

An Open Appeal from Shakti to the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi  
13th December, 2018



To,  
Shri Narendra Modi  
Prime Minister of India

Good morning!

I am Tara Krishnaswamy, writing to you as 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 women in local bodies, grassroots women's groups, academicians, 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.

The recent elections in Chattisgarh, Mizoram, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Telangana have under 10% women candidates fielded by the parties. This has further underscored a most tragic state of affairs from the first election onwards, and 70 years into the democratic republic.

## Tickets to Women Candidates

State	Total Seats	BJP	INC
MP	230	24	28
Chattisgarh	90	15	13
Rajasthan	200	23	27
Mizoram	40	6	1
Telangana	100	14	11
<b>Average</b> %		<b>11.3</b>	<b>8.9</b>

@politicalshakti  
http://shaktiindia

You have promised this country the Women's Reservation Bill in your manifesto. We are aware it requires deliberations and negotiated outcomes, but those cannot be achieved if it is not even listed for Parliamentary debate this session!

In your public statement regarding this Winter Session of the Lok Sabha, as stating, "If anybody wants to bring something to the government's notice inside the House or even outside, we are open to it,"

We request that this Women's Reservation Bill be brought up by you on behalf of the women of India.

You have launched universal programs to enhance the financial and labour participation of women, but what about political participation? We must bring to your attention two egregious injustices to the political participation of women. First, even 10% of the top performers amongst the over 1 million women who graduate from local bodies, have no career path in politics and head back to the kitchen! Second, parties have been consistently grudging of tickets to women, even though they are clearly winnable as per the Government of India statistics itself.

Press Information Bureau  
Government of India  
Election Commission

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Number of Contestants and Winners - Gender-Wise  
Highest number of Women in Lok Sabha so far

The 16<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha has the highest number of women members ever at 61, compared to 59 Women members in 2009. The least number of women members was in 1977 followed by 1971 and 1957. In the 2014 Elections, 8251 candidates contested the elections, out of which 668 were women and 7,578 were men. 5 Transgender also contested the polls this Elections. The winning percentage of women in the 16<sup>th</sup> General Elections is 9.13% while that of Men's is 6.36%. The Average number of contestants per seat is 15.2 in 2014.

Contestants and Winners - Gender-wise

Order of Elections	Year	Total Number of Seats	Total Number of Contestants	Average Number of Contestants Per Seat	Male			Female		
					Contestants	Elected	Winning %	Contestants	Elected	Winning %
First	1952	489	1,874	4.67	--	--	--	--	--	--
Second	1957	494	1,319	3.77	1474	472	22.02	42	12	48.89
Third	1962	484	1,985	4.07	1919	465	24.13	66	31	46.97
Fourth	1967	520	2,369	4.56	2302	491	21.33	67	29	43.28
Fifth	1971	538	2,384	3.37	2095	497	18.42	86	21	24.42
Sixth	1977	542	2,439	4.5	2359	521	22.08	70	19	27.14
Seventh	1980	542	4,629	8.54	4456	514	11.66	143	28	19.58
Eighth	1984-85	542	2,492	10.13	2421	500	9.4	171	45	22.15
Ninth	1989	543	6,190	11.34	5962	514	8.52	198	29	14.65
Tenth	1991-92	543	8,349	16.11	8419	496	5.35	206	28	11.52
Eleventh	1996	543	13,952	25.65	13353	502	5.27	599	40	6.68
Twelfth	1998	543	4,250	8.75	4176	500	11.17	271	43	15.69
Thirteenth	1999	543	4,648	8.56	4354	494	11.32	284	49	17.25
Fourteenth	2004	543	2,435	10.81	2380	492	9.8	203	43	14.88
Fifteenth	2009	543	8,070	14.84	7514	484	6.41	556	29	10.61
Sixteenth	2014	543	8,251*	15.2	7,078	484	6.76	668	61	9.13

@politi.abbhuti  
http://bhuti.india

\*5 Transgender contested the 2014 elections

When parties do not act in public interest, must the government not legislate? Did you not legislate electoral bonds?

What is more, numerous studies from local bodies' performance over the past two and a half decades, show that women-led Indian villages outperform the average in health, education, sanitation and other sectors. More women are likely to approach their female Parliamentarians raising governance issues.

A UN study for ten years across 4000+ constituencies of India has unearthed that women MLA led constituencies, not just local bodies, have experienced higher economic growth by 15% points and helped raise the GDP of India by 1.8% more per year!

How should the women of India feel when systematically and deliberately excluded despite proven electoral winnability and governance capacity?

The government under your leadership has efficiently passed some of the most complex and controversial Bills including Aadhaar, GST and outlawing of Instant Triple Talaq. Hence, we respectfully ask that as the highest democratic representative of the women of India, you table the Women's Reservation Bill for debate, negotiation and navigate it to successful passing.

It is already 70 years late for women, and indeed for India itself. It is an outrageous situation in a representative democracy you must rectify for us. With an absolute majority in the Lower House, there is no force on earth that can stop you if decide to gift India proportional governance by women. What you will deliver is not just empowerment of women, half this country, but better development of India as a nation.

And what a legacy that would be!

Along with numerous women's groups, women in local bodies, the Shakti team:

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, Pubisher 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