



India's Evolving Voting Behaviour: Trends, Factors, and Impacts (with Special Reference to Women Voters)

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ABSTRACT :

Change is a natural part of life. Just like people change with time, our society also changes—whether in culture, economy, technology, or politics. One major change in recent years has been how people vote in elections. Voting is not just a right but also a way for people to choose their leaders and express their opinions. In India, the voting system has seen many changes, especially in the way women take part in elections. Earlier, many women followed their family's choice while voting. But now, more women are becoming aware, educated, and independent. They are thinking for themselves and making their own decisions. Women now vote based on important issues like safety, education, health, jobs, and women's rights. This shows a shift from old habits like voting based on caste or religion to new trends based on real issues.

This study looks at how women voters in India—especially those between 18 and 60 years old—are changing the way they vote. Things like education, income, age, access to mobile phones, social media, and local problems affect how women vote. The study also finds that more women are participating in elections than ever before, and this is making democracy stronger in India. The growing role of women in voting is a very good sign. It means women's voices are being heard more, and leaders are now paying more attention to women's needs and issues. This change is helping to build a more fair and equal society.

Keywords: Women Voters, Voting Behaviour, Elections, Awareness, Democracy, India, New Voting Trends.

INTRODUCTION

Voting is one of the most essential elements of a democratic system. It is the tool that allows citizens to choose their leaders and shape the direction of governance. In India, the largest democracy in the world, the importance of voting is especially significant. It is not just a constitutional right but also a civic responsibility. Over the years, Indian democracy has matured, and so has the awareness and participation of voters—particularly women, who represent nearly half of the population and electorate.

Historically, Indian women were often underrepresented in politics and public decision-making due to deep-rooted social norms, lack of education, and limited access to public spaces. Their role in elections was largely passive, and many voted as per the guidance of their family or community leaders. However, this trend is changing. Today, women in India are emerging as independent political participants, more aware of their rights, and more involved in the democratic process than ever before.

Voting is more than just casting a ballot; it reflects an individual's voice, opinion, and engagement with the political system. For women, voting is a symbol of empowerment—a means to express their aspirations, concerns, and priorities. As education levels rise and awareness spreads through media and government campaigns, women are now making informed voting decisions, based not on caste, religion, or family influence, but on issues that directly impact their lives—such as safety, healthcare, education, employment, and gender equality.

Political thinkers like Richard Rose and Harve Massavir have outlined six key roles of voting, many of which hold special relevance for women voters in India:

- **Choice of Leaders and Policies:** Women are now actively choosing candidates who advocate for women's rights and social welfare.
- **Continuous Dialogue:** By voting, women influence policy decisions and hold leaders accountable for promises related to women's development.
- **Trust in Democracy:** Voting reinforces their belief in democratic values and strengthens their identity as equal citizens.
- **Expression of Discontent:** Women voters are increasingly rejecting corrupt or inefficient governments and supporting parties with pro-women agendas.
- **Emotional Engagement:** For many women, voting is tied to dignity, independence, and hope for a better future.
- **Routine Participation:** Even those who vote without much political interest still contribute to the democratic fabric.

India's social diversity adds complexity to voting behaviour. Women from different regions, castes, age groups, education levels, and income backgrounds have unique concerns. For example, urban educated women might prioritize career opportunities and public safety, while rural women may focus on

access to clean water, maternity healthcare, or local governance. Understanding this diversity is crucial in analysing the changing patterns of women's electoral choices.

In recent years, the influence of media and digital platforms has transformed the way women voters engage with politics. Television debates, social media campaigns, YouTube content, and WhatsApp messages are now key sources of political information. This digital exposure, especially among younger women, has increased political awareness and encouraged them to question, compare, and choose wisely.

Despite this progress, there are still challenges. Misinformation, vote-buying, gender stereotypes, and the lack of women candidates in elections hinder the full political participation of women. Many women in rural areas still face pressure from family or community leaders and are discouraged from voting freely. Addressing these issues requires a stronger commitment from political parties, civil society, and the Election Commission to promote fair, inclusive, and gender-sensitive electoral practices. The study of voting behaviour is incomplete without focusing on women voters, who are not just passive supporters but active agents of democratic change. Their growing political engagement reflects a shift towards a more mature, inclusive, and participatory democracy in India. As more women claim their space in politics—not just as voters, but also as leaders—their influence will continue to shape the country's political future.

Statement of the Problem

India, the world's largest democracy, has witnessed a significant transformation in its electoral dynamics over the past few decades. One of the most notable aspects of this change is the evolving voting behaviour of women. Historically, women in India were largely passive participants in the electoral process, often casting their votes under the influence of familial, patriarchal, or community pressures. Their political engagement was limited, and voting decisions were frequently guided by caste, religion, or the dominant male figures within the household. However, recent trends reveal a shifting landscape. With rising levels of literacy, economic independence, digital exposure, and social awareness, women are emerging as independent political actors. Issues such as education, healthcare, employment opportunities, safety, and gender equality have started to significantly influence their voting decisions. Women are no longer mere extensions of their families' political preferences; they are becoming assertive, informed voters with unique and issue-based priorities. Despite this positive transformation, there remains a gap in understanding how and why women's voting behaviour is changing, what socio-economic and cultural factors are driving this change, and how it impacts electoral outcomes and policy formulation. Moreover, the degree of this change may vary by region, age, education level, or rural-urban divide, indicating the need for focused, region-specific studies.

Research Gap

Despite a growing body of literature on electoral behaviour in India, the specific dynamics of women's voting patterns remain underexplored, especially in regional and sub-national contexts. Much of the existing research focuses either on macro-level electoral statistics or general gender disparities in political representation, without delving deeply into the qualitative and intersectional factors that influence women's voting decisions. Several studies have highlighted that women's voter turnout has increased significantly in recent elections, sometimes even surpassing that of men. However, mere turnout figures do not explain the complexity behind women's political choices—whether those choices are autonomous, issue-based, or still influenced by social norms, caste loyalties, or familial expectations.

Moreover, most available research lacks a localized focus that could illuminate how socio-economic status, education, digital literacy, urban-rural divides, caste, and regional political culture affect voting behaviour differently across India's diverse population. There is also an insufficient understanding of how digital exposure and social media are reshaping women's political awareness and participation, particularly among young and first-time voters. Further, while urban middle-class women have received some attention in political studies, the voices and experiences of rural, lower-income, and marginalized women remain significantly underrepresented. This lack of intersectional analysis obscures the full spectrum of challenges and transformations taking place.

What is Voting Behaviour?

The concept of voting behaviour has long been part of political science discourse, but its scope and significance have evolved considerably in recent decades. As Samuel S. Eldersveld rightly notes in his work *"Theory and Method in Voting Behaviour Research"*, the term "voting behaviour" is not entirely new. However, its contemporary use marks a significant shift in how scholars view and analyze political participation. Eldersveld emphasizes that voting behaviour today encompasses not just numerical data or election outcomes, but also the psychological, emotional, and institutional dynamics that influence the decision-making of voters.

In earlier studies, the examination of voting patterns was primarily quantitative—focused on the statistical analysis of electoral outcomes, voter turnout, party preference, and shifts across constituencies. Over time, scholars recognized the limitations of purely statistical interpretations. A richer understanding required moving beyond numbers and exploring the underlying factors—such as individual perception, motivation, values, identity, and institutional influences—that shape political choices. Thus, voting behaviour emerged as a broad interdisciplinary field that bridges political science, sociology, and psychology.

Political scientists Plano and Riggs offer a succinct definition: *"Voting behaviour is a field of study concerned with the ways in which people tend to vote in public elections and the reasons why they vote as they do."* This description highlights both the empirical dimension (how people vote) and the analytical dimension (why people vote in certain ways). As such, voting behaviour represents a vital subset of the broader study of political behaviour and is often seen as the foundation for understanding democratic participation.

Psychological and Sociological Dimensions

One of the defining characteristics of modern voting behaviour research is its focus on the psychological processes of voters. These include individual perception of political issues, emotional responses to leaders or events, and motivational factors driving participation. For instance, a voter's decision to support a particular party may be influenced not only by rational assessment of policies but also by emotional attachment to a charismatic leader or a deep-seated sense of identity with a political community.

Furthermore, voting is also shaped by sociological factors. Age, gender, caste, class, religion, language, and education all play critical roles in influencing political preferences. These social characteristics often correspond with distinct voting patterns and political allegiances. Voting surveys have consistently shown that different segments of society—whether defined by economic status, religion, caste, or ethnicity—tend to exhibit varied political behaviours, based on their lived experiences, grievances, and aspirations.

For example, young voters may be more inclined toward parties that promote education, employment, and digital innovation, whereas older voters might prioritize stability, tradition, or pension benefits. Similarly, urban voters may be more responsive to issues like infrastructure, public services, and governance transparency, while rural voters may place higher importance on agricultural subsidies, irrigation, and rural development programs. This diversity illustrates how voting behaviour is deeply embedded in the socio-political environment of the electorate.

Voting Behaviour as Political Expression

Elections are central to democratic governance and serve as the primary mechanism through which citizens express their political will. In the electoral context, voting becomes an act of political communication. Voters use the ballot to express their approval or disapproval of governments, parties, policies, and leaders. At the same time, voting can reflect ideological leanings, group identity, or protest against existing conditions.

Elections also function as a peaceful expression of democratic class struggle, where various interests—economic, social, or ideological—are represented through the electoral competition. Through voting, citizens engage in a process of negotiation and bargaining with the state. As a result, voting behaviour provides insight into the balance of power and the evolving priorities of a democratic society.

A particularly noteworthy area of study is how irrational factors influence voting. Although political theory often assumes rational choice—that voters make decisions based on informed self-interest—empirical research reveals a more complex reality. Voters are frequently swayed by non-rational elements such as propaganda, emotional appeals, religious sentiments, group loyalties, and even temporary popularity surges on social media.

For instance, the role of charismatic leadership is especially significant. A leader with a strong public image and personal appeal can often override policy shortcomings and still attract large voter support. The use of mass media and digital platforms has further amplified this effect, turning elections into highly personalized and media-driven events.

Similarly, the influence of money power and pressure groups—such as religious or caste-based organizations—can also distort the electoral process. Vote-buying, fear-mongering, misinformation, and emotional manipulation are tactics that have been used across various democracies, including India. These irrational forces can greatly impact electoral outcomes, often at the expense of democratic ideals.

The Indian Context

In the case of India, voting behaviour reflects the complex and diverse nature of its society. India's vast population is divided by region, religion, caste, language, and class, making its electoral politics uniquely multifaceted. Despite this complexity, India has conducted regular, large-scale democratic elections since its independence in 1947.

However, voting behaviour in India often deviates from strictly rational or ideological lines. As Prof. V. M. Sirsikar observed, although India has managed to establish a relatively stable democratic system, several non-rational forces continue to dominate the electoral process. These include mass manipulation, caste-based mobilization, communal politics, fear of minority exclusion, and the overwhelming influence of charismatic leaders. According to Sirsikar, these factors have contributed to electoral outcomes more significantly than rational assessment of policies or performance. This does not mean that Indian voters lack political awareness or critical thinking. On the contrary, recent elections have shown an increasing trend of issue-based voting, particularly among educated and urban populations. Issues like corruption, economic performance, women's safety, job creation, and national security are becoming central to voter decision-making. At the same time, identity politics and populist promises still hold considerable sway, especially in rural and underdeveloped regions.

The study of voting behaviour is an essential area of political science, offering deep insights into the functioning of democratic systems. It is no longer sufficient to merely examine who won an election or by what margin. Scholars must delve into the psychological, social, and institutional factors that shape voter choices. Voting behaviour research not only helps understand electoral outcomes but also informs policy design, campaign strategies, and democratic reforms. In democracies like India, where voter diversity is immense and political participation is both vibrant and volatile, this field holds even greater significance. By examining the reasons behind voter preferences—whether rational or irrational, individual or collective—researchers can better assess the health of a democracy and its responsiveness to the needs of its people. As democracies evolve in the 21st century, the study of voting behaviour will continue to be a vital lens for understanding how citizens interact with power, governance, and each other.

Voting Behaviour in India: Determinants

Voting behaviour in India is shaped by a wide array of social, economic, cultural, and political factors. These determinants often interact in complex ways to influence how individuals and communities make electoral choices. Unlike the idealistic notion of purely rational voting based on policies or performance, the reality in India presents a dynamic blend of identity politics, ideological affiliations, emotional appeals, and material considerations. Some of the most prominent factors that influence voting patterns in India include religion, caste, community, language, regional identity, economic status, political ideology, party image, leadership charisma, and media influence. Political parties and candidates strategically use these variables in their campaign narratives and outreach efforts to win votes. Despite public declarations supporting secularism, inclusivity, and rational governance, many political actors routinely appeal to religious, linguistic, or caste-based sentiments to mobilize voters.

For example, religion has historically played a significant role in shaping voter loyalty in several states. Similarly, caste remains a powerful determinant, especially in rural areas where community networks and traditional affiliations strongly influence political preferences. Political parties often field candidates or craft slogans that resonate with dominant castes or religious communities to maximize their electoral appeal.

Language and regional identity are also critical factors, especially in linguistically diverse states such as Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, and Maharashtra, where regional pride and cultural uniqueness are closely linked with political sentiment. Voters in such regions often respond more strongly to parties that promote regional autonomy, protect local languages, or resist perceived external domination. Another important determinant is economic status and class. Voters from economically marginalized sections tend to be more responsive to welfare schemes, subsidies, and direct benefits, while middle-class and urban voters might prioritize issues such as inflation, taxation, infrastructure, and job creation. This divergence often leads to varying voting patterns between rural and urban areas. Charisma and leadership personality also exert a strong influence. Indian electoral history is replete with examples of charismatic leaders shaping the national mood and influencing mass voting decisions. Popular campaign slogans such as “*Garibi Hatao*”, “*Indira is India*”, or “*My heart beats for India*” created emotional connections between leaders and the masses. These symbolic phrases often turn into powerful tools of political communication, especially when associated with iconic figures such as Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, and Narendra Modi.

Election type and context also affect voter behaviour. Voters tend to make different decisions in national versus state or local elections. While national elections may focus on leadership and macro-level issues like national security and economic policy, local elections often revolve around issues like sanitation, water supply, roads, and candidate accessibility. In some cases, voters even adopt split-ticket voting, choosing different parties for different levels of governance. Additionally, media and digital platforms now play a growing role in shaping voting preferences. Television, newspapers, social media campaigns, and WhatsApp messaging have revolutionized political communication. Visual imagery, viral slogans, targeted advertising, and political debates significantly impact public perception and decision-making, especially among younger voters and the urban electorate. Political waves or national sentiments, often sparked by major events such as wars, economic reforms, corruption scandals, or crises like demonetization or the COVID-19 pandemic, can also dramatically shift voting behaviour. These waves may override traditional caste, community, or regional considerations and generate sweeping electoral mandates.

The extent of the franchise and voter awareness also influence behaviour. With the expansion of universal adult suffrage, millions of first-time and less-informed voters have entered the political process. Their choices are often guided by local opinion leaders, community influencers, or popular media rather than detailed policy analysis. Voting behaviour in India is not driven by a single factor but by a confluence of various elements—emotional, rational, traditional, and modern. Political parties understand these determinants and craft their campaign strategies accordingly. Understanding these factors is essential not just for winning elections but also for strengthening democratic participation and designing more inclusive and effective governance.

1. Charisma as a Determinant of Voting Behaviour in India: With Special Reference to Women Voters

Charisma is one of the most powerful, yet often underestimated, factors influencing voting behaviour in India—especially among women voters. Charisma refers to the personal magnetism, appeal, or charm of a leader that generates emotional attachment, admiration, and loyalty among the masses. In Indian politics, charismatic leadership has consistently played a vital role in mobilizing support across gender, caste, religion, and class lines. For women voters in particular, charisma acts not just as a political influence, but also as an emotional connector, often motivating political participation and trust in leadership. Women, historically marginalized in the political space, have increasingly become more active and assertive as voters in India. However, many female voters—particularly in semi-urban and rural areas—still rely on personal impressions, emotional appeal, and the perceived strength of leadership when choosing candidates. In such contexts, a leader’s ability to inspire confidence, empathy, and protection becomes more influential than ideology or policy details. A charismatic leader who appears relatable, trustworthy, and decisive often gains significant support from women voters who seek assurance of stability, welfare, and social upliftment.

From the early days of Indian democracy, charismatic leaders have successfully appealed to women. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru’s image as a visionary and compassionate statesman drew admiration from many female voters. His inclusive language and soft-spoken approach made politics feel accessible to women in a newly independent nation. Similarly, Indira Gandhi, India’s first woman Prime Minister, became a powerful symbol of female strength and leadership. Her slogan “*Garibi Hatao*” resonated with millions of underprivileged women who saw her as a leader who understood their struggles. Indira Gandhi’s personality became an identity marker, and many women voted for her not just for her policies but for the image of power and resilience she projected. The emotional impact of charismatic leadership was also seen after her assassination, when a sympathy wave swept Rajiv Gandhi to power. His youthful appearance, soft-spoken nature, and promises of modernization made him especially popular among women and youth. In more recent times, Narendra Modi’s carefully crafted image as a self-made, decisive, and nationalist leader has won wide admiration, particularly from women in both rural and urban India. His schemes like Ujjwala Yojana, Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, and Beti Bachao Beti Padhao were publicized with personal emotional narratives, connecting deeply with female voters who associated these policies with safety, dignity, and empowerment. In addition to national figures, many state-level leaders have also gained massive support from women due to their charismatic personalities. Leaders like Jayalalitha in Tamil Nadu and Mamata Banerjee in West Bengal built their political capital not just on policy but on their strong, relatable public personas. Women viewed these leaders as protectors and champions of their rights, reinforcing the emotional bond that charisma can foster.

For women, who often face structural and cultural barriers to political engagement, charismatic leaders offer an entry point into democratic participation. They help build trust in governance and foster a sense of belonging in the political system. At the same time, it is essential to recognize that such loyalty may not always be based on rational policy analysis. Emotional appeal and personal admiration can overshadow critical scrutiny, which makes voter education and awareness just as important. Charisma remains a significant determinant of voting behaviour in India and has a particularly strong influence on women voters. It bridges the gap between the electorate and the leader by creating a sense of personal connection, trust, and hope. As Indian democracy evolves, the emotional dimensions of politics—symbolized by charismatic leadership—will continue to shape electoral choices, especially for women who are increasingly emerging as a powerful and decisive voter bloc.

2. Caste as a Determinant of Voting Behaviour Among Women Voters in India

Caste has long been one of the most influential factors shaping voting behaviour in India. Despite the country's constitutional commitment to equality and non-discrimination, caste continues to play a deep and enduring role in elections. For Indian women voters in particular—especially in rural and semi-urban areas—caste identity often guides political preferences and choices during elections. In many communities, women rely on social and cultural networks where caste plays a major role in daily life. These networks influence not only personal decisions but also political opinions. Many women vote according to the directions or preferences of community leaders, family elders, or caste-based organizations. The belief that a leader from one's own caste will better understand and protect community interests is still very strong. Political parties are well aware of this reality. Before selecting candidates, they often assess the caste composition of each constituency. They field candidates who can appeal to dominant caste groups and design their campaigns to mobilize caste-based support. For example, if a large number of women in a region belong to a certain backward caste, parties might field a woman candidate from that caste and promise schemes focused on women's welfare and social justice.

The rise of women leaders from marginalized castes has also influenced voting patterns. Leaders like Mayawati, who represented Dalits and especially Dalit women, created a powerful emotional and political connection with women voters. Her leadership gave many marginalized women the confidence to vote independently and think critically about their political choices. Caste-based political mobilization gained significant momentum after the Mandal Commission in the 1990s, which recommended reservations for Other Backward Classes (OBCs). This move empowered many lower-caste communities, including women, to participate in the political process more actively. Women from these groups began to see voting as a tool for self-respect and collective progress.

Regional parties like the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) built strong vote banks by focusing on caste identities. These parties often engaged directly with women through grassroots campaigns, self-help groups, and caste-based community outreach. Women voters responded positively when they saw leaders who spoke their language and understood their struggles. However, there has been a slow but important change in recent years. With increasing education, exposure to media, and digital access, many women—especially young and urban women—are moving beyond caste when deciding whom to vote for. Issues such as safety, education for girls, healthcare, inflation, and employment are becoming more important to them than the caste of a candidate. Still, the change is uneven. In rural areas, caste continues to dominate political conversations, and many women still feel pressure to vote according to family or community expectations. It is also important to note the difference between caste as social identity and casteism as political manipulation. While caste identity is part of a woman's lived experience, casteism often limits her ability to make independent political choices. To promote more inclusive and rational voting behaviour among women, there is a need for sustained civic education, awareness programs, and women-centric political discourse. Women must be encouraged to think critically, participate actively, and vote based on issues that matter to their lives—not just community or caste loyalty. Caste still plays a strong role in shaping voting behaviour among Indian women voters, particularly in traditional settings. Yet, with growing awareness and empowerment, there is hope that more women will exercise their right to vote freely and focus on development, equality, and good governance.

3. Religion as a Determinant of Voting Behaviour in India – With Special Reference to Women

India, as a constitutionally secular nation, guarantees every citizen the right to freedom of religion, treats all religions equally, and does not recognize any state religion. Despite these secular ideals, religion continues to play a pivotal role in shaping the political landscape—particularly during elections. Among the electorate, women voters—who now constitute nearly half of India's voting population—are increasingly influenced by religious factors, either directly or through their community's collective political orientations.

In the Indian socio-political context, religion often intersects with gender, especially in patriarchal communities where women's political choices are shaped by family, community leaders, and religious norms. The influence of religious identity on women's voting behaviour is therefore both personal and collective. In many regions, women voters—especially in rural or traditional areas—are more likely to vote in alignment with their religious group, often under family or community influence. This trend is particularly noticeable during polarised elections where religious sentiments are mobilized.

Several political parties and groups openly or subtly engage in religion-based electoral strategies that affect women. Parties such as the Muslim League, Akali Dal, Hindu Mahasabha, and Shiv Sena have historically mobilized support by invoking religious identity, and women have often been targeted as symbols of cultural preservation. Campaigns around issues like triple talaq, uniform civil code, women's entry into religious shrines, and protection of religious customs have often been projected as matters of religious dignity and women's safety, which in turn influence voting decisions.

Furthermore, religious leaders and clerics sometimes issue direct or indirect appeals to women voters to act "in accordance with faith." For example, in some communities, fatwas or public religious appeals may ask women to support a candidate seen as protecting religious values. Even when women are aware of broader political issues, religious narratives often tap into emotional and identity-based sentiments that heavily influence their vote.

Political parties have also employed religious symbolism and targeted women-centric religious narratives to shape electoral behaviour. Women voters are often addressed through themes of cultural purity, moral responsibility, and protection of faith and family values, which are deeply embedded in religious discourse. Women, being central to family and community life in many religious traditions, are perceived as custodians of culture—making them prime targets for religiously infused political messaging.

In addition, religious institutions such as temples, mosques, and gurdwaras are not only centres of worship but also hubs for community discussions and mobilization. Women who attend religious gatherings often become conduits of political messaging, either through direct appeals made at these venues or through informal discussions influenced by religious opinion leaders.

The impact of communal polarization during elections—such as during riots or after controversial judicial verdicts involving religious issues—can disproportionately affect women. Concerns about security, dignity, and protection of family become prominent in such contexts, prompting women to vote for parties that they perceive as defenders of their religious identity. This behaviour, though not necessarily irrational, is rooted in lived experiences and emotional responses to communal environments.

However, the religious influence on women's voting behaviour is not uniform across all classes, regions, or age groups. In urban areas, among educated and working women, there is a growing trend towards issue-based voting. These women are more likely to prioritize policies related to healthcare, women's safety, education, and employment opportunities, although religious factors may still linger in the background. This reflects a gradual but significant shift from identity-based voting to aspirational and rational decision-making.

It is also important to note that women are not passive participants in religion-based voting. They can and do express agency within the frameworks of their communities and religious identities. In some cases, women have been at the forefront of religiously inspired political mobilizations—such as protests against or in support of religious verdicts, personal law reforms, or cultural traditions. These movements further indicate that religion shapes women's political behaviour not only in terms of voting but also through activism and community engagement.

In conclusion, religion remains a critical determinant of voting behaviour among women in India, particularly in contexts where religious identity is deeply linked with family, community, and social honour. While the secular principles of the Indian Constitution aim to separate religion from politics, the lived reality for many Indian women—especially in rural and conservative settings—still reflects a complex interplay between faith, identity, and electoral choice.

4. Language as a Determinant of Voting Behaviour in India – With Special Reference to Women Voters

India is one of the most linguistically diverse countries in the world, with the Constitution recognizing 22 official languages and hundreds of dialects spoken across its states. This multilingual character is not just a cultural feature—it is also deeply embedded in Indian politics. The organization of Indian states on a linguistic basis since the States Reorganization Act of 1956 reflects the centrality of language in political identity. Language often serves as a significant determinant in electoral politics, and its influence extends to women voters, shaping their political perceptions, engagement, and voting behaviour.

For women voters, especially those in rural and semi-urban areas, language is a powerful medium through which political ideas, manifestos, and messages are received and interpreted. The use of regional languages in political campaigns, slogans, pamphlets, and speeches enables women—many of whom may have limited literacy or no exposure to English or Hindi—to connect with political narratives more personally. Political parties strategically communicate in local dialects to emotionally appeal to women voters, highlighting regional pride, cultural identity, and local developmental needs.

In many communities, language is tied to identity and social belonging. Women, as traditional caretakers of culture, often feel strongly about preserving their linguistic heritage. Political parties, recognizing this sentiment, sometimes campaign around linguistic pride and autonomy, promising to protect or promote the official status of regional languages in education, administration, and public signage. These assurances can resonate deeply with women who see language as part of their family and community's cultural continuity.

Women voters have also played an important role in movements that center around linguistic rights. For example, in states like Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, West Bengal, and Maharashtra, women have actively participated in protests or supported political parties advocating for the primacy of their regional language over Hindi or English. Such movements often influence voting patterns, with women aligning with parties that pledge to uphold regional linguistic identity.

Additionally, language can shape access to political information. Women who are monolingual or primarily speak a regional dialect may rely on local-language media—newspapers, radio, TV, and social media platforms—for election-related information. The availability or absence of information in their mother tongue influences their understanding of issues, leaders, and party positions, thereby affecting their voting choices. For instance, a party that communicates extensively in the local language is more likely to connect with women voters at the grassroots level.

In multilingual states, linguistic tensions between different language groups may also influence women's voting preferences. In urban centers with diverse populations, issues such as language dominance, regional job reservations, and educational language policies may create divisions along linguistic lines. Women belonging to linguistic minorities may support candidates who pledge to protect minority language rights, while others may prefer leaders who promote the majority regional language.

Further, education policy—particularly the medium of instruction in government schools—is a language-related issue that holds special importance for women, especially mothers. Women voters often prioritize leaders and parties who promote mother-tongue instruction at the primary level, recognizing its impact on their children's learning and cultural identity. Thus, language is not only a cultural or emotional issue but also a practical concern in the day-to-day lives of women voters.

5. Money Power and Voting Behaviour – With Special Reference to Women Voters in India

In a country like India, where a significant portion of the population still lives below the poverty line and struggles with daily survival, money plays a crucial role in shaping voting behaviour. The impact of financial power on electoral outcomes is well acknowledged, especially during local and national elections. Among the various demographics affected by this, women voters—particularly those from economically weaker sections—are both directly and indirectly influenced by the money factor in politics.

For many women, especially in rural and underprivileged urban areas, economic vulnerability is a daily reality. Political parties and candidates often exploit this financial hardship during elections. Women, as primary caregivers and homemakers, are responsible for managing household expenses, ensuring food security, and meeting their families' basic needs. This makes them more susceptible to small cash incentives, free rations, or household items like pressure cookers, sarees, and utensils, which are frequently distributed as part of election campaigns.

While such practices may seem like one-time assistance, they can significantly affect voting decisions among economically distressed women. When immediate material benefit is offered, it often outweighs long-term policy promises, especially in the absence of political literacy. This form of indirect vote-buying exploits women's economic dependence and lack of access to independent income. In many cases, women may vote according to the instructions of male family members, particularly when financial exchanges are made at the household level.

Moreover, wealthy candidates and parties with high campaign spending often dominate visibility and access to voters. Expensive rallies, glossy advertisements, large-scale social media promotions, and door-to-door campaigns are more accessible to rich candidates. Women voters, especially those with limited exposure to alternative political narratives or independent media, are likely to be influenced by this constant visibility and presence. A well-funded campaign that engages with women's issues and uses emotional appeals can be more effective in shaping their preferences.

However, it must be noted that money does not guarantee victory in all circumstances. Women, especially the younger and more educated segments, are increasingly rejecting vote-buying tactics and seeking accountability, development, and gender-responsive governance. During "wave elections"—when larger national or regional sentiments take over, or when major issues like corruption, inflation, or women's safety dominate the discourse—financial incentives lose their sway. In such instances, women voters have demonstrated critical political judgment, favoring candidates or parties aligned with their values over those offering short-term material gains.

Additionally, the rise of women-centric welfare schemes, such as direct cash transfers, free LPG connections (Ujjwala Yojana), and maternity benefits, has created a new form of money-based influence. These schemes, though policy-driven, can also influence voting behaviour by associating certain parties or leaders with tangible economic relief. While this is not direct bribery, it does underscore how economic dependency shapes political loyalty among women voters.

6.Sub-Nationalism and Women Voters in India: A Growing Influence on Electoral Behaviour

India's rich diversity is both its strength and its challenge. The presence of multiple ethnic, linguistic, religious, and regional identities has given rise to complex political dynamics, one of which is sub-nationalism—the feeling of strong loyalty or allegiance to one's region, ethnicity, or community, often above national identity. While sub-nationalism has long influenced voting behaviour, its impact on women voters has become increasingly noticeable in recent years.

For women in India, especially those in regions with a history of strong regional or ethnic movements—such as the North-East, Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, or parts of central and eastern India—the emotional appeal of sub-nationalism can deeply affect their voting choices. These women often live in environments where identity-based politics dominate social and political life, and where regional or ethnic pride becomes a part of everyday discourse. As caretakers of culture and tradition within families, women are often key transmitters of identity and emotional affiliations, making them particularly receptive to sub-nationalist narratives.

In several instances, regional parties and movements have specifically targeted women voters through cultural, emotional, and safety-based appeals. For example, in states like Assam, Nagaland, or West Bengal, regional parties may frame their campaign messages around protecting regional identity, preserving language, and resisting central imposition. These messages can resonate with women who feel culturally threatened or excluded by national parties or mainstream politics.

Moreover, in conflict-prone areas or regions with a history of secessionist demands or insurgency, sub-nationalist sentiments are often linked with women's lived experiences of displacement, violence, military presence, or social upheaval. In such settings, women may vote based on the hope of peace, security, and protection of their community, even if it means supporting radical or identity-driven groups. Sometimes, women also respond to election boycotts or pressure from regional outfits by abstaining from voting, either voluntarily or due to social coercion.

At the same time, sub-nationalist narratives can also serve as a platform for empowering women. In some regions, regional parties have actively promoted women's issues within the larger framework of identity politics. For example, demands for separate statehood (as seen in Telangana or Gorkhaland) have sometimes included calls for better education, healthcare, and safety for women. As a result, women voters may support these movements not only out of regional loyalty but also because they see them as vehicles for social and economic upliftment.

However, the influence of sub-nationalism is not uniformly positive. It can also reinforce patriarchal control over women's political choices. In communities where political identity is tightly bound to caste, tribe, or religion, women may be discouraged from independent political thinking, and their votes may be dictated by family or community leaders. Women in these situations may find themselves used as symbolic supporters of a cause without having a real voice in decision-making.

In urban areas and among educated women, the sway of sub-nationalism is often more nuanced. While regional pride or cultural identity may still shape opinions, many women increasingly balance these with concerns about governance, development, education, healthcare, and employment. Here, the emotional appeal of sub-nationalism competes with practical considerations of daily life and personal empowerment. Sub-nationalism plays a complex and layered role in shaping the voting behaviour of Indian women. In some regions, it strengthens their political participation by linking identity with agency, while in others, it may limit their freedom by binding them to collective loyalty. As Indian democracy matures, it is essential to ensure that regional identity politics do not come at the cost of women's individual political rights and voices. Encouraging greater political literacy among women, promoting inclusive regional policies, and supporting women's leadership within regional parties are crucial steps toward empowering women voters amidst the currents of sub-nationalism.

7.Performance of the Party in Power: A Key Determinant for Women Voters in India

In a democratic setup like India, the performance of the ruling party plays a crucial role in shaping electoral outcomes. For women voters, this factor is increasingly emerging as a decisive influence in their voting behaviour. Unlike traditional determinants such as caste, religion, or community, the actual delivery of promises, governance quality, and developmental initiatives now weigh heavily on how women exercise their right to vote.

Every political party releases an election manifesto outlining promises related to education, healthcare, employment, women's safety, social welfare, and empowerment schemes. For women—especially in rural and semi-urban areas—these commitments matter deeply, as they are directly linked to their day-to-day lives. The extent to which a government fulfills these promises often determines how women perceive its credibility and effectiveness.

Over the last few decades, women have emerged as a powerful voting bloc, more aware and assertive than before. Increasing literacy, access to media, community awareness programs, and grassroots political engagement (such as participation in Panchayati Raj institutions) have contributed to a growing

ability among women to evaluate political performance critically. Schemes like Ujjwala Yojana, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Jan Dhan accounts, and free ration distribution have made women more conscious of government efforts. However, the inability of parties to translate announcements into real benefits often leads to disillusionment.

The shift of women voters from loyalty-based to performance-based voting was observed in multiple state and national elections. For instance, when promises around women's safety, affordable healthcare, LPG subsidy, or job opportunities are unfulfilled, women voters—especially from urban and educated middle-class backgrounds—tend to switch allegiance. This trend reflects the rise of the “floating voter” or “issue-based voter” among women, a group that prioritizes delivery over identity politics.

A historical example can be seen in the 1989 General Elections, where the Congress (I), despite having secured a landslide victory in 1984, lost the mandate in the very next election. One of the primary reasons was voter dissatisfaction with the government's inability to meet expectations. While this shift was once largely led by young, educated male voters, in more recent years, educated women voters have joined this category of politically aware “switchers” who assess performance critically and change their support accordingly.

Moreover, in regions where women's security, welfare, and dignity are prominent concerns, the ability of the ruling party to enforce law and order, provide safe public transport, ensure responsive policing, and uphold women's rights becomes a litmus test for its electoral support among female voters. The growing political consciousness among women means that governance failures are no longer tolerated silently, and political accountability is increasingly being demanded from both state and national leaders.

However, performance evaluation among women voters is not uniform across regions or socio-economic backgrounds. In rural areas, performance is judged more on the basis of availability of basic amenities—such as roads, electricity, healthcare centres, and subsidies—while in urban areas, concerns may revolve around employment, safety, price control, and infrastructure. In both settings, women's lived experiences and day-to-day realities shape how they assess the effectiveness of a government. The performance of the party in power is now a central determinant in the voting behaviour of Indian women. As awareness and participation grow, so does the demand for results. Political parties can no longer rely solely on emotional appeals or identity-based politics; instead, they must deliver on promises, particularly those targeting women's welfare and empowerment. Women voters are now more informed, engaged, and strategic in their choices, making them key players in determining electoral outcomes based on performance.

8. Mass Literacy: A Crucial Determinant of Voting Behaviour Among Women in India

Mass literacy remains one of the foundational factors influencing voting behaviour across India, and its significance becomes even more pronounced when viewed through the lens of women voters. In a society where gender inequality and educational disparity have historically gone hand in hand, the level of literacy among women has a direct bearing on how they engage with the democratic process.

In many parts of India—particularly rural and semi-urban regions—female literacy rates remain lower than male literacy rates, which limits women's access to political knowledge, awareness about candidates, party manifestos, and governance issues. This lack of access often makes women voters more vulnerable to emotional appeals based on caste, religion, region, or community identity, which are exploited by political parties and interest groups. When women are not literate, their dependence on male family members, community leaders, or party workers for information increases, thereby reducing their autonomy in making informed electoral choices.

Illiteracy among women also affects their ability to critically assess campaign narratives, understand government schemes, or independently verify political claims. As a result, they may become targets of vote bank politics or symbolic gestures that lack real substance. Political parties often approach women with short-term material incentives—such as freebies, small subsidies, or emotional slogans—rather than addressing systemic issues like quality education, health services, job opportunities, and personal safety.

However, it is important to note that literacy is not the sole indicator of political wisdom. Indian women, even in areas where formal education is limited, often exhibit sharp political understanding shaped by lived experiences, community discussions, and collective memory. For instance, Indian women have demonstrated political maturity at several key moments in the nation's history. In the 1977 General Elections, women voters were part of the united wave against authoritarianism, and again in 1980, they contributed to the electoral rejection of a non-performing government.

In recent years, the rise in female literacy, especially among younger generations, is gradually reshaping voting patterns. Educated women are now more likely to engage with political discourse, question party agendas, and shift their support based on performance, transparency, and gender-sensitive policies. Media exposure—especially through smartphones and social media—has amplified the political awareness of even semi-literate and first-time women voters.

Furthermore, several government-led literacy and empowerment programs, such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Digital India, and Self-Help Group (SHG) movements, have contributed to increasing civic awareness among women. As a result, women voters are now more confident in questioning candidates, participating in political meetings, and voting independently.

The growing intersection of literacy and empowerment is also visible in urban India, where women from middle-class and educated backgrounds act as opinion leaders in families and communities. Their political choices are guided more by policy evaluation, leadership credibility, and issue-based priorities, such as women's safety, health, price rise, and education. Mass literacy plays a dual role in shaping the voting behaviour of women in India. While illiteracy still hinders the political empowerment of many, the expanding base of educated and semi-educated women is changing the narrative. The more literate a woman is, the more likely she is to vote independently, rationally, and with awareness of her rights and responsibilities as a citizen. Therefore, continued investment in female literacy and civic education is essential not only for empowering women but also for strengthening democratic values across the country.

9. Factionalism and Its Impact on the Voting Behaviour of Women Voters in India

Factionalism—the internal division within political parties based on personal rivalries, group loyalties, or regional interests—has long been a defining feature of the Indian political landscape. From the grassroots village level to national politics, almost every political organization, including cadre-based

parties like the BJP and the two Communist parties, has experienced the destabilizing effects of factionalism. As political analyst Rajni Kothari aptly observed, even a historically dominant party like the Congress has been deeply affected by internal divisions, weakening its strength and eroding its mass appeal.

For women voters in India, factionalism has unique and layered implications. Traditionally considered less involved in the internal workings of party politics, women often view political parties as a source of stability, empowerment, and opportunity. However, when factions within parties publicly clash, shift loyalties, or engage in power struggles, it creates confusion, distrust, and disillusionment—especially among women who seek clear leadership, consistent ideology, and credible promises for social welfare and gender justice.

Many women voters, particularly in rural or semi-urban areas, tend to follow local leaders or community influencers. When those leaders are embroiled in intra-party rivalries or switch political allegiances frequently, it destabilizes the trust women may have built in a party or candidate. This volatility discourages consistent political participation and undermines the credibility of parties that claim to champion women's causes. As a result, women are increasingly turning to regional parties or locally rooted independent candidates, who appear more focused, accessible, and less burdened by large-scale internal disputes.

Factionalism also affects women's political aspirations and representation. Intra-party conflict often sidelines capable female candidates, especially in male-dominated factions that do not prioritize gender equity in leadership roles. As a result, women may feel underrepresented or overlooked within mainstream parties and may gravitate toward women-centric movements, smaller political outfits, or civil society initiatives that offer them greater voice and visibility. Furthermore, in constituencies where women voters form a large and influential voting bloc, the presence of factionalism can directly influence voting patterns. Women are more likely to favor candidates who represent unity, stability, and community development over those who are associated with internal squabbles or political opportunism.

However, it is also worth noting that educated and politically aware women, particularly in urban areas, are learning to navigate through the noise of factional politics. They are increasingly making issue-based choices, evaluating candidates not merely on party loyalty but on their track record, stance on women's issues, and ability to deliver public services like education, healthcare, and safety. Factionalism poses a serious challenge to women's trust in political parties and the democratic process. While it reflects the dynamic and competitive nature of Indian politics, it also creates instability and confusion, which can alienate large sections of women voters. To regain and retain the confidence of women, political parties must focus on unity, transparency, and inclusive leadership, ensuring that factional disputes do not overshadow the real needs and aspirations of half the electorate.

10. Public Esteem of the Candidate and Its Influence on the Voting Behaviour of Women Voters in India

The personal reputation and public image of a candidate—commonly referred to as public esteem—plays a pivotal role in shaping the voting behaviour of women in India. Women voters, who often place high value on trustworthiness, accessibility, and integrity, are significantly influenced by a candidate's individual qualities beyond party affiliations or ideological positions.

In many Indian constituencies, women are more likely to vote for candidates who have a direct and positive connection with the local community. A candidate known for their involvement in social service, women's welfare programs, education drives, health camps, or legal aid for domestic violence victims often earns the respect and loyalty of women voters. The ability to personally relate to or recognize the candidate—as someone who is approachable, empathetic, and responsive—can override party lines and even caste or religious considerations.

In the case of women from marginalized or low-income backgrounds, the perception of a candidate who is reachable in times of need—whether for official help, medical emergencies, or local grievances—is a significant factor. They often rely on word-of-mouth reputation and the testimonials of peers or community leaders. A woman voter may prefer a candidate who has helped solve local water supply issues or ensured the construction of toilets in their area over one who only appears during election time. Moreover, in today's media-driven environment, women voters in urban and semi-urban areas are increasingly influenced by how a candidate presents themselves in public, on television, and on social media. A clean image, respectful conduct toward women, and vocal support for gender equality or safety policies enhance a candidate's appeal. Women are likely to be cautious of candidates with a history of criminal allegations, disrespectful remarks about women, or aggressive and unapproachable demeanour.

Importantly, women voters tend to distinguish between the party and the person. Even if a party's ideology does not strongly align with their own views, many women cast their vote based on the perceived sincerity, honesty, and effectiveness of the individual candidate. This is particularly true in elections where “local faces” matter more than national leadership, such as in Panchayat, Municipal, or State Assembly elections.

The public esteem of women candidates themselves also influences female voter turnout. When women see competent and respected female candidates standing for elections, it not only boosts their interest in participating but also strengthens their confidence in the political process. Female candidates who engage with women's self-help groups, attend anganwadi or school meetings, or speak on issues like health, safety, and employment have a distinct advantage in building rapport with female voters. For women voters in India, the personal qualities and reputation of the candidate are often decisive. A candidate's image as a responsible, ethical, and community-oriented individual resonates strongly with women across rural and urban settings. Political parties, therefore, must recognize that candidate selection based on character, public service, and approachability can significantly influence women's voting decisions and lead to greater electoral success.

11. Election Campaigns and Their Influence on the Voting Behaviour of Women Voters in India

Election campaigns play a crucial role in shaping the perceptions and voting choices of women across India. With the growing participation of women in electoral processes—both as voters and as politically aware citizens—targeted election campaigning has emerged as a significant tool to influence their preferences.

Political parties in India engage in vigorous and multi-platform campaigns to reach out to diverse voter groups, and women form a key demographic in this outreach. These campaigns involve a combination of mass rallies, local street meetings, door-to-door canvassing, distribution of leaflets, and increasingly, digital and social media outreach through WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram. Women voters, especially in urban and semi-

urban areas, are often drawn to messages that reflect their daily concerns—such as safety, sanitation, healthcare, education, and inflation. Personal contact and community-level interactions have proven particularly effective among women in rural and semi-urban areas. Women often rely on family, neighbours, and community influencers to form opinions. Hence, when campaigns include women volunteers or SHG (Self Help Group) leaders, or when candidates—especially women—interact personally with female voters, it creates a trust-based connection that can strongly impact voting behaviour. Another key factor is the use of emotional appeals in campaign messaging. Political parties and candidates who speak on issues like domestic violence, rising food prices, maternal health, girl child education, or offer schemes such as free LPG cylinders, cash incentives for daughters, or subsidized healthcare tend to connect better with women. These issue-specific appeals are often designed to make a woman voter believe that her and her family's welfare is best secured by voting for a particular party or candidate. Modern campaigns also strategically use women icons—film stars, female political leaders, and social workers—to connect with female voters. The presence of such figures during rallies or on media platforms can significantly influence the sentiments of women, particularly the younger demographic. Television ads, radio jingles, and locally spoken messages in the regional language, often carry more weight among women than technical manifestos or high-pitched debates.

In the case of undecided or floating women voters, poll-eve campaigning—particularly campaigns that showcase confidence in winning or endorsements from trusted figures—can sway decisions. Women, like many voters, often show inclination toward a candidate or party perceived as strong, stable, and likely to win, especially if it aligns with their family or community leanings. However, it is important to note that effective messaging must be inclusive, respectful, and relatable to women's everyday realities. Overly symbolic gestures or promises lacking credibility may backfire, especially among educated or politically aware women who are increasingly scrutinizing the gap between campaign promises and actual delivery. Election campaigns significantly influence the voting decisions of women in India, especially when they focus on women-centric issues, build direct engagement, and project relatable and sincere candidates. Political parties that strategically and genuinely engage with women voters through sensitive, inclusive, and sustained campaigning are more likely to earn their trust—and their votes.

CONCLUSION :

The voting behaviour of women in India is shaped by a wide range of social, economic, cultural, and political factors. While traditional influences such as religion, caste, language, and money continue to play a role, the growing participation and awareness among women voters is steadily transforming the nature of electoral politics in the country.

Over time, Indian democracy has gradually evolved, and so has the political maturity of its electorate—including women. Women are no longer passive voters swayed only by emotional or identity-based appeals. A slow but visible shift is occurring toward issue-based political choices, particularly among women who are becoming more informed about governance, policies, and the performance of political parties. Schemes related to healthcare, safety, education, financial inclusion, and social welfare are now key determinants for many women while making their electoral decisions. Despite this progress, it is undeniable that many factors still influence the female vote—such as community norms, patriarchal pressures, and misinformation during campaigns. Political parties and candidates often attempt to use religion, caste alliances, linguistic identity, or even money to secure women's support. While some women vote independently, many still follow family or community voting patterns, especially in rural and conservative regions. Therefore, it becomes imperative to foster a political environment that truly empowers women to vote independently, rationally, and confidently.

Elections remain the cornerstone of democratic governance. Through voting, people—especially women—exercise their fundamental right to express political opinions and determine the direction of government policies. For this process to be meaningful, elections must be conducted freely, fairly, and without coercion or manipulation. Democratic institutions must ensure that women enjoy full freedom of thought, expression, and participation, without fear or bias. Ultimately, the true strength of a democracy lies in how inclusively it represents its people, especially women, who make up nearly half of the electorate. For Indian democracy to thrive, the electoral process must uphold and reflect the genuine will of all its citizens, and particular efforts must be made to protect the voice and vote of every woman. All undemocratic practices such as vote-buying, voter suppression, rigging, and emotional manipulation must be eradicated to build a truly participatory and just political system. The journey toward a gender-sensitive democracy is ongoing—but with growing awareness, increased literacy, and deeper political engagement, Indian women are emerging as a powerful force in shaping the nation's future through the ballot box.

IMPLICATIONS

The in-depth exploration of voting behaviour among women in India reveals a rich, multifaceted picture of political engagement, where historical exclusion is giving way to growing empowerment, but not without persistent challenges. These insights have far-reaching implications for democratic development, electoral strategy, policymaking, gender justice, and social equity.

- Strengthening Democratic Participation
- Policy Formulation Rooted in Gendered Needs
- Targeted Civic Education and Political Literacy
- Reforming Campaign Strategies and Outreach
- Mitigating the Role of Money Power
- Encouraging Women's Political Leadership
- Deconstructing Caste and Religious Barriers
- Leveraging Digital Media Responsibly
- Addressing Sub-National and Regional Identity Dynamics
- Incorporating Women's Issues into National Agendas
- Rise of the Performance-Conscious Female Voter
- Political Accountability Must Be Grounded in Lived Experience

- Literacy and Political Awareness Are Game-Changers
- Factionalism Weakens Party Credibility Among Women
- Candidates Matter More Than Party Labels
- Female Representation and Relatability Influence Turnout
- Campaigns Must Reflect Women's Real Concerns
- Digital and Regional Media Must Be Leveraged Responsibly
- Floating Women Voters Are Emerging as Decisive
- Empowered Women Can Reshape India's Democratic Future

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ensure Inclusive and Gender-Sensitive Electoral Reforms
- Institutionalize Political Education for Women
- Promote Women-Centric Policy Development
- Curb the Influence of Money and Material Inducements
- Encourage and Fund Women's Political Leadership
- Strengthen Party Discipline and Internal Democracy
- Prioritize Candidates with Ethical and Social Credibility
- Reimagine Election Campaign Strategies
- Recognize and Engage the Floating Women Voter
- Decentralize Women's Political Engagement
- Mainstream Women's Voices in National Debates

These recommendations, if implemented effectively, can help reshape India's electoral landscape by transforming women from underrepresented subjects into influential and informed agents of democracy.

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