IJAER/ November-December-2026/Volume-15/Issue-6 ISSN: 2278-9677
International Journal of Arts & Education Research
(Peer-Reviewed, Open Access, Fully Refereed International Journal) Impact Factor:8.03

Women in Indian Politics: An Analysis of Representation in Parliament and State Legislatures

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- (UGC-NET December 2025 Qualified in Ph.D. Category)

Abstract:

For an Effective and Inclusive Democracy to operate, The Representation of Women in the Political Spectrum and Policy Making is considered as an essential factor especially in a country like India, where Women constitute nearly half of the population, yet their Representation in the Parliament and the State Legislatures has remained considerably lower than that of men since independence. Though the leaders of different political parties may claim that Women's Participation has gradually increased in the Parliament and State Legislatures in the last decade, yet their representation continues to be uneven and remains below their demographic share in the country. In India, Women are not given meaningful participation in the decision-making as well as in the policymaking functions of the Political System or the Government. Therefore, the purpose of this research paper is to carefully examine the status, trends and determinants of women's representation in the Parliament and State Legislatures in India. The paper at analysing the historical evolution of women's political participation to discussing the constitutional provisions and legislative measures for women in India and other socio-economic factors that influence women's participation in the Indian Legislature. Hence, the Research aims at enhancing Women's Representation in the Indian Politics, since the Researcher believes that adequate representation to the Women in Indian Legislatures can strengthen the representative character of Indian democracy and contribute to more inclusive and gender-responsive governance.

Keywords: Women Representation, 106th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2023 (Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023), Gender Equality, Universal Adult Suffrage, Gender Inclusive Governance & Policy Making, Patriarchal Attitudes, Gender-based Discrimination, Women Empowerment, Social Justice, Political Culture.

Introduction:

Women's Representation in Indian Politics is a significant indicator of the country's democratic development, gender equality, and inclusive governance. Despite India's constitutional commitment to equality and universal adult suffrage, women continue to remain underrepresented in political institutions, particularly in Parliament and State Legislatures. Although women have actively contributed to India's freedom struggle, social reform movements, and political development, their participation in legislative decision-making has not increased proportionately. The representation of women in the Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, and State Legislative Assemblies reflects persistent structural, social, economic, and political barriers. These include patriarchal attitudes, limited access to financial resources, gender-based discrimination, and the dominance of male leadership within political parties. Nevertheless, women leaders have played an important role in shaping public policies, promoting social justice, and addressing issues related to education, healthcare, and women's empowerment. Constitutional measures, including

the 106th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2023 (Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023), which provides for women's reservation in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies, represent important steps towards improving gender representation. Against this background, the present study examines women's political representation in Parliament and State Legislatures, analyses trends and regional variations, and identifies the major challenges affecting their participation. It also explores the implications of women's representation for democratic governance and gender-inclusive policymaking in India.

Constitutional and Legal Frameworks for Women in India:

- **Constitutional Provisions for Gender Equality in India:**
  - **Preamble**: Provides for Social, Economic & Political Justice and Equality of Status and Opportunity for all citizens, irrespective of Gender.
  - **Fundamental Rights (Part-III):**
    - **Article-14**: Guarantees Equality before the Law and Equal Protection of Rights for Everyone.
    - **Article-15**: Prohibits Discrimination on the grounds of Religion, Race, Caste, Sex or Place of Birth.
    - **Article-16**: Ensures Equal Opportunity in Public Employment.
  - **DPSP (Part-IV):**
    - **Article-39**: Directs the State to focus its Policies on securing Specific Economic and Social Welfare Goals for All Citizens.
    - **Article-39A**: Equal Justice and Free Legal Aid to All.
    - **Article-42**: State shall make provision for securing Just and Humane Conditions of Work and for Maternity Relief.
  - **Fundamental Duties (Part-IV-A):**
    - **Article-51 A(e)**: Citizens are legally and morally bounded to give up any Customs, Traditions and Behaviours that Insult, Demean or Harm Women.
- **Electoral Laws and Reservation Policies for Women's Representation:**
    - **General Voting Rights**: Under the Constitution of India and the Representation of People's Act, 1951, Women in India enjoys Equal Right to Vote (Universal Adult Suffrage) and Equal Rights to Contest Elections as Men.
    - **73rd & 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts of 1992**: **Local-Self Government Provisions.**
      - **Article-243D**: Mandates the Reservation of Seats and Offices of Chairpersons in Panchayati Raj Institutions for SC's, ST's and Women (1/3rd).
      - **Article-243T**: Provides for the Reservation of Seats in Every Municipality (Urban Local Bodies) and the Offices of Chairpersons for SC's, ST's and Women (1/3rd).
    - **Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023 (Women's Reservation Act)**: Mandates that at least 1/3rd (33%) of All Seats in the Lok Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies and Legislative Assembly of the N.C.T. of Delhi are Reserved for Women.

Historical Evolution of Women's Political Participation in India:

- Rise of Some of the Prominent Women in the Indian Freedom Movement:

Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi (1828-1858)	○ One of the leading figures of the "**Revolt of 1857**", led armed resistance against British forces in Jhansi.

Begum Hazrat Mahal (1820-1879)	○ Played a major role in the **"Revolt of 1857"** in Awadh by mobilizing the local support to prevent its annexation.
Annie Besant (1847-1933)	○ Played a major role in the **"Home Rule Movement"**. ○ Co-founded the **"Women's Indian Association in Adyar, Madras".** ○ Became the **"1st Woman President of the Indian National Congress in 1917".**
Sarojini Naidu (1879-1949)	○ Participated in the **"Non-Cooperation, Civil Disobedience and Quit India Movements".** ○ Played a prominent role in the **"Salt Satyagraha"**. ○ Became the **"1st Indian Woman President of the Indian National Congress in 1925."**
Aruna Asaf Ali (1909-1996)	○ Became a prominent leader of the **"Quit India Movement of 1942".** ○ **"Hoisted the Indian National Congress flag at Gowalia Tank Maidan in Bombay".** ○ Co-founded the **"National Federation Of Indian Women (NFIW) in 1954"**. ○ Became the **"1st Elected Mayor of Delhi in 1958"**.
Sucheta Kripalani (1908-1974)	○ Participated actively in the **"Quit India Movement Of 1942"**. ○ Played an important role in the establishment of the **"Women's Wing of the Congress- All India Mahila Congress in 1940"**. ○ Played a **"Prominent Role in the Constituent Assembly of India"**, contributing directly to the Drafting of the Indian Constitution. ○ Was the **"1st Woman Chief Minister of India and Uttar Pradesh"**.
Rajkumari Amrit Kaur (1887-1964)	○ Co-founded the **"All India Women's Conference (AIWC) in 1927"**. ○ Was a **"Member of the Constituent Assembly".**

	○ Co-founded the **"Lady Irwin College in Delhi".**
Durgabai Deshmukh (1909-1981)	○ Founded the **"Andhra Mahila Sabha in 1937"**. ○ Served as a **"Member and the Only Woman on the Panel of Chairmen of the Constituent Assembly"**. ○ Served as the **"1st Chairperson of National Council on Women's Education"**.

Women's Representation in the Lok Sabha since Independence:

- The table below shows the Number of Women M.P.s elected in the Lok Sabha from different political parties from the 1st Lok sabha to the Present 18th Lok Sabha:

Lok Sabha General Elections	No. of Women M.P.'s	State-wise Representation (Highest)
1st Lok Sabha (1952-57)	**22 (4.5% of 489 seats)**	Uttar Pradesh
2nd Lok Sabha (1957-62)	**27 (5.5% of 494 seats)**	Madhya Pradesh
3rd Lok Sabha (1962-67)	**34 (6.7% of 508 seats)**	Uttar Pradesh
4th Lok Sabha (1967-70)	**31 (5.9% of 523 seats)**	Uttar Pradesh
5th Lok Sabha (1971-77)	**22 (4.2% of 521 seats)**	Uttar Pradesh
6th Lok Sabha (1977-79)	**19 (3.5% of 542 seats)**	Maharashtra
7th Lok Sabha (1980-84)	**28 (5.2% of 542 seats)**	Uttar Pradesh
8th Lok Sabha (1984-89)	**44 (8.1% of 542 seats)**	Uttar Pradesh
9th Lok Sabha (1989-91)	**28 (5.1% of 542 seats)**	No Data Available
10th Lok Sabha (1991-96)	**39 (7.1% of 542 seats)**	Uttar Pradesh
11th Lok Sabha (1996-98)	**40 (7.6% of 543 seats)**	Uttar Pradesh
12th Lok Sabha (1998-99)	**43 (8.1% of 543 seats)**	Uttar Pradesh
13th Lok Sabha (1999-2004)	**49 (9% of 543 seats)**	Uttar Pradesh
14th Lok Sabha (2004-2009)	**45 (8.3% of 543 seats)**	Uttar Pradesh
15th Lok Sabha (2009-2014)	**58 (10.9% of 543 seats)**	Uttar Pradesh
16th Lok Sabha (2014-2019)	**62 (11.8% of 543 seats)**	Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal (tied)

17th Lok Sabha (2019-2024)	**78 (14.4% of 543 seats)** (HIGHEST NUMBER OF WOMEN M.P.'s)	Uttar Pradesh (11), West Bengal (11), Maharashtra (8) & Odisha (7)
18th Lok Sabha (2024-Present)	**74 (13.6% of 543 seats)**	West Bengal

Women in Top Government and Constitutional Positions in India:

- **President of India:**
  - **Pratibha Devisingh Patil** (25 July 2007 – 25 July 2012)
  - **Droupadi Murmu** (25 July 2022 – Incumbent)

- **Prime Minister of India:**
  - **Indira Gandhi** (1966-67), (1967-71), (1971-77), (1980-84)

- **Lok Sabha Speakers of India:**
  - **Meira Kumar** (2009-2014)
  - **Sumitra Mahajan** (2014-2019)

- **Governors of States:**
  - **Sarojini Naidu** (United Provinces) **(1st Woman Governor of India)**
  - **Sharda Mukherjee** (Andhra Pradesh & Gujarat)
  - **Fathima Beevi** (Tamil Nadu)
  - **V.S. Ramadevi** (Himachal Pradesh & Karnataka)
  - **Pratibha Patil** (Rajasthan)
  - **Prabha Rau** (Himachal Pradesh & Rajasthan)
  - **Margaret Alva** (Uttarakhand, Rajasthan & Goa)
  - **Kamla Beniwal** (Gujarat & Mizoram)
  - **Urmila Singh** (Himachal Pradesh)
  - **Sheila Dikshit** (Kerala)
  - **Mridula Sinha** (Goa)
  - **Droupadi Murmu** (Jharkhand)
  - **Najma Heptulla** (Manipur)
  - **Anandiben Patel** (Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh & Uttar Pradesh)
  - **Baby Rani Maurya** (Uttarakhand)
  - **Anusuiya Uikey** (Chhattisgarh & Manipur)
  - **Tamilisai Soundarajan** (Telangana)

- **Union Cabinet Ministers**:
  - **Rajkumari Amrit Kaur**
  - **Indira Gandhi**
  - **Sheila Kaul**
  - **Mohsina Kidwai**
  - **Ambika Soni**
  - **Sushma Swaraj**
  - **Mamata Bannerjee**
  - **Meira Kumar**

- **Girija Vyas**
- **Selja Kumari**
- **Najma Heptulla**
- **Nirmala Sitharaman**
- **Harsimrat Kaur Badal**
- **Anupriya Patel**
- **Smriti Irani**
- **Annapurna Devi**

- **Chief Ministers of States:**
  - **Sucheta Kriplani** (Uttar Pradesh) **(1st Woman C.M. of India)**
  - **Nandini Satpathy** (Odisha)
  - **Shashikala Kakodkar** (Goa)
  - **Anwara Taimur** (Assam)
  - **V.N. Janaki Ramchandran** (Tamil Nadu)
  - **J. Jayalalithaa** (Tamil Nadu)
  - **Mayawati** (Uttar Pradesh)
  - **Rajinder Kaur Bhattal** (Punjab)
  - **Rabri Devi** (Bihar)
  - **Sushma Swaraj** (Delhi)
  - **Sheila Dikshit** (Delhi)
  - **Uma Bharti** (Madhya Pradesh)
  - **Vasundhara Raje** (Rajasthan)
  - **Mamata Bannerjee** (West Bengal)
  - **Anandiben Patel** (Gujarat)
  - **Mehbooba Mufti** (Jammu and Kashmir)
  - **Atishi Marlena** (Delhi)
  - **Rekha Gupta** (Delhi)

- **Deputy C.M.'s of States:**
  - **Rajinder Kaur Bhattal** (Punjab)
  - **Jamuna Devi** (Madhya Pradesh)
  - **Kamla Beniwal** (Rajasthan)
  - **Pamula Puspa Sreevani** (Andhra Pradesh)
  - **Renu Devi** (Bihar)
  - **Diya Kumari** (Rajasthan)
  - **Pravati Parida** (Odisha)
  - **Sunetra Pawar** (Maharashtra)
  - **Nemcha Kipgen** (Manipur)

- **Key Women Bureaucrats of India:**
  - **Anna Rajam Malhotra (India's 1st Female I.A.S. Officer and 1st Female District Collector)**
  - **Kiran Bedi (India's 1st Female I.P.S. Officer)**
  - **C.B Muthamma (India's 1st Female I.F.S. Officer)**
  - **Kanchan Chaudhary Bhattacharya (India's 1st Female D.G.P.)**

- **V.S. Ramadevi (1st Female Chief Election Commissioner of India and 1st Female Secretary-General of the Rajya Sabha)**
- **Snehlata Shrivastava (1st Female Secretary-General of the Lok Sabha)**

- **As of October, 2026:**
  - **India has never had a Female Vice President.**
  - **India has never had a Female Chief Justice (CJI).**
  - **India has never had a Female Army, Air Force or Navy Chief.**
  - **India has never had a Female Cabinet Secretary.**

Factors affecting the Political Representation and Participation of Women in India:

1. **Social and Cultural Factors:**
   - **Patriarchal Norms and Gender Roles**- Traditional expectations confine women largely to the domestic household and care giving duties. Also, the Public Life and Political Leadership are frequently viewed as male domains, thus, discouraging the women from entering active politics.
2. **Educational Factors:**
   - Lack of Formal Knowledge of Constitutional Rights, Legal Frameworks and Electoral Processes among women.
   - Lack of Political Knowledge and Training.
   - Illiteracy
3. **Economic Factors:**
   - Lack of an Independent Economic Base or Control over Family Assets.
   - High Cost of Campaigns.
   - Unpaid Domestic and Care Work.
   - Lack of Access to Financial Information and Resources.
   - Lack of Financial Support for the Women Candidates by Political Parties, Business Associations, Trade Unions and Co-operatives.
4. **Political Party Structures:**
   - Pre-dominance of Men is found in Major Political Parties, leading to Male-centric Perspectives on National Issues and Gender Bias in Ticket Distribution.
   - Lack of Inner Party Democracy.
   - Women are confined to Party Office Works.
5. **Political Violence and Harassment:**
   - Physical Violence & Rapes
   - Direct Threats & kidnapping
   - Acid Attacks
   - Character Assassination
   - Verbal Abuse
   - Digital and Online Harassment (MMS, Sexist Trolling, AI Morphed Pictures)
6. **Media Representation:**
   - Mainstream Media often portray Women as Submissive, Passive or Secondary Actors rather than capable political leaders.
   - The Media Coverage frequently emphasizes on a Woman Leader's Clothing, Family Background, Maritial Status and Beauty instead of her Policy Expertise, Legislative Record and Governance Competence.

- Disproportionate Visibility & Under-representation on Mainstream T.V. Channels and Newspapers.

7. **The "Pradhan Pati" or Proxy Phenomenon:**
   - At the Local Panchayat and Municipality Level, the elected women representatives are frequently sidelined by their male relatives (Husbands, Fathers or Father-in-laws), who exercise the real decision-making power.

- Hence, despite High Voter Turnout, Women in India holds only 13.6% of Seats (74 MP's) in the 18th Lok Sabha, remaining well below the global average.

Intersectionality and Women's Political Representation:

- **Caste and Political Representation of Women:**
  - In India, Women's Representation in the Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies has historically remained limited compared with men's representation. Within this broader gender gap, women from marginalised caste groups face additional challenges in securing party nominations and winning elections.
  - Though, the Constitution reserves Seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Lok Sabha (84 for SC and 47 for ST) and State Legislative Assemblies (613 for SC and 565 for ST), but there is No Constitutional Reservation for OBCs in Parliament or State Legislative Assemblies.
  - However, the SC/ST reserved seats are not exclusively reserved for women. Both men and women from the respective communities can contest these constituencies, subject to the applicable eligibility rules.
  - The Constitution (106th Amendment) Act, 2023 provides for approximately 1/3rd (33%) Reservation for Women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies. Within that quota, approximately one-third of SC-reserved and ST-reserved seats would be reserved for women from those respective communities.
  - However, the Proposed Implementation was not brought forward by the April, 2026 Constitutional Amendment Bill, which failed to pass in the Lok Sabha. Therefore, the women-specific reserved seat counts shown above remain unimplemented (as of October, 2026).
- **Tribal Women's Representation:**
  - The Tribal Women's Political Representation is an important aspect of democratic participation, gender equality, and social justice in India. Women belonging to Scheduled Tribes (STs) often face multiple challenges arising from gender inequality, geographical isolation, poverty, limited educational opportunities, and social exclusion.
  - Although Tribal Communities have their own traditions of community participation and leadership, women's representation in formal political institutions remains an important area of study.
  - Political Representation enables Tribal Women to raise issues concerning land rights, forest resources, displacement, education, healthcare, livelihoods, and cultural identity and their Participation in Parliament and State Legislative Assemblies can help bring the concerns of tribal communities into legislative debates and public policymaking.
  - The Indian Constitution provides for the Reservation of Seats for Scheduled Tribes (ST) in the Lok Sabha (Article-330) and in the State Legislative Assemblies (Article-332).

- **The 2024 General Election Data provides Examples of Tribal Women entering into National Politics. As per it, 7 Women were elected from ST-reserved constituencies in the 18th Lok Sabha:**
  - **Gumma Thanuja Rani** (Araku Constituency, Andhra Pradesh)
  - **Anita Nagarsingh Chouhan** (Ratlam Constituency, MP)
  - **Savitri Thakur** (Dhar Constituency, MP)
  - **Joba Majhi** (Singhbhum Constituency, Jharkhand)
  - **Kriti Devi Debbarman** (Tripura East Constituency, Tripura)
  - **Delkar Kalaben Mohanbhai** (Dadra and Nagar Haveli)
  - **Himadri Singh** (Shahdol Constituency, MP)
- Also, **Droupadi Murmu** is the **First and Only Woman ST President of India (2022-2027)**. She was also the **1st Woman Tribal Governor of Jharkhand.**
- **Anusiya Uikey**, a Tribal Woman Leader also served as the Governor of Chhattisgarh (2019-23) and Manipur (2023-24).

- **Representation of Minority Women:**
  - In India, Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, and Parsi Women contribute to Political Life. However, their representation remains limited due to the intersection of Gender, Religion, Class, and Social Inequalities.
  - Several Women from the Minority Communities have made Significant Contributions to Indian politics:
    - **Justice M. Fathima Beevi** - **India's 1st Muslim Woman Governor**, who served as the Governor of Tamil Nadu from 1997 to 2001. She was also the **1st Female Judge of the Supreme Court of India**, appointed in 1989.
    - **Syeda Anwara Taimur** - **India's 1st Muslim Woman Chief Minister**, who served as the CM of Assam from 1980 to 1981.
    - **Najma Heptulla** - Served as the **16th Governor of Manipur and Union Cabinet Minister**.
    - **Margaret Alva** - **India's 1st Christian Woman Governor**, who served as the Governor of Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Goa between 2009 to 2014.
    - **Rajinder Kaur Bhattal** - **India's 1st Sikh Woman Chief Minister**, who served as the 14th CM of Punjab from 1996 to 1997. She was also the **1st Female Deputy CM in India** from 2004 to 2007.
    - **Mehbooba Mufti** - Served as the **1st Muslim Woman Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir** from 2016 to 2018.

Impact of Women's Legislative Representation in India:

- **Strengthening Democracy-** Women's Equal Participation makes Indian Democracy More Inclusive and Representative. Since Women constitute nearly half the population, their participation in Parliament and State Legislative Assemblies helps ensure that diverse social experiences and interests are reflected in the policymaking. It strengthens Democratic Legitimacy and Public Trust in the Public Administration.
- **Gender-Sensitive Lawmaking-** Women Legislators can bring Greater attention to Issues such as gender-based violence, domestic violence, workplace harassment, maternal health, and equal opportunities. Their participation can encourage gender-sensitive debates and laws, although policy outcomes depend on political priorities and institutional support.

- **Improvement in Education**- Women Representatives may prioritise girls' education, school infrastructure, scholarships, sanitation facilities, and measures to reduce school dropout rates. Their advocacy can help address barriers faced by girls, particularly those from rural, economically disadvantaged, and marginalised communities.
- **Better Healthcare and Nutrition**- Women Legislators can raise concerns regarding maternal healthcare, reproductive health, child nutrition, sanitation, and access to public hospitals. Their participation helps bring these everyday welfare concerns into legislative discussions and budgetary decisions.
- **Economic Empowerment of Women**- Women's Representation can promote policies supporting women's employment, equal pay, entrepreneurship, skill development, access to credit, and financial independence. Legislative attention to childcare facilities, maternity benefits, and safe workplaces can also improve women's participation in the economy.
- **Social Justice and Inclusion**- Women Legislators from Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Minority Communities, and Economically Weaker Sections can highlight multiple forms of discrimination. Their presence may improve the visibility of marginalised groups and strengthen debates on social equality, dignity, and access to public services.
- **Greater Accountability and Transparency**- Women Representatives can contribute to legislative scrutiny, committee discussions, public consultations, and monitoring of government programmes. Their effectiveness depends on their authority, experience, party environment, and opportunities to participate meaningfully in decision-making.
- **Transformation of Political Culture**- Women's Participation challenges the traditional perception that politics is primarily a male domain. It provides role models for younger generations, encourages women's political aspirations, and may help reduce gender stereotypes regarding leadership and decision-making.
- **Strengthening Grassroots Governance**- Women's experience in Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies has expanded Political Participation at the Grassroots Level. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments established a framework for reservation of at least one-third of seats for women in these local bodies, including reserved seats for SC and ST women. Such participation can create pathways to wider political leadership, though progression is not automatic.
- **Policy Priorities and Long-Term Development**- Greater legislative representation can influence discussions on poverty reduction, drinking water, housing, sanitation, food security, and social welfare. However, women are not a homogeneous group, and their political views differ. Representation produces stronger outcomes when accompanied by legislative resources, party support, and freedom to exercise independent judgement.

- However, the Numerical Representation of Women Legislators alone is insufficient, since, Meaningful Participation requires Leadership Opportunities, Institutional Support, Political Autonomy and Equal Influence over the Legislative Decisions.

A Detailed Study on the "Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023":

"The Constitution (106th Amendment) Act, 2023"

- The "**Constitution (106th Amendment) Act, 2023"**, popularly known as, "**The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023"** was introduced in the Lok Sabha on 19 September, 2023 and was passed by the

Lok Sabha on 20 September, 2023. It was then passed by the Rajya Sabha on 21 September, 2023 and got the President's Assent on 28 September, 2023 to become an Act.

- It aims to Increase Women's Political Representation and Participation in Legislative Decision-Making in India.
- **The Act introduces or modifies the following important constitutional provisions**:
  - **Article 239AA:** Provides for 1/3rd Reservation of Seats for Women in the Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi.
  - **Article 330A:** Provides for 1/3rd Reservation of Seats for Women in the Lok Sabha.
  - **Article 332A:** Provides for 1/3rd Reservation of Seats for Women in State Legislative Assemblies.
  - **Article 334A:** Deals with the Commencement, Duration and Rotation of Women's Reservation.

- This Reservation includes the Seats already Reserved for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs). However, the Act does not provide a separate quota for Other Backward Classes (OBC) women.

- It also sets a **15-Year Sunset Clause**, meaning the Reservation will last for 15 Years unless extended by Parliament.
- The reservation becomes operational after the first census conducted after the Act's commencement is published and the subsequent delimitation exercise is completed.
- Also, the Reserved Constituencies may be rotated after each delimitation exercise. The manner of rotation will be determined by a law made by Parliament.
- Thus, it is a Landmark Step towards Gender Equality, Inclusive Democracy and Women's Political Empowerment.
- **However, it has its own Challenges and Limitations, which are as follows**:
  - The Census and Delimitation requirements may delay its implementation.
  - Reservation alone cannot eliminate social barriers, political violence or unequal access to campaign resources.
  - Effective Participation requires political-party support, leadership opportunities and capacity-building.
  - The Act does not provide a separate reservation for women in the Rajya Sabha or State Legislative Councils.
  - It does not itself introduce a separate quota for women within the OBC category.
- Still, we can conclude that **"The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023"**, is a historic step towards strengthening women's political empowerment and making Indian democracy more representative. Its long-term success depends on timely implementation, effective political participation and the removal of structural barriers faced by women.

Suggestions and Policy Recommendations to increase the Women's Political Participation in India:

- **Timely and Effective Implementation of Women's Reservation:** The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023.
- **Reservation Within Political Parties:** Encourage or legislate for a minimum percentage of women candidates in party nominations and leadership positions.
- **Political Education and Awareness:** Organise awareness campaigns to educate women about their constitutional rights, electoral processes and political opportunities.

- **Leadership and Capacity-Building Programmes:** To Provide training in public speaking, election campaigning, policy formulation, budgeting and legislative procedures.
- **Financial Support for Women Candidates:** To Improve women's access to campaign funding, transparent political donations and financial assistance, particularly for candidates from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- **Prevention of Political Violence:** Establish effective mechanisms to address threats, harassment, character assassination and gender-based violence against women in politics.
- **Strengthening Grassroots Democracy:** To Empower Elected Women Representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies through adequate funds, functions, training and administrative authority.
- **Elimination of Proxy Representation:** To Prevent the practice of Sarpanch Pati, in which male relatives exercise the authority of elected women representatives, and ensure that women independently discharge their responsibilities.
- **Media Representation and Positive Role Models:** To Encourage fair media coverage of women politicians and highlight their achievements to challenge gender stereotypes and social prejudices.
- **Work–Life Balance and Institutional Support:** To Provide childcare facilities, safe transport, flexible meeting arrangements and family-friendly legislative working conditions.
- **Inclusion of Marginalised Women:** To Promote the Political Participation of SC, ST, OBC, Minority, Rural and Economically Disadvantaged Women through targeted outreach, mentoring and leadership development.
- **Monitoring, Accountability and Gender-Sensitive Governance:** Establish mechanisms to monitor women's representation, participation in legislative debates, committee membership and leadership positions, supported by gender-disaggregated data and periodic reviews.

Conclusion:

Women's Participation in Indian Politics represents a Crucial Dimension of Democratic Governance, Gender Equality and Inclusive Development. This Research Paper, titled "Women in Indian Politics: An Analysis of Representation in Parliament and State Legislatures," examines the extent of women's political representation, the structural and socio-cultural barriers that restrict their participation, and the reforms required to strengthen their role in legislative institutions. The analysis highlights that, despite significant progress in women's education, social awareness, and constitutional empowerment, their representation in India's Parliament and State Legislatures has remained relatively limited compared with their share of the population. This gap raises important questions about the inclusiveness and representativeness of Indian democracy. The enactment of the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023, or the Constitution (106th Amendment) Act, 2023, marks a Historic Milestone in the Pursuit of Gender-balanced Political Representation as it establishes an important constitutional framework for women's greater participation in legislative decision-making. Nevertheless, its intended impact depends on the fulfilment of the constitutional conditions relating to the relevant census and delimitation exercise. Therefore, timely implementation, transparent procedures, and institutional preparedness are essential to translating legislative intent into substantive political change. The findings of this research underscore that Women's Participation must extend beyond occupying seats to exercising meaningful influence over legislation, policymaking, parliamentary and assembly debates, and political-party decision-making. Moreover, women's political representation should reflect the diversity of Indian society. Particular attention must be given to women from Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, Minority Communities, Rural Areas, and Economically Disadvantaged Backgrounds. Hence, achieving Gender Equality in Indian politics requires sustained cooperation among the Government, Political

Parties, Electoral Institutions, Civil Society, Media, and Citizens, since, a Truly Representative Democracy can emerge only when women participate not simply as voters, but also as elected representatives, policymakers, and leaders who shape the country's political and developmental future.

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