



Reservation Architecture and Social Category Representation in Metropolitan Municipal Corporations: A Comparative Study of Delhi and Mumbai

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Abstract:

Reservation policies in urban local governance constitute a critical institutional mechanism for ensuring inclusive political participation in India. This study examines the reservation architecture and category-wise seat distribution in two major metropolitan municipal corporations, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) and the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), using official electoral data from the 2017 municipal election cycles. Grounded in the conceptual framework of institutional design and democratic representation, the paper analyses the distribution of seats across Scheduled Castes (SCs), Other Backward Classes (OBCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and women in both corporations. The findings reveal that while gender reservation is uniformly institutionalised across both bodies, with women constituting more than 50 per cent of elected councillors in each city, the architecture of caste-based reservation differs markedly. The MCD reserves seats only for Scheduled Castes and women, whereas the BMC incorporates a substantially broader framework that includes OBCs and STs. These variations demonstrate the decisive influence of state-level legislative frameworks operating within the constitutional space created by the Constitution (Seventy-Fourth Amendment) Act, 1992. The paper contributes to a comparative study on urban governance by foregrounding reservation architecture as a distinct and under-analysed dimension of metropolitan democratic politics in India.

Keywords: *Reservation Policy, Urban Local Governance, Metropolitan Municipal Corporations, Social Categories, Political Representation, Seventy-Fourth Constitutional Amendment, OBC Reservation, Scheduled Castes, Women's Representation, Institutional Design*

1. Introduction

Urban local governance constitutes the third tier of India's democratic architecture and represents the institution of government closest to citizens. Municipal corporations govern large metropolitan regions and

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perform functions that range from urban planning and infrastructure maintenance to sanitation, public health, and the delivery of basic civic services. As directly elected bodies, they serve simultaneously as arenas of democratic representation and as implementing agencies of urban public policy, making their social composition a matter of considerable democratic importance.

Despite the democratic mandate of these institutions, historically marginalised social groups, the Scheduled Castes (SCs), the Scheduled Tribes (STs), the Other Backward Classes (OBCs), and women, have persistently remained underrepresented in political institutions across India. The structural barriers to their political participation are rooted in socio-economic inequality, caste-based exclusion, and the concentration of political resources within historically dominant communities (Phillips, 1995; Young, 2000). Reservation policies were introduced as institutional correctives to these structural inequalities, creating constitutionally mandated spaces for marginalised groups within elected bodies at every tier of governance.

The Constitution (Seventy-Fourth Amendment) Act, 1992, which came into force on 1 June 1993, granted constitutional status to municipalities for the first time and fundamentally restructured urban local governance in India through Part IX-A of the Constitution (Articles 243-P to 243-ZG) (Government of India, 1992). Crucially, Article 243-T of the Amendment mandates reservation of seats for SCs and STs in proportion to their population in the municipal area, and requires that not less than one-third of total seats be reserved for women. Article 243-T (6) further empowers, but does not compel, state legislatures to enact provisions for the reservation of seats for backward classes. This asymmetry between the mandatory character of SC/ST and gender reservation and the discretionary character of OBC reservation is the constitutional source of the inter-state variation that this study documents and analyses.

Delhi and Mumbai are two of India's largest and most consequential metropolitan agglomerations. Delhi is governed by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) under the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957, while Mumbai is governed by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) under the Bombay Provincial Municipal Corporations Act, 1949, as applicable in Maharashtra. Despite sharing a common constitutional foundation, the two corporations operate under distinct state-level legislative frameworks that have produced strikingly different reservation architectures. This study undertakes a systematic comparative analysis of those architectures using official electoral data from the 2017 municipal elections, situating the findings within broader debates on the relationship between institutional design and democratic representation in urban India.



2. Literature Review

2.1 Institutional Design and Democratic Representation

The relationship between institutional design and patterns of democratic representation has been a central concern of comparative political science. Phillips (1995), in her foundational work on the politics of presence, argues that the physical inclusion of previously excluded groups in legislative bodies is a necessary, not merely symbolic, condition for meaningful democratic representation. Members of dominant groups cannot reliably represent the identities, experiences, and interests of marginalised communities, however well-intentioned; their physical presence is the only guarantee that their perspectives will enter deliberation. Young (2000) extends this argument, contending that democratic legitimacy requires that deliberative bodies encompass voices from across the social spectrum, including communities whose perspectives are systematically overlooked in majoritarian politics.

From an institutionalist perspective, Lijphart (1999) demonstrates, through a comparative analysis of 36 democracies, that the design of political institutions, including electoral systems, proportional representation, and reserved constituencies, substantially shapes patterns of political inclusion. Quota systems and seat reservations are understood within this framework as institutional tools that compensate for structural barriers to entry, which persist even in formally open electoral competition. The comparative literature on electoral gender quotas (Dahlerup, 2006; Norris, 2004) and ethnic and caste-based representation (Htun, 2004; Pande, 2003) provides theoretical foundations for understanding how mandated reservations alter the social composition of representative bodies and, through that composition, the content of public policy.

2.2 Reservation in Indian Local Governance

Within the Indian context, the introduction of reservation in local governance through the Seventy-Third and Seventy-Fourth Constitutional Amendments represented a transformative moment in the politics of representation. The landmark empirical study by Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004), based on a randomised policy experiment across 265 village councils in West Bengal and Rajasthan, demonstrated causally that gender reservation significantly altered the types of public goods provided. Women leaders invested more in infrastructure aligned with women's priorities — including roads, drinking water, and primary health care than male leaders in non-reserved councils. This study remains the most influential evidence that the



institutional design of a reservation shapes not only the composition of elected bodies but also the substantive outcomes of local governance.

Pande (2003) extended this logic to SC and ST reservations at the state assembly level, demonstrating that mandated political representation for these groups led to measurable increases in state spending on welfare programmes targeting marginalised communities. Together, Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004) and Pande (2003) establish the theoretical and empirical case for treating the institutional architecture of reservation as consequential for governance outcomes, not merely symbolic.

Research on urban governance in India has grown substantially since the Seventy-Fourth Amendment. Sivaramakrishnan (2011) provides a comprehensive account of the evolution of metropolitan governance structures in post-liberalisation India. Mohanty (2016) identifies fiscal constraints as a structural limitation on municipal capacity that affects the quality of representation as much as its quantity. Studies of both the BMC and the MCD have examined how party competition, social constituency formation, and the reservation framework shape patterns of municipal representation (Ahluwalia, 2019; Banerjee, 2021). However, these studies focus primarily on electoral competition and political dynamics rather than on the structural architecture of reservation as an independent object of comparative analysis.

The legal dimension of OBC reservation adds a further layer of complexity. A five-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court in *K. Krishnamurthy (Dr.) v. Union of India* (2010) 7 SCC 202 established that OBC reservation in local bodies requires compliance with a triple test: (i) the state must set up a dedicated commission to conduct a contemporaneous, rigorous empirical inquiry into the nature and implications of backwardness in local bodies; (ii) the state must specify the proportion of reservation required on a local body-by-body basis in light of the commission's recommendations; and (iii) the aggregate vertical reservation for SCs, STs, and OBCs combined must not exceed 50 per cent of total seats. This framework has made the implementation of OBC reservation in municipal bodies legally precarious and subject to judicial invalidation, as the 2021 challenges to Maharashtra's OBC quota in local body elections demonstrated (*Vikas Kishanrao Gawali v. State of Maharashtra*, 2021 SCC On Line SC 170).

2.3 The Research Gap

Despite the extensive literature on gender representation, caste-based reservation, and urban governance, comparative research specifically examining the reservation architecture of major metropolitan municipal corporations as its primary object of inquiry remains limited. Most existing studies focus on either a single



city or a single category of reservation, typically gender, rather than systematically comparing the full institutional structure of reservations across multiple categories and multiple urban centres. This gap is significant because the constitutional framework governing municipal reservation deliberately creates conditions for inter-state variation, and understanding this variation is essential for evaluating the equity and effectiveness of reservation policies in urban India. The present study directly addresses this gap.

3. Theoretical Framework and Methodology

3.1 Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the frameworks of institutional design and democratic representation. The core theoretical proposition is that the architecture of reservation, the formal allocation of seats across social categories, is a primary determinant of the social composition of municipal councils and, through that composition, of the range of communities with guaranteed access to urban political representation. Two analytical claim's structure the inquiry.

First, the Seventy-Fourth Amendment establishes a constitutional floor of mandatory inclusion: SC and ST reservation proportional to population and a minimum one-third reservation for women. This floor applies uniformly across all municipal corporations, regardless of state. Second, state-level discretion operates within this constitutional space to determine whether the OBC reservation is activated and at what level. States may extend reservation to OBCs and set the precise proportion of seats reserved for each group, subject to the 50 per cent aggregate ceiling established by *K. Krishnamurthy (Dr.) v. Union of India* (2010). This discretion is the mechanism through which inter-state variation is generated. The comparison of Delhi and Mumbai, two major metropolitan corporations governed by different state legislative frameworks, is designed to isolate and analyse the effect of this discretion on the structure of urban representation.

3.2 Methodology

The study adopts a comparative descriptive research design. Data are drawn exclusively from official primary sources: the statistical report of the State Election Commission of Delhi (2017) for the MCD elections, and the Maharashtra State Election Commission's general election analysis (2017) for the BMC elections. Both election cycles were held in 2017, enabling a direct temporal comparison free of the confounding effects of differing electoral periods.



Descriptive statistical analysis, including absolute seat counts, percentage distributions, and cross-city comparisons, is applied to examine seat distribution by category and gender representation across the two corporations. The study does not seek to establish causal claims about the governance effects of differential reservation architectures; such analysis would require longitudinal data beyond the scope of the present inquiry. Rather, it provides a systematic comparative account of the reservation's institutional structure as a foundation for further research.

4. Contextual Background: State Frameworks and Reservation Structures

The Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957, governs the MCD. Delhi's unique status as a National Capital Territory, governed jointly by a Lieutenant Governor and an elected government with limited legislative powers under Article 239-AA of the Constitution, shapes its legislative context. Delhi has not enacted OBC reservation in its municipal corporation. The MCD's reservation framework, therefore, reflects only the constitutional minimum: SC reservation proportional to population and one-third reservation for women. The absence of OBC reservation in Delhi is not constitutionally prohibited; it reflects a legislative choice not to exercise the discretion provided by Article 243-T(6). This minimalist approach means that OBC communities, which constitute a substantial proportion of Delhi's urban population, must compete for seats in the general category without any institutional guarantee of representation.

The Bombay Provincial Municipal Corporations Act, 1949, governs the BMC. Maharashtra has historically been at the forefront of OBC reservation in local bodies, introducing a 27 per cent quota for OBCs across urban and rural local governments through a legislative amendment in 1994. This framework reflects Maharashtra's political context, in which OBC communities constitute a substantial and politically organised constituency. The BMC's 2017 reservation structure accordingly incorporates OBC and ST categories alongside SC and gender reservations, resulting in a substantially more diverse council composition than the MCD's.

These contrasting legislative choices, Delhi's minimalism and Maharashtra's expansionism with respect to the constitutional discretion on OBC reservation, are the institutional source of the comparative differences documented in the sections that follow. It must be noted, however, that Maharashtra's OBC reservation has subsequently faced significant legal challenges. In *Vikas Kishanrao Gawali v. State of Maharashtra* (2021 SCC On Line SC 170), the Supreme Court struck down OBC reservation in Maharashtra's local bodies for failure to comply with the triple test established in *K. Krishnamurthy (Dr.) v. Union of India* (2010). The



2017 election data used in this study, therefore, reflect the reservation architecture in force before these constitutional challenges culminated in judicial invalidation.

5. Findings: Category-Wise Seat Distribution

Table 1 presents the category-wise distribution of seats in the MCD and BMC for the 2017 municipal elections.

Table 1

Category-Wise Seat Distribution - MCD Delhi and BMC Mumbai (2017)

Category	MCD Delhi (2017) Seats	MCD Delhi (%)	BMC Mumbai (2017) Seats	BMC Mumbai (%)
General / Open	226	83.09	149	65.64
Other Backward Classes (OBC)	—	0.00	61	26.87
Scheduled Castes (SC)	46	16.91	15	6.61
Scheduled Tribes (ST)	0	0.00	2	0.88
Total Seats	272	100.00	227	100.00

Note. Data sourced from State Election Commission, Delhi (2017) and Maharashtra State Election Commission (2017).

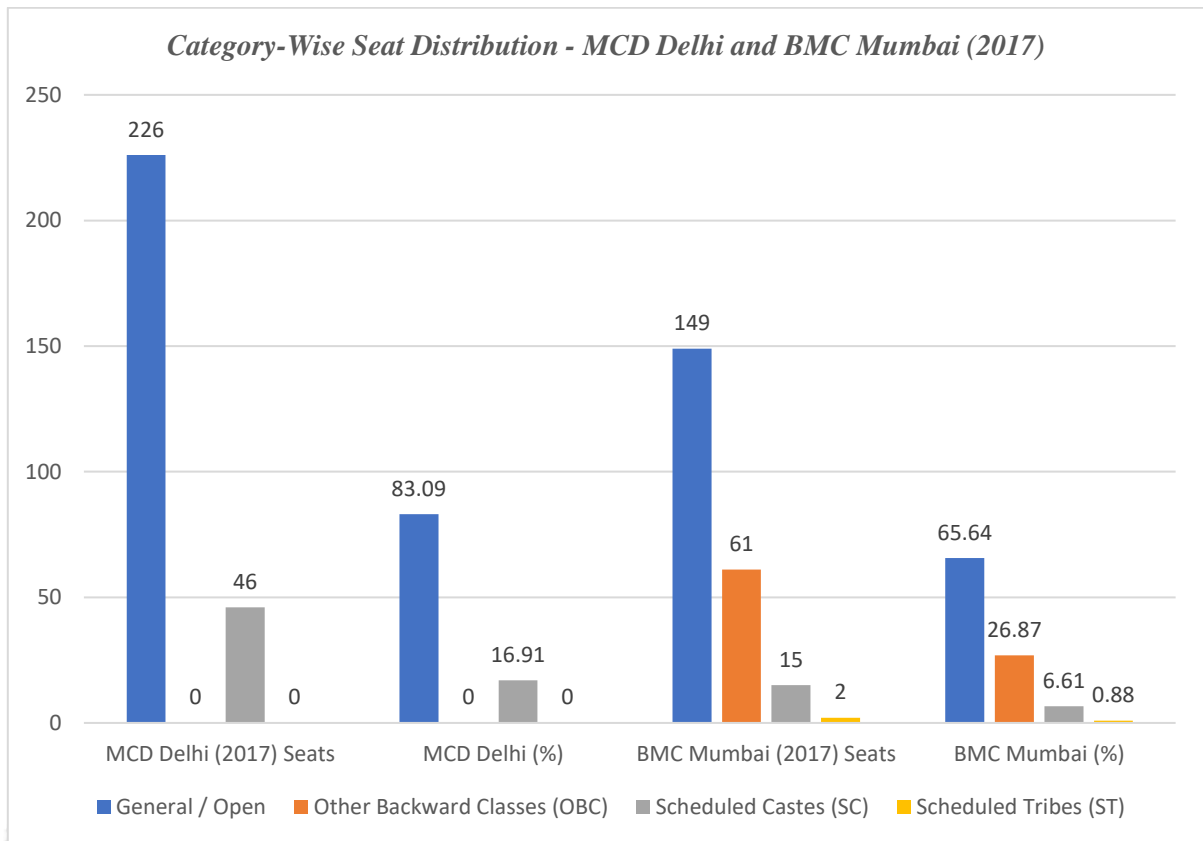


Figure 1: Category-Wise Seat Distribution - MCD Delhi and BMC Mumbai (2017)

The 2017 comparison between the MCD and the BMC reveals marked structural differences in the pattern of reserved and unreserved seats. In the MCD, the General/Open category overwhelmingly dominates, accounting for 83.09 per cent of total seats, while SC seats constitute 16.91 per cent. The OBC and ST categories receive no reserved representation whatsoever in the MCD framework. This configuration reflects a reservation architecture that extends no further than the constitutionally mandated minimum for SC seats.

By contrast, the BMC exhibits a substantially more diversified distribution of reserved categories. General/Open seats constitute 65.64 per cent of the total; OBC seats account for 26.87 per cent; SC seats represent 6.61 per cent; and ST seats constitute 0.88 per cent. This pattern reflects Maharashtra's broader reservation framework, which accommodates multiple socially disadvantaged groups within urban local governance and aligns closely with the state's wider affirmative action policies and demographic composition.



These inter-urban differences highlight the decisive influence of state-specific political and legislative frameworks in shaping patterns of descriptive representation. Delhi's reservation model concentrates political opportunities within a limited set of social categories, thereby constraining the institutionally guaranteed participation of marginalised groups beyond SCs. Mumbai's inclusion of OBC and ST categories demonstrates a more layered approach to affirmative action in urban governance and widens the arena of political incorporation for diverse caste groups.

6. Women's Representation in the MCD and BMC

Table 2 presents the gender composition of the two municipal corporations, including the total number of seats, the number of women councillors elected, and the corresponding percentages.

Table 2

Women's Representation -MCD Delhi and BMC Mumbai (2017)

Corporation	Total Seats	Women Councillors	Percentage (%)
MCD Delhi (2017)	272	144	52.94
BMC Mumbai (2017)	227	132	58.15

Note. Data sourced from State Election Commission, Delhi (2017) and Maharashtra State Election Commission (2017).

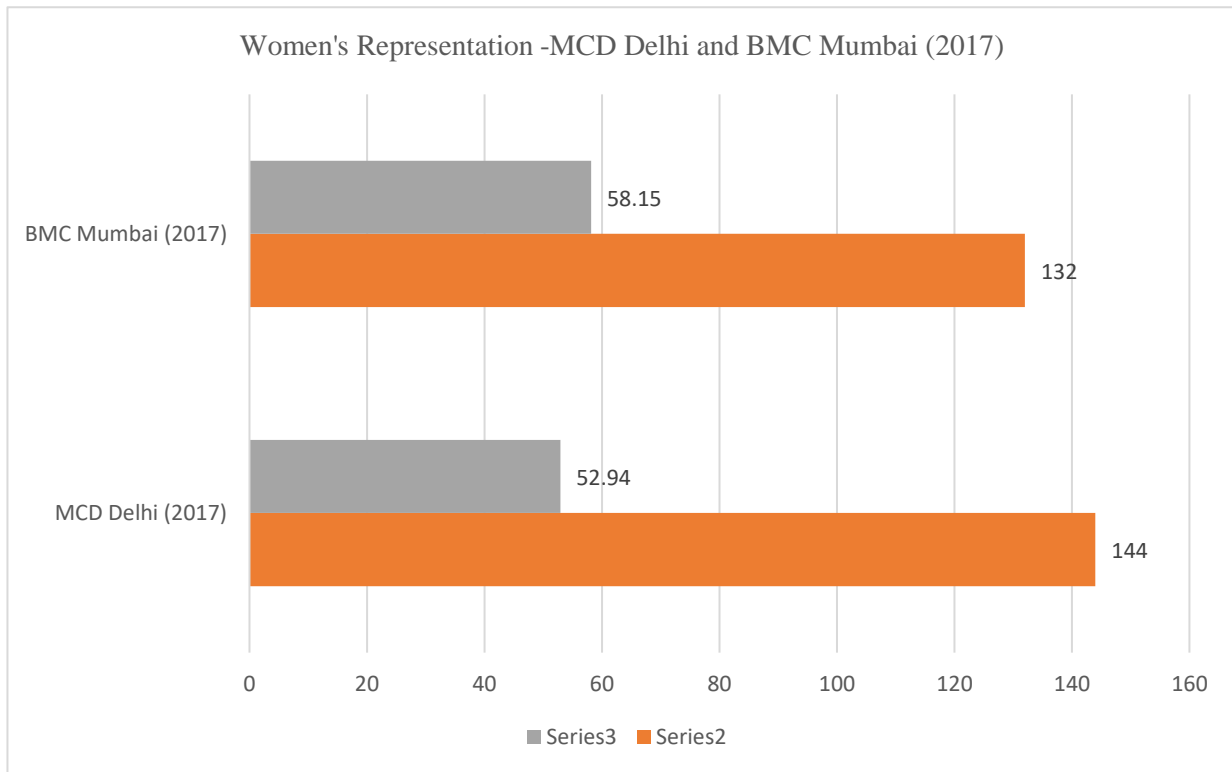


Figure 2: Women's Representation -MCD Delhi and BMC Mumbai (2017)

Women constitute a majority of elected councillors in both corporations: 52.94 per cent in Delhi and 58.15 per cent in Mumbai. Both figures substantially exceed the constitutional minimum of one-third reserved for women under Article 243-T, indicating that the reservation mandate has been implemented with a significantly higher quota than the constitutional floor requires. In absolute terms, 144 of 272 MCD seats are held by women councillors; in the BMC, 132 of 227 seats.

The Mumbai figure is particularly significant. The Maharashtra State Election Commission (2017) data confirm that 114 seats were formally reserved for women across the four social categories. However, approximately 132 women were elected, a surplus of roughly 18 seats won in wards not formally reserved for women. This finding suggests that gender reservation has, over successive electoral cycles, fostered conditions including increased candidate mobilisation, shifting voter attitudes, and altered party incentive structures that enable women to compete and win in open seats. This is consistent with Dahlerup's (2006) concept of the contagion effect, whereby the institutionalisation of gender quotas creates political norms that extend women's representation beyond the formal quota in subsequent election cycles.



Table 3 presents the gender distribution by category for the BMC, providing a granular picture of how gender reservation intersects with caste-based reservation within Mumbai's diverse framework.

Table 3

BMC Mumbai (2017): Seat Distribution by Social Category and Gender

Category	Total Seats	Women	Men
General / Open	149	74	75
Other Backward Classes (OBC)	61	31	30
Scheduled Castes (SC)	15	8	7
Scheduled Tribes (ST)	2	1	1
Total	227	114	113

Note. Data sourced from Maharashtra State Election Commission (2017). General Elections 2016–17: Analysis — Municipal Corporations and Municipal Councils.

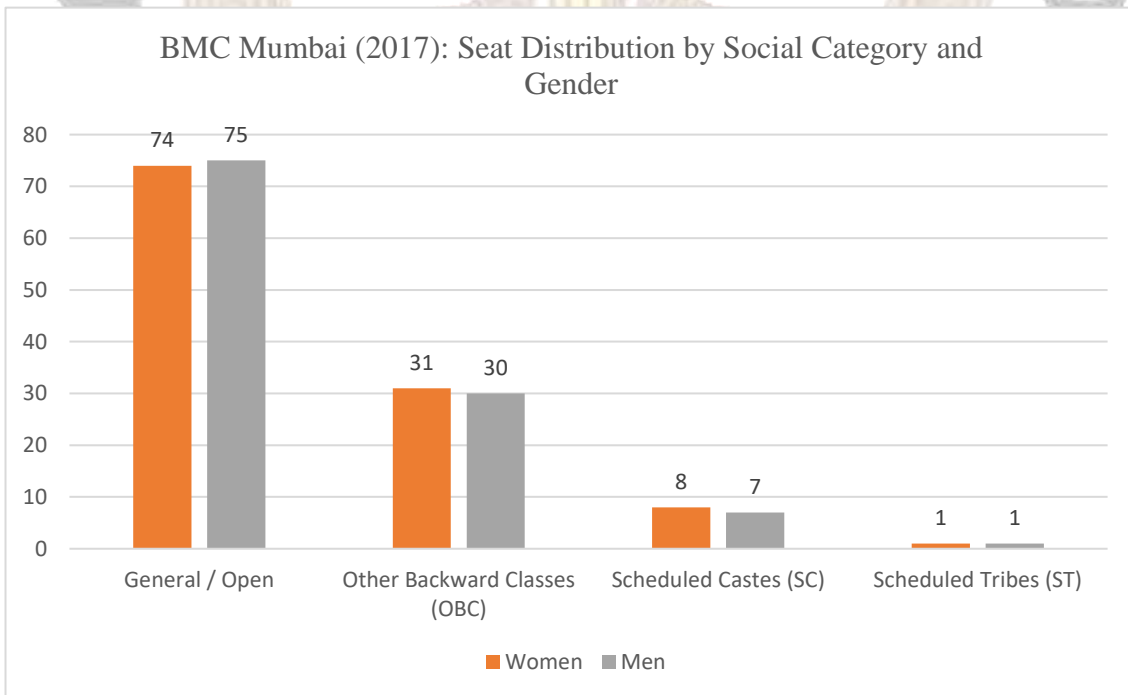


Figure 3: BMC Mumbai (2017): Seat Distribution by Social Category and Gender



The cross-tabulation in Table 3 reveals that women's reservation of approximately 50 per cent is applied consistently across all four social categories in the BMC. Women in OBC, SC, and ST categories receive representation in their respective reserved categories, rather than competing solely for seats in the general category. This cross-cutting application of gender reservation ensures that women from multiply marginalised communities, who are simultaneously female and members of backward or scheduled communities, have institutionalised access to political representation. This intersectional dimension of the BMC's reservation framework is an important structural feature that Delhi's more limited architecture is structurally incapable of replicating.

Table 4 presents the gender distribution by category for the MCD, illustrating the more constrained nature of Delhi's reservation architecture.

Table 4

MCD Delhi (2017): Seat Distribution by Social Category and Gender

Category	Total Seats	Women	Men
General / Open (unreserved)	112	4	108
General - Reserved for Women	114	114	0
SC (Women-Reserved)	24	24	0
SC (non-reserved)	22	2	20
OBC	0	0	0
ST	0	0	0
Total	272	144	128

Note. Data sourced from State Election Commission, Delhi (2017).

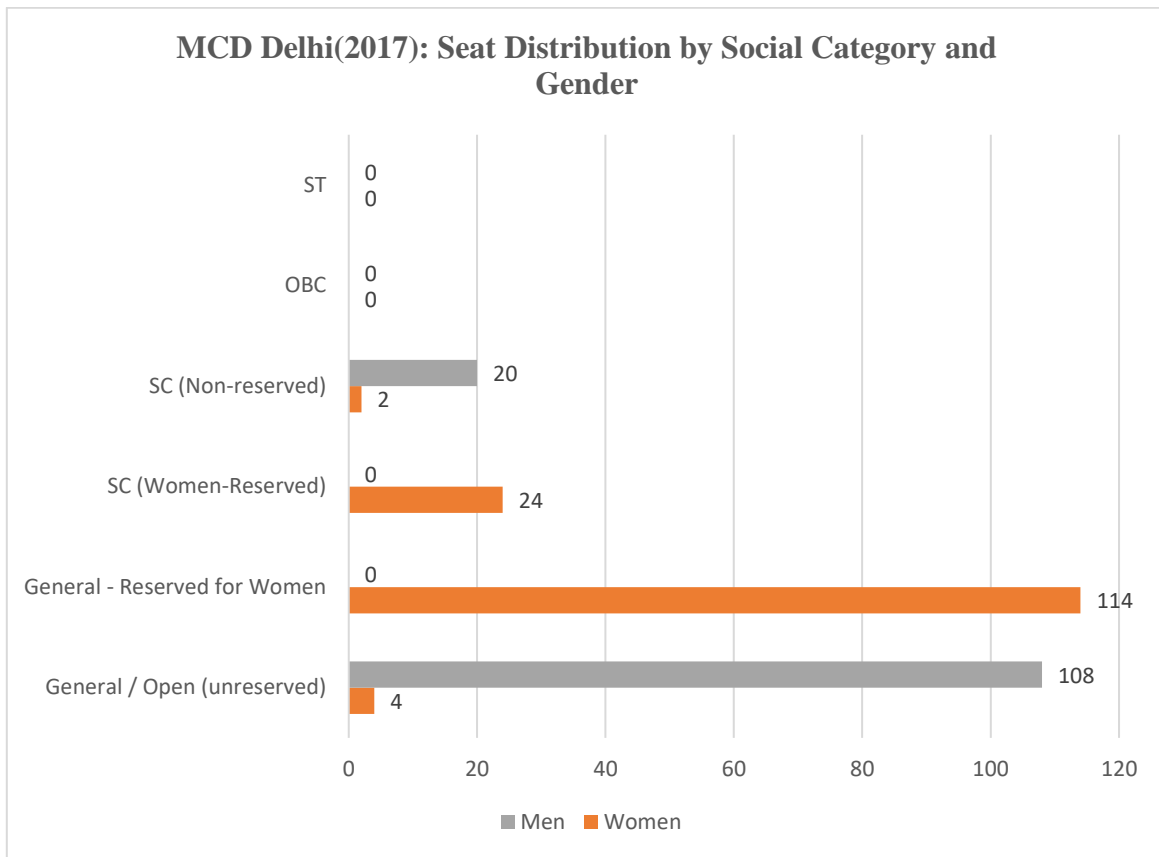


Figure 4: MCD, Delhi (2017): Seat Distribution by Social Category and Gender

Table 4 demonstrates that 144 of 272 MCD seats are held by women, giving them a slim numerical majority (52.94 per cent) over men, who hold 128 seats. Reservation is the primary mechanism securing women's descriptive representation in the MCD. All 114 General Women-reserved seats and all 24 SC Women-reserved seats are held by women, meaning that 138 of the 144 women councillors occupy seats formally earmarked for women. Women remain numerically marginal in non-reserved spaces, winning only 4 of 112 General/Open seats and 2 of 22 non-reserved SC seats. This finding implies that party nomination practices and voter behaviour continue to associate women's candidacies strongly with reserved categories, and that the 'spillover' effect documented in the BMC data is considerably weaker in the MCD context. Nonetheless, the overall share of women exceeding half of all councillors clearly surpasses the constitutional minimum of one-third, confirming that Delhi's reservation design has translated the formal constitutional quota into a numerically women-dominated council.



7. Comparative Discussion

7.1 The Constitutional Floor and the State Ceiling

The comparative analysis yields a finding of clear theoretical significance: the constitutional floor of mandatory SC/ST and gender reservation is observed in both corporations, whereas the activation of the discretionary ceiling for OBC reservation differs sharply. Delhi engages minimally with the constitutional discretion provided by Article 243-T(6), maintaining a reservation architecture that extends no further than the constitutional minimum for SCs. Mumbai, by contrast, makes extensive use of this discretion, incorporating OBC and ST reservation into a substantially broader institutional framework.

This finding confirms the theoretical proposition advanced in Section 3: state-level legislative choices operating within the constitutional space created by the Seventy-Fourth Amendment are the decisive determinant of inter-city variation in reservation architecture. The same constitutional framework produces fundamentally different institutional outcomes in Delhi and Mumbai, not because of differences in the constitutional provisions applicable to each city, but because of different choices made by the Delhi and Maharashtra state legislatures regarding the exercise of discretionary power. The Seventy-Fourth Amendment thus functions as an architecture of constrained variation: it mandates a floor of inclusion. However, it permits states to determine how far above that floor the reservation framework will reach.

7.2 Gender Representation: Convergence above the Floor

One of the most striking findings of the study is the convergence of gender representation across the two cities despite their divergence on caste-based reservation. In both corporations, women account for more than half of all councillors, significantly above the constitutional minimum. This convergence suggests that Delhi and Maharashtra have independently adopted a higher standard of gender representation than the Constitution requires, reflecting a shared political commitment to gender parity in urban governance that transcends differences in their caste-based reservation frameworks.

The mechanisms driving this convergence merit careful analysis. One factor is the rotation of reserved constituencies. In both Delhi and Maharashtra, specific wards are reserved for women and rotate across electoral cycles, ensuring that no ward permanently becomes a 'women's ward' and that the pool of seats accessible to women candidates remains broad. A second factor is the normalisation of women's candidacy across successive elections, a path-dependent effect in which the institutionalisation of women's reservation



over multiple cycles gradually shifts political norms, party strategies, and voter behaviour in ways that support women's election even on unreserved seats (Chattopadhyay & Duflo, 2004; Dahlerup, 2006).

7.3 Implications of the OBC Reservation Divergence

The most consequential structural difference between the MCD and BMC reservation frameworks is the presence of OBC reservation in Mumbai and its complete absence in Delhi. OBC communities represent a substantial proportion of the urban population in both cities, yet their access to institutionally guaranteed representation in municipal governance is radically different. In Mumbai, 61 seats, more than 26 per cent of the council, were reserved for OBC candidates in 2017, ensuring that this large and diverse constituency had a guaranteed presence in the BMC. In Delhi, OBC community members must compete for unreserved general seats alongside all other candidates, with no institutional guarantee of representation.

This difference carries implications that extend beyond the immediate question of council composition. Drawing on Pande (2003) and Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004), one may hypothesise that the presence of OBC councillors in the BMC creates policy pressures to prioritise issues and services of particular salience to OBC communities in Mumbai's governance. The absence of OBC reservation in the MCD means that comparable policy pressures are structurally absent from Delhi's municipal governance framework, even though OBC communities constitute a significant portion of the city's population. Testing this hypothesis empirically constitutes an important direction for future research.

7.4 The Institutional Precariousness of OBC Reservation

A critical caveat to the foregoing analysis concerns the institutional precariousness of the OBC reservation compared to that of the SC/ST reservation. SC/ST reservation is constitutionally mandated and, therefore, institutionally robust; it cannot be removed by state legislation and enjoys insulation from ordinary political pressure. OBC reservation, by contrast, is constitutionally discretionary and subject to the demanding triple test established by *K. Krishnamurthy (Dr.) v. Union of India*, (2010) 7 SCC 202. The requirement that states establish a dedicated commission, collect contemporaneous empirical data on political backwardness, and ensure compliance with the 50 per cent aggregate ceiling creates a significant avenue for judicial invalidation of OBC reservation in municipal bodies.

The subsequent litigation in Maharashtra illustrates this vulnerability precisely. In *Vikas Kishanrao Gawali v. State of Maharashtra* (2021 SCC On Line SC 170), the Supreme Court struck down OBC reservation in Maharashtra's local bodies for failure to comply with the triple test. The social diversity achieved through



Mumbai's OBC reservation in 2017 is therefore structurally more fragile than the formally equivalent figures in Tables 1 and 2 might suggest. This institutional precariousness constitutes a fundamental asymmetry in the design of inclusive urban governance that any comparative analysis of reservation architectures must acknowledge.

8. Conclusion

This study has examined the reservation architecture and category-wise seat distribution in two major metropolitan municipal corporations, the MCD in Delhi and the BMC in Mumbai, using official electoral data from the 2017 municipal election cycles. The analysis was guided by a theoretical framework linking institutional design to democratic representation. It was motivated by the significant gap in comparative research on reservation structures across metropolitan corporations in India.

The principal finding is that while gender reservation is uniformly institutionalised across both corporations, with women constituting 52.94 per cent of councillors in Delhi and 58.15 per cent in Mumbai, both substantially exceeding the constitutional minimum, the architecture of caste-based reservation differs fundamentally. The MCD employs a minimal reservation framework in which only SC seats exist beyond the open category. The BMC employs a substantially broader framework that incorporates OBC and ST reservations alongside SC and gender reservations, resulting in a more socially diverse council in which nearly 35 per cent of seats are reserved across caste-based categories.

These differences are directly attributable to the exercise of discretionary power granted to state legislatures by Article 243-T (6) of the Constitution. Maharashtra activated this discretion through OBC and ST reservation in the BMC; Delhi did not. This finding confirms the core theoretical proposition that state-level legislative choices are the decisive source of inter-city variation in reservation architecture, operating within the framework of constrained variation created by the Seventy-Fourth Amendment.

The study makes three original contributions to the literature. First, it provides a systematic comparative analysis of the full reservation architecture across all gender- and caste-based categories in two major metropolitan corporations, a form of comparative inquiry absent from existing scholarship. Second, it demonstrates that the Seventy-Fourth Amendment's two-tier design, a mandatory floor and a discretionary ceiling, produces predictable and significant interstate variation in the social composition of urban councils. Third, it identifies the institutional precariousness of OBC reservation, given its discretionary constitutional



status and the demanding judicial standards established by *K. Krishnamurthy (Dr.) v. Union of India* (2010), as a structural vulnerability in the design of inclusive urban governance in India.

Future research should examine how these structural differences in reservation architecture translate into differences in governance outcomes, budget priorities, and the substantive representation of marginalised communities in municipal decision-making. Longitudinal analysis of women's representation across successive electoral cycles in both cities and qualitative investigation of the mechanisms through which women win seats beyond the formal quota represent further productive avenues. As India's urban population continues to expand rapidly and the governance of metropolitan regions becomes ever more consequential for hundreds of millions of citizens, understanding and strengthening the institutional architecture of reservation in municipal corporations constitutes a fundamental democratic imperative.

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