



Mains Marathon

Day 29: "Although there is an increasing clamor in India for passing an act to give reservation to women in the Parliament and the State Legislative Assemblies, but it has a few negatives attached with it". Discuss (150 Words)

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Approach / Explanation / Answer

- Start your answer by giving the brief about the Women reservation Bill.
- Discuss the significance of the Women Reservation in the Parliament and the state legislatures.
- Discuss the issues with Women Reservation in the Parliament and the state legislatures
- Conclude Your answer by giving a Way Forward

Answer:

Recently, there was a demand by different political parties to bring the long-pending **Women's Reservation Bill to Parliament**.

The Bill was introduced in the **Rajya Sabha in May 2008** and was referred to a **standing committee**. In 2010, it was passed in the House and transmitted finally to the **Lok Sabha**. However, the Bill **lapsed with the 15th Lok Sabha**.

The bill seeks **to reserve 33% seats in Lok Sabha and all state legislative assemblies for women**.

Reserved seats **may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies** in the state or union territory.

Reservation of seats for women **shall cease to exist 15 years after the commencement** of this Amendment Act.

Significance of the reservation for the Women:

- Women's political empowerment is premised on three **fundamental and non-negotiable principles**:
 - The **equality** between women and men.
 - Women's right to the full **development** of their potential.
 - Women's right to **self-representation and self-determination**.
- There is a **gender gap in political decision-making**, and women leaders need to come out more in numbers to **impact position decisions** and **inspire teenage girls to contribute to nation-**

building.

- The Rwandan experience has shown that women reservation can bring sufficient change in process of empowerment. The systematic inequality that infuses every aspect of social expression can only be addressed through political empowerment of women, which will act as a catalyst in strengthening our socio-political systems

Issues with women reservation:

- It has been argued that it **would perpetuate the unequal status of women** since they would not be **perceived to be competing on merit**.
- After the bill will get passed, it will become essential to fill the seats reserved for women, depriving 33% of the populace of their democratic right to elect their representatives.
- **Numerous MLAs and MPs who now hold seats in state legislatures and the House of Representatives will make an effort to fill the vacancies with their own wives and other relatives.**
- It is also contended that this policy **diverts attention from the larger issues of electoral reform** such as criminalisation of politics and inner party democracy.
- It **restricts the choice of voters** to women candidates.
- **Rotation of reserved constituencies in every election** may reduce the **incentive for an MP** to work for his constituency as he may be **ineligible to seek re-election from that constituency**.
 - Some experts have suggested the **adoption/promotion of alternative methods**, such as reservation in political parties and dual member constituencies.

Way Forward

- **Panchayati Raj institutions (PRIs)** have played a significant role in bringing **women representatives at grass-root level**. Many States have granted 50% **reservation for women candidates in elections**.
- **Fundamental reforms at the party level** will serve as a necessary and strategic compliment to the Women's Reservation Bill. Even if the bill is derailed further, it should not stop political parties from making internal structures more conducive to women entering politics.
- Here, it is important to underline and **differentiate the Indian perspective on quotas from that of the West**. Unlike the West, where quotas are almost a bad word, the Indian paradigm has seen such quotas emerge as invaluable tools for social leverage.
 - They are **redistributive tools meant to ameliorate centuries of continued oppression**.
- Even once women are on the same table as men in politics, they may continue to face the challenges mentioned. There is a need to **bring about institutional, social and behavioral change** among India's populace. Gender equality is a part of **Sustainable Development Goals** as well.

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