

## POWER AND REPRESENTATION: WOMEN RESERVATION BILL

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### GUEST PAPER

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## INTRODUCTION

The women's quota (108th Constitutional Amendment) Bill providing for a one-third women's reservation at the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies has been hanging fire for some time and has now been put in cold storage. Feminist views on the government, democracy, and conceptions of political equality and involvement have demonstrated that without institutional processes to guarantee women's involvement in political structures, women will not be able to cross formidable obstacles to their entrance into active electoral politics.<sup>1</sup>

Democratization and representative institutions also provide the framework for political activity, while setting the terminology for citizen participation. Inequalities that describe the idea of political equity as a feature of our social structure are an important component of every democratic agenda. The women's movement's platform encompasses an entire array of issues ranging from the redistribution of resources to the redistribution of time and obligations in the household, to improvements to the electoral process and to parliamentary democracy. The social agenda embedded in the desire for women's political representation and the wider struggle for equality also threatens democratic institutions. The democratization phase has been opposed by shifting patterns of wealth, caste and gender ties, which follow their different and sometimes conflicting interests. A guarantee of equal status and opportunities was the strongest attraction in a liberal democracy.<sup>2</sup>

The major challenge in attaining these objectives was nevertheless the social and political systems and other hegemonic activity in a multicultural and stratified society. The enduring dilemma in a liberal democracy was the relation between the concept of political freedom and actual social and economic differences. The basic values of democracy are constantly being questioned by a cultural and ethnic diverse population (equality, social justice). People's demonstrations were important in the transition of democracy and in portraying democracy itself.<sup>3</sup>

The Women's Reservation Act or the Constitution (108th Amendment) Bill, 2008, is a lapsed act in the Indian Parliament aiming to change the Indian Constitution by reserving 33 percent of all seats for women in the Lower House of Parliament of India, the Lok Sabha, and in all state legislatures. The seats were to be distributed in turn and would have been determined by

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<sup>1</sup>2010\_Samdud\_Women\_Reservation\_Slides.pdf, , [http://oasis.col.org/bitstream/handle/11599/1147/2010\\_Samdud\\_Women\\_Reservation\\_Slides.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y](http://oasis.col.org/bitstream/handle/11599/1147/2010_Samdud_Women_Reservation_Slides.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y) (last visited Dec 30, 2019).

<sup>2</sup>PpoollicyyBbriieeff, *Strengthen Girls' and Women's Political Participation and Decision-Making Power* 8.

<sup>3</sup>The populist challenge to liberal democracy, , <https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-populist-challenge-to-liberal-democracy/> (last visited Dec 30, 2019).

drawing lots so that a seat would be retained only once in three successive general elections. The bill was adopted on 9 March 2010 by Rajya Sabha. Nevertheless, the Lok Sabha never voted on the motion. The bill was repealed in 2014 after the 15th Lok Sabha.<sup>4</sup>

The Bill that gives women 33 percent quota will not only empower women but in many respects alter India's social structure. This Legislation is ground-breaking and is in making a quiet change. We have to welcome this as a law. While women continue to be largely outside the national public space following long years of democratic politics. Their existence here, given the natural barriers that encourage men while debarring women, is mostly symbolic and exists. This is because women's roles tend to be relegated to the private sphere consciously and subconsciously, as men are given public roles. It has been established that giving women rights not only helps women but also helps the family and the community.<sup>5</sup>

## **WHAT IS WOMEN RESERVATION BILL?**

For almost a decade now, the Women's Reservation Bill has been a raw electoral nerve. Throughout Congress and outside, it has always sparked heated debates. In order to extend this reservation to parliament and legislative assemblies, there is a long-term plan. Furthermore, in rare cases, women in India receive reservations or preferential education treatments. It has opposed considering this unequal treatment of women in India as sexism against them in education, college and university admissions. A feminist group of India is strongly in favor of giving preference to women to create a level playing field for all its people.<sup>6</sup>

The Women's Reservation Act or The Constitution (108th Amendment) Bill, 2008, is a pending action in the Indian Parliament intending to reserve 33 percent of all seats in the lower house of the Indian Parliament, the Lok Sabha, and in all the province's women's legislative assemblies. The seats would be rotating and chosen by drawing lots so that only one vote could be allocated once in three successive general elections. It said that women's seating reservations will stop 15 years following the launch of the reformed rule. The proposal was accepted on 9 March 2010 by Rajya Sabha. The Lok Sabha has never acted on

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<sup>4</sup>One-Third Reservation in Parliament: Here's Why Indian Women Need This Bill, , <https://www.thebetterindia.com/143745/one-third-reservation-parliament-indian-women-bill/> (last visited Dec 30, 2019).

<sup>5</sup>Women leaders stall quota bill - India News, , <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/women-leaders-join-forces-to-stall-quota-bill-71038-2010-04-06> (last visited Dec 30, 2019).

<sup>6</sup>Update on the Women's Reservation Bill, , PRSINDIA (2010), <http://prsindia.org/theprsblog/update-women%E2%80%99s-reservation-bill> (last visited Dec 30, 2019).

the resolution, however. The legislation is pending because it has never gone to the Lok Sabha.<sup>7</sup>

After a constitutional amendment in 1993, reservation of 33% for women in Panchayati Raj institutions was made compulsory. 19 states, including Bihar and Odisha, have increased the reservation to 50%, according to the Panchayati Raj Ministry.<sup>8</sup>

## **HISTORY OF POLITICAL RESERVATION FOR WOMEN**

The initial phase of the women's movement coincided with the creation of three women's organizations, the Women's Indian Association 1917, the All India Women's Conference 1927 and the Indian National Women's Council in 1925. In 1910, a number of local and regional women's organizations formed, which eventually fused into national organizations.<sup>9</sup>

The election campaign started in 1917 with Sarojini Naidu accompanying a female All India delegate to Montague, Indian Secretary of State, who came to address India's parliamentary participation demands. In 1924, a Reforms Enquiry Committee began recording facts and thoughts on whether Indian women still wished to be a member of the legislatures. After the moratorium had been removed in 1927, only a few weeks before the elections the state legislature of the province of Madras opened its membership to women.

The Indian Women's Movement's movement in support of political representation had two phases: first (1917-1928) women's rivalry and qualifications for legislative offices; second (1928-1937) liberalization of the conditions of competition and expanded representation of women in the legislatures. The Simon Commission was boycotted by many women leaders, congress and other nationalist parties when it arrived in India in 1928.<sup>10</sup> Simon's Commission did not recommend that seats be reserved for parliamentarians and left that seats. However, another group in the movement of women came before the Commission arguing for the extension of the women's voting and the reservation of four female seats in legislatures so as to enable women to take part in political matters and to better represent women's role in

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<sup>7</sup>Rajya Sabha passes Women's Reservation Bill | India News - Times of India, , <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Rajya-Sabha-passes-Womens-Reservation-Bill/articleshows/5663003.cms> (last visited Dec 30, 2019).

<sup>8</sup>Women Reservation in Panchayats, , <https://pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=74501> (last visited Dec 30, 2019).

<sup>9</sup>LOUISE MICHELE NEWMAN, WHITE WOMEN'S RIGHTS: THE RACIAL ORIGINS OF FEMINISM IN THE UNITED STATES (1999).

<sup>10</sup>Indian National Congress | History, Ideology, & Facts, , ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA, , <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Indian-National-Congress> (last visited Dec 30, 2019).

education and social welfare. The Commission even rejected the independent electoral system but proposed reserving seats for the oppressed classes. Everett called this group the 'women's uplifting team' that was also embodied at the First Round Table Conference (November 1930-January 1931) which had been boycotted by Congress.<sup>11</sup>

Their commitment to increasing women's franchise was compatible with the government's position, as they supported the idea of women's credentials and women's limitations in statutory terms. The British Government nominated two women (Radabhai Subbarayan and Begum Shah Nawaz) to support a woman's qualification and women's seats in legislatures at the first-round table conference boycotted by Congress. The report they produced was in accordance with the memorandum of the British women.<sup>12</sup>

On the other side, the report sent on behalf of the three All India Women's organizations called for the principle of equality. Everett suggests it seems like a division between those who identified with Congress and those women who did not partake in political practices emerged within the women's movement.

The Report of the Joint Select Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform (1934) brought out women's equality proposals and implemented them with minor changes to the 1935 Government of India Act. Females were allocated the key instrument for the female franchise and 41 community seats. The main tool was the qualifications of the wifehood. With the formal passage of the 1935 Constitution, six million women and 29 million people became eligible to vote. While women were able to vote in any of the seats, seats were reserved for women on a group basis.<sup>13</sup>

Just 43 women contested and 14 were elected in free India's first Lok Sabha (1952-57) (out of a total of 489). The topic of political quotas in favor of women died out or at least remained inactive until the early 1970s when the study of the Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI, 1974) again addressed the issue. The All India Panchayat Parishad, at its Sixth National Conference conducted in New Delhi in 1997, also adopted a resolution proposing a greater representation of women and a designated proportion of not less than one-third, to begin with. This resolution was not followed up until 1990 in any of the subsequent

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<sup>11</sup>School of Distance Education, 220.

<sup>12</sup>Kumud Sharma, *Power vs. Representation: Feminist Dilemmas, Ambivalent State and the Debate on Reservation for Women in India* 22.

<sup>13</sup>Women\_Members\_Rajya Sabha.pdf, , [https://rajyasabha.nic.in/rsnew/publication\\_electronic/Women\\_Members\\_Rajya%20Sabha.pdf](https://rajyasabha.nic.in/rsnew/publication_electronic/Women_Members_Rajya%20Sabha.pdf) (last visited Dec 30, 2019).

sessions.<sup>14</sup> While the Committee voted it down for the constitutional reservation of women's seats in legislatures by a majority, it proposed statutory women's village-level Panchayats due to the lack of women in rural development programs. It also insisted on the political parties to “adopt a clear policy on the percentage of women candidates to contest elections”. With the 1975 announcement of the national emergency, the derailment of constitutional democracy sparked a number of grassroots organizations as a priority of the political process to defend civil liberties and democratic rights and ensure that women and other marginalized communities were more active. Many of the progressive projects and the grassroots movements opposing government power are part of the democratic process and are grounded in standardized social and economic ties in India. Since the 1980s, several mainstream political parties have started to view women in their party forms and confronted them with women's issues. Awareness of women's votes and the participation of women in the grassroots movement, the pressure of the women's movement and the grassroots dynamics has been increased in the political parties. Organizations, legislative initiatives, and collective executive action required them to comply with certain women's issues.<sup>15</sup>

In the Lok Sabha, the Congress party introduced Constitutional (73rd Amendment) Bill 1991 with a number of amendments proposing that the new section IX (definition, the constitution of Panchayat, etc.) and the eleventh Schedule (art 243 G concerning Panchayat functions) be inserted in the constitution. Panchayati Raj was the election question and when Congress took over the government. In December 1992, in order to provide for a third reserve in the case of PRIs, the 73rd and 74th amendment bills were finally adopted and all states ratified it by April 1992.<sup>16</sup>

These two landmark legislation could represent a change from opposition politics to progressive politics and an incentive for women to form the policy at the local level. The overwhelming sentiment of women to this and the entry of approximately 1 million women into the PRIs also inspired the women's movements, before the general elections in 1996, to make a similar claim for reservation for one-third of seats. There have been many discussions

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<sup>14</sup>Women's Reservation Bill: What can India learn from other countries?, , <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2019/10/18/womens-reservation-bill-what-can-india-learn-from-other-countries/> (last visited Dec 30, 2019).

<sup>15</sup>FreedomintheWorld2018COMPLETEBOOK.pdf, , <https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/FreedomintheWorld2018COMPLETEBOOK.pdf> (last visited Dec 30, 2019).

<sup>16</sup>The Constitution (Seventy-third Amendment) Act, 1992 | National Portal of India, , <https://www.india.gov.in/my-government/constitution-india/amendments/constitution-india-seventy-third-amendment-act-1992> (last visited Dec 30, 2019).

on electoral quotas across perspectives and efficacy of the first-generation women's leaders of PRIs.

Nevertheless, the appeal was accepted by all major political parties and included in their election embodiments. It was also part of the Government of the Ruling Coalition's Common Minimum Program at the national level. The United Front government introduced the Constitution (81st) Amendment Bill 1996, at the first session of the now-dissolved parliament. The parliamentary debate on the Bill reflected strong resistance from several quarters. The political threat to a male-dominated parliament's role, authority, and rights has led to serious disagreements between lawmakers and different stakeholder groups.<sup>17</sup>

Despite a courageous public stance, it is reported that no one wishes to reveal himself, he said that 'no internal debate has occurred on how the government plans to deal with this emotional matter' Not many were satisfied as claimed by the women's movement that it would bring 'social justice' for women. Even the embattled prime minister relented, stating that 'rule of such social importance cannot be enforced without consent, 'as it includes mediation and accommodation'. The Bill was sent to Parliament's Joint Select Committee, composed of representatives from both houses under Geeta Mukherjee's chairmanship.<sup>18</sup>

Rajya Sabha or the Legislative Councils and Union Territories were not mentioned in the original Bill. The Joint Select Committee presented its report in December (which was sent to the two Houses on 9 December 1996) and recommended a variety of changes, including quotas, in those states where there are less than three seats. This did not recommend how reserved electoral districts were to be formed and it was left to the government and to the Election Commission. The provision involving quotas for people belonging to other retroactive castes was not approved.<sup>19</sup>

Twice in Lok Sabha, and under strain from the alliance measures that have threatened the fate of the Constitution, the constitution stalled. It is worth noting that there was almost unanimity on the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments, accepted by all political parties as a 'historic step' and as an instrument of democratic decentralization. In accordance with the 81st Constitutional amendment, a broad divide remains between the reactions of the intellectual

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<sup>17</sup>Sabha Parv, *RAJYA SABHA SECRETARIAT NEW DELHI 2012* 80.

<sup>18</sup>PARLIAMENT OF INDIA, , <http://164.100.47.5/newcommittee/reports/EnglishCommittees/Committee%20on%20Personnel,%20PublicGrievances,%20Law%20and%20Justice/36th%20Report.htm> (last visited Dec 30, 2019).

<sup>19</sup>Mona Lena Krook, *Quota Laws for Women in Politics: A New Type of State Feminism?* 35.

elite, politicians and the media. In dissonant tones, the women's movement succeeded in keeping a cohesive front but low.<sup>20</sup>

The BJP government has repeatedly reinstated the Bill in Parliament-without success in 1998, 1999, 2002 and 2003. The Congress, when it came to power in 2004, prompted UPA to integrate the Bill into its Common Minimum System and tried to introduce the Bill with little progress. It was opposed by its own partners—Lalu Prasad Yadav-led Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), Mulayam Singh Yadav-led Samajwadi Party (SP) and Mayawati-led Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP). The SP leaders had tried to snatch the Bill from the hands of the then Law Minister, HK Bhardwaj when it was passed in the Rajya Sabha in 2008 and tear it down.<sup>21</sup>

## **STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT**

The 2008 Bill was referred to the Standing Committee on Law and Justice.

- The Standing Committee on Employment, Public Grievances, Law and Justice issued its 36th Statement on the Constitution (One Hundred and Eighth Amendment) Bill 2008' on 17 December 2009. The President was Smt Jayanthi Natarajan.
- The Committee found it appropriate to have a reservation to ensure the women's representation and to ensure the integration of the democratic process. It claimed that quotas in Panchayats and municipalities have had positive impacts for women at the grass root and argued that the need for women to be reserved in-state meetings and the parliament has been further enhanced.
- In order for women to gain sufficient political representation in the parliament and state legislatures, the committee suggested that the 15-year cap prescribes for reservation be re-examined.
- Methods have not been made clear in the Act to establish the seats reserved for women. The Commission suggested that the government take this issue fully into account.
- The committee recommended that a quota of women in Rajya Sabha and Legislative Councils and other disadvantaged groups be accepted by the legislature.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>The Constitution (Seventy-third Amendment) Act, 1992 | National Portal of India, *supra* note 16.

<sup>21</sup>The 14-year-journey of Women's Reservation Bill - India News, , <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/the-14-year-journey-of-womens-reservation-bill-68999-2010-03-09> (last visited Dec 30, 2019).

<sup>22</sup>Women's Day and Reservation: Status of women in India, , PRSINDIA (2010), <http://prsindia.org/theprsblog/women%E2%80%99s-day-and-reservation-status-women-india> (last visited Dec 30, 2019).

## **MAIN FEATURES OF THE BILL**

- The Constitution (One Hundred and Eighth Amendment) Bill aims to reserve one-third of all seats for women in the Lok Sabha and the State Legislative Assembly. The distribution of reserved seats shall be determined by such jurisdiction as the Parliament has approved.
- A third of the total number of seats in the Lok Sabha and the legislature reserved in Scheduled Caste / Scheduled Tribes (SC / ST) shall be reserved for SC / ST women to nearly one-third as possible.
- Fifteen years after the start of this reform Act, the allocation of women's seats shall no longer occur.
- Reserved seats can be distributed in the state or union territories by the allocation of various constituencies. If a state or union territory has only one seat in the Lok Sabha, the seat is reserved for women in each process of three elections at the first general election. If two seats are available, each of them shall be held once in a three-election cycle. Similar rules apply to SC / ST seats. Of the two seats reserved for Anglo Indians in the Lok Sabha, one in a series for three polls will be reserved for women in each of the two elections.
- The report examining the 1996 Women's Reservation Bill suggested that reservations be made to women of Other Backward Classes (OBCs) once the Constitution has been amended to allow for reservations to OBCs. It has suggested that Rajya Sabha and Legislative Councils should be added to the quotas. Neither of these proposals has been implemented into the legislation.

## **ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF WOMEN'S RESERVATION BILL**

Women's Reservation Bill is a good idea to have more female MPs in Parliament and more female MLAs in our state assemblies. Most people are fully convinced that women should be actively involved in politics.

- It will increase the number of woman members of parliament and state legislative assemblies.
- Women's issues will be given much greater priority in Parliament and can be easily resolved.
- The introduction of the bill will contribute to gender equality in Parliament and will have an impact on women's empowerment as a whole.
- Parliamentary leadership will be good because of women's managerial skills.
- It will eliminate discrimination against women in Parliament and change the attitude towards women in the public sphere.
- Women in Parliament will act more responsibly.
- It will provide qualified and active people with more electoral incentives.

- Including a vote of women for at least one term in each district over the 15 years is a major step towards a growing gender gap.
- The quick change in women's lifestyle.
- It will be very beneficial to society because the elected representative of women will be closely linked to the social issues of women.
- The current involvement of women heading small regional parties demonstrates their successful political leadership.

### **IN AGAINST ARGUMENTS**

- Women's concerns in Parliament cannot bring about a real change in the status of women in society. It cannot be effective in fighting social problems in any way.
- It is not assured that the socially backward and disadvantaged women who really need them will receive assistance.
- Most MLAs and MPs with parliamentary and state meetings also seek to get the wife and other relatives to serve their seats.
- The rights of competent and successful parliamentary candidates will be curtailed.
- Men will be oppressed by the access of women to social and political activities since reservation means killing other rights.
- Currently, the quota for SC & ST groups in the accounts of Lok Sabha & State Assembly is 22%. If this bill is passed, the minimum quota will be 55%. This will reduce the odds of competitors in the general category.
- Women's reservation bill is unlikely to succeed. If you see the estimates of the seats allotted to the women candidates by the two major parties, you may realize that they are only seeking positions, but they are not enforcing the same. There is nothing like a leader of a woman or a leader of a man when it comes to governance. There is only one term that is a chief in politics. Thus what is ultimately required is an ethical dictator.
- MPs and MLAs may not be able to work dedicatedly because of the rotating process because they are not required to win local people to vote in favor.
- Many minority communities may not take this opportunity because the majority of women in these societies are less likely to use it. This can add to their alleged incompetence.

## **WOMEN RESERVATION BILLS PASSING OF PARLIAMENT OF INDIA**

Women's Reservation Act or The Constitution (108th Amendment) Bill, is a pending act in India that proposes reserving 33% of all seats in the Lok Sabha, India's Lower House, and state legislatures. The law stipulates that the positions to be held in the rotation will be determined in such a way that a seat will only be allocated for three consecutive general elections.

In March 2010, this bill was adopted by the Upper Chamber of Parliament's Rajya Sabha. The Lok Sabha and at least 50% of all state legislatures have to do this before the President of India ratifies it. Women's Bill of Reservation will still have to wait before our own members know some of the steps and forms in which the rule of law can prevail and the legislative decorum can be upheld. It's just the start of the emancipation of women. If women get 33 percent coverage, they're going to take the next move forward with their male counterparts to get on a similar representation.

In Gram Panchayats and Municipal elections, women now enjoy a 33 percent quota. In fact, women in India receive education and work quotas or special care. For example, many law schools in India have a 30 percent reserve for females. The political view behind women's reservations is to promote competition for all their citizens. The claim is that social standards strongly favor males and thus reserve for women should allow men and women equal opportunities. The Bill is expected to offer certain advantages, such as greater women's participation in politics and culture. Because of female feticide and women's health issues, the sex ratio of 1.06 males per female is concerning in India. The Bill is expected to change society in order to give women equal rights.<sup>23</sup>

Women are reportedly more immune to corruption, so this bill could prove a factor limiting corruption's growth. In terms of political power, the importance of women within internal party structures is perhaps more significant than the proportion of women fighting Lok Sabha polls. Females in all parties are usually still less represented here. There has not been a

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<sup>23</sup>Engendering local democracy: The impact of quotas for women in India's panchayats: Democratization: Vol 13, No 1, , <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13510340500378225?src=recsys&journalCode=fdem20> (last visited Dec 30, 2019).

deliberate step towards the inclusion of many more women at the decision-making levels and roles within the party except in All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK).<sup>24</sup>

The Women's Reservation Act, on the other hand, will lead to a partial approach to the democratic process. We can undermine women's self-respect and contribute to a lower level of respect for women in society. The efficiency of leaders can also be decreased. The fact that males can feel deprived of certain rights may create a new kind of animosity between sexes, and in turn, create social problems. Another concern for the political parties is whether the women are involved in the overall partisan agenda and the rest of the issues relating to all people, in contrast to women alone.<sup>25</sup>

There is no way of preventing discrimination against men by finding women who tend solely to women's issues or, in other words, to men. In fact, powerful male party members will be tempted to find female relatives to "reserve" the seat on their own. Therefore, it is believed that reservation will only allow elitist women to gain seats, leading the poor and the backward classes to further inequality and under-representation.

Some politicians, such as Mulayam Singh Yadav, Lalu Prasad Yadav, and Sharad Yadav, have fiercely opposed the Bill in its present form. They claim a quota for the women of backward class with the 33 percent, i.e. within a reservation we call for a reservation. Regardless of whether or not the bill comes into force, women are under-represented as ever in the electoral fray and the structures of the party. After independence, very little has improved on one point. The members of the various political parties are still predominantly male; only 5-10% of candidates in all parties and regions make up women. This is the same specific trend found in nearly all the country's general elections. This is the case despite the hubbub of the Bill on women's reservations made even last year on the Constitution (84th amendment). The very parties which are most strongly in favor of calling for the reservation of women put up the same proportion of women in elections as usual, and definitely not more than other parties that oppose the Bill. Nevertheless, today women play an important role in Indian politics. This is most apparent in the prevalence of women leaders and in the reality that they clearly cannot be overlooked, even though some of them growing lead relatively small parties in the national sense.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Why women votes matter - Cover Story News - Issue Date: Feb 25, 2019, , <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/cover-story/story/20190225-why-women-votes-matter-1455807-2019-02-15> (last visited Dec 30, 2019).

<sup>25</sup>Women Rising: The Unseen Barriers, , <https://hbr.org/2013/09/women-rising-the-unseen-barriers> (last visited Dec 30, 2019).

<sup>26</sup>Few takers for Lalu's view on women's bill in Bihar - News18, , <https://www.news18.com/news/politics/few-takers-for-lalus-view-on-womens-bill-in-bihar-334904.html> (last visited Dec 30, 2019).

What is even more relevant is that these women leaders have not arisen in many instances through the traditional dynastic advantage model of South Asia. Clearly, Sonia Gandhi is a clear example of a dynastic monarchy, with a particular almost legendary pattern. One of the misconceptions that the role played by such women leaders quickly destroys is that women have dramatically different leadership from men's political leadership. In reality, most of our women's representatives are great or worse than men. Therefore, all this indicates that women's political advancement not only still has a long way to go, but it may also have little to do with the Indian electoral democracy's periodic carnivals.<sup>27</sup>

This does not mean the absence of women's political participation. Instead, it has to be deeper and wider in the context of a few prominent representatives, than its current manifestation. The Women's Reservation Act is too early to tell if it will fulfill this purpose. Finally, the Rajya Sabha bill was passed. To women in India as well as the globe, it is very good news, that India has entered the elite club of countries that have taken such a move.

## **GENERAL ELECTION 2019**

The Bharatiya Janata Party vowed to reserve 33% of parliamentary seats and state assemblies for women in the election manifesto. The Women's welfare and development would be given high priority at all levels of government and is committed to reserving 33% in parliament and state assemblies through a constitutional amendment as per the manifesto. Women are listed 37 times in the 48-page BJP manifesto. The election manifesto of BJP Lok Sabha aims to guarantee gender equality in Indian society.<sup>28</sup> The opposition Congress party also included it in their manifesto and promised to pass in the first session of Parliament.<sup>29</sup> The Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik declared on Sunday that the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) would reserve 33% of women's seats in the upcoming general election. In 2018, the government of Biju Janata Dal-led Odisha adopted a resolution seeking a quota of 33% for women in parliament

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<sup>27</sup>Sonia Gandhi: Sonia Gandhi: The woman who would not be queen - The Economic Times, , <https://m.economictimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/sonia-gandhi-the-woman-who-would-not-be-queen/articleshow/62095728.cms> (last visited Dec 30, 2019).

<sup>28</sup>BJP promises 33 percent reservation for women in parliament, REUTERS, April 8, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/india-election-women-idUSKCN1RK0M9> (last visited Dec 30, 2019).

<sup>29</sup>Congress manifesto | Lok Sabha Election 2019: Congress releases manifesto for 2019 Lok Sabha polls, promises wealth and welfare, , <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/elections/lok-sabha/india/congress-releases-manifesto-for-2019-lok-sabha-polls-details-here/articleshow/68684073.cms?from=mdr> (last visited Dec 30, 2019).

and assemblies.<sup>30</sup>The Chief Minister of West Bengal Mamata Banerjee has gone a step further and declared quotas for women by 41 percent.<sup>31</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The Women's Reservation Bill's trajectory in India was characterized by a high war drama with phrases repeated many points over and over without agreement. As a consequence, women's empowerment has lost the whole problem. No doubt, the Bill of Reservation was one of the most controversial pieces of legislation ever presented in any house of the Indian Parliament. This is noteworthy as one of the rare instances in which the three major national parties-Bharatiya Janata Party, Congress, and the Left — have formed a political consensus. The passage of the Rajya Sabha Women's reservation bill is not only a warm movement for India but also an impetus for women's empowerment throughout the world. One of the problems, for example, with the Lok Sabha approval, is that of the legislation.

This matter is urgently needed, as the challenge of enforcing the law based on rights—food, education, safety, sanitation and supply of water, clean energy, demographic change, and jobs-will definitely be increased and incorporated by women. Women's active engagement in local self-governing bodies demonstrates that many women are good leaders and spend more time and effort in them. Improved women's political participation will help them fight the violence, inequality, and disparities they face. Women's organizations need to be constructive and put pressure on the government to implement the bill.

Men should also make room for women in the decision-making process without any prejudice, apart from all of these, the key issues related to the policy of reservation must also be discussed with dispassion. In India, which is a male dominant society, women's quotas will definitely act as a catalyst for change. It can only start to change, but progress will come if society changes its attitude towards women. Women's political empowerment is seen as an effective and necessary weapon to eradicate gender inequality and discrimination.

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