

RESERVATION FOR WOMEN

IN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLIES AND PARLIAMENT

“Men have already made a mess of the world. Let them quit the field and make way for women.” This is what a lady member of the Lok Sabha said one day during a discussion on the Women’s Reservation Bill. There has been a strong demand from a section of the society to reserve at least 33 per cent seats for women in the legislative bodies like the Panchayats, Municipal Corporation, State Assemblies, the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha. Even though the demand has already been accepted and implemented in the case of the Local bodies, it has yet to be accepted in the case of the other state and national level legislative bodies.

Apart from the women themselves, several political parties are also strongly supporting this idea of reservation of seats for women. They argue that ever since the creation of this world, women have always been at the receiving end. They have been exploited and burdened with the household duties and prevented from having a free, independent life or status of their own. They were confined to the four walls of the house, kept behind the veil and used as nothing more than sex dolls. With the advance of civilization, women have proved their worth and left men far behind in several fields. It is because of this only have inspired their male partners to do wonders in their respective fields. It is because of this only that it is said that behind every successful man there a woman that makes him achieve great heights. In spite of all this women continue to be discriminated against. Many a female foetus is destroyed and not allowed to see the light of the day. A majority of the female children are still not being sent to schools and are being deprived of their right to education. Male chauvinists continue to treat them as inferior beings fit only to look after their children or household affairs.

All this has led to a strong feeling that women should be given their proper place and status in the society. This can be possible if they are given some powers to control their own destiny. That is why the demand for reservation of seats for women in the state assemblies and the parliament is gaining strength day by day. The government is seriously trying to bring in a law for the purpose but some groups opposed to the idea are trying to get it postponed. They have so far been able to scuttle the move to introduce the Women’ Reservation Bill in the Parliament. The day is not far when this legislation would be enacted and women will get their rightful place and power in the social set-up of this country.

Those who oppose the idea of reservation for women say that family life in the country would be totally upset if women are called upon to work in such large numbers. Moreover, women, they say, are likely to exploit others or are more prone to be exploited by the men folk. They think that once women start asserting their rights they would lose the traditional respect they command in the society. Some women who are already occupying top positions in the country openly say that they do not need the crutch of reservation and that they would go ahead in life on their own. Some people express the fear that if women are given thirty-three per cent in the open competition on their own merit. The legislative bodies would, in that case, become heavily loaded in favour of the fair sex only. Although some believe that the presence of women in the decision making bodies would lend them grace, decency and decorum, others say that it would only bring in glamour, indecency and scandal mongering

The debate is continuing. It is not a healthy sign for any nation to be divided so sharply on the issue of the status of a particular sex. Men and women are both complementary to each other like the two wheels of a vehicle. None can work without the support of the other. They must enjoy equal status and none of them should have any grudge against the other. The main role of a woman is that of a mother. It is she who has to bear the greater burden and make more sacrifices. "Give me good mothers, I shall give you a great nation," said Napoleon. A woman must, therefore, be given all opportunities to grow. Every nation must make sure that women enjoy a proper status in society. No country that does not respect the rights of women, can ever hope to prosper.