

## Political Participation and Dalit Women's Leadership in Karnataka: Analysis of 1952–2023 Election Results

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### Abstract

The first election in Karnataka state was held on March 26, 1952, when Karnataka was known as Mysore state. It was renamed Karnataka in 1973. The Mysore Representative Assembly was established in 1881 by Maharaja Chamaraja Wodeyar, the first in India. When we look at the politics of Karnataka, the most important thing we know is that from 1952 to 2023, leaders of dominant castes have been the Chief Ministers of the state, and when we analyze the statistics of participation of women in the legislative assembly, it is very low and shows a patriarchal system. And the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals address women's gender equality and women's empowerment. Especially in India, the participation of women is low compared to other countries, and Karnataka is no exception; thus, it is against the basic concept of democracy. Especially among women, the status of lower caste women is very low in terms of political participation, even compared to upper caste women. What is the reason for this gap? Is it because of the provision of reservation in the constitution to facilitate their political participation or because of male or other female leadership in politics? The main purpose of this article is to inform. Also, from the beginning, from 1952 to 2023, who were the influential Dalit women politicians elected to the Legislative Assembly, and what was their contribution, as well as the contributions that they made to the community in society? It is also important to have nobody elected as a woman legislator in the legislature, especially in 1952, when the first elections were held in the state of Karnataka. Finally, this article will find out and analyze the general caste and scheduled caste women's participation in Karnataka's legislative assembly as well as their leadership.

**Key Words:** Dalit women leadership, Karnataka politics, upper caste women participation, Election results, SDG goals, First women SC MLA

### Introduction

In 1952, the first election to the Karnataka Legislative Assembly was held. Then it was only 99 constituencies in Karnataka. state, which was not yet named Karnataka, was called Mysore Vidhan Sabha. In the 1957 Karnataka general assembly election, (*Prakash, 2018*) the first woman Dalit MLA, Kempamma from the Congress Party, was elected from Kollegal, taking 20,286 votes, while her rival V. R. Puttaraju got a vote of 14,424 and lost. In this election, K.S. Nagratnamma won as an independent candidate from the first-time general constituency in Karnataka and made history. Champa Bai Bhogale, a Congress party candidate from Sankeshwar, got 14,273 votes and defeated his rival social reformer, B Shankarananda, from the Congress; Yellava from Ranebennur was elected from the Congress; and Nagamma was elected from the Kalmala reserved seat, in which Ratnamma from Shimoga village was also prominent.<sup>1</sup> BC Peraji was elected from the Kagawad reserve constituency in the 4th election in 1967.,<sup>2</sup> but no reserved women were elected in 1972 and 1983,<sup>3</sup> and five SC women were elected in 1978, including Renuka Rajendra from Chikkaballapur and Mottamma from Mudigere. Prominently from the Devadurga constituency A Pushwati.<sup>4</sup> In 1985, for the first time, "From Sadalga to Shakuntala Chowgala" was prominent.<sup>5</sup> In the 1989 9th election, Renuka Rajendra from Chikkaballapur, Mallananjamma from Muluvali, and Mottamma from Mudigere were the most prominent <sup>6</sup> BT Lalitha Naik from Devadurga and DG Hemavati from Shantinagar were prominent in the 10th election of 1994 <sup>7</sup>In 1999, Anusuya Mudigere from Chikkaballapur was elected to the highest post; women were elected from reserved

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<sup>1</sup> 1957 Mysore State Legislative Assembly Election

<sup>2</sup> 1967 Mysore State Legislative Assembly Election

<sup>3</sup> 1983 Karnataka Legislative Assembly Election

<sup>4</sup> 1978 Karnataka Legislative Assembly Election

<sup>5</sup> 1985 Karnataka Legislative Assembly Election

<sup>6</sup> 1989 Karnataka Legislative Assembly Election

<sup>7</sup> 1994 Karnataka Legislative Assembly Election

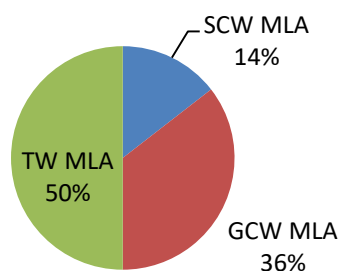
constituencies in 2004 and 2008; two in 2013<sup>8</sup> and in 2018, Rupkala Sashidhar, daughter of veteran politician Muniyappa, was elected from KGF<sup>9</sup> What is special is that 2023 election result is the highest in the Siddaramaiah-led government, i.e., six women have been elected from women's reserved constituencies, and veteran politician Mottamma's daughter Nayana Mottamma has become a young MLA by being elected. When women look at all these statistics, although 13 women were elected from the general constituency in the Karnataka legislative assembly election, such a large number of Dalit women were not elected from the reserved constituency. In 2023.<sup>10</sup> The Siddaramaiah Congress government created history by electing six women from scheduled castes from the reserved constituency to the Dalit MLA post for the first time. They are Roopkala Shashidhar from the KGF constituency, Nayana Mottamma from Mudigere, Manjula Limbavali from Mahadevapura, Bhagirathi Murulya from Sullia, Latha Mallikarjun from Harapanhalli, and Sharada Pooryanaik from Shimoga Rural. Nayana Mottamma is the daughter of Congress senior leader Mottamma. In this same election, Roopkala Shashidhar wins, and she is the daughter of Congress senior leader K. H. Muniyappa. It shows dynastic politics continues to be a feature of major parties in Karnataka state.

**This Table Compares Schedule Caste & General Caste Women's Political Participation.**

YEAR	Total Women MLA	SCW MLA	GWC MLA
1952 1 <sup>ST</sup> election	0	0	0
1957 2 <sup>nd</sup> election	2	1	1
<b>1962 3<sup>rd</sup> election</b>	18	5	13
1967 4 <sup>th</sup> election	5	1	4
1972 5 <sup>th</sup> election	1	0	1
1978 6 <sup>th</sup> election	8	5	3
1983 7 <sup>th</sup> election	3	0	3
1985 8 <sup>th</sup> election	7	3	4
1989 9 <sup>th</sup> election	8	3	5
1994 10 <sup>th</sup> election	9	1	7
1999 11 <sup>th</sup> election	7	1	6
2004 12 <sup>th</sup> election	6	0	6
2008 13 <sup>th</sup> election	4	0	4
2013 14 <sup>th</sup> election	6	2	4
2018 15 <sup>th</sup> election	7	1	6
<b>2023 16<sup>th</sup> election</b>	9	6	3
	<b>100</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>71</b>

**Note: only counted SC & GM caste women constituency**

**Women Participation in the Karnataka Legislative Assembly Result 1952-2023**



**Abbrivation of the above chart:**

SCW	Schedule Caste Women Member of Legislative Assembly
GWC MLA	General Caste Women Member of Legislative Assembly

<sup>8</sup> 2013 Karnataka Legislative Assembly Election

<sup>9</sup> 2018 Karnataka Legislative Assembly Election

<sup>10</sup> 2023 Karnataka Legislative Assembly Election

TW MLA	Total Women Member of Legislative Assembly
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In 1952, the first election to the Karnataka Legislative Assembly was held. Then it was only 99 constituencies in Karnataka. State, which was not yet named Karnataka, was called Mysore Vidhan Sabha. In 1952, there were only 99 seats in the Karnataka Legislative Assembly first time the Election Commission increased the number to 208 in the 1957 elections. Since the formation of the state's first Legislative Assembly in 1952,<sup>11</sup> there have been approximately 30 or 31 female ministers. The majority of them have worked in the Women and Child Development or Kannada and Culture departments. This emphasizes the idea that women are primarily family caregivers and cultural upholders. In 1999, the administration of SM Krishna, then of the Congress Party, had the most women in the cabinet of ministers. Motamma was in charge of the Department of Women and Child Development; Rani Satish was in charge of the Department of Kannada and Culture; Suma Vasanth was in charge of Muzrai; Nafees Fazal was in charge of Medical Education; and later, the Department of Science and Technology. Since then, no administration has had four female ministers at the same time. However, during the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led government in 2008, Shobha Karandlaje broke the portfolio stereotype by handling Rural development, panchayat raj, food, and civil supplies. Grace Tucker was the first woman to get a cabinet post in Karnataka, serving as Deputy Minister<sup>12</sup> of Education in the S. Nijalingappa-led Congress government in 1957. Leelavati (Venkatesh) Magadi was the 1962 Deputy Minister in Charge of Khadi Gramodyog, Handloom, and Small Industries in the Congress government led by Chief Minister BD Jatti in 1958. Yashodhara Dasappa served as Minister for Social Welfare in the Congress government led by Chief Minister SR Kanthi in Kansas. Nagarathnamma was the first woman to be elected Speaker of the Karnataka Legislative Assembly in the 1970s. Sumati Madiman, who was elected Deputy Speaker of the Assembly in 1979, performed successfully; in 1980, a few months before her death, she was also elected Assembly Speaker. Deputy Chairpersons of the Karnataka Legislative Council included MR Lakshamma, Rani Satish, and Vimala Gowda; Basavarajeshwari Jahagirdar was the first woman to chair the Council. Jayamala, the lone female cabinet minister in the HDK government in 2018, was the House Leader in the Legislative Council. Motamma, a Dalit politician who held various key positions in the Congress party, was elected in 2010 as the Legislative Council's leader of the opposition; she was the first woman to hold that role.

Bengaluru, which became renowned as India's Silicon Valley in the 1990s, contains 28 constituencies. Shobha Karandlaje was elected from the Yeshwanthpur constituency in 2008. However, no woman has won elections from this constituency in the last 15 years. In comparison, three female candidates from the Congress Party won elections in Bengaluru 66 years ago, in 1957: Grace Tucker, Nagarathnamma, and Lakshmi Ramanna from Ulsoor, Gandhinagar, and Chamarajapete, respectively. Pramila Nesargi was elected to Chamarajpete twice, in 1978, the number of assembly constituencies increased from 208 in 1957 to 224 in the 1978 6th election. first on a Janata Party ticket in 1978 and again in 1994. During the 2018 state elections, Sowmya Reddy of the Congress won the Jayanagar constituency. However, only six women have been elected as MLAs from different constituencies in Bengaluru during the last 66 years, which is cause for concern. Srirangapatna, in Mandya district, has always been regarded as a safe seat for women. For over two decades following the 1986 by-election, women MLAs from the Congress and Janata Dal parties represented this constituency. Despite this tradition, no female candidates ran in the 2018 state election in Srirangapatna. There are no female candidates here this time, either. When choosing candidates to run in elections, political calculations take caste and religious communities into account. Despite the fact that women make up more than half of the state's population, female voters do not appear to be treated as a separate voting bloc. Women have recently gained considerable prominence in political considerations as the proportion of women exercising their franchise as voters has increased. According to Election Commission (EC) figures, the number of women voters grew by 16% during the most recent Assembly elections. To encourage women to vote, the EC set about 450 "Sakhi" polling stations. Political parties have made a concerted effort to court female voters in recent election campaigns. Prime Minister Narendra Modi adopted the phrase 'Beta Beti Ek Saman' (son and daughter equal) in his campaign speeches during the previous state elections. During the 2018 Assembly elections, however, the BJP fielded only six female candidates, accounting for less than 3% of the total number of candidates fielded by the party. Three of the six female candidates were elected. The Congress has fielded 15 female candidates, with six of them winning. The Janata Dal (Secular) Party, or JDS, maintains that it has given its full support to the Women's Reservation Bill, which sought to reserve one-third of Lok Sabha and state Legislative Assemblies seats for women and was first introduced in Parliament in 1996, when JDS Chief HD Deve Gowda was Prime Minister. The party's symbol is a lady farmer carrying a stack of paddy on her head. During a JDS women's rally in 2017, Deve Gowda stated that if the Women's Reservation Bill became law, Karnataka would gain 84

<sup>11</sup> Prakash, 2018 P No 17

<sup>12</sup> AC, A. (2023, April 28). Karnataka 2023: Where are the women? NWM India. <https://nwmindia.org/gender-lens/gender-media-elections/karnataka-2023-where-are-the-women/>

female MLAs. He wrote to the Prime Minister in 2017 imploring him to take action to pass the long-stalled Bill, and he encouraged him again this week to guarantee that it becomes law. According to reports, Deve Gowda proposed to his son and current JDS supremo, HD Kumaraswamy, that female candidates be fielded in 2018. However, at the last elections, the JDS fielded only four female candidates, none of whom were elected. On the final day of the 15th State Legislative Assembly (February 24, 2023), BJP leader BS Yediyurappa said more women should be elected and urged men to help make that happen. Most women, however, understand that such statements are really ploys to sway female voters. They understand how tough it is to obtain tickets without the assistance, financial resources, or lobbying abilities of male relatives. The state's three biggest parties—the BJP, the Congress, and the JDS—have each fielded no more than 13 women for the next election. Across parties, the number of women who have been awarded electoral tickets remains pitifully low. Female candidates have received less than 5% of total party tickets.<sup>13</sup> BJP leader BS Yediyurappa of the 15th State Legislative Assembly stated more women should be elected and urged men to help make that happen. Most women, however, understand that such statements are really ploys to sway female voters. They understand how tough it is to obtain tickets without the assistance, financial resources, or lobbying abilities of male relatives. The state's three biggest parties—the BJP, the Congress, and the JD—have each fielded no more than 13 women for the next election. Across parties, the number of women who have been awarded electoral tickets remains pitifully low. Female candidates have received less than 5% of total party tickets. While the JDS has fielded 13 female candidates for the May 10 elections, This time, the BJP has fielded 12 women, whereas the Congress has fielded 11 women. In Bangalore, there are just 38 female candidates among the 389 final nominations, with no women competing for election in several of the city's constituencies. It is a constitutional obligation to provide women with equal opportunity. The right to equality is recognized as a fundamental right in Article 14 of the Constitution. Article 15 (3) authorizes and allows the State to establish particular provisions for women and children<sup>14</sup>. According to Article 39a, the state should establish chances to achieve equal justice for people who are denied justice for financial or other reasons.

India is a signatory to the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). According to Article 7 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the state must take appropriate measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination in political and public life. This Article contends that women should be equally eligible to vote in elections. It states that women have equal rights to participate in the creation and implementation of government programs. Despite this, there have been no meaningful attempts by India's political class to share power with women. Political representation inequality appears to be accepted as usual. This is at least one reason why India as a country lags behind in terms of gender equality

## Objectives

- ✓ To understand Dalit women's participation in Karnataka Legislative Assembly
- ✓ To compare and analyze Dalit Women & general cast women representation in Karnataka.
- ✓ Understanding the contributions of women politicians in the Karnataka legislative assembly

## A major analysis of 1952 to 2023 Karnataka legislative assembly election

Out of 99 constituencies, the Indian National Congress Party won a landslide victory in 74 seats. Similarly, Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party, which won 8 seats, got 2nd position. Samajwadi Party won 3 seats and Scheduled Caste Union 2 seats and Communist Party of India 1 seat while independent candidates won 11 seats. Through this, the Congress won a huge victory in the first election of Karnataka State or Mysore State. By that the first government was formed.<sup>15</sup> 208 seats in the 1957 election! In 1952, there were only 99 seats in the Karnataka Legislative Assembly. But in 1957 election that number suddenly jumped to 208. Thus, out of 208 constituencies, Indian National Congress Party won 150 seats. Congress won again in the 3rd election held for Karnataka assembly elections. If we look at the election results of 1962, the Indian National Congress Party won 138 seats. The Praja Samajwadi Party, which had won 20 seats, came second. Independent Party won 9 seats, Maharashtra Integration Committee 6, Lok Sevak Sangh 4, Communist Party of India 3, Samajwadi Party 1 and independent candidates won 27 seats.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> ("B. S. Yediyurappa," 2023)

<sup>14</sup> Article 15(3). (2016, November 4). Indian Constitutional Law and Philosophy.

<https://indconlawphil.wordpress.com/tag/article-153/>

<sup>15</sup> 1952 Mysore State Legislative Assembly Election

<sup>16</sup> 1962 Mysore State Legislative Assembly Election

The 1967 elections to the Karnataka Legislative Assembly brought further distinction. In 1952, there were only 99 seats in the Karnataka Legislative Assembly. But in 1957 election that number suddenly jumped to 208. This number increased to 216 in 1967 elections. Out of 216 constituencies, Indian National Congress won 126 seats, while Praja Samajwadi Party, which won 20 seats, came second again. Swatantra Party got 16 seats, Samyukta Samajwadi Party 6 seats, Bharatiya Jana Sangh 4 seats and others got 44 seats.<sup>17</sup> The 1972 assembly election was a turning point in the electoral history of Karnataka. Here, Congress-R won 165 seats, while Congress-O won 24 seats. Communist Party of India won 3 seats and Samyukta Samajwadi Party 3 seats. Others had won in 21 places.<sup>18</sup> A total of 216 seats were polled in the 1972 Karnataka assembly elections. Congress-R formed the government as the single largest party by winning 165 seats. Most of the present Legislative Assembly of Karnataka was formed in 1978 itself. The present 224 constituency's election style started from 1978. Indira Gandhi-led Congress-(I) won 149 seats in the first election for 224 seats. On the other hand, Janata Party won 59 seats and came second. Communist Party of India won 3 seats and Congress-O won 2 seats. Others won 11 seats in 1978 elections. After the independence of India since 1952, Congress led government was formed in Karnataka. But in 1983, for the first time, a party other than the Congress formed the government. Janata Party emerged as the largest party by winning 95 seats in this election. Congress got 82 seats and fell to the 2nd position. Thus, for the first time, the Janata Party, under the leadership of Ramakrishna Hegde, formed a coalition government with the BJP, which won 18 seats. Others were ranked 29.<sup>19</sup> After only 2 years in 1985, Karnataka assembly elections were again faced. Ramakrishna Hegde's government was formed with a majority of 139 seats. While the Congress saw a decline to 65 seats, the BJP, which had won 18 seats in 1983, had won only 2 seats in 1985. Others had won in 18 seats. Through this, once again the government was formed in Karnataka under the leadership of Ramakrishna Hegde.<sup>20</sup> The Congress party, which had lost power twice in a row, won a landslide victory in 178 seats in the 1989 elections. Janata Dal won 24 seats while BJP won 4 seats. Later, Janata Party won 2 seats and Karnataka State Farmers' Union won 2 seats. Finally, others won at 14 positions. After this election again Congress failed to show great performance in Karnataka.<sup>21</sup> Congress lost power again in 1994. Janata Dal won 115 seats in the elections. On the other hand B.S. BJP won 40 seats under the leadership of Yeddyurappa. At that time, Congress was ranked 3rd with 34 seats. Karnataka Congress Party won 10 seats. The rest won at 25 positions. Through this, Karnataka saw a significant change in the 1994 elections. This is the first major victory for the BJP in Karnataka.<sup>22</sup> The Congress, which had lost power, again won a landslide victory in the 1999 Karnataka assembly elections. Congress had established power in Karnataka by winning 132 out of 224 seats. SM Krishna became the chief minister. On the other hand B.S. BJP led by Yeddyurappa won 4 more seats and was the 2nd largest party with 44 seats. Janata Dal-U won 18 seats while Janata Dal-S settled for 10 seats. Others had won in 20 places.<sup>23</sup> In 2004, the BJP became the largest party for the first time in the Karnataka Legislative Assembly elections in independent India. This is the first time BJP has achieved such a victory in a South Indian state. B.S. BJP won 79 seats under Yeddyurappa, while Congress won 65 seats and Janata Dal-S 58 seats. The rest settled for 22nd place. However, the Congress and JDS coalition government came into existence.<sup>24</sup> The BJP, which won 79 seats in the 2004 Karnataka assembly elections, increased its seat to 110 in 2008. B.S. The BJP, under the leadership of Yeddyurappa, won a landslide victory and thereby formed the government in Karnataka. Congress got 80 seats but fell to 2 seats. Janata Dal-S was ranked 3rd by securing 28 seats. It is special that the number of independent candidates has fallen to only 6 seats in this election.

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<sup>17</sup> 1972 karnataka State Legislative Assembly Election

<sup>18</sup> 1978 karnataka State Legislative Assembly Election

<sup>19</sup> 1983 karnataka State Legislative Assembly Election

<sup>20</sup> 1985 karnataka State Legislative Assembly Election

<sup>21</sup> 1989 karnataka State Legislative Assembly Election

<sup>22</sup> 1994 karnataka State Legislative Assembly Election

<sup>23</sup> 1999 karnataka State Legislative Assembly Election

<sup>24</sup> 2004 karnataka State Legislative Assembly Election

<sup>25</sup> 2004 karnataka State Legislative Assembly Election result

<sup>26</sup> 2013 karnataka State Legislative Assembly Election result

elections to the Legislative Assembly was 73.19% in this election. With 135 seats, the Indian National Congress had the largest victory in Karnataka since the 1989 elections in terms of both seats and vote share. Both the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Janata Dal (Secular), who came in second and third, admitted defeat.

## Conclusion

In 2021-22, the country was ranked 132 out of 191 in the UNDP's Human Development Index (HDI).<sup>27</sup> In the same report, it was placed 122 on the Gender Inequality Index (GII); one of the factors used for the GII is the percentage of seats in Parliament held by women. India has dropped several places in the Inter-Parliamentary Union's global list of women in parliament. From 117 following the 2014 general election to 142 as of March 2023. There has been much discussion and praise of India as the "Mother of Democracy" recently. Is it conceivable to consider the country to be the most populous, if not the greatest, democratic democracy in the world when half of its citizens—female citizens—are hardly represented in Parliament and state Legislative Assemblies.

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