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## **Perception on *Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam* among Rural Women: A Study**

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### **Abstract:**

The *Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023* (Women's Reservation Act) is a landmark constitutional reform in India introduced to ensure 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies, thereby marking a significant advancement toward gender-inclusive governance. The Act seeks to enhance women's descriptive representation in political institutions and strengthen democratic participation by addressing entrenched structural inequalities that have historically limited women's presence in decision-making bodies. By institutionalizing gender representation, it aims to reshape the political landscape and promote inclusive development. In this context, the present study examines the perceptions of rural women regarding the Act, with particular emphasis on their awareness levels, perceived socio-political benefits, patterns of political participation, and the socio-cultural constraints that shape their attitudes.

**Keywords:** *Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam 2023*, Women's Reservation Act, rural women, political participation, women empowerment, gender equality, democratic governance and etc.

### **Introduction**

Women's political representation in India has historically remained low despite strong constitutional guarantees of equality, justice, and non-discrimination. Since independence, successive institutional reforms and policy initiatives have sought to enhance gender balance in public life; however, women continue to be



significantly underrepresented in elected bodies, policy-making institutions, and positions of political leadership. This persistent disparity is rooted in deep-seated structural barriers, including entrenched patriarchal norms, unequal access to education and economic resources, disproportionate domestic responsibilities, and the dominance of male-centric political party structures. Collectively, these factors have constrained women's meaningful participation in formal political processes and decision-making arenas.

A major milestone in addressing this imbalance was the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments, which introduced 33% reservation for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions and urban local bodies. This reform marked a transformative shift in India's grassroots democracy by enabling large-scale entry of women into local governance. It not only improved numerical representation but also fostered political awareness, leadership development, and increased visibility of women in public institutions. Despite challenges such as proxy representation, patriarchal control, and limited administrative autonomy, these amendments laid a strong foundation for women's political empowerment at the local level.

Building on this foundation, the *Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023* represents a landmark constitutional intervention aimed at extending gender-based political reservation to higher legislative institutions. By providing 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies, the Act seeks to institutionalize gender equality within India's core representative framework. Rather than being a mere numerical adjustment, it is widely interpreted as a structural reform intended to transform political culture, enhance inclusivity, and improve policy responsiveness toward gendered and marginalized concerns.

From a constitutional standpoint, the Act strengthens the principles of equality and non-discrimination enshrined in Articles 14, 15, and 16. It reflects a shift from formal equality—where equal rights are guaranteed—to substantive equality, which acknowledges historical disadvantage and the need for corrective mechanisms such as reservations. In this sense, the Act aligns with global democratic practices where gender quotas are increasingly adopted to improve women's representation in governance.



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A distinctive feature of the Act is its linkage with the delimitation and census processes, making its implementation dependent on the redrawing of electoral constituencies based on updated demographic data. While this provision ensures procedural alignment, it has also generated debate regarding timelines and effective execution.

The broader significance of the Act lies in its potential to reshape India's democratic discourse. Greater representation of women in legislatures is expected to prioritize issues such as health, education, social welfare, gender-based violence, and rural development, thereby promoting more inclusive governance outcomes.

However, the effectiveness of this reform is closely tied to prevailing socio-political realities. In a context marked by patriarchal value systems, caste hierarchies, uneven educational attainment, and limited political awareness, legal provisions alone may not automatically translate into substantive empowerment. Therefore, the Act must be understood as part of a broader democratic transformation that requires sustained efforts in political education, leadership development, and institutional capacity building.

#### **Review of Literature:**

1. Rekha Saxena (2021) critically examines gender representation in Indian parliamentary politics and argues that women's participation remains largely symbolic in many contexts. Her work highlights that political parties continue to be male-dominated, with limited opportunities for women to contest "winnable" seats. She also emphasizes that without internal party reforms, reservation policies alone may not ensure meaningful empowerment.
2. Mona Lena Krook (2009) in her seminal work on gender quotas, argues that reservation policies are among the most effective mechanisms for increasing women's political representation globally. She emphasizes that quotas not only improve numerical representation but also reshape political recruitment patterns and party behavior. However, she also cautions that the effectiveness of such policies depends on institutional design and socio-political context, as informal barriers often persist even after formal inclusion.

#### **Objectives:**

1. To understand the provisions and significance of the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023 Act.



2. To examine the level of awareness and understanding of the Act among rural women.
3. To assess the level of perception and attitudes of rural women towards the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023.

### Hypothesis:

Null Hypothesis ( $H_{01}$ ): There is no significant level of awareness about the *Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023* among rural women.

Alternative Hypothesis ( $H_{11}$ ): There is a significant level of awareness about the *Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023* among rural women.

### Methodology:

The study adopts an analytical and descriptive research design to examine voter behaviour and perceptions of rural women towards the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023 in Telangana. The study was conducted in Bandarupally and Incherla villages of Mulugu District. Primary data was collected from 80 women respondents selected through a random sampling method using a structured interview schedule. Secondary data was gathered from books, journals, government reports, and reliable online sources to support the study. The collected data was analysed using simple percentage method to interpret the responses in a systematic and meaningful way.

### Data Analysis and Interpretation:

#### 1. Age Group

| Age Group          | Number    | Percentage  |
|--------------------|-----------|-------------|
| 18-30 Years        | 24        | 30%         |
| 31-45 Years        | 11        | 13.8%       |
| 46-60 Years        | 37        | 46.2%       |
| 60 Years and above | 08        | 10%         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>       | <b>80</b> | <b>100%</b> |

From the above table, it is observed that the majority of respondents belong to the 46–60 years age group (46.2%), followed by the 18–30 years age group (30%). The 31–45 years group constitutes 13.8%, while the 60 years and above category accounts for 10% of the total respondents. This indicates that middle-aged and elderly women form the dominant segment of the study population.



## 2. Educational Qualifications:

| Response         | Number    | Percentage  |
|------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Illiterate       | 37        | 46.3%       |
| School Dropout   | 29        | 36.3%       |
| SSC              | 17        | 21.2%       |
| Intermediate     | 09        | 11.2%       |
| Degree and above | 08        | 10%         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>     | <b>80</b> | <b>100%</b> |

From the above table, it is observed that a significant proportion of respondents are illiterate (46.3%), followed by school dropouts (36.3%). A smaller proportion of respondents have completed SSC (21.2%), while 11.2% have studied up to intermediate level and only 10% possess a degree and above qualification. This clearly indicates that the educational status of the majority of respondents is low, which may have an influence on their level of awareness and understanding.

## 3. Women Should Actively Involve in Politics:

| Response  | Number | Percentage |
|-----------|--------|------------|
| Yes       | 57     | 71.2%      |
| No        | 18     | 22.5%      |
| Can't Say | 05     | 6.3%       |
| Total     | 80     | 100%       |

From the above table, it is observed that a majority of respondents (71.2%) expressed that women should actively involve in politics, indicating a positive attitude towards women's political participation. However, 22.5% of respondents disagreed with this view, while 6.3% of respondents remained neutral and could not express a clear opinion. This suggests that although most rural women support the idea of women's involvement in politics, a considerable proportion still hold reservations or lack clarity, which may be influenced by social, cultural, and educational factors.

## 4. Awareness on this Act:

| Response           | Number    | Percentage  |
|--------------------|-----------|-------------|
| High Awareness     | 04        | 5%          |
| Moderate Awareness | 14        | 17.5%       |
| Less Awareness     | 15        | 18.7%       |
| No Awareness       | 47        | 58.8%       |
| <b>TOTAL</b>       | <b>80</b> | <b>100%</b> |



From the above table, it is observed that a majority of respondents (58.8%) have no awareness of the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023. About 18.7% of respondents reported low awareness, while 17.5% have moderate awareness. Only a very small proportion (5%) of respondents have high awareness of the Act. This clearly indicates that awareness about the Act among rural women is very limited.

**5. Heard about this Act:**

| Response | Number | Percentage |
|----------|--------|------------|
| Yes      | 38     | 47.5%      |
| No       | 42     | 52.5%      |
| Total    | 80     | 100%       |

From the above table, it is observed that 52.5% of respondents have not heard about the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023, while 47.5% of respondents reported that they are aware of or have heard about the Act. This indicates that slightly more than half of the rural women respondents are not familiar with the Act, reflecting a moderate to low level of exposure to information regarding recent constitutional reforms.

**6. Reasons for Less Awareness about the Act**

| Response           | Number    | Percentage  |
|--------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Lack of Interest   | 47        | 58.7%       |
| Lack of Propaganda | 28        | 35%         |
| Any Other          | 05        | 6.3%        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>       | <b>80</b> | <b>100%</b> |

From the above table, it is observed that the major reason for less awareness about the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023 among respondents is lack of interest (58.7%). This is followed by lack of propaganda or insufficient dissemination of information (35%). A small proportion of respondents (6.3%) cited other reasons for their lack of awareness. The findings indicate that both motivational factors and inadequate awareness campaigns contribute significantly to the limited understanding of the Act among rural women.

**7. Agreed that 33% Women reservation in local governance caused women empowerment:**

| Response | Number | Percentage |
|----------|--------|------------|
| Agreed   | 24     | 30%        |



|                  |           |             |
|------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Partially Agreed | 27        | 33.8%       |
| Disagreed        | 29        | 36.2%       |
| <b>TOTAL</b>     | <b>80</b> | <b>100%</b> |

From the above table, it is observed that 30% of respondents agreed that 33% women reservation in local governance has led to women empowerment. About 33.8% of respondents partially agreed with this statement, while 36.2% disagreed. This indicates a mixed perception among rural women regarding the impact of women's reservation on empowerment. Although a considerable proportion acknowledges its positive role, a slightly higher proportion expresses disagreement, suggesting that the effectiveness of reservation in ensuring real empowerment is still debated and may be influenced by social, cultural, and practical challenges at the grassroots level.

#### **8. Women Participation in Politics is Improved with this Act**

| Response     | Number    | Percentage  |
|--------------|-----------|-------------|
| Agreed       | 18        | 22.5%       |
| Can't Say    | 15        | 18.8%       |
| Disagreed    | 47        | 58.7%       |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>80</b> | <b>100%</b> |

From the above table, it is observed that 22.5% of respondents agreed that women's participation in politics will improve with the implementation of this Act. About 18.8% of respondents could not express a clear opinion, while a majority of 58.7% disagreed with the statement. This indicates that most rural women do not strongly believe that the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023 will directly improve women's political participation.

#### **9. Women Empowerment is Possible with this Act**

| Response         | Number    | Percentage  |
|------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Agreed           | 11        | 13.7%       |
| Partially Agreed | 20        | 25%         |
| Disagreed        | 49        | 61.3%       |
| <b>TOTAL</b>     | <b>80</b> | <b>100%</b> |

From the above table, it is observed that 13.7% of respondents agreed that women empowerment is possible through this Act, while 25% partially agreed with the statement. A majority of 61.3% of respondents disagreed. This indicates that most rural women do not strongly believe that the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam,



2023 alone can ensure women empowerment. The findings suggest that empowerment is seen as dependent not only on legal provisions but also on socio-economic conditions, education, awareness, and effective implementation of policies at the grassroots level.

**10. Do you think more women participation in Politics reduce women Problems**

| Response     | Number    | Percentage  |
|--------------|-----------|-------------|
| Yes          | 25        | 31.2%       |
| No           | 55        | 68.8%       |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>80</b> | <b>100%</b> |

From the above table, it is observed that 31.2% of respondents believe that increased women participation in politics will help reduce women's problems, while a majority of 68.8% do not support this view. This indicates that most rural women do not strongly associate higher political participation of women with the direct reduction of women-related issues.

**11. This Act bring Positive Social Change among Women**

| Response     | Number    | Percentage  |
|--------------|-----------|-------------|
| Yes          | 09        | 11.2%       |
| No           | 45        | 56.3%       |
| Can't Say    | 26        | 32.5%       |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>80</b> | <b>100%</b> |

From the above table, it is observed that only 11.2% of respondents believe that the Act will bring positive social change among women, while 56.3% of respondents do not agree with this view. About 32.5% of respondents remained uncertain and could not express a clear opinion. This indicates that a majority of rural women do not strongly perceive the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023 as a catalyst for positive social change.

**Key Findings:**

1. The study shows that the majority of respondents belong to the 46–60 years age group (46.2%), indicating that middle-aged women dominate the sample.
2. A high proportion of respondents are either illiterate (46.3%) or school dropouts (36.3%), showing low educational attainment among rural women.



3. Although 71.2% of respondents support women's active participation in politics, actual awareness about the Act remains very low.
4. More than half of the respondents (58.8%) reported no awareness of the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023.
5. 52.5% of respondents have not even heard about the Act, indicating limited information exposure in rural areas.
6. The main reason for low awareness is lack of interest (58.7%), followed by lack of propaganda (35%).
7. Perceptions regarding women's reservation and empowerment are mixed, with a slight tendency toward disagreement or uncertainty.
8. 36.2% of respondents disagree that 33% reservation in local governance has led to women empowerment.
9. A majority (58.7%) believe that women's participation in politics will not improve under this Act.
10. 61.3% of respondents feel that women empowerment is not directly achieved through this Act alone.
11. 68.8% of respondents do not believe that increased women participation in politics will reduce women's problems.
12. 56.3% of respondents do not think the Act will bring positive social change among women.
13. The findings reveal low awareness but moderate to negative perception regarding the effectiveness of the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023 among rural women.

**Suggestions:**

1. The government should conduct intensive awareness campaigns in rural areas to improve understanding of the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023 among women.
2. Local self-government institutions should actively organize regular meetings and training programmes to educate rural women about political rights and reservation policies.
3. Mass media such as television, radio, and social media should be effectively used in regional languages to reach rural women.
4. Political parties should ensure genuine participation of women in decision-making positions rather than symbolic representation.



5. NGOs and Self Help Groups (SHGs) should be encouraged to spread awareness and promote women's political participation.
6. Special focus should be given to improving political literacy among illiterate and less educated rural women.
7. Socio-cultural barriers like patriarchy and family restrictions should be addressed through continuous community awareness programmes.

### **Testing of Hypothesis:**

The findings of the study reveal that 58.8% of respondents have no awareness about the Act, and 52.5% have not even heard about it. Only a very small proportion (5%) reported high awareness. These results clearly indicate a very low level of awareness among rural women regarding the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023. Based on the above findings, the null hypothesis ( $H_{01}$ ) is **accepted**, and the alternative hypothesis ( $H_{11}$ ) is **rejected**.

### **Conclusion:**

The present study on the perception of rural women towards the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023 reveals a clear gap between constitutional intent and ground-level awareness. Although the Act is a landmark reform aimed at ensuring 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies, the findings indicate that awareness among rural women remains very low. A majority of respondents are either unaware of or have only limited knowledge about the Act, reflecting inadequate dissemination of information and weak political communication at the grassroots level. The study also highlights that despite a generally positive attitude towards women's participation in politics, rural women exhibit skepticism regarding the actual impact of the Act on empowerment, political participation, and social change. Most respondents do not strongly believe that the Act alone can reduce women's problems or bring meaningful empowerment, suggesting that structural barriers such as education, socio-cultural norms, and lack of political exposure continue to influence perceptions. It can be concluded that the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023 has significant constitutional importance, but its effectiveness at the rural level depends heavily on awareness creation, socio-political sensitization, and proper implementation. Without addressing these ground realities, the goal of achieving substantive women empowerment in politics may remain limited to policy intent rather than practical reality.



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