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## WOMEN IN INDIAN POLITICS: REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION

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### Abstract

Women's participation in Indian politics is crucial for democratic governance and social change. Despite constitutional guarantees of equality, women's representation in Indian politics remains low. This paper examines the current state of women's representation and participation in Indian politics, challenges faced by women, and initiatives for empowerment. The study highlights the importance of women's reservation in local governments and the role of civil society organizations in promoting women's leadership. The article also discusses the challenges faced by women in politics, including patriarchal attitudes, violence, and harassment. Furthermore, it explores the initiatives taken to promote women's empowerment, such as the National Commission for Women's reservation bill. The article concludes that the women's representation and participation in Indian politics are essential for democratic governance and social change, and more needs to be done to address the challenges faced by women in politics.

**Key words:** Governance, Constitution, empowerment, Democracy, Civil Society, Leadership, harassment

### Introduction

Women's participation in politics is a key indicator of a country's democratic health. India, with its diverse population and complex social dynamics, presents a unique case study. The Indian Constitution guarantees equal rights and opportunities for women, but patriarchal attitudes and social norms continue to limit women's participation in politics. The 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution, which reserve one-third of seats for women in local governments, have increased women's representation at the grassroots level. However, women's representation in national and state legislatures remains low.

The importance of women's participation in politics cannot be overstated. Women's perspectives and experiences are essential for informed decision-making and policy formulation. Women's participation in politics can lead to more inclusive and equitable policies, which can address the needs and concerns of women and other marginalized groups.

Despite the importance of women's participation in politics, women continue to face numerous challenges in India. Patriarchal attitudes and social norms limit women's mobility and participation in public life. Women's roles are often confined to the domestic sphere, and they are expected to prioritize family and household responsibilities over political participation.

### Review of Literature

- The literature on women's representation and participation in Indian politics highlights several key themes. Studies have shown that women's reservation in local governments has increased women's participation and leadership (Chattopadhyay and Duflo, 2004). However, women's representation in national and state legislatures remains low due to patriarchal attitudes and social norms (Kumar, 2012).
- The impact of social media on women's participation in politics is also significant (Goyal, 2015). Social media has provided a platform for women to voice their opinions and mobilize support for their causes. However, the digital divide and online harassment remain major challenges for women's participation in online politics.
- The role of civil society organizations in promoting women's leadership is crucial (Ray, 2003). Organizations such as the National Federation of Indian Women and the All India Democratic Women's Association have been at the forefront of promoting women's rights and empowerment.



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- The literature also highlights the challenges faced by women in politics, including violence and harassment (Menon, 2015). Women politicians often face sexist and misogynistic comments, and are subjected to physical and emotional violence.
- The intersectionality of gender with other social identities such as caste, class, and religion is also an important theme in the literature (Sarkar, 2001). Women from marginalized communities face multiple barriers to participation in politics, including lack of access to education and resources.

### Representation of Women in Indian Politics

Women's representation in Indian politics is increasing, but still low. As of 2022, women constitute only 14.3% of the Lok Sabha (Lower House of Parliament) and 11.2% of the Rajya Sabha (Upper House of Parliament). In state legislatures, women's representation varies from 2.4% in Nagaland to 14.9% in Bihar.

### Challenges to Women's Participation

- Women in Indian politics face several challenges, including patriarchal attitudes and social norms. Women's participation is often limited by family and societal expectations (Kumar, 2012). Violence and harassment are major deterrents to women's participation (Menon, 2015). The lack of support from political parties and inadequate resources also hinder women's participation. The media often perpetuates stereotypes and biases against women in politics (Goyal, 2015).
- Patriarchal attitudes and social norms are deeply ingrained in Indian society, and they often limit women's mobility and participation in public life. Women's roles are often confined to the domestic sphere, and they are expected to prioritize family and household responsibilities over political participation.
- Violence and harassment are major challenges faced by women in Indian politics. Women politicians often face sexist and misogynistic comments, and are subjected to physical and emotional violence. The lack of support from political parties and inadequate resources also hinder women's participation in politics.

### Initiatives for Women's Empowerment

Several initiatives have been taken to promote women's empowerment and participation in politics. The 73rd and 74th Amendments have reserved one-third of seats for women in local governments. The National Commission for Women and other government initiatives promote women's rights and empowerment. Civil society organizations play a crucial role in promoting women's leadership and providing training and support to women politicians.

The 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Amendments to the constitution have reserved one-third of seats for women in local governments, increasing women's representation Bill, which reserves one-third of seats for women in National and state legislatures, is pending in Parliament.

### Suggestions and Recommendations

To increase women's representation and participation in Indian politics, several measures can be taken. Firstly, political parties should give more tickets to women candidates and provide them with adequate resources and support. Secondly, women's reservation in national and state legislatures should be implemented to increase women's representation. Thirdly, Civil society organizations should continue to promote women's leadership and provide training and support to women politicians.

Additionally, awareness and sensitization programs should be conducted to change patriarchal attitudes and social norms that limit women's participation in politics. Women's participation in politics should be encouraged and supported, and women should be provided with a safe and secure environment to participate in politics, crucial role in promoting women's leadership.



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## Conclusion

Women's representation and participation in Indian politics are crucial for democratic governance and social change. Despite challenges, initiatives like women's reservation in local governments and civil society organizations' efforts have increased women's participation. However, more needs to be done to address patriarchal attitudes, violence, and harassment. Increasing women's representation and Women's participation in politics is essential for India's development and democracy. It is essential to create a more inclusive and equitable society where women can participate freely and equally in the political process. The government, civil society organizations, and individuals must work together to promote women's leadership and women participation in politics is essential for India's development and democracy.

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