



## PARTICIPATION OF DISABLED WOMEN IN THE INDIAN PARLIAMENT SINCE INDEPENDENCE

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### Abstract

This study looks at how women with disabilities have been part of the Indian Parliament since India became independent. We found that very few women with disabilities have become members of parliament. Less than 1 out of every 100 women MPs has a disability. This is despite new laws meant to help people with disabilities. We looked at how things have changed over time, what laws exist, and how India compares to other countries. The few women with disabilities who became MPs have done important work. They have spoken up for disability rights and helped change how people think. But many things still make it hard for women with disabilities to enter politics. These include physical barriers and unfair treatment. We suggest ways to improve this, like setting aside seats for women with disabilities and making politics more accessible. Having more women with disabilities in parliament is important to make sure everyone in India is truly represented.

**Keywords:** *Women with Disabilities, Indian Parliament, Voting, Equal Rights.*



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### 1. INTRODUCTION

India, the world's largest democracy, has made significant strides in political representation since gaining independence in 1947. However, the participation of marginalized groups, particularly disabled women, in the highest echelons of political power remains a critical area of concern. The intersection of gender and disability presents unique challenges and opportunities in the context of political representation, making it a compelling subject for academic inquiry. The rights of persons with disabilities in India have evolved substantially over the decades, with major

legislative milestones such as the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995, and its more comprehensive successor, the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016.<sup>1</sup> Concurrently, women's political participation has seen a gradual increase, though it remains disproportionately low

<sup>1</sup> Kothari, J. (2012). The future of disability law in India: A critical analysis of the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act 1995. Oxford University Press.

compared to their population share.<sup>2</sup> At the intersection of these two marginalized groups are disabled women, whose political representation and participation in the Indian Parliament warrant in-depth examination. This research aims to address the following question: How has the participation of disabled women in the Indian Parliament evolved since independence, and what factors have influenced this participation?

## 2. THE OBJECTIVES OF THIS STUDY

- To analyze the historical trends in the participation of disabled women in the Indian Parliament since 1947.
- To identify the key challenges faced by disabled women in entering and participating in parliamentary politics.
- To evaluate the impact of legislative measures on improving the participation of disabled women in parliament.
- To compare India's progress in this area with other countries and identify potential best practices.

The significance of this research lies in its potential to shed light on an often-overlooked aspect of political representation in India. By examining the participation of disabled women in parliament, this study contributes to the broader discourse on inclusive democracy and social justice. Furthermore, it provides valuable insights for policymakers, activists, and scholars working towards more equitable political representation. This paper will employ a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative analysis of parliamentary data with qualitative examination of case studies and legislative frameworks. By doing so, it aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges, progress, and potential for increased participation of disabled women in the Indian Parliament.

## 3. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

### A. Women's participation in Indian politics since independence

The participation of women in Indian politics has its roots in the freedom struggle against British colonial rule. Notable figures like Sarojini Naidu and Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit played significant roles in both the independence

movement and early post-independence politics.<sup>3</sup> However, despite these early trailblazers, women's representation in the Indian Parliament has remained consistently low since independence. In the first Lok Sabha (1952-1957), women constituted only 4.4% of the members.<sup>4</sup> This percentage has fluctuated over the years but has never exceeded 15%. The 17th Lok Sabha, elected in 2019, saw a record high of 14.4% women representatives, but this figure still falls far short of women's proportion in the general population.<sup>5</sup>

Several factors have contributed to this underrepresentation, including:

- Patriarchal social norms and gender stereotypes
- Lack of economic resources
- Limited access to education and political networks
- Political violence and harassment<sup>6</sup>

Despite these challenges, there have been notable achievements. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments in 1992 mandated 33% reservation for women in local governance bodies, significantly increasing women's participation at the grassroots level.<sup>7</sup>

### B. Disability rights movement in India

The disability rights movement in India gained momentum in the 1970s, with the formation of self-advocacy groups and disability rights organizations. However, the movement faced significant challenges due to the deeply entrenched medical model of disability, which viewed disability as an individual problem rather than a social issue.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Basu, A. (2005). *Women, political parties and social movements in South Asia*. United Nations Research Institute for Social Development.

<sup>4</sup> Election Commission of India. (2019). *Statistical report on general elections, 1951-2019*.

<sup>5</sup> Rai, P. (2017). Women's participation in electoral politics in India: Silent feminisation. *South Asia Research*, 37(1), 58-77.

<sup>6</sup> Kalaramadam, S. (2018). *Quota systems and women's political representation in India*. Routledge.

<sup>7</sup> Ghosh, R., & Chakraborty, A. (2017). Women's empowerment and education: Panchayats and women's self-help groups in India. *Policy Futures in Education*, 15(2), 212-228.

<sup>8</sup> Mehrotra, N. (2013). *Disability, gender and state policy: Exploring margins*. Rawat Publications.

<sup>2</sup> Rai, S. M. (2017). *Women and politics in the third world*. Routledge.

Key milestones in the disability rights movement include:

- 1981: The International Year of Disabled Persons, which raised awareness about disability issues in India
- 1995: The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act
- 2007: India's ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)
- 2016: The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, which expanded the definition of disability and increased reservations in public sector jobs<sup>9</sup>

Despite these legislative advances, the political participation of persons with disabilities, especially women with disabilities, remained limited. The intersection of gender and disability created compounded barriers to political engagement, with disabled women facing discrimination on multiple fronts.<sup>10</sup> The historical context of both women's political participation and the disability rights movement in India sets the stage for understanding the unique challenges and opportunities faced by disabled women in parliamentary politics. The next section will examine the legislative framework that has shaped their participation.

#### 4. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

The participation of disabled women in the Indian Parliament is shaped by a complex legislative framework that addresses both gender equality and disability rights. This section examines the key legal provisions that have influenced their political representation.

##### A. Constitutional Provisions

The Indian Constitution provides the foundation for equality and non-discrimination, which are crucial for the political participation of disabled women.

- Article 14 guarantees equality before the law and equal protection of the laws.
- Article 15 prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place

of birth, and allows for special provisions for women and children.

- Article 16 ensures equality of opportunity in matters of public employment.

While disability is not explicitly mentioned in these articles, the Supreme Court of India has interpreted them to include disability as a protected ground.<sup>11</sup>

##### B. The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016

This landmark legislation replaced the Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995, and significantly expanded the rights and protections for persons with disabilities in India.

Key provisions relevant to political participation include:

- Section 11 mandates that election authorities ensure that all polling stations are accessible to persons with disabilities and that all materials related to the electoral process are easily understandable and accessible.
- Section 29 requires the government to ensure that persons with disabilities have the right to participate in political and public life on an equal basis with others.
- Section 92 prescribes punishments for offenses against persons with disabilities, which can help combat political violence and harassment.

##### C. The Representation of the People Act, 1951

This Act governs the conduct of elections to the Houses of Parliament and to the State Legislatures. While it does not contain specific provisions for disabled women, it has been amended over time to improve accessibility:

- Section 60(b) allows for companions to assist blind or infirm voters in casting their votes.
- In 2009, the Election Commission of India introduced Braille-enabled Electronic Voting Machines to facilitate independent voting by visually impaired persons.<sup>12</sup>

##### D. Women's Reservation Bill

The Women's Reservation Bill, which proposes to reserve 33% of seats in the Lok Sabha

<sup>9</sup> Narayan, C. L., & John, T. (2017). The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016: Does it address the needs of the persons with mental illness and their families. *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*, 59(1), 17-20.

<sup>10</sup> Ghai, A. (2015). *Rethinking disability in India*. Routledge.

<sup>11</sup> Raturi, B. (2018). Disability rights in India: A paradigm shift from welfare to human rights. *Indian Law Review*, 2(2), 167-189.

<sup>12</sup> Election Commission of India. (2009). *Braille signage features on Electronic Voting Machines*.

and state legislative assemblies for women, has been a subject of debate since 1996. Despite multiple attempts, it has not been passed into law. The bill does not specifically address the representation of disabled women.<sup>13</sup>

### E. Guidelines and Orders

The Election Commission of India has issued various guidelines to enhance the political participation of persons with disabilities:

- In 2016, the Commission declared "Accessible Elections" as the central theme for National Voters' Day.<sup>14</sup>
- In 2019, it issued guidelines for "Accessible Elections," which include provisions for mapping Persons with Disabilities, accessible voter education, and barrier-free polling stations.<sup>15</sup>

While these legislative measures have created a framework for inclusivity, their implementation and impact on the actual participation of disabled women in parliament remain areas of concern. The next section will examine the representation of disabled women in the Indian Parliament since independence.

## 5. REPRESENTATION OF DISABLED WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT

### A. Statistics and trends since independence

The representation of disabled women in the Indian Parliament has been historically low, reflecting the intersectional challenges they face. However, precise data on their participation is limited due to the lack of comprehensive disability-disaggregated data in electoral records, especially in the early decades after independence.<sup>16</sup>

- Pre-2000s: There is a notable absence of documented disabled women parliamentarians in this period, which may

be attributed to both low representation and lack of recognition of disabilities.<sup>17</sup>

1. Post-2000s: With increased awareness and better data collection, there has been a slight improvement in representation:
  - In the 15th Lok Sabha (2009-2014), out of 59 women MPs, only one was reported to have a disability.<sup>18</sup>
  - The 16th Lok Sabha (2014-2019) saw no disabled women representatives.<sup>19</sup>
  - In the current 17th Lok Sabha (2019-present), out of 78 women MPs, one is a person with disability.<sup>20</sup>

These figures indicate that the representation of disabled women in the Indian Parliament remains critically low, constituting less than 1% of women MPs and an even smaller fraction of the total parliamentary strength.

### B. Notable disabled women parliamentarians

While few in number, some disabled women have made significant contributions in the Indian Parliament:

- Sarika Singh Baghel: Elected to the 15th Lok Sabha in 2009, she was the first woman with a locomotor disability to become an MP.<sup>21</sup>
- Pratima Bhoumik: Elected to the 17th Lok Sabha in 2019, she has a locomotor disability and has been vocal about disability rights.<sup>22</sup>

These parliamentarians have not only represented their constituencies but have also brought attention to disability issues in parliamentary discussions and committees.

<sup>13</sup> Rai, S. M. (2013). The politics of access: Narratives of women MPs in the Indian Parliament. *Political Studies*, 61(1), 216-231.

<sup>14</sup> Election Commission of India. (2016). *National Voters' Day 2016*.

<sup>15</sup> Election Commission of India. (2019). *Accessible Elections 2019*.

<sup>16</sup> Ghai, A. (2019). *Disability in South Asia: Knowledge and experience*. SAGE Publications India.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas, P. (2005). Mainstreaming disability in development: India country report. Disability Knowledge and Research Programme.

<sup>18</sup> Lok Sabha Secretariat. (2009). *Women members in 15th Lok Sabha*.

<sup>19</sup> Election Commission of India. (2014). *Statistical report on general elections, 2014*.

<sup>20</sup> Lok Sabha Secretariat. (2019). *Women members in 17th Lok Sabha*.

<sup>21</sup> National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People. (2010). *Political participation of persons with disabilities*. NCPEDP Report.

<sup>22</sup> Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs. (2019). *List of women members of 17th Lok Sabha*.



### C. Challenges faced by disabled women in politics

Disabled women face multiple barriers in their political participation:

- Intersectional discrimination: The combined effect of gender and disability-based discrimination creates unique challenges.<sup>23</sup>
- Accessibility issues: Physical barriers in political spaces, inaccessible campaign materials, and lack of assistive technologies hinder participation.<sup>24</sup>
- Economic barriers: The high costs associated with political campaigns are particularly challenging for disabled women, who often face economic marginalization.<sup>25</sup>
- Stereotypes and prejudices: Negative societal attitudes towards both women and persons with disabilities affect their political aspirations and public perception.<sup>26</sup>
- Lack of support systems: Limited access to education, healthcare, and social networks crucial for political engagement.<sup>27</sup>
- Political violence and harassment: Disabled women are at higher risk of facing violence and intimidation in political spaces.<sup>28</sup>
- Underrepresentation in party structures: Political parties often overlook disabled women in ticket distribution and party positions.<sup>29</sup>

These challenges contribute to the severe underrepresentation of disabled women in the Indian Parliament. The next section will examine the impact and contributions of the few who have overcome these barriers to enter parliamentary politics.

### 6. IMPACT AND CONTRIBUTIONS

Despite their limited representation, disabled women parliamentarians have made

<sup>23</sup> Addlakha, R. (2013). *Disability studies in India: Global discourses, local realities*. Routledge.

<sup>24</sup> Ghosh, N. (2016). *Interrogating disability in India: Theory and practice*. Springer.

<sup>25</sup> World Bank. (2007). *People with disabilities in India: From commitments to outcomes*. World Bank.

<sup>26</sup> Mehrotra, N. (2013). *Disability, gender and state policy: Exploring margins*. Rawat Publications.

<sup>27</sup> United Nations. (2019). *Disability and development report*.

<sup>28</sup> UN Women. (2018). *Violence against women in politics*.

<sup>29</sup> International Foundation for Electoral Systems. (2014). *Equal Access: How to Include Persons with Disabilities in Elections and Political Processes*. IFES and National Democratic Institute.

significant contributions to Indian politics and society. Their presence and actions have influenced policy, raised awareness, and challenged societal norms.

### A. Policy Initiatives and Legislative Changes

Disabled women parliamentarians have been instrumental in pushing for disability-inclusive policies and legislation:

- Advocacy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016: While not directly authored by disabled women MPs, their presence and advocacy in parliament contributed to the momentum for this comprehensive legislation.<sup>30</sup>
- Accessibility in public spaces: Sarika Singh Baghel, during her tenure in the 15th Lok Sabha, raised questions about accessibility in government buildings and public transportation, leading to increased focus on these issues.<sup>31</sup>
- Education policies: Pratima Bhoumik has been vocal about the need for inclusive education, influencing discussions on the National Education Policy 2020.

### B. Advocacy for Disability Rights and Women's Empowerment

The presence of disabled women in Parliament has provided a platform for intersectional advocacy:

- Raising awareness: Their mere presence in the highest legislative body has helped raise awareness about the capabilities of disabled women and challenged stereotypes.<sup>32</sup>
- Intersectional perspective: These parliamentarians have brought attention to the unique challenges faced by women with disabilities, advocating for policies that address both gender and disability issues.<sup>33</sup>
- Committee participation: Disabled women MPs have actively participated in

<sup>30</sup> Narayan, C. L., & John, T. (2017). The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016: Does it address the needs of the persons with mental illness and their families. *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*, 59(1), 17-20.

<sup>31</sup> Lok Sabha Secretariat. (2011). *Questions raised by members: 15th Lok Sabha*.

<sup>32</sup> Ghai, A. (2015). *Rethinking disability in India*. Routledge.

<sup>33</sup> Addlakha, R., & Mandal, S. (2009). Disability law in India: Paradigm shift or evolving discourse? *Economic and Political Weekly*, 44(41/422013). *Disability, gender and state policy: Exploring margins*. Rawat Publications.

<sup>33</sup> Ghai, A. (2019). *Disability in South*, 62-68.

parliamentary committees, bringing disability perspectives to various policy discussions.

### C. Social and Cultural Impact

The impact of disabled women parliamentarians extends beyond legislative chambers:

- Role models: They serve as powerful role models for other disabled women and girls, demonstrating that political participation is possible despite societal barriers.<sup>34</sup>
- Media representation: Their presence in Parliament has led to increased media coverage of disability issues, contributing to changing public perceptions.<sup>35</sup>
- Grassroots mobilization: Many of these parliamentarians have used their positions to mobilize disabled women at the grassroots level, encouraging political participation.
- Intersectional dialogue: Their unique position has fostered dialogue between women's rights organizations and disability rights groups, promoting a more inclusive approach to advocacy.

While the contributions of disabled women parliamentarians have been significant, their impact has been limited by their small numbers. The potential for greater change remains largely untapped due to continued underrepresentation.

### 7. CHALLENGES IN MEASURING IMPACT

- Limited data: The scarcity of comprehensive data on the activities and contributions of disabled women parliamentarians makes it difficult to quantify their impact.
- Intersectional invisibility: The intersectional nature of their identity sometimes leads to their contributions being overlooked in both disability rights and women's rights narratives.<sup>36</sup>
- Systemic barriers: Despite their efforts, systemic barriers often hinder the full

implementation of the policies they advocate for<sup>37</sup>.

The impact of disabled women in the Indian Parliament, while notable, underscores the need for increased representation to effect more substantial and sustainable change. The next section will provide a comparative analysis with other countries to contextualize India's progress in this area.

## 8. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

To better understand India's progress in the political participation of disabled women, it's valuable to compare it with other countries. This comparison can highlight best practices and areas for improvement.

### A. Comparison with Other Countries

#### 1. United Kingdom:

- The UK has seen a gradual increase in the number of disabled MPs. In 2019, five MPs openly identified as disabled, including women.<sup>38</sup>
- The Access to Elected Office Fund provides financial support to disabled candidates, addressing economic barriers.<sup>39</sup>

#### 2. United States:

- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 has been crucial in improving political participation of disabled individuals.<sup>40</sup>
- Senator Tammy Duckworth, a woman with disabilities, was elected in 2016, marking a significant milestone.<sup>41</sup>

#### 3. South Africa:

- Has a more robust representation of disabled women in parliament compared to India.
- In 2019, approximately 2% of MPs were persons with disabilities, with a notable presence of disabled women.<sup>42</sup>

37 Thomas, P. (2005). Mainstreaming disability in development: India country report. Disability Knowledge and Research Programme.

38 UK Parliament. (2019). Disability in Parliament.

39 Government Equalities Office. (2019). Evaluation of the Access to Elected Office Fund.

40 National Council on Disability. (2013). Experience of Voters with Disabilities in the 2012 Election Cycle.

41 Schur, L., & Adya, M. (2013). Sidelined or mainstreamed? Political participation and attitudes of people with disabilities in the United States. *Social Science Quarterly*, 94(3), 811-839.

<sup>34</sup> Mehrotra, N. (2013). Disability, gender and state policy: Exploring margins. Rawat Publications.

<sup>35</sup> Ghai, A. (2019). Disability in South Asia: Knowledge and experience. SAGE Publications India.

<sup>36</sup> Chib, M., & Rashid, R. (2015). Intersectionality of gender and disability in the Indian context. *Women's Link*, 21(3), 1-11.

4. Uganda:
  - Has constitutional provisions for the representation of persons with disabilities in parliament.
  - Five seats are reserved for representatives with disabilities, elected through an electoral college system.<sup>43</sup>

## B. Best Practices and Lessons Learned

1. Legislative Quotas:
  - Countries like Uganda and South Africa have implemented quotas for disabled representatives, leading to increased representation.<sup>44</sup>
  - India could consider similar measures specifically for disabled women.
2. Political Party Inclusion:
  - In the UK and Sweden, major political parties have disability sections and actively recruit disabled candidates.<sup>45</sup>
  - Indian political parties could adopt similar strategies to increase the participation of disabled women.
3. Accessibility of Political Processes:
  - Canada has implemented comprehensive accessibility guidelines for elections, including accessible voting technology and materials.<sup>46</sup>
  - India could enhance its existing accessibility measures based on these international standards.
4. Financial Support:
  - The UK's Access to Elected Office Fund could serve as a model for India to address the economic barriers faced by disabled women candidates.<sup>47</sup>
5. Intersectional Approach:
  - Countries like Sweden have adopted an intersectional approach in their disability policies, recognizing the

42 Parliament of the Republic of South Africa. (2019). State of representation in national parliament.

43 International Foundation for Electoral Systems. (2014). Equal Access: How to Include Persons with Disabilities in Elections and Political Processes. IFES and National Democratic Institute.

44 United Nations. (2019). Disability and development report.

45 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. (2014). The right to political participation for persons with disabilities.

46 Elections Canada. (2019). Accessibility Policy and Service Offering.

47 Government Equalities Office. (2018). Access to Elected Office Fund (Pilot): evaluation.

multiple forms of discrimination faced by disabled women.<sup>48</sup>

- India could benefit from a similar approach in its policy formulation.

## 6. Data Collection:

- The United States conducts regular surveys on the political participation of persons with disabilities, providing valuable data for policy-making.<sup>49</sup>
- India could improve its data collection methods to better track the participation of disabled women in politics.

## 7. Mentorship Programs:

- Australia has implemented mentorship programs for aspiring disabled politicians.<sup>50</sup>
- Similar programs in India could encourage more disabled women to enter politics.

While India has made progress in creating a legal framework for the inclusion of persons with disabilities, the implementation and actual representation of disabled women in parliament lag behind several other countries. However, these international examples provide valuable lessons and potential strategies for improving the political participation of disabled women in India.

## 9. FUTURE OUTLOOK

The participation of disabled women in the Indian Parliament, while currently limited, shows potential for growth. Several factors are likely to shape this trajectory in the coming years:

### A. Current Initiatives and Proposed Reforms

- Digital India Initiative: This government program aims to improve digital literacy and access to technology, potentially enhancing political engagement for disabled women.<sup>51</sup>
- Accessible India Campaign (Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan): Launched in 2015, this campaign

48 Swedish Agency for Participation. (2017). Evaluation and analysis of disability policy.

49 U.S. Election Assistance Commission. (2017). Election Administration and Voting Survey.

50 Australian Human Rights Commission. (2018). Face the facts: Disability Rights.

51 Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology. (2015). Digital India Programme.

focuses on creating accessible physical environments, transportation systems, and information and communication ecosystems.<sup>52</sup>

- National Action Plan for Skill Development of Persons with Disabilities: This initiative may indirectly support political participation by enhancing economic empowerment.<sup>53</sup>
- Proposed Electoral Reforms: Discussions are ongoing about potential reforms to make the electoral process more inclusive, including better provisions for voters with disabilities.<sup>54</sup>

## B. Potential for Increased Participation

- Growing Disability Rights Movement: The strengthening disability rights movement in India is likely to push for greater political representation.<sup>55</sup>
- Intersectional Advocacy: Increased collaboration between women's rights and disability rights organizations may lead to more focused efforts to promote disabled women in politics.<sup>56</sup>
- Technology and Accessibility: Advancements in assistive technologies and increased digital accessibility may reduce barriers to political participation.<sup>57</sup>
- International Pressure: India's commitments under the UNCRPD may lead to increased efforts to promote the political participation of persons with disabilities, including women.<sup>58</sup>
- Changing Social Attitudes: Gradual shifts in societal perceptions of disability and women's roles may create a more conducive

environment for disabled women in politics.<sup>59</sup>

## 10. CONCLUSION

### A. Summary of Key Findings

This research has revealed that the participation of disabled women in the Indian Parliament since independence has been markedly low. Despite progressive legislation and growing awareness, disabled women continue to face significant barriers to political participation, stemming from intersectional discrimination, accessibility issues, and socio-economic challenges.

The few disabled women who have entered parliament have made notable contributions, influencing policy discussions and raising awareness about disability rights. However, their impact has been limited by their small numbers.

Comparative analysis with other countries suggests that India lags behind in terms of representation of disabled women in national politics, but there are valuable lessons to be learned from international best practices.

### B. Recommendations for Improving Participation

- Implement targeted quotas or reservations for disabled women in political parties and parliamentary seats.
- Establish mentorship programs and leadership training specifically for disabled women interested in politics.
- Enhance accessibility of political processes, including party meetings, election campaigns, and voting procedures.
- Provide financial support for disabled women candidates to overcome economic barriers to political participation.
- Improve data collection on the political participation of disabled women to inform policy-making.
- Strengthen the implementation of existing disability rights legislation, particularly in relation to political participation.
- Promote intersectional approaches in both disability rights and women's empowerment initiatives.

52 Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities. (2015). Accessible India Campaign.

53 Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship. (2016). National Action Plan for Skill Development of Persons with Disabilities.

54 Law Commission of India. (2015). Electoral Reforms. Report No. 255.

55 Mehrotra, N. (2013). Disability, gender and state policy: Exploring margins. Rawat Publications.

56 Ghai, A. (2019). Disability in South Asia: Knowledge and experience. SAGE Publications India.

57 Raja, D. S. (2016). Bridging the disability divide through digital technologies. World Bank.

58 United Nations. (2006). Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

59 World Health Organization. (2011). World report on disability.



### C. Call to Action

The underrepresentation of disabled women in the Indian Parliament represents a significant democratic deficit. Addressing this issue requires concerted efforts from multiple stakeholders:

- Government bodies must strengthen implementation of existing laws and consider new measures to promote participation.
- Political parties should actively recruit and support disabled women candidates.
- Civil society organizations need to continue advocacy efforts and provide support to aspiring disabled women politicians.
- Media outlets should increase visibility of disabled women in political discourse.
- Academic institutions should conduct further research to inform evidence-based policies.

Enhancing the participation of disabled women in parliament is not just a matter of rights and representation; it is crucial for creating a truly inclusive democracy that reflects the diversity of Indian society. As India continues to evolve as a democratic nation, the inclusion of disabled women in its highest legislative body will be a key indicator of its progress towards equality and social justice.

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