



# Women in State Politics in India

Missing in the Corridors of Power

Edited by Pam Rajput and Usha Thakkar



# WOMEN IN STATE POLITICS IN INDIA

The dynamics of Indian politics is reflected in the flexible and fluctuating relations between the centre and the states as well as in the equations within the multiparty political system. This book is one of the first to explore the participation of women in state politics in India and how women navigate the dynamic spaces and hierarchies of the Indian political system.

With the help of in-depth studies of 16 states in India, it analyses the gender profile of political parties and legislative bodies in these states; the question of women's representation which is miniscule in legislative assemblies and women voters and their voting choices. It also explores the roadblocks and barriers they face, along with a study of women's participation in informal politics. The chapters in this book underline the need for women's active participation both inside and outside the party system to make democracy more robust and meaningful.

Topical, rich in empirical data, this book will be an essential read for scholars and researchers of Indian politics, gender studies, political science, sociology, public administration, and South Asia studies.

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*Edited by Pam Rajput and  
Usha Thakkar*

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IN THE 75TH YEAR OF INDIA'S INDEPENDENCE,  
DEDICATED TO ALL UNKNOWN AND KNOWN  
WOMEN FREEDOM FIGHTERS OF INDIA AND  
HON'BLE DROUPADI MURMU, THE FIRST TRIBAL  
WOMAN PRESIDENT OF INDIA



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## WOMEN IN GOA'S POLITICS

The need for fast tracking to achieve gender equality

*Alaknanda Shringare*

### Introduction

The Constitution declares India as a 'Union of States' and each state has shown considerable variations in its politics since independence. The party system and leadership have been changing but what remains unchanged across all states is women's entry into formal politics.

Goa was under Portuguese rule for over 450 years. It was liberated on December 19, 1961, and remained a Union Territory till statehood was achieved in May 1987. Goa witnessed a large number of women participating in the liberation movement but their entry into formal politics remained marginal in the post-liberation period. Goa has good socioeconomic parameters for women with a low infant mortality rate, a high literacy rate, and a better sex ratio as compared to the all-India level. However, when it comes to women's participation in formal politics it is no different from the other states. Patriarchy and gender stereotypes make entry of women in formal politics difficult.

### Post-liberation Goa

After liberation, Goa faced many challenges. On the political front, it faced the issue of merger with Maharashtra. The two regional parties Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party (MGP) and the United Goans Party (UGP) which played an important role in state politics were formed during this period. MGP was formed with the objective of merging Goa with Maharashtra while UGP was formed to retain Goa as a separate state. In a historic 'opinion poll' on January 16, 1967, the merger issue was resolved when the people of Goa voted against the merger. While the Congress formed the first government in most of the states in India, in Goa the first government was formed by a regional party.

MGP formed the first government under the leadership of Dayanand Bandodkar which remained in power for almost two decades. UGP was the



main opposition party. MGP also gave Goa its first woman Chief Minister, Shashikala Kakodkar, who came to power after her father, Dayanand Bandonkar's death.

The challenges before the state were different on the economic front. There were no major industries in Goa at the time of its liberation and agricultural productivity was also low. Though MGP gave Goa its first woman Chief Minister, the state's efforts in the initial years were mainly directed towards economic development while gender equality took a backseat. The state gave impetus to setting up new industries and it also explored development of mining and tourism as options which could contribute to its economy. Economic development continued to remain a major concern of subsequent governments. With the emergence of coalition politics in the post-statehood period, political competition increased manifold. Party hopping became a common feature of Goan politics with every government, political party, and leader struggling to maintain itself in power. In such a scenario, no serious efforts were made either by the government or by the political parties to ensure women's entry into politics.

### **Goa's gender profile**

Goa has high socioeconomic parameters for women. Its sex ratio is 973 which is higher than the national average of 940 as per Census 2011. In 2001, Goa's sex ratio was 961 (Census, 2011) and female literacy was 85 per cent. Goa was also reported to have a low infant mortality rate of eight deaths per 1,000 live births in 2016 (NITI Aayog, 2019).

As per the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS, 2019) of the 50 per cent labour force participation rate (15 years and above) in Goa, 70 per cent were male and 30.9 per cent were female (Ministry of Statistics, 2019). More women in rural areas are working as casual labourers while a sizeable number of women in urban areas are regular wage or salaried employees.

However, these indicators alone are no guarantee that women's condition is better in Goa compared to the rest of India. The question instead is how far this gets translated into their increased representation in the legislative assembly and Parliament? Past experience shows a negligible presence of women in Goan politics.

### **Women's role in the liberation movement**

The 450 years of Portuguese rule gave Goa a unique identity. A system of indirect elections was introduced by the Portuguese in Goa in 1822–51. In 1860, the first direct elections took place in the state. However, franchise was limited to the educated and tax-paying elite men. According to Pais (2017) till the nineteenth century, women's participation in politics was a non-issue in Portugal. It was only in 1933 that the Portuguese government

passed a law which allowed educated women a right to vote in Portugal but this was not extended to Goa. Goan women enjoyed their voting rights only after 1961 when Goa was liberated from Portuguese rule.

Women were active participants in Goa's freedom struggle. The beginning was made by Sarubai Vaidya who brought out a Marathi-Portuguese monthly for women called *Haldikumkum* in 1910 (Salgaonkar, 2000, p. 38). Other prominent women in the struggle were Premilabai Zambaulikar, Berta Braganca, Sasikala Hardorkar, Asha Phade, and Vilasini Prabhu. Kakodkar (1986) categorizes the nature and extent of women's participation at three levels. Firstly, a small group of women participated in all aspects of the national freedom struggle. Berta Menezes Braganca is a prominent name among this group of women. Secondly, a group of women who got involved with only one particular aspect of the national struggle and a third group of women who participated in political meetings, *prabhat pheris*, and also became satyagrahis. The first confrontation that the Goan women had with the Portuguese police was on June 18, 1946, the day Ram Manohar Lohia addressed a public meeting in Margao (Sardesai, 1986).

### **Women's political participation in the post-liberation period**

The Union Parliament passed the Constitution (12th Amendment) Act, 1962 on June 20, 1962, and conferred the status of a Union Territory to Goa with a 30-member assembly. The first assembly elections were held in 1963 and were historic with seven women contesting and Urminda Lima Leitao Mascarenhas achieving the distinction of becoming the first woman MLA in the assembly (*The Times of India*, 2017a). Later in the 1967 assembly elections not a single woman contested. Many women were active in social life during this period but their political participation was mainly restricted to voting. Women who had actively participated in the freedom struggle and worked equally with men were not equally represented in Goa's legislative assembly in the post-liberation period. The number of women contesting elections increased only after 1984. In 1984, for the first time, ten women contested the elections but unfortunately not a single one got elected. One of the reasons for this could be that out of the ten women who contested, seven contested as independent candidates. One each contested on BJP, CPM, and Janata Party tickets.

Over a period of time, there has been an increase in the number of women contesting assembly elections (Table 9.1). From 7 in 1963 to 26 in the assembly elections in 2022 there has been a gradual increase in the number of women contesting elections. However, the same is not witnessed in more women getting elected to the state assembly. Since the first assembly elections (1963) not more than two women candidates have been elected to the Goa assembly, except for the 1994 assembly elections, when out of the ten women candidates who contested the elections, four were elected. In the

Table 9.1 Gender-wise data of candidates contesting the Goa assembly elections

Year	Contested (Men)	Won (Men)	Contested (Women)	Won (Women)
1963	–	30	7*	1*
1967	226	29	0	1
1972	132	30	6	0
1977	141	29	4	1
1980	174	30	3	0
1984	232	30	10	0
1989	243	38	8	2
1994	301	36	10	4
1999	200	38	10	2
2002	201	39	11	1
2007	188	39	14	1
2012	196	38	10	2
2017	224	38	19	2
2022**	275	37	26	3

Source: Compiled from [www.eci.ac.in](http://www.eci.ac.in), accessed on January 12, 2019.

\* <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/goa/53-years-on-women-yet-to-find-footing-in-goassembly/articleshow/57525646.cms>, accessed on January 12, 2019.

\*\* 2022 election data retrieved from [www.eci.in](http://www.eci.in), accessed on March 14, 2022.

2022 assembly elections, three women candidates were elected which is an increase over the last five elections. Deviya Rane won with the highest vote share among all the candidates who contested in 2022.

The 2017 assembly elections saw more women contesting (Table 9.1). The highest number of women candidates (five) was fielded by the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) which contested the assembly elections in Goa for the first time. Congress gave tickets to three women candidates of whom one was victorious. Alina Saldanha was the sole woman candidate contesting on a BJP ticket from the Cortalim constituency. During the election campaign for the 2017 assembly elections, she had told the press that as the only elected woman candidate from her party 'it does get little lonely sometimes' (*The Times of India*, 2017b). The same newspaper reported a statement made by the then Chief Minister Laxmikant Parsekar who believed it was easy to give party tickets to women candidates but getting them elected was a challenge because people in Goa wanted their MLAs at their doorstep to fix their problems from electricity to water and help when someone in the family was not well, which was difficult for women to do (*The Times of India*, 2017b).

He further added that it would take another ten years for women to make a mark in politics. The Congress Party's response to the issue was that it was up to the women to come forward and take part in politics and it was ready to give tickets to women candidates if they were found to be viable. There is reluctance on the part of political parties to give tickets to

women. The winnability of women candidates is always questioned by the political parties.

The story is no different when it comes to parliamentary elections. Sanyogita Rane of MGP was the first woman to become a Member of Parliament from Goa in 1980. In the 1980 Lok Sabha elections, Shashikala Kakodkar played an active role in ensuring the victory of MGP candidate Sanyogita Rane Sardesai from the North Goa constituency. Sanyogita Rane was the only woman elected to Parliament from Goa.

The two national parties which played an important role in the politics of the state after MGP's downfall have not given party tickets to women candidates to contest in the Lok Sabha elections from any of the two Lok Sabha seats in the state. Though women candidates contested almost all Lok Sabha elections but they did not get elected, as the chances of any candidate contesting from a party other than the BJP or Congress are almost nil.

Since 1987 the state is sending one representative to the Rajya Sabha but till today not a single woman from Goa has become a member of the Rajya Sabha. It is also important to note that most of the women candidates who were able to make it in Goa's politics had their families either rooted in politics or actively involved in social life.

Any discussion on women in Goa's politics is incomplete without a mention of Shashikala Kakodkar, the first woman Chief Minister of Goa and Mridula Sinha, the first woman Governor of Goa. Both of them left their mark on Goa's politics.

Shashikala Kakodkar was sworn in as the Chief Minister of Goa in 1973. Initially seen as Bandodkar's daughter she soon carved out her own image in state politics. Her experience of participating in Goa's liberation movement, social work, and political affairs benefitted her. She contested the assembly elections in 1967 on a MGP ticket and won by a huge margin. During her tenure, she focused on health, education, and provision of drinking water facilities in the state, apart from which her tenure is also known for the enactment of the Goa, Daman and Diu Mundkars (Protection from Eviction) Act and amendments to the Tenancy Act (Biography, n.d.).

Shashikala Kakodkar faced criticism from within and outside her party. After MGP's defeat in the 1980 assembly elections, she joined the Congress but soon resigned and formed her own party, the Bhausaheb Bandodkar Gomantak Party (BBGP). Later she joined MGP by merging BBGP with it. She contested all assembly elections till 2002 and was successfully elected to the assembly till the 1994 assembly elections. After her defeat in the 2002 assembly elections she did not contest any more elections.

Mridula Sinha's entry into Goa's politics as the first woman Governor was a welcome development. She served as the Governor from August 2014 to October 2019. She was also the first Governor to open the gates of the Governor's residence to the public. She had vast experience in political and administrative fields. She was also a renowned Hindi writer. Being an

ambassador of the Swachh Bharat Mission appointed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, she held the view that cleanliness should be part of our culture and declared 2016 as the year of cleanliness in Goa.

Mridula Sinha emphasized the need for creating a single identity for women as Indian women and maintained that a common civil code will strengthen this singular identity (*The Statesman*, 2017). She also initiated a unique project 'The Constitution Week', a week-long celebration every year in January, to popularize constitutional values and ideals among common people of Goa. She also stressed the need of making the Constitution available in the mother tongue. She faced criticism for inviting the BJP to form the government while it was not the single largest party in the House after the 2017 assembly elections.

### Women as voters

While women's political representation in the legislative assembly has been limited to 5–10 per cent, there has been a tremendous increase in their participation by way of voting as compared to men. Since 2007 more women have voted compared to men (Table 9.2). Out of the 80 per cent voter turnout witnessed in the 2022 assembly elections, 51 per cent were women voters. However, this increase in the number of women voters is not getting translated into more women candidates getting elected. Despite the fact that more women are voting compared to men, women are not emerging as a political constituency in the state. Women candidates mobilize voters as party members by following their party's ideology and policies.

Table 9.2 Voting percentage in the Goa assembly elections

<i>Year</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>
1963	—	—	—
1967	69.12	67.42	68.25
1972	69.01	69.30	69.16
1977	64.69	61.75	63.22
1980	70.12	68.89	69.51
1984	71.68	72.03	71.86
1989	73.50	71.42	72.47
1994	71.73	70.65	71.20
1999	66.78	63.15	65.00
2002	69.87	67.61	68.75
2007	69.70	70.30	70.51
2012	78.86	84.57	81.73
2017	78.40	83.94	81.21
2022*	78.15	80.96	79.59

Source: Compiled from [www.eci.ac.in](http://www.eci.ac.in), accessed on January 20, 2019.

\*2022 data retrieved from [www.eci.ac.in](http://www.eci.ac.in), accessed on June 14, 2022.

No political party can neglect women voters who can make a difference to election results. Both the Congress and BJP governments have started various schemes for women. Some of the well-known schemes are Mamata, Griha Aadhar, and Ladli Laxmi schemes. The Mamata scheme provides Rs 25,000 to mothers who deliver a female child and who have been living in Goa for at least three years irrespective of their social/economic status (*The Indian Express*, 2018). Griha Aadhar provides financial assistance of Rs 1,000 per month to women whose gross family income is less than Rs 3 lakh (*The Economic Times*, 2012). The amount was increased to Rs 1,500 per month in 2016. One lakh rupees is given to a girl child under the Ladli Laxmi scheme once she turns 18. Initially the money was provided to meet marriage expenses due to which it came under criticism from feminist groups in Goa. Later the scheme was modified to provide financial benefits to meet girls' educational and other expenses.

### Political parties acting as gatekeepers

An important factor in an analysis of electoral quotas for women is the fact that 'political parties are the gatekeepers when it comes to nominations and elections to political posts' (Dahlerup, 2006, p. 10). It is the party that decides the candidates and their constituencies for contesting elections (Table 9.3). It has been observed that political parties are reluctant to give tickets to women candidates. Though Shashikala Kakodkar supported Sanyogita Rane to win the Lok Sabha seat she did not encourage or promote more women in politics in the state. This is also true for most of the women who got elected to the Goa assembly. They may have worked for women's welfare but a conscious effort at mobilizing and organizing more women to bring them into politics was missing.

An examination of the distribution of party tickets to women candidates of the two important political parties in Goa shows that compared to the BJP, Congress has given more preference to women candidates (Table 9.3). Only in the 2022 assembly elections did the BJP give party tickets to three women candidates. It was also the first time that most of the women contested on party tickets. Out of 26 women who contested the elections only six were independents (Table 9.4).

It is important to note the factors that hinder or determine women's entry into politics. Some aspects which make women's entry into politics difficult/easy deserve attention. Firstly, most of the women who contest as party candidates have a family background rooted in politics which makes it easier for them to get party tickets. Thus, women representatives who get elected to the state assembly mainly belong to political families. In the 2022 assembly elections, all the three women candidates elected belonged to political families. Secondly, each party has a women's wing which tirelessly works for the party but when it comes to getting party tickets its members are often

Table 9.3 Party tickets given to women candidates

<i>Year</i>	<i>Political Party</i>	<i>Number of Women Candidates Given Tickets</i>
1989	INC	4
	BJP	0
	Independent	4
1999	INC	3
	BJP	1
	Independent	1
2002	INC	2
	BJP	1
	Independent	4
2007	INC	1
	BJP	2
	Independent	7
2012	INC	2
	BJP	0
	Independent	2
2017	INC	3
	BJP	1
	Independent	5

Source: Compiled from [www.eci.gov.in](http://www.eci.gov.in), accessed on February 5, 2019.

Table 9.4 Women candidates in the 2022 assembly elections

<i>Party</i>	<i>Women Candidates</i>
INC	2
BJP	3
AAP	3
TMC	4
Shiv Sena	2
RGP	2
SBP	2
GSP	1
MGP	1
Independents	6

Source: ECI website: <https://affidavit.eci.gov.in/CandidateCustomFilter>, accessed on March 14, 2022.

neglected. Women's wings are used as agents for mobilizing people. They are at the forefront of party activities like rallies, dharnas, and campaigns. A discussion with the women representatives of political parties as well as party workers reveals that mahila wings are merely used for working for the parties but are hardly given any opportunities to contest elections.

Thirdly, as political parties are reluctant to give tickets to women candidates, many women in Goa have contested as independent candidates. This also indicates that there are many women candidates who aspire to contest elections. This is a positive development as far as women's political participation is concerned but it is found that women candidates representing a political party have higher chances of winning.

The role of money power too cannot be neglected at the time of elections. Compared to independent candidates, party candidates are in a better position to fund their elections as the party also takes up the responsibility of campaign expenditure. In the absence of reservation for women in assemblies and Parliament, women candidates have to compete with men to win elections. Most of the women candidates believe that it is very difficult to fight against the money power used by men.

It has been observed that in Goa candidates have a stronghold over some constituencies. It does not matter if the candidate changes party loyalties. Men's or families' stronghold over constituencies makes women's entry impossible unless they are from the same family as happened in Taleigao constituency where Atanasio Monserrate made his wife contest the elections and Poriem which was represented by Pratapsingh Rane is now represented by Deviya Rane.

### **PRIs and women's political participation**

With the passing of the Goa Panchayati Raj Act (GPRA) 1994, 33 per cent seats are reserved for women in PRIs in Goa. Panchayat elections were the first democratic elections to be held in Goa in 1962. Earlier one seat was reserved for women in panchayats by the Panchayat Regulations (1962).

In the 1997 panchayat elections, 445 women members were elected from the reserved wards while 33 women won from the general category (Salgaonkar, 2000, p. 104). This trend, however, did not continue for long in Goa. As per the Ministry of Panchayat Raj's (MoPR, 2008) study on elected women representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), Goa was the only state which had less than 33 per cent women representatives elected to PRIs, while in all the other states this figure was more than 33 per cent. Goa which has good socioeconomic parameters for women as well as the best GDP and HDI parameters compared to other states is not able to perform well in political gender parameters.

It is interesting to note that at the panchayat level women voters outnumber men voters, in Goa. Some assertive women panchayats are also found. When women sarpanches were contacted for this study, they said they had control over gram sabha and panchayat meetings. A woman sarpanch from Gaodongrem, Canacona, revealed that she contested the elections for the first time from an open seat and got elected. This competent and married member with young children got the full support of her family members. It



is also noticed that most of the women who were assertive and confident had family members as panchayat members.

However, having assertive women representatives in panchayats does not mean that there are no proxy women members in panchayats. As the wards are reserved, in many cases men who represent those wards make their wives, daughters, or daughter-in-law contest from these wards. When women get elected from these wards as first timers, they lack knowledge about the functioning of the panchayat and are termed proxy members if they take help from their family members. Women who get family support in contesting elections from reserved seats may not get the same support and encouragement when the seat is not reserved for women. This is also the reason why the women who have gained some training and knowledge about the functioning of the panchayats are usually not able to contest for a second time. However, there are a few cases when women get elected for the second time from an unreserved seat and emerge as more confident leaders.

It is easier for women whose families have been in politics to get into politics. Albertina Almeida, Goa-based advocate and social activist, believes that things will improve only when a culture of participation for women is developed at all decision-making levels. It is not possible to achieve women's equal participation at all levels unless we address the issue of the gender division of work.

### **Women's lived experiences**

While talking to some of the women representatives it was found that there are occasions when they feel very lonely and do not know whom to look at for support. Many times men do not even recognize their presence in meetings and other gatherings. However, when asked for help, they never say no. This indicates the mindset of most of the men in politics that they think they are superior and women always need to be protected and supported. When women become assertive and demanding they do not get the same support. Women politicians, party workers, and women activists believe that women's representation in politics is a struggle. Gender stereotypes and patriarchal notions are so strongly rooted that women cannot get an equal say in politics. Politics is still very strongly male dominated where women's entry is blocked in different ways.

### **Women's movements**

Goa is the only state which has the Uniform Civil Code and the credit for this goes to Portuguese rule. During Portuguese rule, several legislations were passed that safeguarded women's rights, especially property rights for Christian women. In 1869, the Portuguese Civil Code of 1867 was extended to the colonies which further helped in improving women's status (Gracias,

1996, p. 90). These rights were not extended to Hindu women in the early period. As a result, legislations passed by the Portuguese helped in improving the status of Christian women in particular. The Portuguese never interfered in the religious and customary traditions of Hindus due to which the laws never protected the interests of Hindu women. However, a few years later, an *Alvarado* issued in 1739 decreed that *gentios* of Old Conquest should be governed by Portuguese laws while their counterparts in New Conquest would be governed by their *Uso e Costume* (Gracias, 1996, p. 95). This created further confusion as non-Christians from the Old Conquest were governed by different laws and New Conquest areas were governed by different laws.

The Civil Code ensured certain rights to women but it made wives obey their husbands in many contexts. A husband's consent was required for things like preparing a will, moving the court, and publishing her work. During this time, the Portuguese thought of extending the Civil Code to New Conquest areas also. At the request of Hindus, some of the customary practices relating to Hindu marriages and others were retained. Thus, the revised Code hardly improved the condition of Hindu women. The Civil Code (known as the Uniform Civil Code) continued after Goa's liberation. However, the Civil Code is discriminatory towards women and does not hold women as being equal to men.

Women in Goa not only played a significant role during the liberation movement but also worked towards the development of their community during the Portuguese period. Parobo (2015, p. 45) writes that women from the Gomantak Maratha Samaj played a vital role in promoting the interests of their community in Goa at the beginning of the twentieth century. He further writes that many women of the Gomantak Maratha Samaj participated and played lead roles in organizing conferences. All schools set up by the Gomantak Maratha Samaj were financed by the women from this community (Parobo, 2015, p. 45).

In the post-liberation period, movements for gender equality continued. Goa did not witness massive women's movements as such but women's groups in Goa have time and again raised various women's issues of national and state interest. Women's groups were a part of the national movement demanding equality for women in the Uniform Civil Code after the Shah Bano case. All the women's groups got together for the implementation of the Dowry Prohibition Act which was not extended to Goa. They actively supported the act banning prenatal sex determination and during the Nirbhaya case, women's groups actively participated in support of implementing various acts. There was a continuous struggle by women's groups to put a system in place for implementing the Domestic Violence Act. Most of these women's groups came together and formed Bailancho Ekvott (Women Together). Women's groups are also actively involved in demanding the women's reservation bill and raising questions related to livelihood issues.

Sabina Martins, convener of the Goa Bachao Abhiyan (GBA) and a founder member of 'Bailancho Saad', a women's organization, mentions that women were at the forefront in mobilizing people to fight against the scrapping of the Regional Plan, 2011 and also SEZs in Goa, but when it comes to representation in decision-making bodies, they have been neglected. Very few women who were a part of women's movements joined politics.

Martins observes that priorities change when one becomes part of formal politics. The demands of electoral politics are different. Politics has different rules which clash with the activities of the movements. She states that when the GBA was fighting for various causes many political groups became part of the movement but once the question of decision-making arose all these groups took different stands according to their party ideologies or preferences. Alternative groups have also been formed within GBA which has weakened the group. If women from these groups wish to join politics, they have to join one or the other political party. However, getting party tickets is very difficult for women candidates because of existing gender stereotypes and a stronghold of the patriarchal mindset. Women's winnability is always questioned by the political parties unless they have a family member (men) already in politics who can bargain for them. If women activists wish to contest as independent candidates they lack the resources and tactics to win elections.

Albertina Almeida, a women's rights activist and lawyer, believes that the women's groups in Goa have decided not to get involved in active politics. She mentions that the initial women's movements were through the All India Women's Conference (Goa Branch), an NGO functioning in Goa since 1978. There was no women's rights organization at that time in Goa. The first women's rights movement was noticed in the 1980s when the Muslim Women's Association led by Rashida Muzawar resisted extending the Shariat Act to Goa and fought to continue the Uniform Civil Code in the state. This was the first known women's rights group in Goa. Later many women's groups were formed but most of them were loose organizations mainly working in getting people together to fight for women's causes.

In July 1986, a few women, most of whom had been associated with the progressive students union or with the civil liberties movement, got together to form an informal discussion group. Many of these women were disillusioned by the patriarchal nature of the organizations that they had earlier been associated with and viewed the forming of a women's collective without a formal hierarchical organizational structure a refreshing change from those that they had had experience with (Desouza, 2009, p. 135).

Women working at different positions in different organizations realized that they had common needs and interests, so on October 12, 1986, they formed an independent organization called *Bailancho Saad* (Women's Voice). It was the outcome of continuous discussions carried out by most of the women activists who were initially part of various other movements

in Goa. *Bailancho Saad* is also an outcome of the realization that women's issues are not addressed adequately by any groups, organizations, or movements in Goa.

*Bailancho Saad's* founding members decided that they will not participate in active politics but will fight for women's rights and raise women's issues. One of the important developments at this time was the formation of *Bailancho Ekvott* by Auda Viegas, who felt that women's active participation in politics was crucial for raising women's issues. One more important group which was formed but failed to continue its activities was *Bailancho Munch* (Women's Platform). This was mainly formed for mobilizing women to fight for their causes. Mahila mandals which are present-day self-help groups also contributed in raising women's issues.

One of the social activists pointed out that women's groups did not get support from other organizations in Goa as most of them remained patriarchal. Members of these organizations and also some political leaders believe that Goa does not need women's groups/organizations as it is the only state which has a Uniform Civil Code and women are treated equally with men. They do not see Goan women having any problems. Most of the times even those women who hold important offices do not grasp the issues raised by women's groups. One such incident mentioned by Almeida was in the mid-1980s when Goa's assembly did not have any women MLAs and the government appointed three women to represent women's interests. When one of them was approached by Almeida and her group to object to the manner in which women's images were being used for promoting tourism in Goa, they found it difficult to convince not only the MLAs but also the women who were appointed to represent the women. Almeida opined that women's groups' struggle is on but having women in the state legislative assembly is very much needed and this will happen only by reserving seats for women.

There is very little dialogue between women's movements and the women representatives and if at all it is happening it is not fruitful. This is also pointed out by Basu (2010), when she says that the women's movement has fewer links with women who command political power. Women representatives' power is limited by their party ideology and most of these women representatives have family lineage in politics which keeps them away from actively engaging with women activists and women's movements. As a result, women as a political constituency are not emerging forcefully. There is no question that the farmers' movement and caste-based, ethnic, and religious nationalist movements have all had a much bigger impact as compared to the women's movement on electoral politics (Basu, 2010, p. 179).

## Conclusion

There is a need for women's groups and women representatives to actively engage in women's issues and work together to bring more women into

politics. There are many aspiring women candidates in the women's wings of different political parties and also those who are part of women's movements who should be supported and encouraged to contest elections.

When women are given an opportunity, they make a difference in politics which is noticeable in the women representatives in panchayats in Goa. However, when it comes to state politics, women do not have a voice. It is not that they are not contesting but it is becoming difficult for women to contest elections in a male-dominated political scenario with a patriarchal mindset. Despite having high socioeconomic indicators, women's representation in Goa's legislative assembly is low. This incremental representation is not going to solve the problem of women's meagre representation in politics. Implementing electoral quotas for women is a way of ensuring more women in the decision-making forums of the state legislative assembly and Parliament.

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