

17/06/2024**(MODEL ANSWER)**

Q. Analyse the challenges and progress in bridging the gender gap in education and politics in India. Discuss with relevant examples.

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Answer Template:**Introduction:**

- The gender gap in education and politics in India is a reflection of the broader societal inequalities that persist despite significant progress.
- The **Global Gender Gap Report 2024** indicates that India has closed 64.1% of its gender gap but highlights a need for improvement, especially in education and political empowerment.
- According to the Census of India 2011, the literacy rate for males was 82.14% while for females it was 65.46%, indicating a gender disparity in educational attainment. In politics, women continue to be underrepresented, holding only 14.4% of seats in the Lok Sabha as of 2023, reflecting persistent gender inequalities.

Body:

- **Education Sector- Challenges & Progress**
 - **Access to Education:**
 - Despite improvements, access to education remains uneven across genders in rural and urban areas.
 - **Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2020** highlighted that girls in rural areas still face challenges in accessing secondary education due to cultural norms and safety concerns.
 - *E.g.: The **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao** initiative launched in 2015 aimed to improve the declining child sex ratio and promote girls' education, showing mixed results in different regions.*
 - **Quality of Education:**
 - Disparities also exist in the quality of education received by girls compared to boys, impacting their learning outcomes. Infrastructure issues like lack of separate toilets for girls in schools often deter female enrolment and attendance.
 - *Case Study: The **Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya** scheme aimed to provide quality education to girls from marginalized communities, but challenges persist in its implementation and effectiveness in some regions.*
 - **Literacy Rates:**
 - While overall literacy rates have improved, particularly among females, regional disparities and differences between rural and urban areas persist. States like Kerala have achieved near gender parity in literacy, but states like Bihar and Rajasthan lag behind.

- *Example: The rise of social media has also led to increased online harassment and abuse of women politicians, highlighting new challenges in political participation.*
- Political Empowerment Initiatives:
 - Initiatives such as the **National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW)** and the **Mahila Shakti Kendra** scheme aim to enhance women's political participation through training, capacity-building, and advocacy.
 - Impact: These initiatives have contributed to a gradual increase in the number of women contesting elections at various levels, although substantive representation remains a challenge.
- Role of Civil Society and NGOs:
 - Civil society organizations and NGOs play a crucial role in mobilizing women, providing training, and advocating for policy changes to enhance women's political representation.
 - Success Story: Organizations like **Women Power Connect** have been instrumental in lobbying for policy changes to improve gender parity in politics.

Conclusion

- While India has made significant strides in bridging the gender gap in education and politics, challenges persist due to socio-cultural norms, structural barriers, and systemic inequalities.
- Efforts such as legislative reforms, targeted educational initiatives, and grassroots mobilization have shown promise but require sustained commitment and holistic approaches.
- Moving forward, enhancing access to quality education, addressing socio-cultural barriers, enforcing safety measures for women in politics, and promoting inclusive governance are essential. Collaborative efforts involving government, civil society, and communities will be crucial in achieving substantive gender equality in these domains.