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**DAILY EDITORIAL
ANALYSIS**

TOPIC

**MORE WOMEN IN POLITICS IN 2024 &
BEYOND**

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Context

- As the world's largest democracy, India stands at a pivotal moment where the inclusion of women in political spheres is not just a matter of representation but a necessity for holistic development and true democracy.
 - ♦ In 2024, the call for increased women's participation in politics is louder and more urgent than ever.

Current Landscape: Women in Indian Politics

- Women's equal participation and leadership in political and public life are essential to achieving the **Sustainable Development Goals by 2030**.
- The percentage of **women Members of Parliament (MPs)** in the Lok Sabha (the lower house of India's Parliament) remained **very low — between 5% and 10% — until 2004**.
 - ♦ It marginally increased to 12% in 2014 and **currently stands at 14% in the 18th Lok Sabha, and 11% of the Rajya Sabha**.
- **State Legislative Assemblies** fare even worse, with **a national average of around 9%** women representatives.
- The **73rd and 74th** Constitutional Amendments of the 1992-93, provided for **one-third reservation for women in Panchayats and Municipalities**.
 - ♦ However, **attempts between 1996 and 2008** to provide similar reservation in the Lok Sabha and assemblies were **unsuccessful**.

Advantages of Women in Indian Politics

- **Enhanced Representation:** Women's participation in politics ensures that their perspectives and needs are represented in policy-making. This leads to more inclusive and comprehensive governance.
 - ♦ Policies like the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao and Sukanya Samridhi Yojana are examples of initiatives that have been influenced by women leaders.
- **Advancing Gender Equality:** Women's participation in politics is crucial for advancing gender equality. It ensures that the issues affecting women are adequately addressed and that policies are inclusive and equitable.
- **Diverse Perspectives:** Women bring diverse perspectives and solutions to the table. Their involvement can lead to more comprehensive and effective policies that benefit all sections of society.
- **Economic Growth:** Studies have shown that gender diversity in leadership roles can lead to better economic outcomes. Women leaders often prioritise social issues such as education, healthcare, and child welfare, which are critical for sustainable development.
- **Empowerment and Role Models:** Women in politics serve as role models, inspiring other women to participate in public life.
 - ♦ Leaders like Indira Gandhi, Mamata Banerjee, and Sushma Swaraj have paved the way for future generations, demonstrating that women can hold the highest offices and make impactful decisions.
- **Policy Focus on Social Issues:** Women politicians often bring attention to social issues such as healthcare, education, and gender equality.
 - ♦ Their involvement can lead to the implementation of policies that address these critical areas, benefiting society as a whole.

Challenges of Women in Indian Politics

- **Patriarchal Mindset:** Despite progress, a patriarchal mindset still prevails in many parts of India. Women politicians often face discrimination and are not taken as seriously as their male counterparts.
 - ♦ It can hinder their effectiveness and discourage other women from entering politics.
- **Safety and Security:** Women in politics frequently face threats to their safety and security.

- ◆ The risk of violence and harassment can be a significant deterrent, making it challenging for women to participate fully and freely in political activities.
- **Balancing Multiple Roles:** Women often have to balance their political careers with family responsibilities.
 - ◆ This dual burden can be overwhelming and may limit their ability to engage in politics as fully as they would like.
- **Limited Access to Resources:** Women candidates often have less access to financial resources and political networks compared to men.
 - ◆ It can affect their ability to campaign effectively and win elections.

Expanding Women Participation

- **106th Constitutional Amendment:** It reserves **one-third** of all seats for women in **Lok Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies, and the Legislative Assembly** of the National Capital Territory of Delhi, including those reserved for SCs and STs.
- It shall come into **effect based on the Delimitation Exercise** after the relevant figures of the first Census conducted after the commencement of this act is published.
 - ◆ **Census is overdue since 2021** and should be conducted without any further delay to ensure that this reservation is implemented starting with the general elections in 2029.

Key Grassroots Movements Promoting Women's Political Participation

- **Self-Help Groups (SHGs):** SHGs have been instrumental in mobilising women at the grassroots level. These groups, often formed in rural areas, focus on economic empowerment and social issues, which naturally extend to political participation.
 - ◆ By fostering a sense of community and collective action, SHGs have enabled many women to take on leadership roles within their communities.
- **Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs):** The **73rd Amendment** to the Indian Constitution, which mandates the reservation of one-third of seats in Panchayats for women, has been a game-changer.
 - ◆ It has led to a significant increase in the number of women participating in local governance.
 - ◆ Grassroots movements have supported these women by providing training and resources to help them succeed in their roles.
- **NGOs and Civil Society Organizations:** Numerous NGOs and civil society organisations work tirelessly to promote women's political participation. These organisations conduct workshops, provide legal aid, and advocate for policy changes that support women's involvement in politics.
 - ◆ Their efforts have been crucial in creating an enabling environment for women to enter and thrive in the political arena.

Way Forward

- **Quotas and Reservations:** Implementing quotas for women in political parties and legislative bodies can ensure a minimum level of representation.
- **Capacity Building:** Providing training and resources to women candidates can help them navigate the political landscape more effectively.
- **Strengthen Support Networks:** Building strong support networks through SHGs, NGOs, and other community organisations can provide women with the necessary resources and encouragement to participate in politics.
- **Policy Advocacy:** Continued advocacy for policies that support women's political participation is essential. This includes pushing for increased reservations, better implementation of existing laws, and creating more opportunities for women in politics.
- **Public Awareness:** Campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of women's participation in politics can shift public perception and garner support for female candidates.

Conclusion

- As we move forward in 2024, it is imperative that we recognise the critical role women play in politics. Their participation is not just a matter of fairness but a cornerstone for a vibrant, inclusive, and effective democracy.
- By ensuring that women have equal opportunities to lead and make decisions, we can build a stronger, more equitable India.



Mains Practice Question

[Q] Why is it crucial to have increased female representation in political leadership positions in 2024 and beyond? Do you think having more women in leadership positions could help address issues like gender inequality and discrimination?

