

Shakti joins hands with 120+ Bihar organizations, universities & eminent personalities to demand 50% MLA tickets for women

Shakti - "Political Power to Women" along with Adhiti, Bihar Mahila Samaj, Dalit Ekta Sangathan, Jan Jagran Shakti Sangathan, Khetee, Navjeevan Education & Social Welfare Society, Megh Pyne Abhiyan, Rajat, Oxafam India, and 120+ grassroots organizations, companies, institutions, education initiatives, health associations, women's collectives, NGOs, Dalit groups, youth & minority groups and eminent, influential personalities like ex-IFS & civil services officers, Professors, Head of Departments, representatives of Chambers of Commerce, activists and arts practitioners demand 50% MLA tickets to women in the upcoming Bihar Vidhan Sabha elections.

With Assembly election in Bihar few months away, **Shakti, has joined hands with 120+ organizations and eminent persons to jointly appeal to all political parties in Bihar, state, national and smaller parties, urging them to field 50% female candidates.** (See attachments)

Women are grossly under represented, with barely 28 women, or 11.5% in the Bihar State Assembly, falling from 34 women, or 14% in 2010.

The petition to the parties underscored that Bihar made history in the Lok Sabha elections with 59% female voting percentage, that far exceeded the 55% male voting percentage and was also first state with 50% women in Panchayati Raj as early as 2006. Even with the increase in the political participation of women, parties fielded a mere 10% women candidates fielded in the 2015 Assembly elections.

The petition, from Shakti and 120+ grassroots organizations and eminent individuals with a reach to tens of lakhs of Bihari voters, echoed their desire that parties give 50% MLA tickets to women candidates to ensure fair representation.

Shakti - Political Power to Women is a non partisan, pan-India citizens collective with a goal to get more women elected as MLAs and MPs.

Tara Krishnswamy, Co-founder of Shakti said "The last 68 years of elections in Bihar shows that men have 90% reservations in the Vidhan Sabha, and that implies that voters have no choice. Shockingly, if we add up all the women who have ever been MLAs in Bihar, it adds up to only 277! Just a little more than the size of the Assembly! Unless political parties change their own internal mechanisms for women's representation in election committees and candidate selection process, it will be the same old recycled men who are elected. How can Bihar become a glorious state by leaving 50% of the talent untapped for state governance? We are putting public pressure on the parties to be fair, and field 50% women candidates. It is the only democratic thing to do,"

Earlier, Shakti ran a twitter campaign tagging the Bihar political parties for #50pcMahilaUmeedvaar and #50pcMLATicketsToWomen which trended nationally! (See image)

Dr Maya Shankar Prasad, Historian & Retd Prof, Dept of History, Patna University said, "21st century should be a gender equality century especially when it comes to representation in the Parliament & Vidhan Sabhas. Women have always been fighting for their rights. It would be a good gesture on the part of our leaders to offer them if not 50% atleast 33% to start with. Give it a try! You will feel the difference."

Satyendra Kumar, the State Director of the Centre for Social Equity & Inclusion, that works with marginalized communities on cultural rights, Dalit and Adivasi human rights, recalled Dr. Ambedkar;'s words, "...measure the progress of a community by degree of progress which women has achieved," and said, "It is time for political equity and our assembly needs to realise this for women of India. Bihar can again show the way to the country by giving 50 percent tickets/seats to women in assembly election, like they have done in panchayat and many state vacancies. This will not only encourage women to be part of political processes, it will also ensure equitable rights of women in politics and policy making. Let's "womenise" our politics a bit more!"

Sister Veena Jacob of Navjeevan Educational & Social Welfare Society said, "50% women candidates is the empowerment of womem, which in turn is the empowerment of society."