



General Studies-1; Topic: Role of women and women's organization

Women in Politics and Bureaucracy

Introduction

- India has one of the fastest-growing economies in the world.
- By 2030, India is expected to be behind only the US and China.
- **Despite its economic growth, women's participation in the economy, polity and society has not kept pace.**

Female voter turnout

- The female voter turnout has increased in India.
- However, this has not translated into more women contesting elections.

Women in Politics

- As per Election Commission of India (ECI) data, women represent 10.5 per cent of all Members of Parliament as of October 2021.
- For all the state assemblies, female MLAs' representation stands at an average of 9 per cent.
- India's ranking in this regard has fallen over the last few years.
- Even the states with higher literacy rates display the same trend.

Women in Bureaucracy

- The representation of Indian women in bureaucracy is also lacking.
- Out of a total of 11,569 IAS officers entering service between 1951 and 2020, only 1,527 were women.
- There are only three women chief secretaries across Indian states and union territories.
- India has never had a woman cabinet secretary.

- There have been no women Secretaries of Home, Finance, Defence and Personnel, either.
- Women candidates are more likely than men to seek voluntary retirement from service.

Reasons for Low participation of women in bureaucracy

- **Service conditions** involving postings in distant cadres.
- **Patriarchal conditioning** and **balancing family commitments** along with the requirements of the job.
- There is a general perception that women should be preferred for ministries like Social Welfare, Culture, Women and Child Development.

Other issues

- A quick look at other sectors shows that the situation is no better.
- Only 20.37 per cent of MSME owners are women, 10 per cent of start-ups are founded by females, and 23.3 per cent of women are in the labour force.
- Most of the statistics on India's female labour rate do not incorporate the unpaid work that females do.

Way Forward

- **Quotas for women in Parliament as envisaged in the Women's Reservation Bill.**
- Awareness, education and role modelling that encourage women towards politics.
- Women's leadership and communication skills need to be enhanced by increasing female literacy especially in rural areas.
- **SDG goal 5 has a target – "Ensure women's full and active participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making".**
- Every step in this direction must have social justice, equality, and inclusivity at its heart.
- **Every woman from a disadvantaged background must have access to empowering measures as a woman coming from privilege does.**