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WOMEN'S RESERVATION BILL

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ABSTRACT

There is increasing interest in whether improving the participation of women in government will lead to more gender equality. The government of India Passing the bill of parliament 33 percent reservation seats in Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha and Panchayati Raj but also categories the 22.5 per cent reservation of Scheduled Caste & Scheduled Tribal women candidates. Positive impact of women which is under scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, poor women and Muslim women would benefit from it and also women empowerment as whole increasing political participation in India. This paper aims to what are government pros and cons from women reservation and why this bill passed in parliament it.



KEYWORDS: *poor women and Muslim women, women reservation bill.*

INTRODUCTION

The question of a women's quota in India is distinct from any other nation because the Constitution of India has already provided for quotas for the 'Scheduled Castes' (SCs) formerly untouchable castes in the Hindu community and the 'Scheduled Tribes' (STs). It has provisions for similar measures for the socially and educationally backward classes now termed as the 'Other Backward Classes' (OBCs). These quotas are for admissions to educational institutions, public sector employment and political representation. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments provided for 33 per cent quotas for women's representation in the local self-government institutions. These Amendments were implemented in 1993. They were enacted without any pressure or persistent demand from women or any other section. Prior to these Amendments the State of Karnataka had introduced 25 per cent women's quota in Panchayati Raj Institutions. First elections after the implementation of quotas were held in 1987 (Jain 1996). Later, State of Maharashtra passed a law providing for 30 per cent reservation of seats for women in rural as well as urban local self-government institutions. It is curious that, in spite of over 1,000,000 elected women representatives flooding the local governments; the women's movement in India was totally silent over this issue till 1996. The entry of more women may deprive the Houses of experienced legislators. OBCs and Muslims will be handicapped because of low women empowerment in their communities. Seat rotation may see less dedicated MPs and MLAs. Short-term problem and new talents will sprout among women representatives. On the contrary, they have an incentive to empower their women so as not to risk lower representation. Male politicians will explore wide range of seats.

In India, the number of women politicians is very less. It is true that most of the women leaders are at the top. But, this is not helping the situation of women. Women are not getting help from these

very few leaders, who are bound to take decisions which favour men more. Other than that, the most important decision for the welfare of our country is taken ignoring the will of half of the society, i.e. women.

What is Women reservation Bills?

The women's Reservation Bill has been a political raw nerve for nearly a decade now. It has always triggered heated debates in Parliament and outside. There is a long-term plan to extend this reservation to parliament and legislative assemblies. In addition, women in India get reservation or preferential treatments in education in rare cases. It has opposes consider this preferential treatment of women in India as discrimination against them in admissions to schools, colleges, and universities. A segment of feminists in India are strongly in favor of providing preferential precedence to women in order to create a level playing field for all of its citizens.

Rajya Sabha Chairman Hamid Ansari dispensed with the Question Hour and allowed members to make brief statements on the occasion of International Women's Day. Now, women have made remarkable progress in economic, political and social spheres, but femininity equality remains a distant dream. On this occasion, let us rededicate ourselves collectively towards the cherished goal of women's empowerment," he said. Samajwadi Party member Jaya Bachchan said a true International Women's Day celebration would be when women feel safe and secure in the country. "The true celebrations would be if we were able to change the mindset of people and ensure security and safety of women. What is the use of such celebrations, we deliver lofty speeches here and next day read about rape and torture of women," said Jaya Bachchan. Rajni Patel of the Congress said parliament should pass the women's reservation bill as early as possible. "Women reservation bill has been pending in parliament and it should be passed so that women get equal representation and have a say in all laws made in the country," she said. Congress member AmbikaSoni said reservation for women in parliament and state assemblies is necessary, and appealed for its early passage. Listing out increase in crime against women in the last one decade, GunduSudha Rani, of Telugu Desham Party (TDP), said: "There has been a 70 percent increase in crime against women since 2002. Unless there is change in the mindset of men, nothing can happen. Women reservation bill should be passed immediately to give power to women." NajmaHeptullah of the BharatiyaJanata Party (BJP) said crime against women can be contained if there is change in the mindset of people.

How did the Women's Reservation Bill originate?

The proposed legislation to reserve 33.3 percent seats in Parliament and state legislatures for women was drafted first by the H D Deve Gowda-led United Front government. The Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha on September 12, 1996. Though it has been introduced in Parliament several times since then, the Bill could not be passed because of lack of political consensus.

What does the Bill provide?

Reservation for Women at each level of legislative decision-making, starting with the Lok Sabha, Down to state and local legislatures. If the Bill is passed, one-third of the total available seats would be reserved for women in national, state, or local governments. In continuation of the existing provisions already mandating reservations for scheduled caste and scheduled tribes, one-third of such SC and ST candidates must be women.

What is the argument in favour of the Bill?

Its proponents say it would lead to gender equality in Parliament, resulting in the empowerment of women as a whole. Historically, the Bill's supporters say, women are deprived in India. Increased political participation of women will help them fight the abuse, discrimination, and inequality they suffer from.

Does reservation for women exist in Panchayat elections?

Yes, 33.3 per cent seats in panchayat elections have been reserved for women already. The experience of women's reservation at the panchayat level has been very encouraging. A million women are being elected to the panchayats in the country every five years. This is the largest mobilization of women in public life in the world.

What is the status of the Bill now?

The Bill had been referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Law and Justice, and Personnel, which gave its report in December 2009. It recommended passage of the Bill in its present form and suggested that the issue should not be left to the discretion of political parties. The central government cleared the Bill on February 25, 2010. For such a bill to pass, the Constitution has laid out an elaborate procedure. So, even if the Rajya Sabha passes the bill its real impact will be felt only when it passes through the Lok Sabha. On March 8, it's difficult to say how the government will manage order in the Upper House so that members favouring the bill can vote without disruption or chaos created by opposing members. Political pundits, sociologists, political scientists, feminists and historians and almost everybody has said that if the bill becomes an act then it will be the biggest socio-political news since independence.

IMPACT OF WOMEN'S RESERVATION BILL

This bill was introduced in 1996 and it aimed to reserve 33 per cent of the seats in the Indian legislature for women. The proponents of the bill claim that increased representation will lead to empowerment of women. But will this really happen? Women elected to the parliament through reservation might not be champions of women's issues. It is heartening to know that all the political parties acknowledge the problems of social evils faced by women but it cannot be affirmed how by having a woman president or a woman Lok Sabha speaker has improved the status of women in India. Parliamentary reservations will not give the women power to fight social evils like dowry and female infanticides. For ages, no matter to which nation they belong, women in general have been suffering from agony, distress, discrimination, apathy. The tormentor turns out to be no one but their own family, friends and fellow humans. Every nation has a sordid story of women discrimination behind it. No doubt, the position and status of the women of today has improved quite significantly, however, women continue to suffer in general even now.

Do women need reservation? I mean do we need to say that we need a place equal to men. What can we gain by reservation? A few seats here and there, but what about the rule of equality. Males and females are born to be equal. Let's shun this fact that males are born to dominate. Males need to understand that without women their train of life would come to a halt. In fact, the entire life on earth would stop. God never sent us for this. Did He? No, not at all. Then why are we distinguishing between men and women. I think there should be no reservation, however, it should become a rule of law that equality prevails, with males and females on equal parameters. The fairer sex does not need reservation for marking its presence. Females, when given opportunities have shown that they are no less than males. Then, why such discrimination? Let's give our women equal opportunities as males. Let's not say that so and so seat is reserved for women, beyond which women cannot make entry. We have to break the shackles bounding us and not bound ourselves further in chains. If we are today fighting for mere 33 per cent reservation, and trust me Indian women are fighting very hard for this, then we will close all doors for us thereafter, for further enhancement in our power. We do not need merely 33 per cent reservation. We need to be on a par with males, no matter what. However, seeing the state of affairs in India, I think reservation is a step toward women emancipation, as it will become mandatory for the fairer sex to represent the country in parliament. It will also mean that at least 33 per cent women representatives will be required to be part of parliament, facilitating the revival of women empowerment.

Manmohan Singh-led UPA government had decided to make International Women Day historic by reinitiating the debate on the women reservation bill, thinking to make 33 per cent reservation for

women in parliament. However, the events that occurred in parliament on International Women Day remind us that we still have to go a long way before our leaders or so-called representatives learn to behave properly, lest apart taking decisions in favor of the country. Even though BJP, CPI-M have openly offered their support to the government on the women reservation bill, Samajwadi party and Lalu Yadav's RJD still need time to reach a consensus on the same. They are citing this bill discriminates against women from backward classes and OBCs, Muslim women and women from other minority classes.

WOMEN RESERVATION BILLS PASSING OF PARLIAMENT OF INDIA

Women's Reservation Bill or The Constitution (108th Amendment) Bill, is a pending bill in India which proposes to reserve thirty three per cent of all seats in the Lok Sabha, the Lower House of Parliament of India, and state legislative assemblies. The Bill says the seats to be reserved in rotation will be determined by draw of lots in such a way that a seat shall be reserved only once in three consecutive general elections.

This Bill has been passed by the Rajya Sabha, the Upper House of the Parliament in March 2010. It needs to be passed by the Lok Sabha and at least fifty per cent of all state legislative assemblies, before it is put before the President of India for her approval. Women reservation bill will still have to wait until our very own representatives learn some activates and manners to let the rule of law prevail and parliamentary decorum be maintained. It is just the beginning of women emancipation. Once women get 33 per cent representation, they will take a next step forward toward getting on a par representation with their male counterparts.

Women already enjoy 33 per cent reservation in gram panchayats and municipal elections. In addition, women in India get reservation or preferential treatments in education and jobs. For instance, several law schools in India have a 30 per cent reservation for females. The political opinion behind providing such reservations to women is to create a level playing field for all of its citizens. The argument is that social norms strongly favor men and therefore, reservation for women would create equal opportunity for men and women. Among the other benefits that the Bill is expected to provide is an increased participation of women in politics and society. Due to female feticide and issues related to women's health, sex ratio in India is alarming at 1.06 males per female. It is expected the Bill will change the society to give equal status to women. Women are supposedly more resistant to corruption, so this bill might prove to be a factor restraining the growth of corruption. What may be more significant in terms of political power than the proportion of women fighting the Lok Sabha polls is the importance of women in inner party structures. Here women are by and large even less represented, in all parties. Only in the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) there has been a conscious move to bring many more women into decision-making levels and posts within the party.

On the other hand, the passing of the Women' Reservation Bill may cause bias in the democratic process. It may hurt the self-respect of women who have come up on their own ability, and may result in lesser respect for women in the society. It may also bring down the quality of leaders. It may create a new kind of hatred between genders as males may feel deprived of certain privileges, which in turn may create more social issues. Another issue will be for the political parties, which will be forced to find women whether or not the women identify with the overall party agenda and the rest of the issues concerning all citizens, as opposed to just women's issues. There are no provisions to prevent discrimination against men because of finding women who are inclined towards women's issues alone, or, in other words, biased against men. Further, powerful male members of parties will be tempted to find female relatives to 'reserve' the seat for themselves. So, it is feared that reservation would only help women of the elitist groups to gain seats, therefore causing further discrimination and under-representation to the poor and backward classes.

Some leaders like Mulayam Singh Yadav, Lalu Prasad Yadav and Sharad Yadav have vehemently opposed the Bill in its current form. They are demanding a reservation for backward class's women with the 33 per cent, i.e. they are asking for a reservation within a reservation. Irrespective of whether the Bill comes into effect or not, the fact is that women are as ever underrepresented in the election fray

and in party structures. Very little has changed at one level since Independence. The candidates fielded by the various political parties are still dominantly male: women account for only five to ten per cent of all candidates across parties and regions. This is the same broad pattern that has been observed in virtually all the general elections in the country. This is the case despite the hullabaloo made over the Constitution (84th Amendment) Bill relating to women's reservation even last year. The very parties that are most explicitly in favor of pushing for women's reservation put up the same proportion of women as always in elections, and certainly not more than other parties that oppose the Bill.

Despite all this, women are playing an important part in Indian politics today. This is most evident in the proliferation of women leaders and in the fact that, even though some of them may head parties that are relatively small in the national context, they simply cannot be ignored. What is even more significant that in many cases these women leaders have not emerged through the familiar South Asian paradigm of dynastic advantage. Sonia Gandhi, obviously, is a clear example of a dynastic leader, with an almost iconic model of relevance. Of course, one myth that is easily exploded by the role played by such women leaders is that political leadership by women is dramatically different from that by men. Indeed, the truth is that most of our women political leaders are no better or worse than men. What all this suggests, therefore, is that the political empowerment of women not only still has a long way to go, but it also may not have all that much to do with the periodic carnivals of Indian electoral democracy. This is not to say that the electoral representation of women is unimportant, but rather that it needs to be both deeper and wider than its current manifestation in the form of the prominence of a few conspicuous women leaders. It is too early to say whether the Women's Reservation Bill will serve the purpose.

Finally, the bill has been passed in the Rajya Sabha. It's very good news for the women folk not only in India, but also in the world, with it, India has joined the elite club of countries where such a step has been initiated. However, it is still to be seen how this affects us in the long run and what impact it will have. One thing is for sure that INDIA can now dream of women empowerment. A country boasting women/female emancipation is the only one that can succeed and compete in this world! On the contrary, a country that shuns equal rights for women lags behind others in development. It's a fact. Because only educated or literate mothers understand the importance of educating their kids, who will be the cheerleaders of tomorrow, with the rein of the country in their hands.

CONCLUSION

At the end part of the paper I conclude that there was positive as well as negative impact on society. Indian society is a male dominant society where women consider as a low as compare to men. Since last few decades the ideas of reservation come in to mind but the true reservation would be if we were able to change the mindset of people and ensure security and safety of women. Unless there is change in the mindset of men, nothing can happen. The proponents of the bill claims that increased representation will lead to empowerment of women. . Parliamentary reservations will not give the women power to fight social evils like dowry and female infanticides. For ages, no matter to which nation they belong, women in general have been suffering from agony, distress, discrimination, apathy. The tormentor turns out to no one but their own family, friends and fellow humans. Every nation has a sordid story of women discrimination behind it. No doubt, the position and status of the women of today has improved quite significantly, however, women continue to suffer in general even now. I think there should be no reservation, however, it should become a rule of law that equality prevails, with males and females on equal parameters. The fairer sex does not need reservation for marking its presence. Females, when got opportunities have shown that they are no less than males. Then, why such discrimination? Let's give our women equal opportunities as males. It may hurt the self-respect of women who have come up on their own ability, and may result in lesser respect for women in the society. It may also bring down the quality of leaders. It may create a new kind of hatred between genders as males may feel deprived of certain privileges, which in turn may create more social issues

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