# Polity & Governance · GS - II

**“The reservation of seats for women in the institutions of local self- government has had a limited impact on the patriarchal character of the Indian Political Process.” Comment.**

| EXAM YEAR | PAPER | SUBJECT |
|---|---|---|
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| MARKS | WORD LIMIT |
|---|---|
| 15 | ~250 words |

## Answer Hint

**73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments; women's political representation; grassroots democracy; proxy representation; gender stereotypes; capacity building; political participation; social empowerment; institutional reforms**

## Model Answer

### Introduction

The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments institutionalised local self-government and mandated reservation for women in rural and urban local bodies. These measures have substantially expanded women's formal political participation, but their transformative impact on patriarchy remains uneven.

### Positive Impact

- **Political representation:** Reservations have brought millions of women into elected local institutions.
- **Leadership development:** Women representatives have gained experience in budgeting, public administration and community decision-making.
- **Local priorities:** Women leaders may give greater attention to drinking water, sanitation, healthcare, education and welfare delivery.

- **Social change:** Visible female leadership challenges traditional assumptions that politics is exclusively a male domain.
- **Political pathways:** Local governance can provide experience for participation in state and national politics.

**Limitations**

- **Proxy representation:** In some cases, male relatives exercise influence over elected women representatives.
- **Patriarchal attitudes:** Social norms, restricted mobility and gender stereotypes constrain independent leadership.
- **Capacity gaps:** Inadequate training, information and administrative support can limit effectiveness.
- **Intersectional barriers:** Caste, class and local power structures may compound discrimination.
- **Resource constraints:** Weak devolution of funds, functions and functionaries restricts the authority of local representatives.

**Way Forward**

Training, institutional support, financial devolution, protection against intimidation and stronger accountability can improve women's independent participation. Community awareness and gender-sensitive political parties are also essential.

**Conclusion**

Reservations have weakened the monopoly of men over grassroots political representation, but they have not automatically dismantled patriarchy. Their long-term success depends on converting numerical representation into substantive authority and independent decision-making.