Polity & Governance · GS - II

“Women's political representation is essential for substantive democracy, but constitutional reservation alone cannot ensure their effective participation.” Examine.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
DAILY PRACTICE 25/11/2026	GS - II	Polity & Governance

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

Political representation, gender equality, 106th Constitutional Amendment, descriptive representation, substantive participation, institutional barriers

Model Answer

Women's representation in legislative institutions is central to inclusive democracy. The Constitution (106th Amendment) Act, 2023 provides for one-third reservation of seats for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies, including the Delhi Assembly.

Significance of women's reservation

1. **Democratic inclusion:** It addresses historical underrepresentation and makes legislatures more representative of India's population.
2. **Policy responsiveness:** Greater participation can strengthen attention to issues such as healthcare, education, safety and economic empowerment.
3. **Political leadership:** Reservation creates opportunities for women to enter electoral politics and develop leadership experience.

4. **Social transformation:** Women's visibility in decision-making can challenge entrenched gender stereotypes.

Why representation alone is insufficient

1. **Implementation delay:** The amendment links the commencement of reservation to a census followed by delimitation.
2. **Structural barriers:** Campaign financing, political networks, social norms and unequal access to party structures constrain women's participation.
3. **Token representation:** Formal presence does not automatically ensure independent decision-making or influence over legislative priorities.
4. **Intersectional inequalities:** Women from disadvantaged caste, tribal and economic backgrounds face additional barriers.

Institutional measures required

Political parties should improve women's representation in candidate selection and leadership positions. Legislative capacity-building, transparent campaign finance and safer political environments can strengthen meaningful participation.

Conclusion: Reservation is an important constitutional instrument for correcting historical exclusion. Its democratic value will depend on timely implementation and the creation of conditions in which women exercise genuine political agency.

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