

More women are entering Indian Parliament but at the cost of SC, ST men

Political parties replace male SC, ST candidates with women to keep as many general category male candidates as possible.

FRANCESCA JENSENIUS

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(L-R) Member of parliament Muthuvel Karunanidhi Kanimozhi, Smriti Irani, Supriya Sule, Anupriya Patel and Harsimrat Kaur Badal at an event | Praveen Jain/Suraj Bisht

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In the 2019 elections, 715 out of the more than 8,500 candidates in the fray were women, and 78 made it into the new Lok Sabha. This will increase the share of women in the Lok Sabha from about 12 per cent to about 14 per cent. In most parts of the world, it is women from dominant social groups who are most likely to make it into politics, but not in India.

Over the past 30 years, more women have been fielded from and won SC/ST-reserved seats than general-category seats. This means that much of the increase in women's representation in Indian politics is happening at the cost of SC/ST men rather than general-category men.

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Women from marginalised groups

A common concern in discussions about increasing the presence of both women and minorities in elected politics worldwide is that it is difficult to include women from marginalised groups. Reservations or other quota policies for minorities tend to result in the election of men rather than women, while quotas for women often result in the election of **dominant-group women**. Women from marginalised communities, who are doubly disadvantaged socially, often end up falling between the cracks of the institutional efforts to make political institutions more diverse.

This is not a concern, however, in India's local-level politics like panchayat and municipal elections since there are quotas in place not only for women but also for the Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Backward Classes (OBCs). Positions are therefore **specifically reserved** for women from marginalised communities.

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But what happens in elections to the Lok Sabha and the state assemblies?

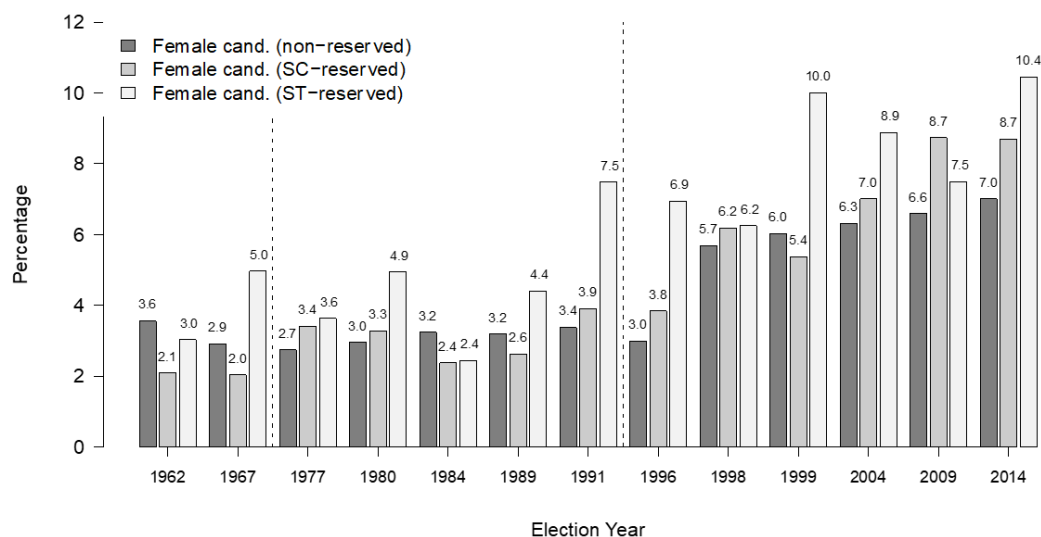
Here, the historically marginalised SCs and STs have had reserved seats **proportional to their share** of the population since the first elections were held in 1951, guaranteeing them a political presence. Are women elected in SC/ST-reserved constituencies?

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As **noticed** by [Gilles Verniers](#) and Sofia Ammassari of Trivedi Centre of Political Data, in the 2019 general elections, there were more women candidates in ST constituencies – about 13 per cent – than in general-category (8 per cent) and SC-reserved (10 per cent) constituencies. The higher share of ST women candidates was also reflected in the share of winners: 26 per cent of the winners in ST constituencies were women as against 14 per cent in general and SC constituencies.

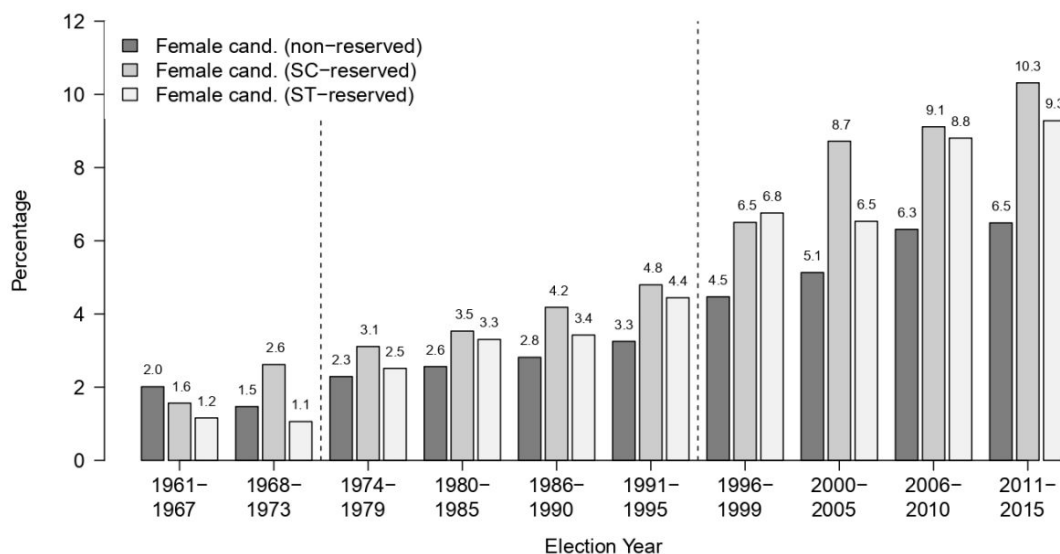
But the 2019 elections were not unique in bringing more women to power in SC/ST-reserved seats. In fact, in a **recent research article**, I show that this has been a trend both in Lok Sabha and state assembly elections for the past 30 years.

Figure 1: Percentage of female candidates in non-reserved, Scheduled Caste-reserved and Scheduled Tribe-reserved parliamentary constituencies, 1962–2014



Source: Francesca R. Jensenius (2016)

Figure 2: Percentage of female candidates in non-reserved, Scheduled Caste-reserved and Scheduled Tribe-reserved assembly constituencies, 1961–2015



Source: Francesca R. Jensenius (2016)

Figures 1 and 2 show the share of female candidates in non-reserved (general) and SC- and ST-reserved constituencies in Lok Sabha elections (1962-2014) and assembly elections (1961-2015). As we can see in Figure 1, until the 1990s, the percentage of women candidates was low across all types of constituencies, although somewhat higher in the ST-reserved constituencies. Since 1991, however, the share of women in reserved constituencies has consistently been somewhat higher.

Also read: [Why Mamata & Naveen’s move is important — just 9% of India’s MPs and MLAs are women](#)

Looking at data from state assembly elections, as shown in Figure 2, the pattern is even starker: here it seems clear that much of the increase in the nominations of female candidates in recent years has actually taken place in reserved constituencies (with a higher share in SC constituencies than ST and general constituencies).

The difference in nomination patterns is also reflected in the number of women who have won the elections. In the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, 11 per cent of MPs elected in general-category constituencies were women, compared to 14 per cent of MPs from SC-reserved constituencies and 13 per cent from ST-reserved constituencies. In the 2019 elections, this

difference is even more pronounced. It is actually the general-category women who have drawn the shortest straw in Indian elections so far.

SC/ST women replace SC/ST men, not general category men

There may be several reasons why SC and ST women have been nominated in somewhat higher numbers than general category women.

A negative interpretation, **consistent with literature from other countries**, is that as the pressure to bring more women into politics has increased, parties have consciously chosen to replace male SC and ST candidates with women so as to be able to keep as many general-category male candidates as possible.

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This may also have happened unintentionally, as SC and ST men tend to have a somewhat **weaker position within the party**.

A more positive interpretation of SC and ST women being nominated in higher numbers is that the political arena in reserved constituencies is **somewhat more open** to a more diverse set of candidates *per se*.

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Whatever the reason, it is important to be aware of such patterns, as it is not ideal that women's entry into politics is happening at the cost of SC/ST men rather than general-category men.

Francesca R. Jensenius is an Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Oslo. Views are personal.

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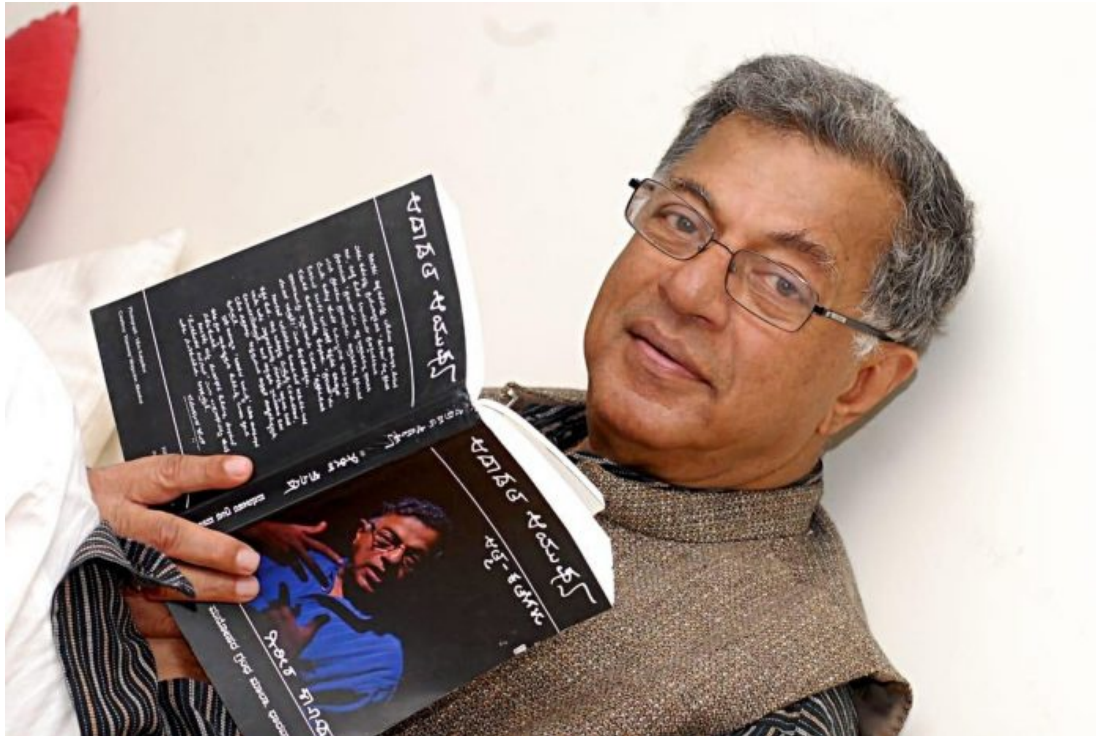
NEXT STORY

Girish Karnad's last work was an unfinished autobiography in English

Acted in classics *Manthan* and *Malgudi Days*, Sahitya Akademi awardee Girish Karnad revisited historical figures in plays such as *Tughlaq* and *Yayati* from Mahabharata.

CHANDAN GOWDA

10 June, 2019 7:11 pm IST



Girish Karnad | ANI Photos

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As he was preparing to leave for Oxford to take up the Rhodes Scholarship, in 1960, Girish Karnad read through C. Rajagopalachari's renderings of the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. He had wanted to brush up on the epics before going abroad.

The story of Yayati from the Mahabharata, Karnad recalls in his autobiography, *Aadadata Ayushya* (2011), gripped him. If a father asked his son to swap his youth with him, what might the latter's wife do in such a situation? Would she accept that unnatural situation? These questions haunted Karnad.

The conversation between Yayati and his daughter-in-law, Chitrlekha, Karnad writes, took form in his mind first with the rest of the play shaping itself around it. He writes: "I didn't think I was writing a play at all. When the characters started running around me, I put their conversations to paper like a stenotypist. It was as if a ghost had possessed me. I have never again felt such an experience of surrender while writing a play." Karnad was twenty-two when he published *Yayati* in 1960. An older playwright and the proprietor of Manohar Granthamala in Dharwar, G.B. Joshi, published it. That was the beginning of a long and affectionate publishing relationship between Joshi, his son, Ramakant Joshi, and Karnad.

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Yayati found a warm reception in Kannada literary circles. At Joshi's insistence, Karnad chose to write another play. This time, his play evolved around the figure of Muhammad Bin Tughlaq, the ambitious Sultan of Delhi in the fourteenth century. Karnad was already at Oxford then. In contrast with the writing experience of the first play, *Tughlaq* took nearly two years of research and writing. Published in 1964, *Tughlaq*, a powerful portrayal of the king's complex personality and idealism and an allegory of state power in independent India, confirmed Karnad's status as a major Indian playwright.

Also read: [Writer, actor, playwright Girish Karnad dies at 81 in Bengaluru](#)

The unfolding phase of literary modernism (Navya) in Kannada had seen figures like Gopalakrishna Adiga and B.C. Ramachandra Sharma in poetry, and U.R. Ananthamurthy, P. Lankesh and Purnachandra Tejasvi in fiction, but not writers of their stature in theatre. Karnad and then Chandrashekar Kambar filled that space.

On returning from Oxford, Karnad worked as assistant manager in the Chennai office of Oxford University Press. During his seven-year tenure there, he found intellectual sustenance through his association with Cholamandalam, a collective of artists, and Madras Players, the English theatre group, in Chennai.

Karnad chose to translate his plays into English himself. When his close friend and well-known poet and translator, A.K. Ramanujan, had showed interest in translating his plays, he hadn't taken up the offer. A knowledge of theatre was fundamental, Karnad had recalled to me once, for translating a play. The translations and the adaptations of his plays in various Indian languages took Karnad's work to audiences outside Karnataka.

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An opportunity to act the role of Praneshacharya, the lead protagonist in the eponymous film adaptation of U.R. Ananthamurthy's novel, *Samskara*, in 1970, launched an acting career for Karnad. Seen in numerous films in south Indian languages and Hindi, his roles in Shyam Benegal's *Nishant* (1975) and *Manthan* (1976), and in Shankar Nag's television adaptation of R.K. Narayan's *Malgudi Days*, are among the most memorable roles of his career. Younger film goers might remember him more from his roles in commercial Hindi and Kannada blockbusters like *Ek Tha Tiger*, *Tiger Zinda Hai* and *AK-47*.

Also read: [Gauri Lankesh was killed for being anti-Hindu: 'Confession' of main accused Naveen Kumar](#)

A chance opportunity for co-directing a Kannada film, *Vamsa Vriksha* (1971), with noted theatre director B.V. Karanth, saw Karnad go on to direct several films in Kannada and Hindi, including *Kaadu* (Forest, 1973), *Ondanandu Kaladalli* (Once Upon a Time, 1978), *Utsav* (Festival, 1985) and *Kanooru Heggadati* (The Matriarch of Kanooru, 1999).

While *Ondanandu Kaladalli*, a film about two warring tribal clans, will count among the best of Kannada cinema and his role as Praneshacharya will let us see fine acting talent in him, the creative activity that Karnad most closely identified with was writing plays. His plays, which revisit mythological and historical episodes, like *Tughlaq*, *Hayavadana* and *Taledanda*, are more powerful as drama and philosophical engagements than those that work with contemporary settings, like *Marriage Album* (2006) or *Boiled Beans on Toast* (2012). Published last year to high acclaim, his last play, *Rakshasa Tangadi* (Crossing over to Talikote), is set against the battle of Talikote that brought about the end of the Vijayanagar empire in the mid-16th century.

Over the last couple of years, Karnad was at work on writing his autobiography in English. He didn't want to translate the Kannada original as the details taken-for-granted with the home audience wouldn't travel straightforwardly to an English audience.

Karnad had been at the helm of several cultural institutions, including the positions of director of the Film and Television Institute of India (1974-75), the president of Karnataka Nataka Academy (1976-78), Sangeet Natak Akademi (1988-1993) and the director of Nehru Centre, London (2000-2003). A study of his contributions in these roles will be good to see.

Also read: [Bharatendu Harishchandra: The poet-playwright who sowed the seeds of Hindi nationalism](#)

Secularism and other democratic ideals mattered deeply for Karnad. His passionate concerns about the future of these ideals surfaced eloquently and powerfully in public fora, especially so over the last two decades, which have seen the rise of the Hindu Right in India. His presence lent strength to local protest meetings organised to express care for the well-being of Indian democracy.

A great playwright, actor, film director, institution builder and a charming speaker, Girish Karnad was a rare figure among us.

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The author is a Professor of Sociology at the Azim Premji University in Bengaluru. Views are personal.

The excerpt from Girish Karnad's autobiography is translated by the author.

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