

# Indian Voters' Perception Towards Quota for Women in Politics

*(An assessment of Indian Urban Voters' Opinion related to Necessity and Impact of 33% Reservation of Seats for Women in Legislative Bodies)*

**Dr. Charuta Vikram Joshi**

Associate Professor  
Department of Political Science,  
Smt. Binzani Mahila Mahavidyalaya, Mahal, Nagpur, India

**Abstract :** The acceptance of 106th Amendment of Indian Constitution popularly known as the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, in the year 2023 marks a historic milestone in India's democratic journey. It has mandated a 33% horizontal reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies. It is necessary to assess whether this legislative triumph is substantiated by democratic acceptance and voter psychology. This study was therefore taken up with the aim to examine the perception of Indian voters towards the 33% reservation for women at Central and State level legislature. The study specifically evaluates public sentiments in urban voters across gender, age, caste and socio-economic divides. The findings indicate overwhelming support for women's reservation policy with 92.7% Male and 94% Female respondents extending their backing. The paper concludes that the perception of urban voters towards policy of reservation for women promoting female political leadership is positive.

**Key words:** Voters perception, Women Reservation, Political leadership, Parliament, State Legislative Assemblies, Male and Female urban Electorate.

## I. INTRODUCTION

### INTRODUCTION

Indian democracy has been witnessing an enduring paradox of the structural exclusion of women from the commanding heights of political power. It is often pointed out that, at its founding, the Indian Republic made a morally profound leap by granting universal adult franchise in a single constitutional stroke, rejecting the graded citizenship models historically seen in Western democracies. (Choudhary & Singh, 2026). However, the studies on the basis of historical data, have also shown that political voice did not automatically translate into political agency. It is discernible from the fact that while female voter turnout has risen dramatically—surpassing male turnout in 19 states and Union Territories during recent electoral cycles—the descriptive representation of women within legislative chambers has remained stubbornly low (Sharma, 2025).

The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments introduced 33% reservation of seats for women at rural and urban level local self-governments way back in the year 1993. The studies related to the impact of reservation policy have shown that there can be either 'role model effect' (Beaman et al., 2009, Deininger et al. 2011) or 'backlash effect' (Gangadharan, 2014) on the perception of voters in rural areas. In this context, through this study serious efforts have been carried out to assess the perception of voters in urban areas towards female leadership in politics and administration encouraged through reservation of seats in Parliament and State Legislature.

### NEED OF THE STUDY.

In the 18th Lok Sabha elected in 2024, women constituted a meagre 13.6% of the lower house (74 out of 543 members), representing a slight decline from the 14.36% recorded in 2019. The numbers are even more discouraging within state legislative assemblies, where female representation frequently drops below 10% (EPW Engage, 2024). To rectify this imbalance, the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam was passed in September 2023, related to reservation of one-third of all seats in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies.

The democratic engine driving the implementation of any act is public perception and act related to quota for women in politics is no exception to it. The fact is that the attitudes, biases, hopes, and anxieties of the Indian electorate would determine whether these reserved constituencies will foster authentic leadership or fall prey to entrenched patriarchal subversion. This paper systematically explores the perceptions of Indian urban voters toward the 33% legislative reservation, assessing how diverse demographic segments navigate the concepts of equity, merit, and governance. This study was carried out in Nagpur which is the second capital and the third largest city of Maharashtra after Mumbai and Pune. It is the 13th largest urban agglomeration in India and the largest city in Vidarbha region and no such study was earlier carried out in the city. Hence, the need for conducting this study on the urban population of the city was felt necessary.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Objectives of Study

1. To study the perception of men and women towards the policy of reservation of seats to promote representation of women in legislative bodies.
2. To study and report the Impact of Introduction of Quota in Parliament and State Legislative Assembly on the Society and Nation.

### 3.2 Literature Review

The earlier studies related perception towards female leadership developed through earlier experience of local level female leaders reveal two contradictory views. While one underlines the 'role model effect', the other puts forth the 'backlash effect'.

Beaman et al. (2009) for instance, have reported that exposure to female leaders weakens the stereotypes among male voters about gender roles in the public and domestic spheres; however the attitudes of female voters remain unaffected. A hope is expressed that after 10 years of the quota policy this change in the attitude would result in victory of women even from free seats.

Pande & Ford (2011) further supported the argument that quotas can reduce gender discrimination in the long-term.

Deininger et al. (2013) have noted that women leaders establish better communication resultantly the affected bring their concerns to the attention of the relevant elected representatives which pertinently show better support by voters to the female leadership in future.

Bhalotra et al. (2016) have pointed out that the implementation of a gender quota increasing the number of women with political experience, increases the overall candidacy response even in gender-biased states.

The studies have also shown the 'role model effect' of female leadership on other fields of progress. (Beaman et. al., 2012)

It is also put forth that quotas, in future, can ensure fairer representation to women even after their withdrawal (Bhavnani, 2009)

On the other hand, the studies have also shown a 'Backlash effect' of a woman's electoral victory as it resulted in a significant decline in the share of new women candidates in the next election. (Iyer, 2019) or unacceptability of women in non-traditional roles of political leadership. (Gangadharan, 2014) due to deep rooted stereotypes.

### 3.3 Type of Research

The present study is a descriptive research study. The study is based on an extensive survey of male and female electorates of Nagpur city. The areas under Nagpur Municipal Corporation were identified and data was collected from these areas.

### 3.4 Research Design

#### 3.4.1 Data Collection: Secondary Data

The secondary data is collected from research articles, reports published in various journals, websites and newspapers. The statistical data related to the study was collected from the portals of Election Commission, IPU Parline Global data on National Parliaments, Press Information Bureau, Census India and Lok Sabha portal of Government of India.

The details of areas under the wards of Nagpur Municipal Corporation (NMC) were obtained from the Map of NMC. The researcher visited NMC Office at Townhall, Mahal, Nagpur for procuring the maps. These maps were finally obtained from Nagpur Municipal Corporation, Administrative Office, Civil Lines.

The Questionnaires related to Electoral Studies were procured from the NES portal of Lokniti, CSDS (Center for Studies in Developing Societies), New Delhi and studied to finalize the structured questionnaire for collection of primary data.

#### 3.4.2 Data Collection: Primary Data

A structured questionnaire was framed and administered while conducting the interviews to obtain the responses of the respondents. Their opinions about possible impact of women quota on society and nation, was collected through open ended questions. The selected respondents were men and women of all the age groups who are eligible voters having completed 18 yrs. of age and above from varied socio-economic strata with diverse family backgrounds and wide-ranging educational qualifications. An effort was made to cover the respondents from the areas of 38 wards under Nagpur Municipal Corporation limit extended over the six segments of Nagpur Vidhan Sabha Assembly Constituency i.e., Nagpur East, Nagpur West, Nagpur North, Nagpur South, Nagpur Central and Nagpur South West.

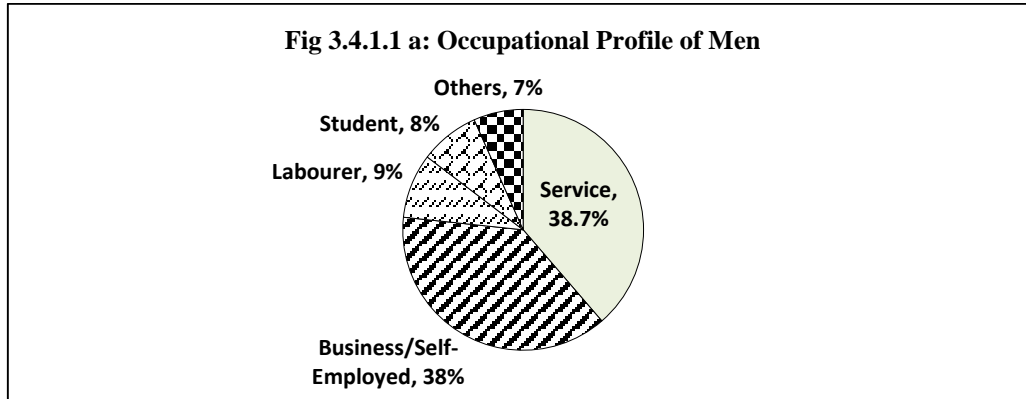
#### 3.4.3 Sample Size and Sample Composition:

Total sample size is 300 with 150 male and 150 female respondents. The sample includes male and female adults who are eligible voters belonging to the age group above 18 yrs. of age. Responses from electors belonging to varied socio-economic and educational backgrounds were collected. Efforts were also made to cover voters belonging to varied castes and categories as well as income groups.

### 3.4.3.1 Socio-Economic Profile of the Voters

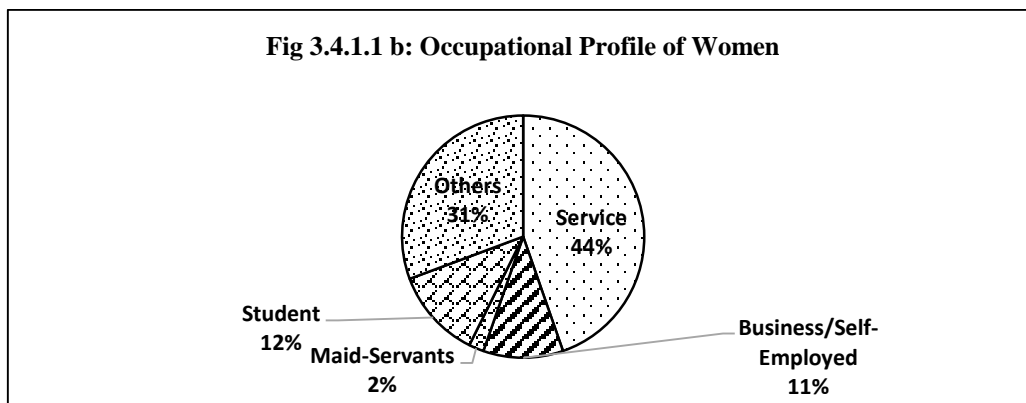
#### 3.4.3.1.1 Occupation: Occupational Profile of Men

The Occupational Profile of the male electorate (Fig. 3.4.1.1 a) in the samples obtained for this study is wide-ranging. It varies from the highest percentage of sample of 38.7% of Men, engaged in Service sector followed by 38% Businessmen and Self-employed. Out of the total samples collected 9% respondents are labourers and 8% students. The lowest proportion i.e. 7% is of 'others' which include unemployed and retired male voters.



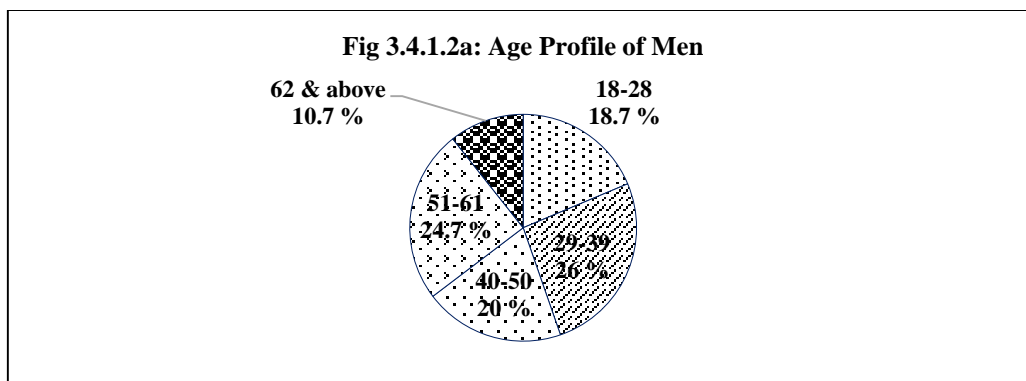
#### 3.4.3.1.2 Occupation: Occupational Profile of Women

The Occupational Profile of the female electorate (Fig 3.4.1.1 b) in the sample obtained for this study is also extensive. It varies from the highest percentage of sample of 44% of women engaged in Service sector to the lowest of 2% maid servants. Another major proportion of total samples i.e. 31% consists of 'others' which include house wives, retired and unemployed women. Out of the total samples collected 12% respondents are students and 11% are self-employed and women entrepreneurs.



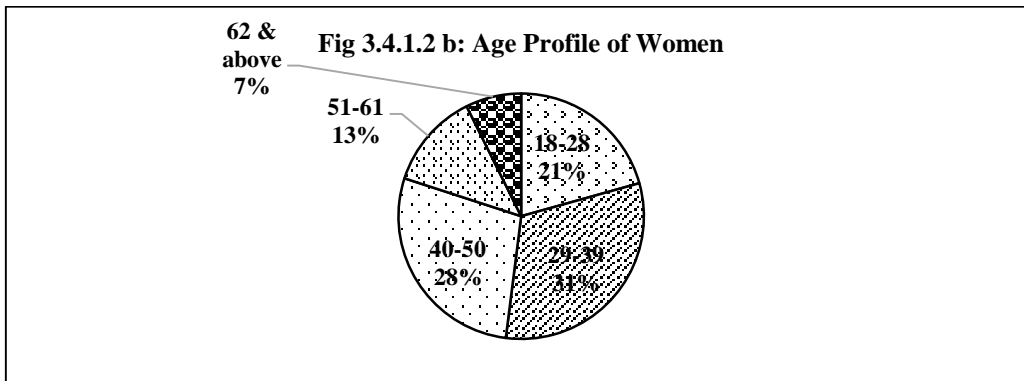
#### 3.4.3.1.3 Age: Age wise profile of Men

As shown below (in fig. 3.4.1.2 a), the opinions of the Male voters out of total respondents belonging to the age group of 18-28 yrs. is 18.7%. The voters belonging to the age group of 29-39 yrs. constitute 26% of the total sample which is the highest one. 20% of the men interviewed belong to the age group of 40-50 yrs. 24.7% of the total respondents belong to age group 51-61. While 10.7% which is the lowest of the total samples collected is of the men belonging to 62 and above age group.



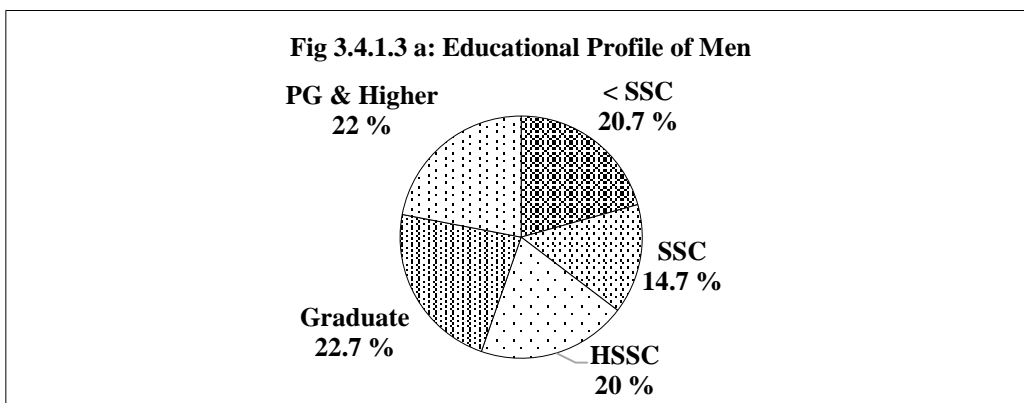
### 3.4.3.1.4 Age: Age wise profile of Women

As shown in fig.3.4.1.2 b, the opinions of the Female voters belonging to the age group of 18-28 yrs. is 21%. The voters belonging to the age group of 29-39 yrs. constitute 31% of the total sample which is the highest one. 28% of the women interviewed belong to the age group of 40-50 yrs. 24.7% of the total respondents belong to age group 51-61. While 7% which is the lowest of the total samples collected is of the women belonging to 62 and above age group.



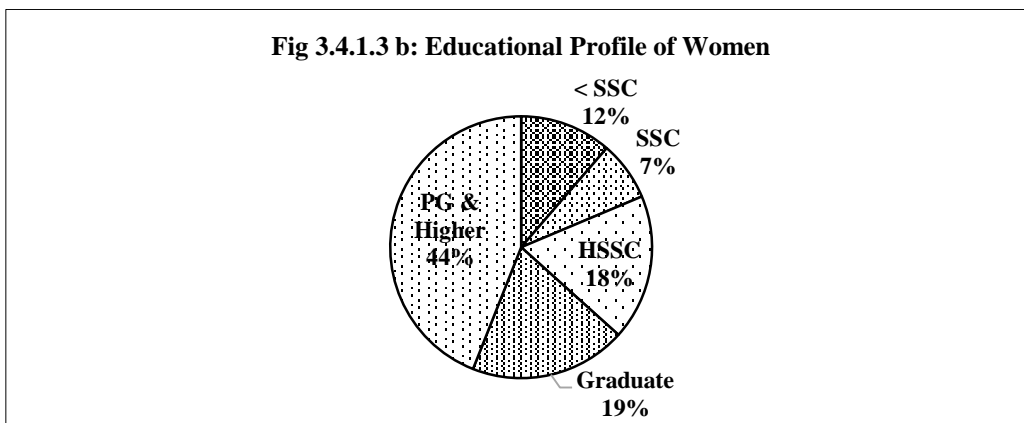
### 3.4.3.1.5 Education: Educational Profile of Men

The Educational Profile of men (as shown in Fig 3.4.1.3 a) presents a comprehensive sample composition. 20.7% of the male respondents could not continue their education till SSC, rest of them, however, have completed their matriculation and higher degrees. The percentage of men who left their studies after SSC constitute 14.7% which is the lowest of the total sample and 20% are HSSC passed. 22.7% which is the highest of the total sample collected are graduates while 22% are Post Graduates.



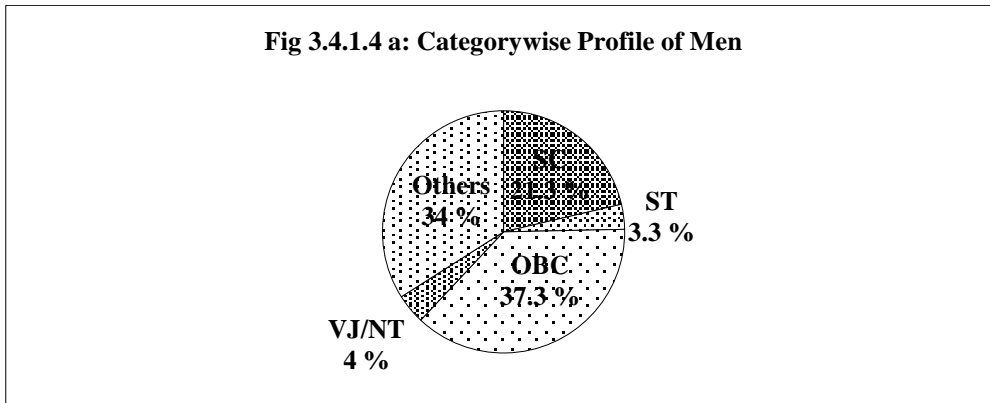
### 3.4.3.1.6 Education: Educational Profile of Women

The educational profile of female respondents (Fig. 3.4.1.3 b) shows that maximum women who are interviewed are qualified and leaving 7% of them who could not continue their education after SSC, rest of them have completed their matriculation and higher degrees. The percentage of women who left their studies before completing SSC constitute 12% and 18% are HSSC passed. 19% of the total samples collected are graduates while 44% which is the highest of the total samples are Post Graduates.



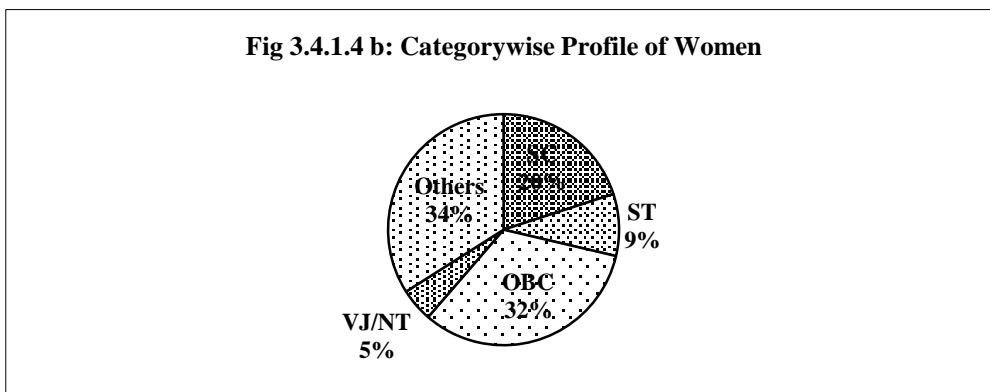
### 3.4.3.1.7 Category: Category wise Profile of Men

The Category wise Profile of the male electorate (Fig. 3.4.1.4 a) in the samples obtained for this study is all inclusive. It varies from the highest percentage of sample of 37.3% of Men belonging to OBC category to the lowest of 3.3% of S.T. category. Out of the total samples collected, 34% belong to 'Others' category and 21.3% respondents are of S.C. category while 4% belong to VJ/NT category.



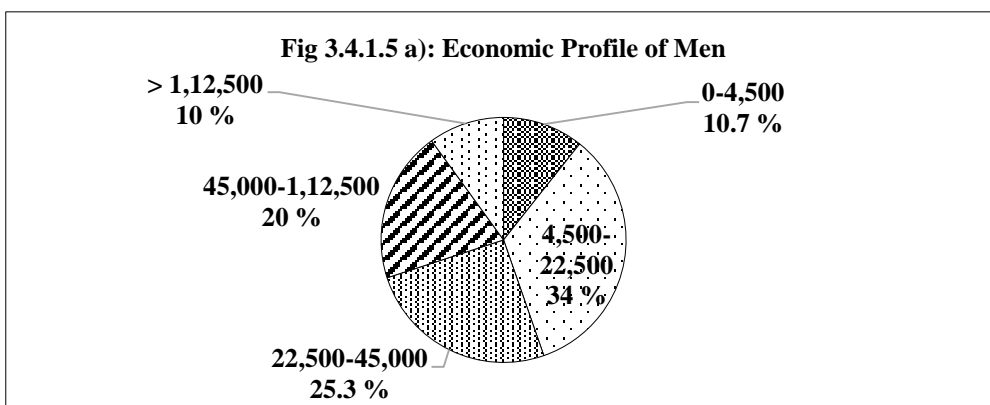
**3.4.3.1.8 Category: Category wise Profile of Women**

The Category wise Profile of the female electorate (Fig. 3.4.1.4 b) in the samples obtained for this study is also extensive. It ranges from the highest percentage of 34% of women belonging to the category of 'Others' to 5% women belonging to VJ/NT category. 32% of the total women interviewed belong to OBC category, 20% to SC and 9% to ST category.



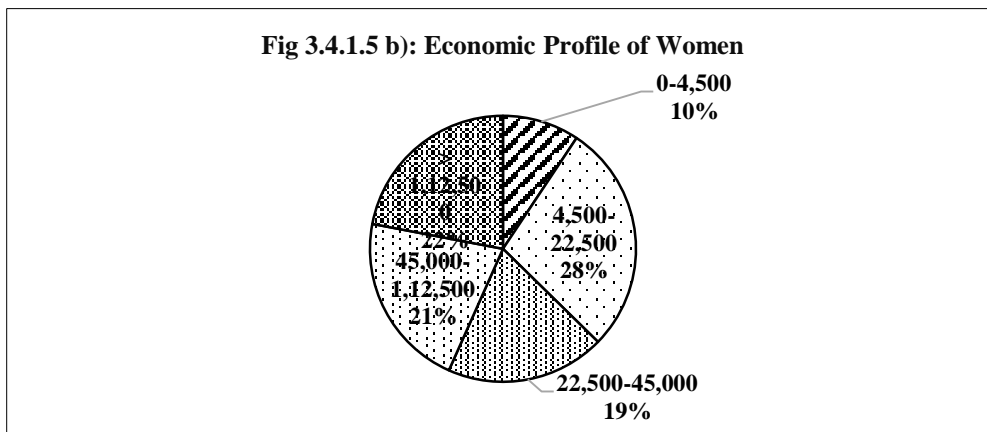
**3.4.3.1.9 Economic Profile: Economic Profile of Men (Monthly Income)**

The Economic Profile of Male respondents represent their family income of a month. The economic profile shown in Fig 3.4.1.5 a) of the male electorate in the samples obtained for this study is all-encompassing. The highest 34% of samples are obtained from men with family income in the range of 4,500/--22,500/-. It is followed by 25.3% responses by men belonging to family income within 22,500/-- 45,000/-. Male Electorate from families with monthly income in the range of 45,000-1,12,500/- constitute 20% of the total samples collected. 10.7% samples are from men whose monthly family income is below Rs. 4,500/-. The lowest chunk of samples is 10% from men who belong to families with income above 1,12,500/-



**3.4.3.1.10 Economic Profile: Economic Profile of Women (Monthly Income)**

The economic profile (shown in Fig 3.4.1.5 b) of the female electorate in the samples obtained for this study is very comprehensive. The highest 28% of samples are obtained from women with family income in the range of 4,500/--22,500/-. It is followed by 22% responses by women belonging to family income above 1,12,500/-. Female Electorate from families with monthly income within 45,000-1,12,500/- constitute 21% of the total samples collected. 19% samples are from women whose monthly family income is in the range of 22,500-45,000/-. The lowest chunk of samples is 10% from women who belong to families with income is below 4,500/-



### 3.5. Result And Discussion:

#### 3.5.1 Support the Bill ensuring 33% reservation of women in Parliament and State Assemblies

The respondents were asked to express their support to the provision of women quota through a close ended question. The collected responses were calculated in percentage and are presented in the figures 4.1 a and Fig. 4.1 b below:

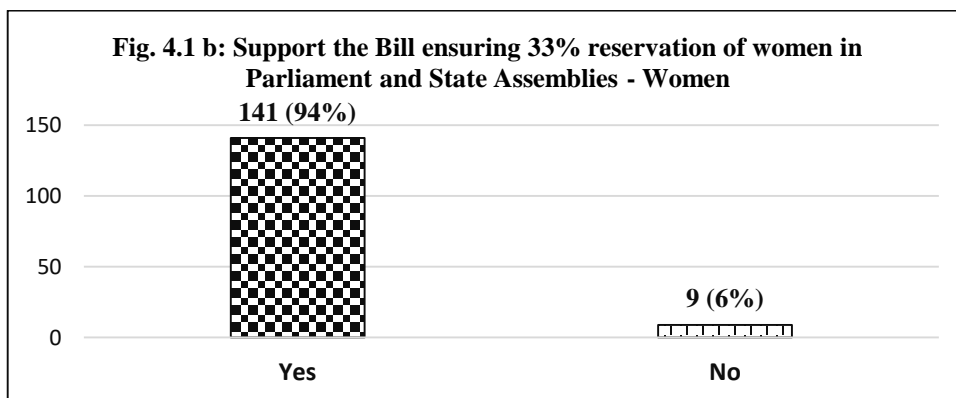
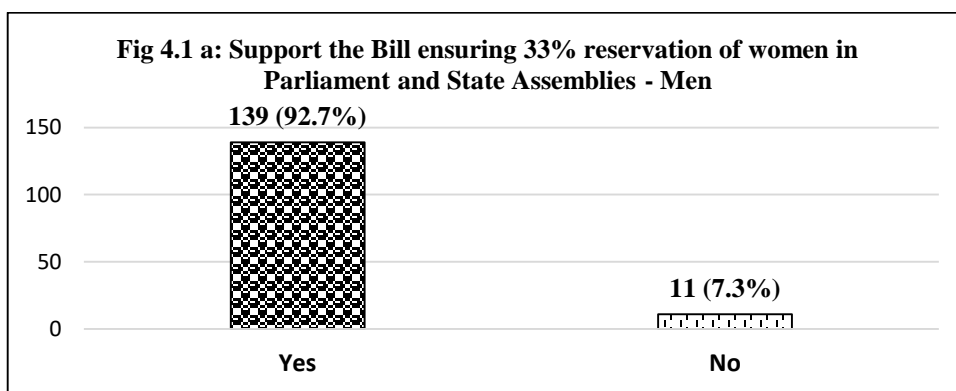


Fig. 4.1 a) and Fig. 4.1 b) show the perception of Male and Female respectively towards their support to the Bill ensuring 33% reservation of women in Parliament and State Assemblies. 92.7% (139) Males and 94% (141) Female respondents said Yes. These responses show that maximum voters support the bill ensuring 33% reservation of women in Parliament and State Assemblies. The difference between percentage of men and women (92.7% and 94% respectively) supporting the bill is not much. This approach can be the result of their earlier experience of women corporators at local level in the role of political leaders and administrators.

#### 3.5.2 Impact of Introduction of Quota in Parliament and State Legislative Assembly on the Society and State:

The respondents were asked to write in brief the benefit, they envision, of introduction of quota in Central and State Legislature to the society and the state at large. Following are the major points mentioned by them.

- It would result in presence of more women which would lead to rise in the strength of women in the house.
- Women would become the part of decision-making process in Legislative bodies at Central and State level.
- New laws in favour of women would be introduced and passed.
- Women members would be able to put forth the views on their behalf while drafting policies and laws for the benefit of women.
- Politics would not remain a male dominated domain.
- It would have 'role model' effect and 'spill over' effect resulting in progress of women in other fields of national life.
- It would rise the respect and dignity of women in the society.
- More women would enter into electoral politics.

- Political parties would be compelled to give tickets to women candidates to contest election on their behalf.
- Presence of women would lead to purification of politics as women are less corruptible than men hence corruption would lessen down.
- More women would look upon the field of electoral politics as a career option.

### 3.5.3 Issues of Concern:

Those who did not support the measure of reservation for women argued that quota system would result in discouragement to deserving men from entering into politics. A concern was also expressed that as the reserved seats would rotate after every delimitation exercise, the performing male incumbents would be forced out of their constituencies, potentially fracturing local developmental continuity and weakening the organic link between an MP and their electorate. It is also added that women have been already given 33% reservation at local level Self-Governing Institutions which is extended to 50% in many of the states. In these SGIs, these women are getting first-hand experience of administration. These experienced women could perceive their further career in the realm of politics by entering into the competition of electoral offices on their own during National and State level hustings.

Voter perception is also fragmented by India's intricate caste dynamics. It is pointed out that the 106th Amendment Act provides horizontal reservation for SC/ST women within existing quotas but does not create a distinct sub-quota for OBC women. Therefore, the critics have argued that the beneficiaries of the 33% reservation will be disproportionately drawn from urban-educated, upper-caste, and elite backgrounds (Roy, 2019).

The most pervasive anxiety limiting voter enthusiasm was the fear of proxy governance. Drawing from the experiences with Panchayati Raj institutions, the voters from urban landscapes also express concern that seats reserved for women will be captured by the female relatives (wives, daughters, sisters-in-law) of male politicians who are barred from contesting due to reservation of seat through rotation. This phenomenon, colloquially termed the "Pradhan-Pati" or "Sarpanch-Pati" syndrome, was however, already countered by scholars. They have already proved that even if initial cohorts face proxy limitations, the institutional normalization of women in offices of high political authority gradually dismantles patriarchal gatekeeping and alters voter psychology over time (Beaman et al., 2009).

### 3.6 Conclusion

These responses show that maximum voters support the bill ensuring 33% reservation of women in Parliament and State Assemblies. Those who denied their support held that women should come in the realm of politics on the basis of their merit. Further, they also contended that reservation merely ensure quantitative representation and not the qualitative representation. It clearly indicates the support of urban voters, both male and female, to the policy of reservation for promoting female political leadership.

However, this perception is marked by a clear distinction between ideological approval and operational caution. Though electorate overwhelmingly welcomes the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam as a democratic corrective to long-standing gender disparities in political power, this optimism, however, is tempered by valid public concerns regarding implementation timelines, elite capture, and proxy leadership.

Ultimately, it is held that Indian voters do not see the 33% quota as a final solution for gender parity, but rather as an essential catalyst. Rather, it is believed that the true success of this historic mandate will depend on the collective commitment of political parties, civil society, and institutional frameworks to dismantle patriarchal barriers. By doing so, it can be ensured that when women enter the legislative halls of India, they do so not as symbolic placeholders, but as fully empowered agents of democratic governance.

### REFERENCES

- [1] Beaman, L., Chattopadhyay, R., Duflo, E., Pande, R., & Topalova, P. (2009). Powerful women: Does exposure reduce bias? *The Quarterly Journal of Economic Literature*, 124(4), 1497-1540.
- [2] Beaman, L., Duflo, E., Pande, R., & Topalova, P. (2012). Female leadership raises aspirations and educational attainment for girls: A policy experiment in India. *Science*, 335(6068), 582-586.
- [3] Bhalotra, S. I Clots-Figueras and L Iyer (2016): "Pathbreakers? Women's Electoral Success and Future Political Participation", *Economic Journal* 128 (613): 1844-78.
- [4] Chattopadhyay, R., & Duflo, E. (2004). Women as policy makers: Evidence from a randomized policy experiment in India. *Econometrica*, 72(5), 1409-1443.
- [5] Choudhry, Kiran & Singh, Hena (2026). Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam: When voice seeks agency. Opinion/ *The New Indian Express* dated 14 Apr 2026 available on <https://www.newindianexpress.com/opinion/2026/Apr/14/nari-shakti-vandan-adhiniyam-when-voice-seeks-agency>.
- [6] Choudhry, Kiran & Singh, Hena (2026). Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam: When voice seeks agency. Opinion/ *The New Indian Express* dated 14 Apr 2026 available on <https://www.newindianexpress.com/opinion/2026/Apr/14/nari-shakti-vandan-adhiniyam-when-voice-seeks-agency>.
- [7] Economic and Political Weekly (EPW) EPW Engage. (2024) Women's Reservation Act of 2023: A symbolic gesture or a significant stride towards empowerment? Available on <https://www.epw.in/engage/article/womens-reservation-act-2023-symbolic-gesture-or-0>.

- [8] Gangadharan Lata, Jain Tarun, Maitra Pushkar and Vecci Joseph (2014): The behavioral response to women's empowerment programs, International Growth Centre, Working paper available on <https://www.theigc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Gangadharan-et-al-2014-Working-Paper.pdf>.
- [9] Indian Law Institute (ILI). (2023). *Analysis of the Constitution (106th Amendment) Act, 2023, in light of Parity Constitutionalism*. Winter Review Series.
- [10] Iyer, L and A Mani (2019): "The Road Not Taken: Gender Gaps Along Paths to Political Power", World Development, Volume 119, July 2019, Pages 68-80 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0305750X19300488>.
- [11] Pande Rohini and Ford Deanna: Gender Quotas and Female Leadership: A Review WORLD DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2012 GENDER EQUALITY AND DEVELOPMENT, April 7, 2011, available on <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/9120/WDR2012-0008.pdf?sequence=1>.
- [12] Roy, P. (2019). Letter to the Editor: Political empowerment of women and intersectional barriers. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 54(42).
- [13] Sharma, Vani (2025). The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam: Road map for women's political representation in India. *Journal of Advance and Future Research*, Volume 3, Issue 6 June 2025 available on <chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnpicajpcglclefindmkaj/https://rjwave.org/jaaf/papers/JAAFR2506037.pdf>.



#### Copyright & License:

© Authors retain the copyright of this article. This work is published under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0), permitting unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.