



## Political Participation of Women in India: A Study

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**Abstract:** *Women empowerment is a new concept in India as compared to history in the rest of the world. The Vedic Yuga was marked by a considerable freedom and absence of bondages upon women. The honour of women started dwindling just after the Vedic age. The Mughal period followed the suit and women continued to be helpless and dependent on men. It was British Empire that brought a little change in the condition of women. The fact is that our society has always been primarily male dominated. Yet it is the recent time that witnessed a huge rise in enthusiasm for women empowerment. Indian women are significantly involved at the grass roots level of activism. In Independent India women have important political and administrative positions. When India became a sovereign republic, the first Lok Sabha had only 22 women though there was no dearth of suitable candidates at that time. the 17th Lok Sabha will have the highest number of women representatives ever. They have account for 14.49% of the entire strength of the Lower House, which was at 11.9% with a total 65 women MPs in the previous Lok Sabha. The Rajya Sabha brought the number of women MPs to 25 of 245, just over 10% of the house. This brings the tally of women in parliament to 104 (there are 79 women in the 17th Lok Sabha), which is a new record. We considered 30 States and Union Territories for this analysis. The total number of MLAs in each Vidhan Sabha or Legislative Assembly ranges anywhere between 30 to 398. Unsurprisingly, male MLAs form an overwhelming majority across all states, constituting anywhere between 86% to a full 100% in some states. Across India, an average of 8% MLAs are women.*

**Key Words:** *Women, Empowerment, Elections, Politics, India, Status, Development, Representation*

### INTRODUCTION

Empowerment of women is a basic requirement for the development of the nation as well as society. It is the most used and discussed term now a days. It is because women play a very important role in all walks of life. Empowerment of women is a necessary basic condition for comprehensive development of any society. Although women constitute approximately half of the total population, they continue to be subjugated, unequal in socio-economic and political status. It is true that women have been struggling for

self-respect, rights and autonomy for a very long time. The empowerment of women is a pressing need of the day. Unfortunately, it is least understood.

Women are no doubt the enfranchised member of the political empire yet they are far away from being considered an equal to men in political participation, political will power, especially with regard to the top-posts. They are considered to be second order citizens. Article 325 and 326 impart women the equal political right so that they may come at par with men with



respect to the participation in politics, including voting. They have not fully availed the benefit of this right. Alas! there is either an absence of particular laws or plans that could empower women in politics or lethargic attitude towards implementing them.

The fact is that our society has always been primarily male dominated. In society, women have always been considered second to men. Even in earlier periods, women were helplessly dependent on others for social and familiar activities. Generally, some efforts have been made for the development of the fair sex since the independence of the nation. Yet it is the recent time that witnessed a huge rise in enthusiasm for women empowerment. These efforts have resulted into a rise in the confidence level of women, and now they are preparing themselves for every possible challenge. The government schemes as well as the private organizations are raising their voice for rights of women. The attempts are being undertaken as to awaken the latent power of women through the movement generally known as 'Women empowerment'.

Indian women are significantly involved at the grass roots level of activism. The Chipko movement that arose in the 1970s is one example of success among the women's movement in India, as women protested the deforestation in Uttarakhand leading to the protection of the region. Since the Indian independence, women's organizations have focused on issues of violence towards women. Women's movements have focused on rape, female mortality rates, female foeticide, dowry deaths, sati, and domestic abuse. Tragedies such as the Mathura rape case in 1972, the dowry death of Tarvinder Kaur in 1979, the

death of Roop Kanwar by practice of sati in 1987, the gang rape of Bhanwari Devi in 1992, and the New Delhi gang rape case in 2012, have kept the movement focused on rape and given rise to many women's organizations at the local and national level.

#### **POLITICAL STATUS OF WOMEN**

The political status of women in India has evolved significantly over the years, though challenges remain in achieving full gender equality in the political arena. Historically, women in India were largely excluded from political life, with traditional societal norms and cultural practices confining them to domestic roles. However, with the advent of British colonial rule and the rise of the independence movement, women began to participate more actively in political and social movements. Prominent leaders like Sarojini Naidu, Kasturba Gandhi, and Begum Hazrat Mahal broke societal barriers and contributed significantly to India's struggle for independence. This marked a crucial turning point in the political status of women, laying the foundation for their eventual participation in post-independence politics.

After independence in 1947, India's Constitution granted women equal rights and opportunities under the law, a significant milestone in improving the political status of women. The framers of the Constitution recognized the need for gender equality, and the document explicitly prohibited discrimination based on gender. This legal framework paved the way for women's entry into the political sphere, albeit at a slower pace. Despite constitutional guarantees, the participation of women in formal politics, particularly in elected offices, remained limited for many years due to societal



constraints and deeply entrenched patriarchal attitudes.

Over time, women's political participation gradually increased. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments, enacted in 1992, were pivotal in ensuring greater representation of women at the grassroots level. These amendments mandated the reservation of one-third of seats in Panchayats and Municipalities for women, thereby providing them with a direct avenue for political involvement. This move not only brought more women into politics but also encouraged them to take on leadership roles within their communities. However, while this policy increased the number of women in local governance, their presence in higher levels of government, such as state assemblies and Parliament, remained disproportionately low.

At the national level, women in India have made notable strides, though their representation in Parliament continues to be a subject of concern. Women have held key political offices, including the position of Prime Minister, with Indira Gandhi serving as the country's first female Prime Minister for a substantial period. Other women, such as Sonia Gandhi, the former President of the Indian National Congress, have played influential roles in shaping national politics. However, despite these notable figures, the representation of women in the Indian Parliament has remained low. Women's political representation in both the Lok Sabha (Lower House) and Rajya Sabha (Upper House) continues to hover around 10-12%, which is far below the global average for female representation in national legislatures. The lack of women in higher political positions is attributed to several factors, including cultural and social barriers, patriarchal structures, and gender biases within

political parties. Women, especially from marginalized communities, continue to face discrimination and violence, which further limits their political participation. Political parties often prioritize male candidates, viewing them as more electable, and women candidates face numerous obstacles, including limited financial resources and societal resistance.

Furthermore, the political environment in India often remains unwelcoming for women. Instances of misogyny, gender-based violence, and the undervaluing of women's contributions continue to persist in the political landscape. Women in politics face challenges such as threats of violence, harassment, and the struggle to maintain a balance between their personal and professional lives. These factors contribute to the underrepresentation of women in key decision-making processes and hinder their ability to contribute fully to the political discourse.

In recent years, however, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of increasing women's participation in politics. This has been reflected in the efforts to pass the Women's Reservation Bill, which seeks to reserve 33% of seats in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies for women. While the bill has yet to be passed, its introduction has sparked important discussions about gender equality in Indian politics. Various political parties and women's organizations have continued to push for greater representation, emphasizing that the inclusion of more women in decision-making bodies will lead to more equitable policies and a stronger democracy.

In Independent India women have important political and administrative positions. For instance, Indira Gandhi guided the destiny of the country as Prime Minister for more than 15 years. Women



have also served as Governors, Chief Ministers, ministers in central and state governments, presiding officers of legislative bodies, judges of high courts and secretaries to the government. Though the constitutional equality is granted to women and women have held important positions, in practice, women are not treated well in all fields including politics.

It was believed that though very few women were actually joining politics, given time the overall change in terms of education and employment opportunities

would necessarily percolate into the political sphere too and their representation would increase. However, the position of Indian women in the Parliament has always remained at a very low level never going beyond 10 per cent at any point of time.<sup>41</sup> An Inter-Parliamentary Union report in February, 1997 revealed that women hold 7.2 per cent seats in the Lok Sabha, 7.8 per cent in the Rajya Sabha. The track record of women candidates in the last Seventeen Lok Sabha elections speaks for itself.

Women Members of Lok Sabha and their Percentage

S.No.	Year	Number	Percentage
1.	1952	22	04.41
2.	1957	27	05.40
3.	1962	34	06.76
4.	1967	31	05.93
5.	1971	22	04.22
6.	1977	19	03.49
7.	1980	28	05.15
8.	1984	44	08.09
9.	1989	27	05.22
10.	1991	39	07.04
11.	1996	39	07.18
12.	1998	43	07.92
13.	1999	49	09.02
14.	2004	44	08.16
15.	2009	59	10.87
16.	2014	65	12.15

Sources: Election Commission of India, New Delhi from 1952 to 2014 General Elections.

At 65 elected women MPs, the 16th Lok Sabha will have the highest number of women representatives ever. They will account for 12.15% of the entire strength of the Lower House, this is well below the global average of 25.10% female elected representatives in the parliaments. With 40 women MPs, BJP has sent the largest number of elected women representatives to Lok Sabha

because of the sheer size of its victory. It is followed by Trinamool Congress (9), Congress (6), BJD (5) and YSRCP (4), as per data compiled by Association for Democratic Reforms, which analysed 539 out of the total 542 winning candidates.

However, it is the regional parties that boast of a higher ratio of women MPs to their total MPs in the new Lok Sabha. Women account for 41.6 per cent of BJD's



total strength in Lok Sabha and 40.9 per cent of TMC's strength in the House. TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee and BJD Chief Naveen Patnaik had pledged to give tickets to 40 per cent and 30 per cent of party candidates before the elections started. Women account for 18.18 per cent of the total winning candidates for Jagan Mohan Reddy's YSR Congress Party (YSRCP). As far as the national parties are concerned, women MPs account for a mere 13.28 per cent of the total winning candidates of BJP and 11.76 per cent of that of Congress.

Women candidates also displayed a higher winnability factor or strike rate with 75.47 per cent or 40 out of 53 women fielded by BJP bagging a Lok Sabha seat. Similarly, 71.42 per cent of women candidates fielded by BJD won and 39.13 per cent of women candidates given a ticket by TMC were elected. In case of YSRCP, DMK and NCP, all women candidates fielded by them were elected as MPs. The 78 elected women MPs emerged winners out of the total 716 women candidates who fought during the 2014

Lok Sabha elections, which is a success rate of 10.89 per cent. This is much higher than the success rate shown by male candidates of 6.41 per cent with 462 male candidates winning out of the total 7,207 men who fought for a Lok Sabha seat this election season. A higher success rate or winnability factor shown by women candidates is consistent with the past record. As per official data maintained from the second Lok Sabha onwards, women have always had a better winnability factor. During the 16th Lok Sabha, the winning percentage of women was at 9.13 per cent and those of men was at 6.36 per cent. In 2014 Indian general election, "Naam Tamilar Katchi" from Tamil Nadu fielded 50 per cent women candidates in the total 40 Lok Sabha seats. It was the first party in India offered equal number of seats to men and women. And in the 2016 Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly election also they followed the same 50:50 ratio by offered 117 seats to women in the total of 234 assembly constituencies

Women Members of Rajya Sabha and their Percentage

S.No.	Year	Women Represents	Percentage
1.	1952	15	06.9
2.	1954	17	07.8
3.	1956	20	08.6
4.	1958	22	09.5
5.	1960	24	10.2
6.	1962	18	07.2
7.	1964	21	08.9
8.	1966	23	09.8
9.	1968	22	09.6
10.	1970	14	05.8
11.	1972	18	07.4
12.	1974	18	07.5
13.	1976	24	10.2
14.	1978	25	10.2



15.	1980	29	12.0
16.	1982	24	10.1
17.	1984	24	10.3
18.	1986	28	11.5
19.	1988	25	10.6
20.	1990	24	10.3
21.	1992	17	07.2
22.	1994	20	08.3
23.	1996	19	07.8
24.	1998	19	07.7
25.	2000	22	09.0
26.	2002	25	10.2
27.	2004	28	11.4
28.	2006	25	10.2
29.	2008	24	09.8
30.	2010	27	10.6
31.	2012	26	10.6
32.	2014	31	12.7
33.	2016	27	11.0

Sources: Election Commission of India, New Delhi from 1952 to 2016 Rajya Sabha Elections.

When India became a sovereign republic, the first Lok Sabha had only 22 women though there was no dearth of suitable candidates at that time. The second Lok Sabha had 27 women (5.4 per cent). In the third Lok Sabha this was improved marginally to 34 (6.7 per cent), whereas the fourth one saw a slump with only 31 women (5.9 per cent). There was a sharp decline when Indira Gandhi was at the peak of her career and only 22 (4.29 per cent) women were elected to the fifth Lok Sabha. There was a further decline in the sixth Lok Sabha (with 3.4 per cent). There was a small increase in 1980 in the seventh Lok Sabha with their figures going up to 28 (5.1 per cent). This situation improved somewhat and the figure went up to 44 (8.11 per cent) in the eighth Lok Sabha, the highest so far. This declined in the ninth Lok Sabha to 28 (5.29 per cent). It went up a little in the

tenth, eleventh, twelfth and Lok Sabha. The number of women in the fourteenth Lok Sabha has, however, declined to 45 (8.25 per cent). The political parties remain reluctant to field female candidates for election unless they are judged potential winners. In the case of Rajya Sabha also the percentage of women members has never crossed 12 per cent. Thus, the participation of women has dwindled in the country's political life. At 79 elected women MPs, the 16th Lok Sabha will have the highest number of women representatives ever. They have account for 12.15% of the entire strength of the Lower House, which was at 11.9% with a total 65 women MPs in the previous Lok Sabha. The Rajya Sabha brought the number of women MPs to 25 of 245, just over 10% of the house. This brings the tally of women in parliament to 104 (there



are 65 women in the 16th Lok Sabha), which is a new record.

Electoral outcomes cannot exceed inputs, be they direct elections to the lower house or indirect elections to the upper house. With political parties fielding 8-9% female candidates in the last decade of Lok Sabha elections, the houses could not have been more female. Their often-

cited excuse is a lack of winnability of women, a complete fallacy in the face of counter-evidence. In every single Lok Sabha election since 1952, women have won at a greater rate than men, as per Election Commission statistics. The graph of the data from 1957-2018 clearly illustrates that.

### Union Territory and state wise women members in the legislative assembly and their percentage

S.No.	State	Total MLAs	Men Members	Women Members	Women Percent
1.	Andhra Pradesh	175	161	14	08.00
2.	Arunachal Pradesh	60	56	4	06.67
3.	Assam	126	118	8	06.35
4.	Bihar	243	217	26	10.69
5.	Chhattisgarh	90	77	13	14.44
6.	Delhi	70	63	7	10.00
7.	Goa	40	38	2	05.00
8.	Gujarat	182	169	13	07.14
9.	Haryana	90	81	9	10.00
10.	Himachal Pradesh	68	64	4	05.88
11.	Jharkhand	81	71	10	12.34
12.	Karnataka	224	214	7	03.12
13.	Kerala	140	133	7	05.00
14.	Madya Pradesh	230	213	17	07.39
15.	Maharashtra	288	264	24	08.33
16.	Manipur	60	58	2	03.33
17.	Meghalaya	60	57	3	05.00
18.	Mizoram	40	40	0	00.00
19.	Nagaland	60	60	0	00.00
20.	Odisha	147	134	13	08.84
21.	Ponchicherry	30	26	4	13.33
22.	Punjab	117	111	6	5.12
23.	Rajasthan	200	176	24	12.00
24.	Sikkim	32	29	3	09.37
25.	Tamil Nadu	225	204	21	09.33
26.	Telangana	119	113	6	05.04
27.	Tripura	60	55	5	08.33
28.	Uttar Pradesh	398	356	42	10.55
29.	Uttarakhand	70	65	5	07.14



30.	West Bengal	294	255	40	13.6
Total		4019	3678	339	8.43

Sources: Election Commission of India, New Delhi.

We considered 30 States and Union Territories for this analysis. The total number of MLAs in each Vidhan Sabha or Legislative Assembly ranges anywhere between 30 to 398. Unsurprisingly, male MLAs form an overwhelming majority across all states, constituting anywhere between 86% to a full 100% in some states. Across India, an average of 8% MLAs are women

This is extremely unfortunate that even after a lapse of 68 years of inception of the constitution Indian women are still struggling for their due representation in the political process. The above table shows that there exists great gender discrimination in the State Assemblies. At present, women representation in all state/UT assemblies is merely 8.43% on an average while it comes to 12% in Parliament in India, lowest being 3.12% in Karnataka, highest being 14.44% in Chhattisgarh. Some states like Nagaland, Mizoram have zero representation of women’s participation in their assemblies. The trend indicates that there is an appallingly low representation of women in the state assemblies in India. It acts as a kind of hindrance in the way of women participation in Indian politics.

The representation of women in all the political and administrative activities is very low. We have a long way to go in improving the political status of woman as a member, voter and decision maker. The conspicuous reasons behind this plight are the low literacy rate of women, lack of confidence, poor exposure to administrative skills, low economic-socio status, traditional attitude and

perception of society as well as family, excessive interference of the male, low interest in political activities, high level corruption and crimes in politics.

**FAILURE TO INCLUDE ENOUGH WOMEN IN POLITICS:**

India's failure to include enough women in politics is a significant issue that continues to hinder the country’s progress toward achieving gender equality in governance. Despite various legal provisions, constitutional guarantees, and affirmative actions designed to enhance women’s political participation, the representation of women in India’s political institutions remains strikingly low. The reasons for this are multifaceted, rooted in deeply ingrained societal attitudes, political structures, and institutional barriers that perpetuate gender-based exclusion.

One of the primary reasons for the low political representation of women in India is the patriarchal nature of Indian society. Women in India, especially those from rural and marginalized communities, often face social and cultural barriers that limit their participation in public and political life. Traditional gender roles often confine women to domestic duties, and the idea of women participating in politics is viewed with scepticism by many. Such stereotypes are deeply entrenched in society, making it difficult for women to challenge the status quo and participate in political decision-making processes. Even when women do venture into politics, they are frequently sidelined or overlooked due to the prevailing perception that politics is a male-dominated domain.



Although the Indian Constitution guarantees gender equality and affords women the right to vote, their participation in political institutions such as Parliament and State Assemblies has remained limited. Women constitute approximately half of the Indian population, but their representation in the Lok Sabha (Lower House of Parliament) hovers around 10–12%, which is far lower than the global average. The reasons for this disparity are multifaceted. Political parties, which play a central role in the political process, tend to marginalize women, often giving them less prominence in electoral campaigns and decision-making. Women candidates typically receive less financial and logistical support from political parties, making it harder for them to contest elections. Additionally, many political parties fail to offer platforms or meaningful leadership roles to women, further restricting their political mobility.

Economic factors also contribute significantly to the underrepresentation of women in Indian politics. Political campaigns are expensive, and women, particularly those from poorer and rural backgrounds, lack the resources necessary to run successful campaigns. Without financial backing, women candidates struggle to reach voters, especially in rural areas where traditional patriarchal attitudes often limit their public visibility. Women are also less likely to be funded by political parties or corporate donors, who tend to prefer male candidates as they are often seen as more capable of winning elections due to prevailing social norms. Another major barrier is the political culture itself. Indian politics is often characterized by a high level of violence, corruption, and conflict, all of which are environments that are not conducive to women's participation. Political parties

may feel that women, especially those from marginalized communities, are less equipped to handle the challenges of competitive electoral politics. Additionally, women who do engage in politics often face harassment, threats, and gender-based violence, which not only discourages them from entering politics but also perpetuates the cycle of underrepresentation. Furthermore, once in office, female politicians are often subjected to sexist attitudes, ridicule, and pressure to conform to traditional gender roles, which limits their ability to exercise power effectively.

The lack of political mentorship and training for women is another factor that hinders their inclusion in the political sphere. Men have traditionally held the reins of political power in India, and women have often been excluded from leadership positions within political parties and institutions. This lack of political mentorship and experience means that women are less likely to be promoted to senior roles or to occupy positions that involve decision-making. Moreover, women who do manage to rise to positions of power often have to work harder than their male counterparts to prove their credibility, often fighting against gender bias and stereotypes that question their ability to lead.

Efforts have been made to address this issue, particularly through legal and constitutional provisions aimed at improving women's political participation. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments, enacted in 1992, mandated that one-third of seats in Panchayats (local bodies) and Municipalities be reserved for women, leading to a significant increase in the number of women in local governance. This reservation system has provided a platform for women to engage in politics,



build leadership skills, and influence local decision-making. However, the representation of women at the national level remains much lower, and women still face many challenges in scaling up from local governance to state or national politics.

One of the most prominent attempts to address the gender disparity in Indian politics is the introduction of the Women's Reservation Bill, which seeks to reserve 33% of seats in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies for women. Although the bill has been introduced in Parliament several times since 1996, it has failed to pass due to opposition from various political parties, particularly those from backward and marginalized regions. This failure to enact the Women's Reservation Bill underscores the deep-seated resistance to women's empowerment in politics and the reluctance of political parties to relinquish their control over the political domain.

The media also plays a crucial role in shaping public perceptions about women's political participation. Women in politics often face negative portrayals in the media, which focuses on their personal lives rather than their political achievements or leadership qualities. Media coverage of women politicians tends to emphasize their physical appearance, family background, and other non-political aspects, which undermines their credibility as serious political figures. Such portrayals contribute to the marginalization of women in politics and discourage other women from entering the political arena.

## STRATEGIES

Improving women's participation in Indian politics is essential for fostering a more inclusive, representative, and just democracy. Despite legal guarantees of

equality and several initiatives aimed at increasing women's political engagement, their representation remains limited, especially at the higher echelons of political power. Various strategies can be adopted to address this gender disparity and ensure that women have an equal voice in political decision-making.

First and foremost, creating a robust legal framework that ensures more significant representation of women in politics is crucial. The introduction and passage of the Women's Reservation Bill, which aims to reserve 33% of seats in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies for women, would be a monumental step toward enhancing women's participation. Although the bill has faced political opposition and has not yet been passed, its successful implementation could transform the political landscape by providing more opportunities for women to enter legislative bodies. Reservations at both the national and state levels would create an environment where women's voices are better represented in key decision-making processes.

Another vital strategy is to strengthen political parties' commitment to gender equality. Political parties play a central role in the electoral process, and without their active support, women's participation in elections will continue to be limited. It is essential for political parties to adopt internal policies that encourage and promote women candidates. This includes giving women the resources and opportunities they need to run effective campaigns. Parties should allocate a certain percentage of tickets to women, ensure their representation in leadership positions, and promote gender-sensitive policies. By prioritizing women's participation within the party structure, political organizations can foster an



environment that encourages the election of more female representatives.

In addition to institutional changes, addressing the cultural and societal norms that limit women's political participation is equally important. Gender stereotypes, entrenched patriarchy, and societal expectations of women's roles often discourage women from pursuing politics. To break down these barriers, awareness campaigns must be launched to challenge existing gender biases. Educating the public about the importance of women's participation in politics and highlighting successful female political leaders can help shift perceptions and inspire more women to engage in political life. Efforts to address violence against women, particularly in politics, must also be prioritized, as threats, harassment, and intimidation often prevent women from participating fully in politics.

Another effective strategy to improve women's participation is to provide targeted education and training programs for aspiring female politicians. Many women, particularly those from rural or marginalized communities, lack the necessary political skills, resources, and networks to compete effectively in elections. Political training programs can equip women with the skills they need to run successful campaigns, understand policy-making processes, and take on leadership roles. Providing mentorship and guidance from experienced female political leaders can also empower young women to enter politics with confidence and ambition.

Economic support is another crucial factor in increasing women's participation in politics. Political campaigns in India are often expensive, and women candidates, especially those from less affluent backgrounds, may lack

the financial resources necessary to run effective campaigns. Political parties, civil society organizations, and government institutions should provide financial assistance, especially for women candidates in rural or underdeveloped areas, to ensure that financial constraints do not prevent them from contesting elections. This financial backing can also help women gain visibility, connect with voters, and enhance their credibility as political leaders.

Furthermore, the role of media in shaping political narratives cannot be ignored. The media often perpetuates stereotypes and biases against women politicians, focusing on their personal lives rather than their political achievements. To counteract this, there needs to be a concerted effort to provide balanced and positive coverage of women in politics. Media outlets should highlight the accomplishments and contributions of female politicians, portraying them as competent and capable leaders. This can help counteract negative stereotypes and inspire more women to enter politics, knowing that they will be treated equally by the media.

Improving women's participation in local governance structures is also a key strategy for fostering long-term change. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments, which mandated one-third reservation for women in Panchayats and Municipalities, have been successful in providing women with an entry point into politics at the grassroots level. Empowering women at the local level allows them to gain political experience, build leadership skills, and understand the challenges of governance. Once women are established in local politics, they are more likely to rise through the political ranks and participate in state and national politics as well.



In addition to these strategies, efforts to create a safer and more supportive environment for women in politics are essential. Women politicians often face threats, harassment, and even violence, which deter many from entering or continuing in politics. Legal protections, along with institutional mechanisms to address harassment and violence, must be strengthened to ensure that women can participate in politics without fear of reprisal or abuse. Political parties, government institutions, and civil society must work together to create a political environment where women can contribute freely and safely.

Finally, increasing the participation of women in politics requires a broader societal shift toward gender equality. While political strategies and reforms are necessary, they must be accompanied by efforts to tackle deeper systemic issues such as poverty, illiteracy, and unequal access to resources. Women's access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities must be improved, as these factors directly affect their ability to engage in political life. Empowered women who are financially independent, well-educated, and healthy are more likely to take an active interest in politics and contribute to the political process.

### CONCLUSION

While there has been significant progress in the political participation of women in India, especially at the grassroots level, there is still a long way to go in achieving true gender equality in the political domain. Women have demonstrated their leadership potential and ability to govern effectively at the local level, but they remain underrepresented in higher political offices. Overcoming the barriers of patriarchal attitudes, social discrimination, political party dynamics, and the lack of resources will be crucial in

enabling women to take their rightful place in India's political sphere. The passage of the Women's Reservation Bill, continued advocacy for women's rights, and greater efforts to combat political violence and harassment will be essential steps in ensuring that the political participation of women in India becomes more meaningful and equitable.

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