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Overview of Women Reservation Bill in India

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Abstract:

In the 21st century, a concept of political empowerment of women gained an important place in the contemporary world. There is a discussion about gender equality in the political circle. An average, there is less participation of the Women throughout World. Women in India comprise east 50 % of the population. But, a participation of women in the Indian political process is very less. For the mature democracy, there is equal participation of men and women.

During the election campaign of Lok Sabha 1996, the issue of Women reservation Bill (Women empowerment) brought for discussion. Since 1996, this issue is pending in Indian Parliament. Political parties play a dual role about women reservation bill (WRB). It is found that national democratic alliances (NDA) headed by the Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) and united progressive alliances (UPA) headed by the Indian National Congress (INC) adopt different stands on the issue depending on whether they are in power or in the opposition.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Democracy, Equality.

Research Methods:

A qualitative and library-based research method used to analyze the political background of the Bill, history of the bill and how the political parties used WRB as a political agenda for vote bank during the election campaign.

Data Collection-

The following sources of data used in writing this research paper.

- 1) Primary Sources:
 - The original draft of WRB.
- 2) Secondary Sources:
 - Relevant reference books and research articles.

Introduction:

WRB is a constitutional amendment Bill which provides thirty-three percentage seats reservations for women in (One-third reservation) the Lok Sabha and the state legislative assemblies respectively. It also provides a concept of quota within quota. It means that one-third seat, within reserved seats for women, will be reserved for women of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes category.

In 1996 (81st Constitution Amendment), 1998 (84th Constitution Amendment) and 1999, WRB (Constitution Amendment) were introduced by Government to reserve seats for women in the Lok Sabha and the state legislative assemblies respectively (PRS Legislative Research; 2008:01). The 1996 WRB was sent to examine by a Joint Committee of Parliament (Ibid: PRS). But, all these Bills lapsed with the dissolution of their respective Lok Sabhas.

On 6th May 2008, The Constitution (One Hundred and Eighth) Amendment Bill was introduced by the UPA Phase I Government in the Rajya Sabha (Rajya Sabha; 2008: 16). The main aim of the bill is to eliminate gender inequality and discrimination against women by providing constitutional reservation in the Parliament. It means the political empowerment of women.

History of the Bill:

After the independence, the first time the proposed legislation to reserve seats for women in Parliament and state legislatures was drafted first by Mr. H. D. Devegowda-led United Front government during eleventh Lok Sabha (Seminar; 1997:475). The Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha on September 12, 1996 (<http://164.100.47.194/>). Though it has been introduced in Parliament several times since then, the Bill could not be passed because of lack of political will among political parties about the various provision of the Bill.

Main provisions of the Bill:

- It provides one-third reservation of seats for women in the Lok Sabha and the state legislative assemblies. Allocation of reserved seats shall be determined by competent such authority as prescribed by Parliament.
- There shall be a quota within quota system. It means that one-third seat, within reserved seats for women, will be reserved for women of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes category.
- 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

Advantages of the Bill:

1. It provides more democratic choice to voters.
2. It allows more flexibility to political parties to choose candidates and constituencies depending on local political and social factors.
3. It can nominate women from minority communities in areas where this will be an electoral advantage.
4. It allows flexibility in the number of women in Parliament.
5. It does not decrease the democratic choice for voters
6. It does not discriminate against male candidates
7. It might make it easier for members to nurture constituencies.
8. Issue related to the women's rights and equal opportunity will get priority in the Parliament. These problems or issue can be resolved easily.