

Government is promoting greater participation of women in local governance and political leadership roles

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The Government of India has adopted a “whole-of-government” and “whole-of-society” approach to address issues on a life-cycle continuum basis for the holistic empowerment of women from all sections of the society, and this includes political empowerment of women. Through various policies, the Government of India is promoting greater participation of women in local governance and political leadership roles.

The total number of women contesting general elections in the country has increased from 3% in 1957 to 10% in 2024. The total number of elected women members, which was 22 in the First Lok Sabha and 27 in the Second Lok Sabha has increased to 78 in the 17th Lok Sabha and to 75 in the 18th Lok Sabha (which is approximately 14% of the total members). In the Rajya Sabha also, the total number of women members in 1952 was 15, which is 42 at present. It is approximately 17% of the total members. Further, the country has about 14.5 lakh Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), which is about 46% of the total elected representatives, unparalleled in the world. There are 21 States in the country who have made provision for 50% reservation for women in PRIs as against constitutional mandate of minimum 33% reservation for women.

In 2023, Parliament of India passed the Constitution (One Hundred and Sixth Amendment) Act, 2023, “Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam”, marking a historic milestone in its national journey to foster equitable representation of women in public life at all levels of the federal structure. This landmark legislation rotationally reserves one-third of all seats for women in the Lower House of Parliament, Lok Sabha, and in all State Legislative Assemblies, including Legislative Assembly of National Capital Territory of Delhi, thus institutionalizing representation of women in politics at the highest levels of public decision-making.

The Government has launched the “Sashakt Panchayat-Netri Abhiyan”, a comprehensive and targeted capacity-building initiative aimed at strengthening Women Elected Representatives of Panchayati Raj Institutions across the nation. It focuses on sharpening their leadership acumen, enhancing their decision-making capabilities, and reinforcing their role in grassroots governance. The Government has prepared specialized training modules designed specifically for capacity building of Women Elected Representatives of Panchayati Raj Institutions. Recognizing the on-ground challenges faced by women duty bearers and women leaders contesting elections, a comprehensive “Primer on Law Addressing Gender Based Violence and Harmful Practices” for Panchayat Elected Representatives has also been prepared.

Recently, the Government has launched Model Women-Friendly Gram Panchayats Initiative with an aim to establish at least one Model Gram Panchayat in each District in the country that is both women and girl friendly, reinforcing the commitment to gender equality and sustainable rural development.

Envisioning Self Help Groups (SHG) as vehicles of change, today 10 crore women linked with over 90 Lakh SHGs, with support from government are transforming the rural landscape economically, and taking greater leadership at grassroots level.

This information was given by the Minister of State for Women and Child Development Smt. Savitri Thakur in Rajya Sabha in reply to a question today.

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