to political orientation than activities. It refers to those voluntary activities by which members of the society have a share in the selection of rulers and directly or indirectly have a role in the formation of public policy. These activities include voting, seeking information, discussing, attending public meetings, contributing financially and communicating with representatives.

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. Women in India participate in voting, run for public offices and political parties at lower levels more than men. Political activism and voting are the strongest areas of women's political participation. To combat gender inequality in politics, the Indian Government has instituted reservations for seats in local governments.

Political Participation of Women

After Indian independence from Britain, the Indian Constitution in 1950 officially granted women and men suffrage. Prior to universal suffrage, provincial legislatures had granted women the right to vote. In 1950, universal suffrage granted voting rights to all women. This is enshrined in Article 326 in our constitution. India is a parliamentary system with two houses: Lok Sabha (lower house) and Rajya Sabha (upper house). Rates of participation among women in 1962 were 46.63% for Lok Sabha elections and rose to a high in 1984 of 58.60%. Male turnout during that same period was 63.31% in 1962 and 68.18% in 1984. So, the gap between men and women voters has narrowed over time with a difference of 16.7% in 1962 to 4.4% in 2009. Voter turnout for national elections in the past 50 years has remained stagnant with turnout ranging between 50 and 60%. State elections have seen a growing trend in women's participation, and in some cases women's turnout is exceeding male turnout. Increased turnout of women was reported for the 2012 Vidhan Sabha elections (legislative/state assemblies) with states such as Uttar Pradesh reporting 58.82% to 60.29% turnout. In the 2013 assembly elections, women's overall turnout was reported to be 47.4%, and male turnout was 52.5%. Indian states of Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Kerala, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Daman and Diu, and Puducherry all reported higher turnouts among women than men in 2013. Increased participation is occurring in both rich and poor states in India. The sex ratio of voters has improved from 715 female voters for every 1,000 male voters in the 1960s to 883 female voters in the 2000s. The Election Commission of India (ECI) has sought to increase voter turnout by cleaning up electoral rolls and removing missing or deceased members. Voter outreach has included door-to-door voter registration, and in 2014 elections, voters will be issued a photo id with polling station information to increase voter turnout. Increased voter turnout in India is also partially due to the women voters. ECI has sought to encourage voter registration among women and participation through education and outreach on college and university campuses. Growing participation has also been attributed to increased security at polling stations. If we look into the women turnout during India's 2014 parliamentary general elections, there was 65.63%, compared to 67.09% turnout for men. In 16 out of 29 states of India, more women voted than men. A total of 260.6 million women exercised their right to vote in April–May 2014 elections for India's parliament.

In India, political participation of women is not impressive when compared with men. This is the case in most of the countries across the world. However, women's political participation now is quite encouraging compared to the older times. Today it remains stronger than ever. But, in India, women who have decision making powers invariably hail from urban and elite groups. Even today, representation of women in Indian Parliament is far from satisfactory. Women have been demanding for more space in legislative bodies.

Need for political participation of women

UNICEF cites the following reasons for the political participation of women:

- ✓ Political participation of women has the potential to change societies.
- ✓ It can have impact on outcomes for women and children especially in the distribution of community resources.
- ✓ Their participation in peace negotiations and post-conflict reconstruction is important to ensure the safety and protection of children and vulnerable sections of populations.

74th Constitutional Amendment Act (Urban Local Bodies):

The 74th constitutional amendment act mandated the setting up and devolution of powers to Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) or city governments as the lowest unit of governance in cities and towns. This landmark

initiative of the Government of India in 1993 was built upon the premise that all 'power' in a democracy rightfully belongs to 'the people'. Power was mandated to be given to the people via the local bodies (referred to as municipalities), namely Municipal Corporations, Councils and Nagar Panchayats, which would have representatives that are elected regularly and have a decisive role in planning, provision and delivery of service. This Act prescribes institutional changes as well, with the setting up of Ward Committees, District Planning Committees and Metropolitan Planning Committees to coordinate planning across jurisdictions, as well as the setting up of State Election Commissions and State Financial Commissions. Effectively, this act gives ULBs a role much larger than just that of service providers that provide water, waste management, electricity, and so on.

1. Devolution of more functions and taxation powers.
2. Revenue sharing with State Government funds.
3. Regular conduct of elections.
4. Reservation of seats for SCs, STs and for women.
5. Uniform composition of the urban bodies throughout the country.
6. Prescription of criteria for categorising urban local bodies like Town Panchayats, Municipalities and City Municipal Corporations.
7. Restriction on the formation of Townships only to industrial areas where the entire municipal services are provided or proposed to be provided by the industry.
8. Formation of District Planning and Metropolitan Planning Committees.

The Tamil Nadu Government as a follow up, to these Constitutional amendments, enacted the Tamil Nadu Panchayats Act, 1994, replacing the Tamil Nadu Panchayats Act, 1958 and also amended the relevant provisions of various Acts relating to the urban local bodies.

The urban local bodies have been classified under three categories viz., Town Panchayats, Municipalities and City Municipal Corporations. They are individual units themselves and each one is in charge of the civic needs of its own area. At Present there are 490 Town Panchayats, 138 Municipalities and 21 City Municipal Corporations in Tamil Nadu. The Councillor of Corporations & Municipalities and Ward Member of Town Panchayats are being elected directly. The Mayor/Deputy Mayor of Corporations, the Chairman/Vice-Chairman of Municipalities & Town Panchayat is being elected indirectly.

Urban Local Body Election scheduled by Election Commission of Tamil Nadu:

The Tamil Nadu State Election Commission, an independent, autonomous constitutional authority formed under the Constitution of India as per the Provisions of the 73rd and 74th Amendments Acts of 1992 headed by the State Election Commissioner.

As per Article 243-K and 243-ZA of the Constitution of India, all elections to Panchayats and urban local bodies are to be held under the superintendence, direction and control of the State Election Commission. For the first time in October 1996 the Local Body Elections in Tamil Nadu, hitherto conducted by the Government were taken over by the State Election Commission. The subsequent ordinary elections were held during October, 2001, 2006 and 2011. Those Elections were held throughout the State simultaneously in two phases for different offices.

Table 1

PROGRAMME OF ELECTION SCHEDULED FOR 2022

S. No	Election Scheduled	Date of commencement
1	Publication of public notice of election and commencement of receipt of nominations	28.01.2022 (Friday)
2	Last date for making nominations	04.02.2022 (Friday)
3	Scrutiny of nominations	05.02.2022 (Saturday)
4	Withdrawal of candidatures	07.02.2022 (Monday)
5	Date of Poll	19.02.2022 (Saturday)
6	Date of commencement of counting of votes	22.02.2022 (Tuesday)
7	Date before which the election shall be Completed	24.02.2022 (Thursday)
8	Date on which the first meeting of the newly elected Ward Members/ Councillors shall be held for assumption of office by taking oath or affirmation.	02.03.2022 (Wednesday)
9	Date on which the meeting of the Ward Members/ Councillors shall be held for the election of Mayor/ Deputy Mayor or Chairman/Vice-Chairman, as the case may be.	04.03.2022 (Friday)

Source: Tamil Nadu State Election Commission

The table 1 illustrates that the schedule of Urban Local Body election in Tamil Nadu in 2022. Based on this schedule the proper way to conduct the election.

Table-2

The numbers of various offices in Urban Local Bodies are as follows:-

Urban Local Body	No of Local Bodes	Total Wards	Total Number of Posts	
			Ward Members	Mayor/Chairman
Municipal Corporations	21	1374/14701	1374	21
Municipality	138	3843/23354	3843	138
Town Panchayat	490	7621/36361	7621	490
Total	649	12836	12836	649

Sources: State Election Commission of Tamil Nadu

The table no 2 shows that the numbers of various offices in Urban Local Bodies in Tamil Nadu. The following members are follows different positions are:

- i) Mayor/Deputy Mayor of City Municipal Corporations and Chairman/Vice-Chairman of Municipalities and Town Panchayats – by and from among the elected Councillors of each local body concerned.
- ii) Chairpersons of the Ward Committees in City Municipal Corporation - by and from among the elected Councillors of concerned wards of the Corporations.
- iii) Members of the various Statutory and Standing Committees of the respective urban local bodies - by and from among the elected Councillors of each local body concerned.
- iv) Chairmen of the Standing Committees of Corporations – by and from among the members of the respective committee.

Political Sphere of Women Political Empowerment

India has a mixed track record when it comes to women's participation and representation in politics. Women were given equal vote the day India became Independent, something that took the UK and the United States 100 and 144 years, respectively, to achieve. India has also produced a number of powerful and consequential women politicians — more than most democracies — that have held, and still hold power, at the highest levels in state as well as national politics. The 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments ensures, by reserving seats for women in the Panchayat system and municipalities, that at least a third of India's 3.2 million elected representatives are women (the 33% quota was raised to 50% in 2009). Several states have since introduced gender parity in representation in municipal bodies.

Table 3

Women Elected Repsentatives in various Urban Local bodies

Types of Urban Local Bodies	No of ULG in Tamil Nadu	Elected Representatives in 2022				
		Male	General Women	SC's Women	ST's Women	Total
Municipal Corporation	21	10	09	02	-	21
Municipalities	138	69	58	10	01	138
Nagar Panchayat	490	245	200	43	02	490

Sources: State Election Commission of Tamil Nadu, 2022

The table 3 illustrates the women got opportunity to elected as representatives from total number of the urban constituencies. Moreover, it is shows proof that the women equally represented in this election. After 348 years the Chennai Municipal Corporation the Dalit women became a Mayor. Because of Tamil Nadu government accepted and implemented 50% reservation for women.

The Mayor posts in nine other corporations – Cuddalore, Dindigul, Vellore, Karur, Sivakasi, Kancheepuram, Madurai, Coimbatore and Erode — have been reserved for women (general). The state government has also reserved the post of chairperson in 79 municipalities across the state for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe. This includes 10 municipalities to SC (general), 10 municipalities to SC (women) and 58 others to women (general). Nalliyam municipality in the Nilgiris district has been reserved for ST (women).

Table 4

Elected Women Representatives in Urban Local Bodies

S.No	Name of the Mayor Constituency	Name of the Women Mayor	Educational Qualifications
1.	Chennai	PriyaRajan,	M.Com
2.	Tambaram	Vasanthakumari,	BE Chemical Engineering
3.	Coimbatore	KalpanaAnandakumar	Employed in a diamond factory
4.	Madurai	IndiraniPonvasanth	Housewife

5.	Vellore	SujathaAnandakumar	Postgraduate
6.	Kancheepuram	MahalakshmiYuvaraj	B.E., M.B.A.
7.	Cuddalore	Mrs. Sundari	House Wife
8.	Karur	KavithaGanesan	M.sc., B.Ed.,
9.	Eorde	Nagarathinam	School Education
10.	Dindigul	Elamathi	B.B.A.,
11.	Sivakasi	SangeethaInbam	B.A.,

In Tamil Nadu 11 Out Of 20 Mayors Are Women, Here Are 5 of the Path Breaking Stories among Them

1. **PriyaRajan**, Chennai a 28-year-old M.Com graduate, won from ward 74 in Thiru.Vi.Ka. Nagar zone, as their candidate for the position of Mayor in Chennai Corporation. Priya will be the first Dalit woman to hold the position. Priya joined DMK at the age of 18 and has been closely associated with politics because of her father, R Rajan, a DMK functionary working with the party since 1987. Priya is stepping into big shoes, as both the current chief minister, M K Stalin (1996-2002), and the health minister, M Subramanian (2006-2011), served as mayors of Chennai. Rajan's father stated that the duo would be role models for his daughter.

2. **Vasanthakumari**, TambaramVasanthakumari, elected from Ward 32, is a chemical engineer with a bachelor's degree becomes DMK's Mayor, as the seat was reserved for SC women. Vasanthkumari promised the TambaramCorporation and said that Chennai is well-known for its metro water infrastructure and piped water supply. Tambaram, on the other hand, despite its proximity, lacks the same. So I'll work hard to build the same infrastructure here.

3. **KalpanaAnandakumar**, Coimbatore who belongs from Maniyakarampalayam, is a responsible mother of two, and she was elected to the urban local body from Ward 19. Her husband, Anandakumar, is a DMK's Maniyakarampalayam area committee member. She came from a low-income family and was employed in a diamond factory. In the same area, Anandakumar runs an e-Sevacentre. KalpanaAnandakumar, 40, will be the Corporation's first female mayor. The DMK high command surprised not only party cadre but also city residents by fielding a candidate who was little known in party circles and the general public.

4. **IndiraniPonvasanth**, Madurai DMK's IndiraniPonvasanth, a 43-year-old housewife, was elected unopposed as the second female mayor of Madurai Corporation, as she belongs to the SC community of Tamil Nadu. Her husband Ponvasanth supports finance MinisterPalanivelThiagraRajan, working as an advocate. After getting elected as a mayor, she told the media that she would work for Madurai's development. She expressed gratitude to Chief Minister M.K. Stalin, Finance Minister PalanivelThiagraRajan, and members of the general public.

5. **SujathaAnandakumar**, Vellore the DMK has chosen SujathaAnandakumar, the 38-year-old postgraduate, as its mayor candidate for the Vellore Municipal Corporation. Sujatha had spent the majority of her life in Konavattam. She attended a government school in the neighbourhood before pursuing her MED and law degrees. Her husband, K. Anandkumar, who has been a member of the DMK since 1991, persuaded her to join the party as a cadre in 2004. The couple ran a cable television network in the neighbourhood for more than two decades. After getting elected as a mayor, Sujata insisted that instead of making grandiose promises now, she preferred to make them one after the other, as the party president had requested. The primary task would lay quality roads, distribute potable water to all 100 wards, and remove the garbage as quickly as possible. At the same time, the Corporation would focus on Madurai's development and growth by enlisting the help of large corporations.

Analysis and Interpretation

Political accountability to women begins with increasing the number of women in decision-making positions, but it cannot stop there. What is required are gender-sensitive governance reforms that will make all elected officials more effective at promoting gender equality in public policy and ensuring their implementation.

Women's participation in decision-making is essential for women's interests to be incorporated into governance. It has been widely experienced that governance structures which do not provide for adequate participation of women, often suffer from state interventions which are neither inclusive nor democratic. Including women, especially in local governments is an essential step towards creating gender equal opportunities and gender sensitive policies. Since women have different needs and perspectives on social and political issues, it is important to involve women in governments to incorporate all of the societal viewpoints in policy and decision-making processes. Women are actively involved in household and community work and hence well aware of real issues faced by common people. This gives them insight and perspective which can be instrumental in sustainable overall development.

There have been evidences that due to reservation policy, certain women got elected into the setup, but they acted merely as the mouth-piece of the male family members. This indicates that there is a possibility of on-roll women participation to be higher than what it actually exists on ground. Awareness programs and increase in female education is now taking care of such happenings and women active participation is on an increase. Still there is a need to record data at a more micro level so that women who only act as a proxy can be identified.

II. Conclusion

India has a rich history of measuring political participation of women since its independence. The decentralization of governance which is taking place for last two decades has increased the importance of measuring participation of women in decision making. Proper gender budgeting has already been worked out for inclusive growth of women & girls by ear-marking one third budget for the women in all the schemes. The Indian Government has a lot of emphasis on utilizing real time data for measuring different social indicators and using them for policy intervention. With more responsive data on women participation, better gender budget initiatives aim to move the country towards a gender equal society. However, when women are elected as representatives they need full freedom to involvement to decision making and execute all welfare activities to the people without interfere of their relation restrictions.

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