

**DELHI HIGHER JUDICIAL SERVICE MAINS  
EXAMINATION (WRITTEN) 2023  
GENERAL KNOWLEDGE & LANGUAGE**

**1. Write on any four of the following in about 200-250 words each:**

- (a) Can IMEC be a challenge to the Belt and Road initiative?
- (b) Conflict resolution — mediation or court room justice?
- (c) Media — the molder of public opinion.
- (d) Bridging the digital divide is not only a matter of policy but a moral imperative.
- (e) Impact of AI on India's IT sector.
- (f) Is India ready for the New Education Policy?
- (g) QUAD is a force for the Global South.
- (h) Caste Census — Need or Concern?

**(20 marks x 4 = 80 marks)**

**2. Prepare a precis of the following passage in about 250 words.**

Reservation is the most effective form of affirmative action and equity is the first step to equality. That it leads to inefficiency or incompetency is simply making excuses for not rendering tightly guarded spaces to ousted classes. I strongly contend that women are not inferior to men. Incompetencies, even if they arise, are short term, and are removed soon after opportunity for skill building is made available.

A very astute person once asked me whether we want women to fight women. The answer is 'no'. What women want is a level playing field where the factor of gender which is completely irrelevant but looms large, is removed from the equation.

The basic premise of advocates against reservation is that it will bring down competence. Alas, this is a completely misplaced notion as statistics show that women perform much better than men in academics, more women graduate from colleges than men, and more women enter the workforce than men. In contrast to this trend, the number of women sharply spirals downwards in leadership positions not because of their incompetence, but because of the hegemony of men.

*From Student to Lawyer to Judge*

The inauguration of parliamentary business in September 2023 in the new Parliament building also gave a fresh start to the aspirations of Indian citizens with the passage of the Women's Reservation Bill. After much delay, the Constitution (One Hundred Twenty-Eighth Amendment) Bill, 2023, popularly known as the Women's Reservation Bill, 2023 became a rare piece of legislation in independent India to be cleared overwhelmingly by both Houses. It is indeed a ground-breaking event. While India's founding fathers ensured that India was early to adopt universal adult suffrage, the role of women in shaping the country's political future still remains minimal.

Global trends exhibit a sharp reduction in the age of political leaders. But can a common Indian woman, just by her commitment and ambition, dream of becoming the Prime Minister of India at the age of 37 — like Jacinda Ardern, the former Prime Minister of New Zealand?

Across the world, women are appreciated by society in supportive and emotional roles, but very seldom in leadership roles. The world hates and denigrates ambitious women. Take, for example, the case of Hillary Clinton. There is not an iota of doubt that her political experience and acumen trumped Donald Trump's competencies. However, America, the world's so-called top democracy, chose an inexperienced Mr. Trump over her to lead them.

Historical evidence points out that but for a few Taleb's black swans, all women who have assumed leadership roles did not get there by sheer industry, competence and intelligence. They were allowed only for the convenience of men who were disqualified from assuming these positions, or, if it served some political agenda. In the Indian political arena women leaders were, most often, convenient choices. Their initial acceptance was the perception that they could be conveniently removed, but their inherent acumen belied those designs.

Historical evidence also shows that most women who make it to leadership positions have a mix of privileges — of higher education, the support of influential mentors or families, or belong to upper classes or castes. If there is a survey, I am sure that the figures will show that the percentage of women legislators who have had university and higher education is almost cent per cent, versus such a percentage of male legislators.

The deepest cut is that the handful of privileged women who assume leadership are not supportive or empathetic to the aspirations of those women who do not even have access to basic needs such as nutrition, education and financial independence. They reel under the misconception that they have become leaders by virtue of their own efforts and sacrifices, ignoring the personal advantages they possess.

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The archives bear testimony to this attitude. During the Round Table Conference held in the 1930s in London, a letter was written on November 16, 1931 by Sarojini Naidu and Begum Jahanara Shahnawaz presenting a joint manifesto by the All India Women's Conference, the Women's Indian Association, and the Central Committee of the National Council of Women in India. They demanded neither discriminatory nor favourable treatment on the basis of gender in legislative representation, thereby rejecting reservation.

The accusation that the previous avatar of the women's reservation Bill would only champion the cause of educated, urban and elite women, failed to recognize that the core objective of the Bill was to create space for women who did not have the good fortune of belonging to privileged and elite classes. A report in the leading daily said that political analysts felt - and rightly so - that the stand of certain leaders did not stem from their concern for women, but because "it would reduce the space for men who dominate elections in our patriarchal society".

It is time to quickly set right historical wrongs. Women want change. Society needs change. And there is no reason why it should be late. **(40 marks)**

**3. Write on any three of the following in about 100 words each:**

- (a) Smart cities - inclusionary or exclusionary?
- (b) Success is what you think of yourself— not what others think about you.
- (c) Write a short note on any one Sustainable Development Goal.
- (d) PPP models of development.
- (e) A need for inter-generational dialogue to re-imagine education.
- (f) The Bio-Fuels Alliance **(10 marks x 3 = 30 marks)**

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