

The Political Journey of Women's Reservation in India: Genesis to Contemporary Debates

Dr. Aditya Parihar¹, Dr. Nirmal Singh², Dr. Malkiat Singh³, Dr. Shefali Chauhan⁴, Dr. Veenat⁵, Tarashi Guglani⁶, : Dr. Nirmala Devi⁷

¹Assistant Professor (Social Work, Department of Sociology, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar)

Email:ID: aditya.sw@gndu.ac.in

²Assistant Professor (Department of Political Science, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar),

Email:ID: nirmal.pol@gndu.ac.in

³Assistant Professor (Department of Political Science, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar)

Email:ID: malkiat.singh91@gmail.com

⁴Assistant Professor (Department of History, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar),

Email:ID: shefali0902@gmail.com

⁵Assistant Professor (Post Graduate Government College for Girls, Sector 11 Chandigarh)

Email:ID: veenat333@gmail.com

⁶Research Scholar (Social Work, Department of Sociology, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar),

Email:ID: guglanitarashi@gmail.com

⁷Assistant Professor (Department of Sociology, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar), nirmala.socio@gndu.ac.in

***Corresponding Author:**

Dr. Nirmala Devi

Assistant Professor (Department of Sociology, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar),

Email:ID: nirmala.socio@gndu.ac.in

Abstract: Introduction

Gender equity in political governance fosters inclusive public policy and representative development. In India, however, women remain significantly underrepresented in national and state legislatures, underscoring the need to examine mechanisms designed to address this persistent gender gap.

MethodThe present study conducts a qualitative review of secondary sources, including constitutional amendments, legislative texts, government reports, and scholarly studies. It traces the evolution of women's reservation in Indian politics, from the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments to the Constitutional 106th

Amendment Act and Women's Reservation Act, 2023.

Result The article highlights that the reservation at various levels in a democratic government, which has remained low for decades, however the current amendments act as a crucial step towards contributing in bridging the gender gap.

Conclusion

Reservation policies have proven effective in enhancing women's participation in political spaces, with the 73rd and 74th Amendments and the 2023 Women's Reservation Act, which on one hand marks to be a landmark step toward addressing gender underrepresentation in political spaces, while on other hand projects their delayed and symbolic participation. However, timely legislative adjustments will translate to meaningful changes at higher levels of governance.

Keywords: *Women, Reservation, Empowerment, Constitution, Participation, Equality.*

Introduction

The empowerment of women is a dynamic concept that encompasses economic opportunities, political representation, social equality, personal rights, and more. Relevant literature indicates that empowerment in the case of women implies primarily, a capacity to exercise decision-making in private and public sphere. Women's accessibility to various life opportunities, is an essential pointer of empowerment. As it empowers women with capability and know how to take decisions independently (Gill, 2019 p.115). Thus, in true sense, women's empowerment can only be achieved through equality of opportunity and collective participation across various spheres of life. Since the time India gained Independence, women's empowerment has remained a key focus for politicians. One significant aspect of this empowerment is political participation, which historically has been defined by women's right to vote and contest elections. Statistics all over the world point out huge disparities between men and women in accessing public transport, employment opportunities, health facilities, and political participation. The reason behind these disparities is mainly because of women's 'home based' priorities (ibid, 2019). The origins of feminism in the late 1800 century, particularly in the West, were rooted in the long struggle for women's suffrage. Equality of opportunity is a key political goal associated with the first wave of feminism. In contrast, Indian women gained the right to vote as one of the fundamental rights of Indian citizens immediately after independence. However, despite this right, political empowerment remains limited, as women's representation at various levels of governance has remained minimal even after 78 years of independence. As a result, the issue of reserving seats for women in political institutions has been a topic of ongoing debate. The discriminatory practices of political parties and political institutions are primarily responsible for the underrepresentation of women in India's parliamentary system. In the Gender Gap Report, India ranked at 127th out of 146 countries compared to 135th in 2022 (World Economic Forum, 2023). The other Asian Countries who performed better as compared to India in this report were Bangladesh 59, Bhutan 103, Sri Lanka 115, and Nepal 116. In the year 2021, the ranking of India lowered 28 places and reached 140th position (Gender Gap Report, 2021). The most significant decline occurred in the sub-index, where India dropped by 13.5 percentage points.

A major factor behind this decline was the substantial reduction in the share of women in ministries. In South Asia, India performs the worst, only ahead of Pakistan (Gender Gap Report, 2021). According to the IPU report on the ranking of women in national parliaments, India was ranked 144th out of 189 countries surveyed. The data clearly shows that, in South Asia, India lags behind Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bhutan (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2022). The Economic Surveys also acknowledge that women's representation in political spaces is abysmally low. The Constitution mandates equality to women and empowers the State to adopt corrective measures (World Economic Forum, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024).

According to much recent data, in the Global Gender Gap Report 2025, India ranked 131st, with

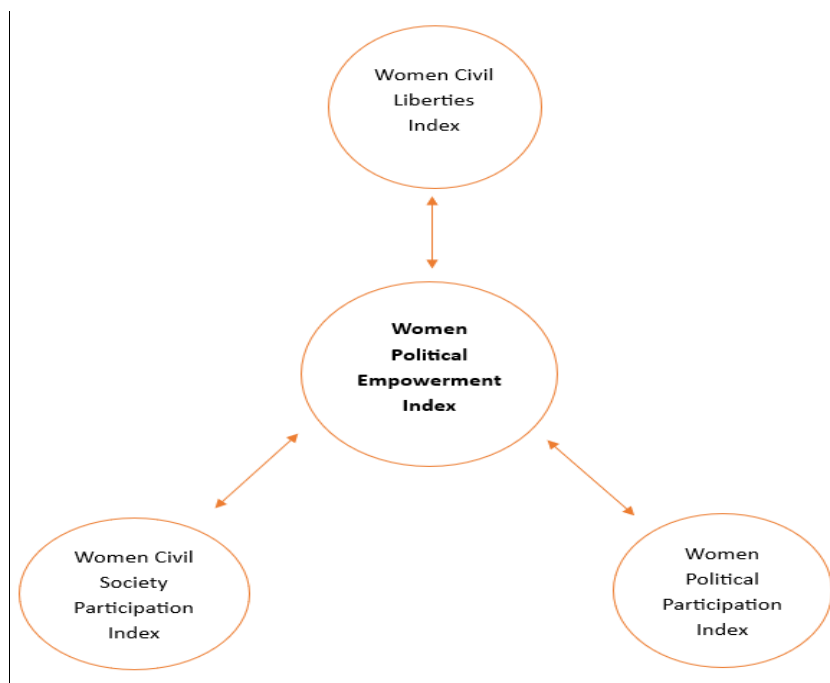
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an overall gender parity score of 64.4%. This represents a relative slip of two to three positions compared to 129th out of 146 countries in the year 2024. Additionally, India's performance remains particularly weak in the Political Empowerment subindex, as it recorded a further decline of 0.6 points. Women's parliamentary representation fell from 14.7% to 13.8%, and the share of women in such positions dropped from 6.5% to 5.6%, for the second consecutive year of decline and well below the 2019 peak. Among other South Asian countries in the 2025 report, Bangladesh was at 24th position, Bhutan was at 119th, Nepal at 125th and Sri Lanka was at 130th position. All these countries held better positions than India and the country's ranking had slipped sharply to 140th out of 156 countries in the 2021 before a partial recovery in 2023 (127th) (World Economic Forum, 2025).

In order to achieve the goal of empowerment, it is essential to provide women with equal opportunities in power-sharing and decision-making. Whenever necessary, affirmative actions, such as reservations or quotas, should be implemented by the government. While there are many women workers in national and regional political parties, they are often denied election tickets or sidelined in the race of contesting elections. Therefore, to give them a voice in decision-making and enhance their representation, reservations are crucial.

As per a study conducted in 2022, there are three basic dimensions on which political empowerment of women depends, i.e. civil participation index (equality between men and women), civil liberties index (their full development of potentials) and political participation index (right to self-determination and self-representation). These indexes are further shown in the figure below:

Figure 1: Components and indicators entering V-Dem's Women Political Empowerment Index



Source: Dahlum, S., Knutsen, C. H., & Mechkova, V. (2022). Women's political empowerment and economic growth. *World Development*, 156, Article 105822. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2022.105822>

- Civil liberties for women: This dimension focuses on protections against gender-based discrimination and violence, ensuring women can exercise basic freedoms (e.g., freedom from forced marriage, access to justice, and protection from domestic violence). It reflects the foundational quality of equality between men and women and enables full personal development by removing barriers to autonomy and self-determination.

- Political participation of women: This covers women's active involvement in formal politics, including suffrage, representation in elected bodies, and influence in decision-making processes. It directly addresses the right to self-representation (e.g., as candidates, legislators, or leaders) and ensures women can participate in shaping policies that affect their lives, promoting self-determination in the public sphere.
- Civil society participation of women: This index highlights the opportunities for collective action, voice, and influence outside formal state structures, supporting broader self-determination, empowerment, and the full realization of women's potentials through societal participation.

The study argues that these three aspects together enhance the variety and quality of ideas in society and drive innovation and economic growth. The composite WPE index shows a stronger positive effect on growth than any single dimension alone, which is thus the current need of the hour for India where a significant gender gap in political decision-making exists. Therefore, it is crucial that more women leaders step forward into impactful positions to influence decisions. In doing so, they can inspire teenage girls to contribute to nation-building. Against this backdrop, this article discusses women's reservation in Indian politics by examining the opportunities and challenges of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment and analyzing the key issues surrounding the Women's Reservation Act, 2023.

Research Objectives

The present study intends to:

- Assess and highlight status of women in the Indian Political System;
- Examine the evolution of women reservation in Indian politics through the purview of constitutional amendments;
- Critically examine the Women Reservation Act, 2023.

Research Methodology

The current paper, based exclusively on secondary data sources, reviews the Inter-Parliamentary Union Reports, Constitutional Amendments and research articles. The study prioritizes credible and relevant data sources from peer-reviewed journals, government publications and other reports, to maintain robustness in the paper.

Women's Representation in Politics: Status and Evolution

Women's equal participation in political leadership is essential for advancing gender equality and achieving sustainable development. The reasons for the latter are multiple. The first being that when women are in any powerful positions of power, they bring unique perspectives to policymaking, including gender-based violence, reproductive health, childcare, and economic security, thereby leading to a more holistic, inclusive, sensitive, and effective policies that promote women's empowerment. For instance, women legislators often prioritize gender equality measures, including laws on parental leave, elimination of violence against women, and equitable resource access. Furthermore, when women hold prominent political roles, they present themselves as powerful role models by inspiring others to pursue leadership positions and engage actively in civic and political life. This role-model effect strengthens their political ambition and participation. Ultimately, equal

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representation of women in the space of politics is crucial for advancing gender equality overall and is indispensable for meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, especially SDG 5, which calls for gender equality and empowerment for all women and girls, along with their effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life (United Nations General Assembly, 2015).

Reilly, 2015 highlights that women’s participation is a predictor of peace. It states that if women’s representation in the parliament increases by five percent, the state is five times less likely to be violent in the situations of international crisis. (O’Reilly, 2015). However, the statistical data highlights that women are under-represented at all levels of decision making worldwide. Globally, only 26.5% of parliamentarians are women. There is a shortage of women in positions of leadership and global decision making. Another study indicates that politics, by general agreement, is a man’s world (Scott, 1978). A study by Lipman-Blumen, (1976) also highlights that women are irrelevant and their role is only limited to sex, motherhood and serving others.

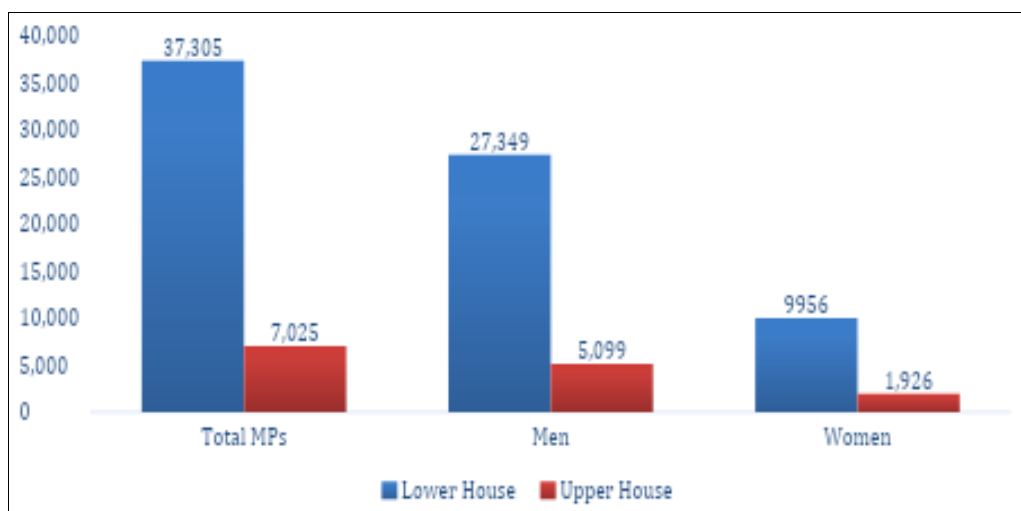
According to Hilda Scott, (1978) there are different reasons for low participation of women in politics, study highlights that women are socially handicapped, family centric and doesn’t deviate from social norms. The author, by using the word “social handicap” means that women were differently socialized, were less educated and had low self-esteem. By family centric author means that women vote like their husband; are drawn to their authoritarian figures and if politically involved, are suited for family issues like women and child welfare. Lastly, the author says that women do not deviate from norms. Women were apathetic, conservative, and emotional and responded to personalities rather than issues, and similar trends have been shown in the attached data points below:

Table 1: Global Average of Women Participation in National Parliaments, February, 2024

Total MPs	Lower House	Upper House	All Houses
	37,305	7,025	44,330
Men	27,349	5,099	32,448
Women	9,956	1,926	11,882
% of Women	26.7	27.4	26.9

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union. (2025). Women in parliament 1995-2025. <https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/reports/2025-03/women-in-parliament-1995-2025>

Figure 2: Global Number of Men and Women in National Parliaments, 2024



Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union. (2025). Women in parliament 1995-2025. <https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/reports/2025-03/women-in-parliament-1995-2025>

According to the report published by the Inter Parliamentary Union, there has been a slight increase (0.4%) in the share of women’s participation in National Parliaments, from 26.5% in January, 2023 to 26.9% in January, 2024. America remains at the top with the highest women parliamentary representation in 2023 i.e. 42.5% of members got elected to nine chambers in the six countries.

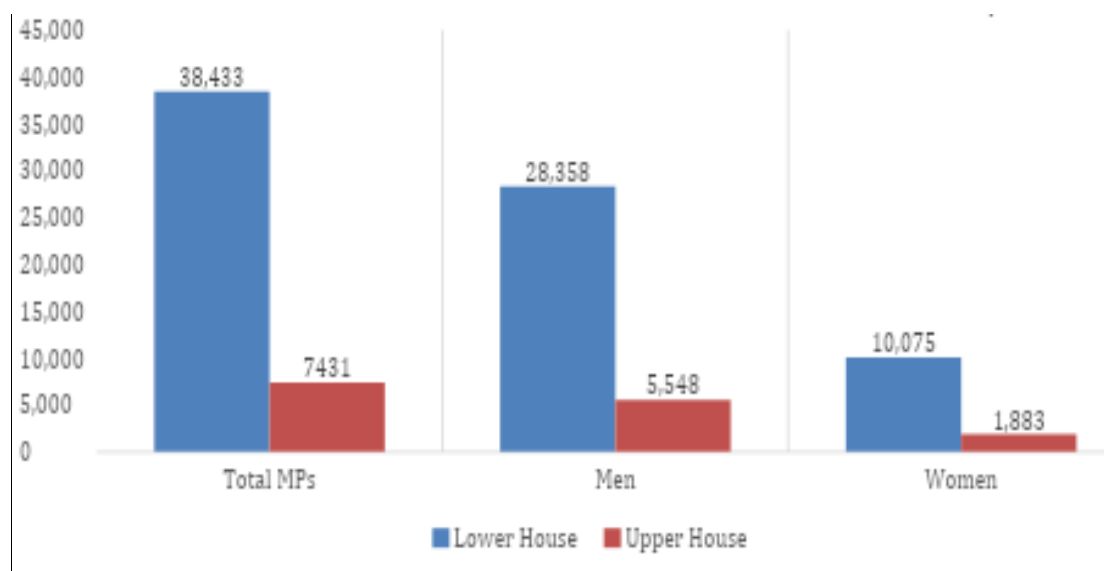
Table 2: Global Average of Women Participation in National Parliaments, February, 2022

Total MPs	Lower House	Upper House	All Houses
	38,433	7431	45,864
Men	28,358	5,548	33,906
Women	10,075	1,883	11,958
Percentage of Women	26.2%	25.3%	26.1%

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union. (2023). Women in parliament 2022. <https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/reports/2023-03/women-in-parliament-2022>

Further, according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union report (2022), the global share of women in national parliaments was 26.1%, reflecting a slight increase of 0.6% from the previous year (25.5%). The data indicates that globally, the percentage of women in the lower houses of national parliaments is 26.2%, while in the upper houses, it is 25.3%. Table and figure 3 highlight the regional average of women and men participation in National Parliaments, February, 2022.

Figure 3: Global Number of Men and Women in National Parliaments, 2022



Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union. (2023). Women in parliament 2022. <https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/reports/2023-03/women-in-parliament-2022>

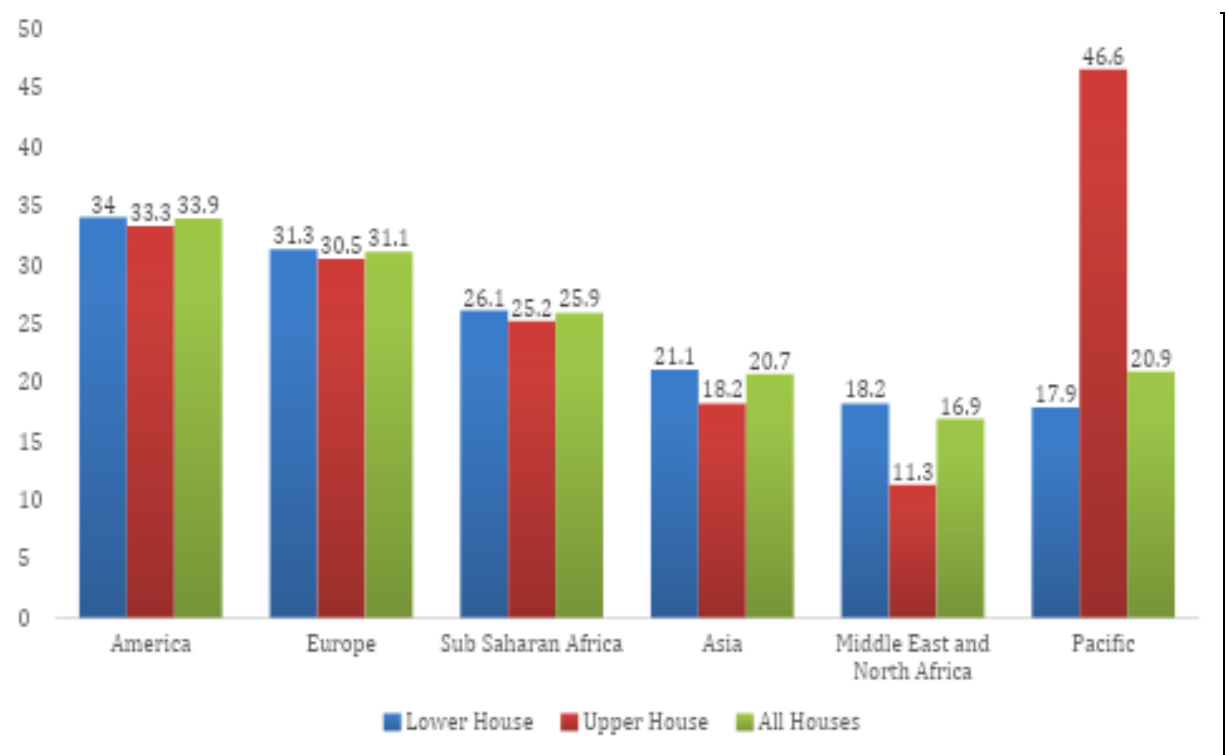
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Table 3: Regional Average of Women Participation in National Parliaments, February, 2022

(In Percentage)			
Region	Lower House	Upper House	All Houses
America	34	33.3	33.9
Europe	31.3	30.5	31.1
Sub Saharan Africa	26.1	25.2	25.9
Asia	21.1	18.2	20.7
Middle East and North Africa	18.2	11.3	16.9
Pacific	17.9	46.6	20.9

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union. (2023). Women in parliament 2022. <https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/reports/2023-03/women-in-parliament-2022>

Figure 4: Women Participation in National Parliaments, 2022



Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union. (2023). Women in parliament 2022. <https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/reports/2023-03/women-in-parliament-2022>

Figure 4 highlighted that America, with 33.9% women’s representation in all houses of national parliaments, is the top-performing region in the world. In contrast, Asia, the Middle East and North Africa are the worst-performing regions, with overall representation percentages of 20.7% and 16.9%, respectively.

Within Asia, Central Asia performs the best with 26.1% women’s representation, while South Asia has the lowest, at 17.8%. According to the report, Rwanda leads globally in women’s

representation in the lower house of parliament, with 61.3% women participation. Meanwhile, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, and Yemen have no women in their lower houses. In the upper houses of national parliaments, Bolivia has the highest representation of women (55.6%), followed by Australia (53.3%), Mexico (49.2%), and Canada (48.9%). Table 4 highlights women representation in the lower house of the National Parliament in India from 1951-2024.

Table 4: Women Representation in Indian Parliament [1951-2024]

Year	Women Candidates Contested	Elected to Lower House	Percentage of winner Women Candidates
1951	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
1957	45	22	N.A.
1962	66	31	7.3
1967	67	29	6.2
1971	86	21	5.2
1977	70	19	3.5
1980	143	28	5.7
1984	171	43	8.6
1989	198	29	5.9
1991	330	38	7.7
1996	599	40	7.7
1998	274	43	8.3
1999	284	49	9.4
2004	355	45	8.7
2009	556	59	10.7
2014	668	62	11.6
2019	716	81	14.9
2024	797	78	09.79

Sources: India Today Web Desk. (2020, March 7). Women's Reservation Bill: All you need to know about the bill which will bring 33 percent reservation for women in Lok Sabha. *India Today*. <https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/gk-current-affairs/story/women-s-reservation-bill-all-you-need-to-know-about-the-bill-which-is-yet-to-be-passed-in-lok-sabha-1653451-2020-03-07> ; John, K. (2024). 74 (13.6%) women MPs in 18th Lok Sabha is much below the global average of 26.5%. *Talk Today*; Press Information Bureau. (2024). Digital flipbook: General elections, 2024. Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India. <https://static.pib.gov.in/WriteReadData/userfiles/GE2024/index.html>

In the lower house (Lok Sabha) of the Indian Parliament there are 542 seats. After independence, in the Second Lok Sabha elections of 1957, nearly 45 women contested elections, and 22 were elected (Election Commission of India, 1957). By 2019, 716 women contested elections, and 81 were elected,

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accounting for 14.9% of the lower house. This data reveals that while women make up roughly 50% of the country's population, they hold only 14.9% of parliamentary seats, whereas men, who constitute approximately 51% of the population, dominate with 86% representation. Over 70 years, from 1957 to 2019, the number of women contesting elections increased three times (2.9% to 9%), and the proportion of elected women candidates doubled (7.3% to 14.9%).

In the year 2024, the number of women contesting election increased from 716 in 2019 to 797 in 2024, women elected to lower house decreased by 3 numbers, i.e. 81 in 2019 to 78 in 2024 revealed in figure 4. The situation in state assemblies is equally disappointing. There are 21 states and union territories where women constitute less than 10% of Members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs). Mizoram, Nagaland, and Pondicherry have no women MLAs in their state legislatures. On a positive note, states such as Bihar, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh, which have traditionally underperformed in sex ratio, have shown better representation of women in their state assemblies. From the above discussion, it is clear that even after 77 years of independence, India has failed to achieve equal gender representation in politics. Countries performing better in women's representation typically have constitutionally mandated quotas. For example, Nepal reserves 29% of seats for women in its legislature, while Pakistan and Bangladesh each reserve 20%, and Afghanistan reserves 28% of its parliamentary seats for women.

In the years 2025 and 2026, the composition of the 18th Lok Sabha remained unchanged as no general elections were held during this period. A total of 797 to 800 women candidates contested the 2024 General Elections, out of which only 74 women were elected to the Lok Sabha. This accounts for 13.6% of the total 543 seats. The success rate of women candidates remained low, with only 9.3% to 9.7% of the women who contested ultimately winning their seats. This figure reflects a marginal decline from the 17th Lok Sabha (2019), which had 78 women MPs (14.4%) (Association for Democratic Reforms, 2026; Election Commission of India, 2024; Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2026)

Despite a record number of women contesting in 2024, 2025 and 2026, the low conversion rate from candidates to elected representatives highlights the persistent challenges women face in securing winnable seats from political parties. In Indian democracy, women's reservation has navigated various socio-political challenges. Leaders of both pre- and post-independence India did not prioritize the rightful representation of women (Jayal, 2006). As a result, even today, women lack significant presence in the power centers of legislation, administration, and party leadership. However, over the years, some measures have been taken to address this imbalance (Government of India, 1993a, 1993b). The 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Indian Constitution are the significant steps that aim to enhance women's participation in decision-making bodies.

73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments: An Overview

Since independence, various steps have been taken by governments to enhance women's participation in politics. Among these, the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments have played an important role in transforming women's position in local governing bodies. The 73rd Amendment of 1992 introduced Part IX to the Constitution, consisting of 16 articles and the 11th Schedule. It reinforced Article 40, which is part of the Directive Principles of State Policy, directing states to organize village panchayats along with the model of self-governance (Government of India, 1950). This amendment marked the beginning of effective women's representation in local-level decision-making processes. The 73rd Amendment reserves one-third seats of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) for women (George Mathew, 1998). It is noteworthy that before this amendment, several states had already introduced provisions for women's reservation in local bodies. For example, Madhya Pradesh provided a 10% reservation, while West Bengal offered 33.5%. Karnataka was the first state to implement the provisions

of the 73rd Amendment, followed by Bihar, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, and Tripura. In the world's largest democracy, the 33.33% reservation for women in panchayats and local bodies has facilitated their entry into politics, signaling the breakdown of long-standing societal myths. This inclusion has not only improved governance at the gram panchayat level but also enhanced accessibility and transparency.

Women representatives have become role models, fostering greater self-esteem among women. Their participation has also impacted gender dynamics within families and society. The reservation for women in local governance has been a vital step, reflecting India's commitment to gender equality in political decision-making. There are numerous success stories of women *sarpanches* contributing meaningfully to village development. Yet, issues such as lack of education, insufficient training, and entrenched patriarchal values often limit women's ability to exercise real power. Many elected women representatives serve merely as face of the position with their male counterparts exercising the actual authority (Rajan & Retnakumar, 2005; Anuja, 2021; Khan, 2017).

Hence, the entry of women into politics has not been without challenges. Male dominance in politics, low literacy rates, patriarchal bureaucratic structures, and inadequate awareness of their roles and powers are significant hurdles faced by elected women representatives. While these amendments have increased women's representation in governance numerically, they have not necessarily led to genuine political empowerment (Goetz, 2003). Critics argue that the amendments, in some cases, reinforce inequality and fail to provide effective representation for all women (Menon, 2000). Opponents also highlight that the benefits often accrue to elite women, leaving women from minority, lower caste, and lower-class backgrounds unable to take advantage of these measures (Omvedt, 2005). Therefore, the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments have been transformative, shifting India's democracy from a purely representative model to one that incorporates elements of participatory democracy. However, much more is needed in terms of changing societal values and enabling true empowerment for women at all levels of governance.

Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam (Women Reservation Act, 2023): A Breakthrough

The Reservation Bill for women was first introduced in Parliament's Lower House in 1996. Following its introduction, a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) was formed under the chairmanship of Geeta Mukherjee, and the bill was referred to this committee. On December 9, 1996, the JPC submitted its detailed report to the Lok Sabha. Despite this progress, the bill faced numerous hurdles over the years.

It was reintroduced in the 12th (1998) and 13th Lok Sabha, and twice in Parliament in 2003, but it failed repeatedly to secure constitutional approval. In 2008, the bill was introduced in the Rajya Sabha and referred to the Standing Committee. In 2010, it was passed in the Upper House and subsequently sent to the Lok Sabha, marking the first significant step forward. Advocacy efforts intensified, with meetings and discussions involving academicians, social activists, and women's rights advocates. Alliances were formed, leading to activities such as rallies, press conferences, petitions, and face-to-face meetings with political leaders. Social and media campaigns were launched at both the state and national levels. However, the bill remained stalled in the Lok Sabha due to a lack of political consensus.

Finally, in 2023, this long-pending bill was passed known as the 106th Constitutional Amendment, reserves one-third of all seats for women in the Lok Sabha, state legislative assemblies, and the Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi, including those reserved for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs). The Lok Sabha passed this landmark bill on September 20, 2023, with overwhelming support, as 454 members voted in its favor. The Rajya Sabha followed suit on September 21, 2023, with all 215 members unanimously supporting the legislation.

Union Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman emphasized the significance of the *Nari Shakti*

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Vandan Adhinyam as a critical step toward achieving political empowerment for women (Government of India, 2023). As per Act the reservation will remain valid for 15 years, with the possibility of extension through parliamentary approval. Reserved seats for women will rotate, based on parliamentary legislation after each delimitation exercise. A new Article, 330A, is inserted into the Constitution of India, modeled on the provisions of Article 330, which reserves seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Lok Sabha. The Act also introduces horizontal reservation, cutting across different quota categories. Women from SCs and STs will be allocated one-third of the seats reserved for their communities in the Lok Sabha and legislative assemblies. This provision aims to ensure greater representation for women in historically underrepresented groups. The Act also aligns with Article 7 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which obliges states to eliminate discrimination against women in public and political life and ensure their participation in government policies and implementation. As a signatory to CEDAW, India's enactment of this legislation reflects its commitment to upholding this international obligation (United Nations, 1979). In a country, where Women constitute approximately half of India's population, with negligible political representation, this Act is a welcoming step. According to the 2015 Report on the Status of Women in India, female representation in state assemblies and Parliament remains has been significantly low. Women are also underrepresented in decision-making positions within political parties (Government of India, Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2015; Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2015).

Several factors like societal bias, which often failed to recognize women as capable leaders, and a perception that women are not capable of decision making and not competent as men, contributed to the delay of reservation of seats for women in central and state governments. Hence, The Women's Reservation Act is a step towards political empowerment of diverse Indian women and facilitating their participation in decision-making processes that shape the nation's future. Despite being a milestone and a landmark step in political empowerment of women, the Women Reservation Act, 2023, has been criticized.

- Critics argue that it would propagate the unequal status of women.
- Election The enforcement of women reservation will divert the attention of the policy makers from major electoral reform issues like inner party democracy and criminalization of politics.
- Reservation of seats for women would restrict voter's choice to women candidates only. Therefore, experts are of the view that alternative methods of reservation can be adopted like reservation in political parties or dual member constituencies.
- Opponents are also of the view that the sitting MP will not show interest to work for his constituency as and when the seat will be reserved for women and he will be ineligible to seek reelection. However, the fact remains that in the interest of democracy, it is the duty of the incumbent to work towards the well-being of his/her constituency, irrespective of whether or not he/she would be elected next time.

As of 2026, the Government of India is actively working to fast-track its rollout ahead of the 2029 general elections. The Centre has announced a three-day special Parliament session from 16 to 18 April 2026 to introduce and pass two key bills which include a constitutional amendment to the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhinyam and an ordinary bill to amend the Delimitation Act. These amendments aim to delink the women's quota from the upcoming Census (expected in 2027) and enable implementation based on the 2011 Census data, potentially increasing the total Lok Sabha seats from 543 to around 816,

with approximately 273 seats reserved for women. The government is currently holding

consultations with opposition parties to build consensus for the required two-thirds majority (India Today, 2026; Press Information Bureau, 2026).

Conclusion

The political empowerment of women is vital for eliminating gender inequality and discrimination in society. In India, however, this journey has been challenging. Although women had the right to vote since independence, their representation at various levels of government has remained minimal. The male-dominated power structure has often sidelined women's issues, leaving the voices of the few women representatives unheard. Empirical studies clearly demonstrate that the feminization of political governance can bring significant changes in public policy decisions and expenditure patterns.

In other words, women's political representation is a prerequisite for their empowerment. It is also widely believed that greater access for women in governance enhances the quality of politics. Therefore, from the grassroots level of village panchayats to Parliament, it is essential to elect more women. Hence, reservations for women at various levels of democratic government were crucial. The 73rd and 74th Amendments were initial and important steps toward including women in local governing bodies. The passage of the Women's Reservation Act marks a historic milestone in India's democratic journey. It signifies a collective effort to empower women, promote gender equality, and create a more inclusive political landscape. This Act represents a critical step toward building a more equitable and representative India. The adoption of this legislation as the first agenda in the new Parliament building reflects a strong commitment to women-led development as the way forward for the nation. The current government has pledged to implement it in alignment with this constitutional spirit.

However, the defeat of the constitution's (131 st amendment bill), 2026, reveal a legislative paradox. While there has been a rhetorical support for gender parity and women's reservation, the failure to combat 352 votes in the lower house reflects the symbolism of women's reservation. Evidently, the bill's failure not only delays the immediate representation but also highlights the "delimitation deadlock" which continues to serve as a legislative barrier deferring gender justice in favor of substantial participation and just power balances (Klây et al., 2025). This pulse of change is being felt across the nation, signaling a much-needed shift away from patriarchal mindsets toward a more inclusive and egalitarian future. Ironically, in the 21st century, an era where women are excelling in almost every sector, challenging men with their skills, knowledge, and leadership, society still requires women's reservations to ensure their rightful, just and equal place.

Conflict of Interest. The authors declare no conflict of interest

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