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Women's Political Representation in India: Challenges and Opportunities

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Abstract

Political representation is a fundamental component of democratic governance, ensuring that diverse social groups participate in decision-making processes. In India, women constitute nearly half of the population, yet their representation in political institutions has historically remained disproportionately low. Despite constitutional guarantees of equality and various policy interventions, women's participation in politics continues to face structural, socio-cultural, economic, and institutional barriers. Over the past three decades, significant progress has been achieved through local government reservations under the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments, which have transformed grassroots governance by bringing millions of women into public office. At the national and state levels, however, progress has been slower. The passage of the Women's Reservation Bill, officially known as the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023, marked a historic step toward enhancing women's representation in Parliament and State Legislative Assemblies, although its implementation remains linked to future delimitation exercises. This article examines the historical evolution of women's political representation in India, analyzes contemporary trends, identifies key challenges limiting women's political participation, and explores opportunities for greater inclusion. The study argues that while legal reforms are necessary, sustainable improvements require broader transformations in political culture, party structures, economic empowerment, education, and social attitudes. The article concludes that strengthening women's representation is not merely a question of gender justice but also a prerequisite for deepening democratic governance and inclusive development in India.

Keywords: Women, Political Representation, India, Gender Equality, Parliament, Panchayati Raj, Women's Reservation, Democracy.

1. Introduction

Democracy thrives when all sections of society participate meaningfully in governance. Political representation serves as a bridge between citizens and the state, enabling diverse voices to influence public policy and decision-making. In a country as socially and culturally diverse as India, inclusive political representation is essential for ensuring democratic legitimacy and equitable development.

Women represent approximately half of India's population and contribute significantly to its economic, social, and cultural life. However, their presence in political institutions has traditionally remained limited. While India was among the first post-colonial nations to grant

universal adult suffrage irrespective of gender, women's numerical participation in elected bodies has not kept pace with democratic expansion.

The contradiction between constitutional equality and political underrepresentation has generated extensive academic and policy debates. Women's political participation extends beyond voting behavior and includes contesting elections, holding public office, influencing policymaking, participating in political parties, and shaping governance outcomes. Despite improvements in literacy, workforce participation, and educational attainment, women continue to encounter numerous obstacles in entering and advancing within political structures.

The issue gained renewed significance with the enactment of the Women's Reservation Bill in 2023. The legislation seeks to reserve one-third of seats in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies for women, reflecting a major policy commitment toward gender-inclusive governance. Nevertheless, questions regarding implementation, effectiveness, and broader structural challenges remain central to scholarly discussion.

This article seeks to analyze women's political representation in India by examining its historical trajectory, current status, challenges, and future prospects.

2. Objectives of the Study

The issue of women's political representation has emerged as a significant area of inquiry within political science, gender studies, and public policy. Although India has made notable progress in promoting gender equality through constitutional guarantees and affirmative action measures, women continue to remain underrepresented in many political institutions. Against this backdrop, the present study seeks to critically examine the status, challenges, and future prospects of women's political representation in India. The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

2.1 To Examine the Historical Development of Women's Political Representation in India

The first objective is to trace the historical evolution of women's participation in Indian politics from the colonial period to the contemporary era. This includes analyzing the role of women in the freedom movement, the constitutional vision of gender equality adopted after independence, and the gradual increase in women's participation in electoral politics. Understanding the historical trajectory helps identify the social, political, and institutional factors that have shaped women's representation over time and provides context for contemporary debates regarding gender-inclusive governance.

2.2 To Analyze Trends in Women's Participation in Parliament, State Legislatures, and Local Governments

The second objective focuses on examining the extent and nature of women's representation across different levels of government. This includes analyzing trends in women's participation in the Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies, and local self-government institutions such as Panchayats and Municipal Bodies. The objective seeks to identify patterns of progress and stagnation, assess regional variations, and evaluate the effectiveness of policies aimed at increasing women's political participation. Particular attention is given to the transformative impact of reservations in local governance institutions.

2.3 To Identify Major Barriers Affecting Women's Political Engagement

Despite legal equality, women continue to face numerous challenges in entering and advancing within political institutions. This objective seeks to identify and examine the structural, socio-cultural, economic, and institutional barriers that limit women's political participation. Factors such as patriarchal norms, gender stereotypes, financial constraints, limited access to political networks, electoral violence, and discrimination within political parties are analyzed to understand why women's representation remains lower than their demographic proportion.

2.4 To Evaluate the Significance of Constitutional and Legislative Reforms

The fourth objective is to assess the role of constitutional provisions, legislative initiatives, and policy reforms in promoting women's political representation. Particular emphasis is placed on the impact of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments, which introduced reservations for women in local governance institutions, as well as the significance of the Women's Reservation Bill (Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023). This objective seeks to determine the extent to which legal reforms have contributed to political empowerment and whether they have translated into meaningful participation and leadership.

2.5 To Explore Opportunities for Enhancing Women's Representation in Governance

The final objective is forward-looking and focuses on identifying opportunities for strengthening women's representation in political institutions. This includes examining the role of education, economic empowerment, digital technologies, leadership development programs, political party reforms, and civil society initiatives. The objective aims to suggest strategies that can contribute to creating a more inclusive political environment and support the long-term goal of achieving gender-balanced governance in India.

3. Research Methodology

The present study adopts a qualitative, descriptive, and analytical research design to examine women's political representation in India. Given the broad historical and contemporary dimensions of the subject, the study relies primarily on secondary sources of information. The methodology has been designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the status, challenges, and opportunities associated with women's participation in political institutions.

3.1 Research Approach

The study follows a qualitative approach that emphasizes interpretation and analysis of existing literature, policy documents, and statistical records. Rather than conducting field surveys or interviews, the research synthesizes available information from diverse sources to identify key trends, patterns, and developments in women's political representation.

3.2 Sources of Data

The study is based entirely on secondary data collected from a variety of credible and authoritative sources. These include:

- Reports and publications of the Government of India.
- Election Commission of India reports and electoral statistics.
- Parliamentary debates and legislative records.
- Reports of the Ministry of Women and Child Development.
- Publications of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj.
- Academic books and peer-reviewed journal articles.

- Research papers published by universities and policy institutes.
- Reports by international organizations such as the United Nations, UN Women, World Bank, and Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).
- Newspaper articles and policy commentaries related to women's political participation.

These sources provide both quantitative data regarding representation levels and qualitative insights into the experiences and challenges faced by women in politics.

3.3 Scope of the Study

The scope of the study encompasses women's representation at three major levels of governance in India:

1. National level institutions, including the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.
2. State-level political institutions, particularly Legislative Assemblies.
3. Local self-government institutions, including Panchayats and Urban Local Bodies.

The study covers developments from the pre-independence period to current, thereby providing both historical and contemporary perspectives.

3.4 Method of Analysis

The collected data have been analyzed using descriptive and comparative methods. Historical developments are examined chronologically to understand changes over time, while contemporary trends are analyzed through comparison across institutions and regions. Special attention is given to identifying recurring themes such as gender inequality, political empowerment, institutional barriers, and affirmative action measures.

4. Literature Review

The relationship between gender and political representation has attracted considerable scholarly attention globally and within India.

Hanna Pitkin (1967) conceptualized political representation as descriptive, substantive, symbolic, and formal representation. Descriptive representation emphasizes the presence of individuals who share demographic characteristics with the groups they represent. This framework remains central to debates concerning women's participation in politics.

Anne Phillips (1995) argued that democratic institutions require a "politics of presence" where historically marginalized groups gain representation in decision-making bodies. She emphasized that equal citizenship cannot be achieved solely through formal legal equality.

In the Indian context, scholars such as Nivedita Menon, Niraja Gopal Jayal, and Zoya Hasan have highlighted the persistence of patriarchal norms within political institutions. Their work demonstrates how structural inequalities restrict women's political opportunities despite constitutional guarantees.

Research on Panchayati Raj institutions by Esther Duflo and Raghavendra Chattopadhyay revealed that reservations for women improved representation and influenced policy priorities, particularly regarding public goods and social welfare.

Zoya Hasan (2000) emphasized that women's representation in India is shaped by the intersection of gender, caste, class, religion, and regional factors. Her work illustrates how social hierarchies influence political opportunities.

Studies conducted after the implementation of local government reservations suggest that political quotas have increased women's visibility in governance and challenged traditional gender norms. However, researchers also note issues such as proxy representation, where male family members exert influence over elected women representatives.

Recent literature on the Women's Reservation Bill focuses on its potential to transform national politics while highlighting concerns related to delayed implementation and the need for complementary reforms.

The literature collectively suggests that while institutional reforms are important, meaningful political empowerment requires broader social transformation.

5. Historical Evolution of Women's Political Representation in India

5.1 Women's Participation in the Freedom Movement

Women's political engagement in India predates independence. During the national movement, women participated actively in campaigns led by Mahatma Gandhi. Leaders such as Sarojini Naidu, Aruna Asaf Ali, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, and Kasturba Gandhi mobilized women across social backgrounds.

Their participation established a foundation for women's involvement in public affairs and influenced post-independence constitutional commitments to equality.

5.2 Constitutional Foundations

The Constitution of India guarantees equality before law and prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex. Articles 14, 15, and 16 provide legal safeguards for gender equality, while Article 15(3) permits special provisions for women.

Universal adult franchise granted women equal voting rights from the beginning of the Republic, distinguishing India from many Western democracies where women's suffrage emerged gradually.

5.3 Early Parliamentary Representation

Despite constitutional guarantees, women's representation in Parliament remained limited. The first Lok Sabha elected in 1952 included only a small proportion of women members. Progress over subsequent decades was slow and inconsistent, reflecting broader social and institutional barriers.

6. Current Status of Women's Political Representation in India

6.1 Representation in Parliament

Women's representation in the Lok Sabha has increased gradually over time. The 17th Lok Sabha elected in 2019 recorded the highest number of women members in Indian parliamentary history. However, women continued to constitute less than one-fifth of the total membership.

Compared to several countries that have implemented gender quotas, India's representation levels remained relatively modest before July 2025.

6.2 Representation in the Rajya Sabha

Women's representation in the Rajya Sabha has historically fluctuated and generally remained below parity levels. Political party nomination practices significantly influence outcomes in the upper house.

6.3 State Legislative Assemblies

Women's representation in State Assemblies remains particularly low in many states. Several assemblies have reported single-digit percentages of women legislators, indicating persistent barriers at the state level.

6.4 Local Government Institutions

The most significant advancement in women's representation has occurred in Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies.

The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments mandated reservation of at least one-third of seats for women. Many states subsequently increased reservations to 50 percent.

As a result, millions of women have entered local governance, making India one of the world's largest experiments in gender-based political reservations.

7. Major Challenges to Women's Political Representation

7.1 Patriarchal Social Structures

Patriarchal norms remain one of the most significant barriers. Traditional gender roles often assign women primary responsibility for domestic work, limiting their opportunities for political engagement.

Women candidates frequently encounter societal skepticism regarding leadership capabilities.

7.2 Economic Constraints

Election campaigns require substantial financial resources. Women generally possess lower levels of economic independence and access to political funding.

The high cost of elections creates significant entry barriers, particularly for women from marginalized backgrounds.

7.3 Political Party Bias

Political parties serve as gatekeepers to electoral politics. Despite public commitments to gender equality, many parties nominate relatively few women candidates.

Women are often fielded in constituencies perceived as difficult to win, reducing their electoral prospects.

7.4 Violence and Harassment

Women in politics frequently face intimidation, harassment, and gender-based violence. The growth of social media has introduced new forms of online abuse and misogynistic attacks.

These challenges discourage many women from entering public life.

7.5 Lack of Political Networks

Political advancement often depends on access to networks, mentorship, and organizational support.

Women generally possess fewer opportunities to develop such networks compared to male politicians.

7.6 Intersectional Disadvantages

The experiences of women are not uniform. Women from Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, minority communities, and economically disadvantaged groups often face multiple layers of discrimination.

Intersectionality significantly shapes political opportunities and outcomes.

7.7 Proxy Representation

In some local government institutions, elected women representatives face pressure from male family members who exercise informal control over decision-making.

Although the phenomenon has declined in several regions, it remains a concern in some contexts.

8. Women's Reservation Bill and Its Significance

The passage of the Women's Reservation Bill in 2023 represented a landmark development in Indian politics.

The legislation provides for:

- Reservation of one-third of seats in the Lok Sabha.
- Reservation of one-third of seats in State Legislative Assemblies.
- Inclusion of reserved seats within Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe quotas.

Supporters argue that the legislation will:

- Increase descriptive representation.
- Encourage political participation.
- Create role models for future generations.
- Strengthen gender-sensitive policymaking.

Critics and scholars have highlighted concerns regarding implementation timelines, rotation mechanisms, and representation of diverse categories of women.

Nevertheless, the legislation is widely regarded as a historic milestone in India's democratic evolution.

9. Opportunities for Enhancing Women's Political Representation

9.1 Educational Advancement

Increasing educational attainment among women creates opportunities for greater political awareness, leadership development, and civic participation.

Higher education institutions can play a critical role in nurturing future women leaders.

9.2 Digital Technologies

Digital platforms provide new avenues for political communication, mobilization, and leadership. Social media enables women leaders to engage directly with constituents and challenge traditional barriers.

9.3 Capacity Building Programs

Training programs focused on leadership, governance, public speaking, and policy analysis can strengthen women's effectiveness in public office.

Such initiatives are particularly important for first-generation women leaders.

9.4 Strengthening Political Party Reforms

Political parties can improve representation by:

- Establishing candidate quotas.
- Creating leadership development programs.
- Ensuring equal access to resources.
- Promoting women within party hierarchies.

9.5 Economic Empowerment

Economic independence enhances political participation by increasing women's ability to finance campaigns and engage in public life.

Policies supporting entrepreneurship, employment, and financial inclusion can indirectly strengthen political representation.

9.6 Civil Society Support

Women's organizations, advocacy groups, and community networks have played a crucial role in promoting political participation.

Continued collaboration between civil society and government institutions can expand opportunities for women leaders.

9.7 Role Models and Leadership Visibility

The visibility of successful women leaders inspires political engagement among younger generations.

India has witnessed prominent women leaders at national, state, and local levels whose contributions demonstrate women's capacity to lead effectively.

10. Impact of Women's Representation on Governance

Women's political representation is not merely a matter of numerical inclusion; it has significant implications for the quality, responsiveness, and inclusiveness of governance. Numerous studies conducted in India and across the world suggest that the increased participation of women in political institutions can positively influence policy priorities, decision-making processes, and development outcomes. As women bring diverse life experiences and perspectives into governance, their presence contributes to more representative and democratic institutions.

10.1 Strengthening Democratic Legitimacy

One of the most important impacts of women's representation is the enhancement of democratic legitimacy. Democracy functions most effectively when political institutions reflect the diversity of the population they serve. Greater representation of women ensures that the interests and concerns of nearly half the population are incorporated into public decision-making. It also strengthens citizens' confidence in democratic institutions by promoting inclusivity and equal participation.

10.2 Influence on Policy Priorities

Research has shown that women representatives often place greater emphasis on issues that directly affect families and communities. Their policy priorities frequently include:

- Expansion of healthcare services.
- Improvement of educational opportunities.
- Access to clean drinking water.
- Sanitation and hygiene infrastructure.
- Child welfare and nutrition programs.
- Social security and welfare schemes.
- Women's safety and gender justice initiatives.

As a result, increased women's representation can lead to more balanced and people-centered policymaking.

10.3 Improving Local Governance

Evidence from Panchayati Raj Institutions demonstrates that women leaders often contribute significantly to local development. Studies indicate that women-headed local governments tend to allocate greater attention to public goods and basic services. In many cases, women representatives have actively worked to improve roads, schools, water supply systems, healthcare facilities, and community welfare programs.

The reservation of seats for women in local government institutions has enabled millions of women to participate in governance and has transformed the political landscape of rural India. This experience suggests that political inclusion can contribute to more responsive and accountable governance.

10.4 Enhancing Accountability and Transparency

Women representatives are frequently associated with greater transparency and accountability in governance. While governance outcomes depend on multiple factors, several studies have found that women's participation can reduce elite capture of institutions and encourage greater citizen engagement. Women leaders often maintain closer interactions with local communities, which helps improve responsiveness to public concerns and strengthens mechanisms of accountability.

10.5 Promoting Gender-Sensitive Governance

The presence of women in political institutions increases the likelihood that gender-related issues will receive policy attention. Women legislators and elected representatives often advocate for measures related to reproductive health, maternal care, equal opportunities, workplace safety, education for girls, and prevention of gender-based violence. Their participation helps ensure that public policies consider the specific needs and experiences of women.

10.6 Inspiring Future Generations

Women's representation has important symbolic effects. The visibility of women in positions of political authority challenges traditional stereotypes about leadership and encourages younger women to participate in public life. Female political leaders serve as role models who demonstrate that governance and leadership are not exclusively male domains. Over time, this can contribute to changing societal attitudes and reducing gender-based barriers.

10.7 Limitations and Continuing Challenges

Although increased representation has generated positive outcomes, numerical representation alone does not automatically guarantee empowerment. Challenges such as proxy representation, limited decision-making authority, lack of political experience, and institutional constraints may affect the effectiveness of women representatives. Therefore, representation must be accompanied by capacity-building initiatives, financial support, and institutional reforms to ensure meaningful participation.

Overall, evidence suggests that women's political representation contributes significantly to improving governance outcomes, promoting social inclusion, and strengthening democratic institutions. As India continues to expand opportunities for women's participation, their role in shaping governance is likely to become increasingly important.

11. Comparative Perspective

Women's political representation is a global concern, and many countries have implemented various institutional mechanisms to address gender disparities in political participation. Comparing India's experience with that of other countries provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of different approaches and highlights lessons that can inform future reforms.

11.1 Global Trends in Women's Political Representation

Over the past few decades, women's representation in legislatures worldwide has increased significantly. This progress has largely been driven by constitutional reforms, legislative quotas, political party initiatives, and broader societal changes promoting gender equality. International organizations such as the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union have consistently advocated for greater inclusion of women in political institutions as an essential component of democratic governance.

Despite improvements, significant disparities continue to exist across countries. Nations that have adopted robust quota systems generally report higher levels of female representation than those relying solely on voluntary measures.

11.2 Rwanda: A Global Leader in Women's Representation

Rwanda is frequently cited as one of the most successful examples of women's political inclusion. Constitutional provisions and reserved seats have enabled women to achieve a majority presence in the national legislature. Women's active participation in governance has been associated with increased attention to social welfare, education, healthcare, and post-conflict reconstruction. Rwanda demonstrates how institutional mechanisms can rapidly transform representation levels when supported by political commitment.

11.3 Mexico: Gender Parity Through Electoral Reform

Mexico has adopted comprehensive gender parity laws requiring political parties to nominate equal numbers of male and female candidates. These reforms have substantially increased women's representation in legislative bodies. Mexico's experience illustrates the importance of combining legal mandates with enforcement mechanisms to ensure compliance by political parties.

11.4 Sweden: Representation Through Political Culture

Unlike many countries that rely heavily on constitutional quotas, Sweden has achieved high levels of women's representation largely through progressive political culture and voluntary party quotas. Political parties actively promote gender balance in candidate selection, and societal support for gender equality reinforces women's participation. Sweden demonstrates that cultural change and institutional commitment can work together to create inclusive political systems.

11.5 India's Position in Comparative Perspective

India presents a unique case. While women's representation in Parliament and State Legislatures has historically remained relatively modest, the country's experience with local government reservations is considered one of the largest democratic experiments in women's political empowerment. Millions of women have entered political institutions through Panchayati Raj reservations, creating a broad base of political participation unmatched in many parts of the world.

However, India's challenge lies in translating local-level success into greater representation at state and national levels. The enactment of the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023, represents a significant step in this direction, but its effectiveness will depend on implementation and broader institutional support.

11.6 Lessons for India

The experiences of Rwanda, Mexico, and Sweden suggest several lessons for India:

- Legal quotas can significantly improve representation.
- Political party commitment is essential for long-term progress.
- Leadership development and capacity-building programs strengthen effectiveness.
- Social acceptance of women leaders enhances political participation.
- Gender equality requires both institutional reforms and cultural transformation.

Comparative analysis indicates that while India has made substantial progress, particularly in local governance, continued reforms are necessary to achieve more balanced representation across all political institutions.

12. Future Prospects

The future of women's political representation in India will depend on the interaction of constitutional reforms, institutional commitments, socio-economic changes, and evolving public attitudes toward gender equality. While significant progress has been made, particularly at the local level, substantial opportunities remain for expanding women's participation in governance.

12.1 Implementation of the Women's Reservation Bill

One of the most significant developments shaping the future of women's political representation is the passage of the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023. Once implemented, the reservation of one-third of seats in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies has the potential to transform India's political landscape. The success of this initiative will depend on timely implementation, effective administration, and sustained political support.

12.2 Reforming Political Party Structures

Political parties play a crucial role in determining who enters electoral politics. Increasing women's representation requires parties to move beyond symbolic commitments and adopt concrete measures such as candidate quotas, leadership training programs, and transparent selection processes. Greater inclusion of women in decision-making positions within party organizations can also contribute to long-term change.

12.3 Leadership Development and Capacity Building

As more women enter politics, the need for leadership development programs becomes increasingly important. Training in governance, policymaking, communication, negotiation, and campaign management can enhance women's effectiveness as political leaders. Capacity-building initiatives are particularly valuable for first-generation politicians and women from marginalized communities.

12.4 Economic Empowerment as a Foundation for Political Participation

Economic independence significantly influences political participation. Women who have access to financial resources, employment opportunities, and entrepreneurial support are often better

positioned to engage in politics. Future policies aimed at women's economic empowerment can indirectly contribute to greater political representation.

12.5 Harnessing Digital Technology

The rapid expansion of digital communication presents new opportunities for women leaders. Social media platforms, online campaigns, and digital networking tools enable women to engage directly with citizens, mobilize support, and overcome traditional barriers associated with political participation. Digital technologies can also facilitate leadership training and civic education programs.

12.6 Addressing Gender-Based Violence in Politics

Ensuring safe and inclusive political spaces is essential for increasing women's participation. Stronger legal protections, effective complaint mechanisms, and institutional support systems are needed to address harassment, intimidation, and violence against women in politics. Creating a secure environment can encourage more women to pursue political careers.

12.7 Promoting Gender-Sensitive Political Culture

Long-term progress requires changes in societal attitudes and cultural norms. Educational institutions, media organizations, civil society groups, and political leaders all have a role to play in challenging stereotypes and promoting acceptance of women as political leaders. Greater visibility of successful women politicians can contribute to shifting public perceptions.

12.8 Strengthening Intersectional Inclusion

Future efforts should recognize the diversity of women's experiences. Policies must ensure that women from Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, minority communities, rural areas, and economically disadvantaged backgrounds have meaningful opportunities to participate in politics. Inclusive representation strengthens both democracy and social justice.

12.9 Towards an Inclusive Democracy

If constitutional reforms, institutional support, and social transformation progress simultaneously, India can achieve substantial improvements in women's political representation over the coming decades. Greater inclusion of women in governance is likely to strengthen democratic accountability, improve policy responsiveness, and contribute to more equitable development outcomes.

The future of Indian democracy is closely linked to its ability to ensure that women participate not merely as voters, but as leaders, legislators, policymakers, and decision-makers. A more gender-balanced political system will not only advance equality but also enhance the quality and legitimacy of democratic governance.

13. Conclusion

Women's political representation in India has undergone significant transformation since independence. Constitutional guarantees, democratic participation, and local government reservations have expanded opportunities for women to engage in governance. The success of Panchayati Raj reservations demonstrates that institutional interventions can produce meaningful change.

However, substantial challenges persist. Patriarchal attitudes, economic inequalities, party-level discrimination, violence, and structural barriers continue to limit women's participation at higher levels of government. The passage of the Women's Reservation Bill in 2023 marks a historic opportunity to address these disparities, though its long-term impact will depend on effective implementation and complementary reforms.

Political representation is not merely about increasing numbers; it is about ensuring meaningful participation, influence, and leadership. A democracy that fully incorporates women's voices is better positioned to address social inequalities, promote inclusive development, and strengthen democratic governance. As India progresses toward greater gender equality, enhancing women's political representation will remain a critical component of democratic transformation.

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