

Shakti - Political Power To Women

Date: 11 Dec 2018



To

Shri Sharad Pawar

President, Nationalist Congress Party

Good morning!

I am Tara Krishnaswamy, writing to you as a co-convenor of Shakti, a non partisan women's collective that enables more women to be elected as MLAs and MPs. Numerous women, from all walks of life including academicians, grass roots activists, women in local bodies, journalists, political commentators, aspiring politicians and others have joined hands for this initiative. Cutting across region, religion, caste, class, language and ideology, we have united to create an inclusive platform to further women's political careers.

As you know, barely 11% of women are MPs and 9% are MLAs, whereas there are over 40% women in local bodies. In a representative democracy like India, half the population has nearly no say in state and central governance. As a leader of a powerful political party, you will agree that sadly, half your electorate, and even your own party's women are not represented in proportion to their numbers and efforts.

Maharashtra benefitted from 33% reservation for women in local bodies during your government, as well as the Maharashtra Women's Policy. Today over 10 lakh of women in India have won, governed and graduated from local bodies. Despite that, even a fraction of them do not have political career opportunities and instead return to their kitchens.

The recent elections in Chattisgarh, Mizoram, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Telangana have under 10% women candidates fielded by the parties. You will agree that this is a most tragic state of affairs, 70 years into a democratic republic.

You have been a staunch supporter of women's political rights, and made progressive statements: "We gave reservation to women at the local self-government level. But what after that? After serving at the local level, their political aspirations increase. But we haven't yet been able to pass the bill giving them reservation in Assembly and in Lok Sabha. It can start with 30-33%. But we must build pressure on male politicians to pass the bill."

Kudos to you for standing up for women's political rights! And asking other male politicians to do so!

We hereby ask that you formalise NCP's support by 1) Committing to give 50% tickets to women for 2019 Lok Sabha and 2) Demanding in the Winter Session of the Lok Sabha (2018), to debate, negotiate and pass an acceptable version of the Women's Reservation Bill.

Shakti recognises that efforts made by the NCP to significantly increase the percentage of women candidates will attract more women voters to your party, pressure rival parties, and is hence benefit society at large.

We petition you, as a consistent and vocal advocate of women's political leadership and trust that you will heed our demands and not let us down.

Along with numerous women's groups, women in local bodies, including Varshatai Nikam, Sarpanch Mankapur Panchayat, and NCP member, is

Team Shakti:

Ammu Joseph - NWMI, Independent Journalist,
Dhanya Rajendran - Co-founder & Editor-In-Chief, The News Minute,
Vidya Subrahmaniam, Sr Fellow, The Hindu Centre for Public Policy
Nisha Agrawal, ex-CEO Oxfam India, Advisor Samruddha Bharat Foundation
Nisha Susan, Partner Grist Media/Ladies Finger
Cynthia Stephen, Writer, independent Researcher and Journalist.
Jyoti Raj, Co-founder CERl
Bhanupriya Rao, Founder genderandpolitics.org, Independent Researcher & Writer

Convened by:

Rajeshree Nagarsekar, Publisher of Evescape & Political Activist
Tara Krishnaswamy, Co-founder Citizens For Bengaluru, Author & Activist

Thanking you!

Sincerely,
Tara Krishnaswamy
Co-convenor, Shakti: Political Power To Women