

Women's Reservation Bill 2023 And Its Influence On Young Women In Politics

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Abstract

Women are essential to the progress and development of any nation their underrepresentation in India emphasizes on the need of reservation policies. The Women's Reservation Bill 2023, officially known as 'Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam 2023' was introduced in Lok Sabha by Union Law and Justice Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal and it was finally passed on 21 September 2023 from both the houses. It aims to increase the political representation of women to 33% in Parliament, State Legislature and Local Self Government. This bill was passed by 454 votes in Lok Sabha and got all the 215 votes in Rajya Sabha. True representation requires women to occupy 50% of seats in Parliament as political leaders. The Women's Reservation Bill promotes inclusivity and the representation of women in politics. Eventually, it increases the acceptance of women in politics and promotes gender equality. This research Paper seeks to examine the impact of this bill on young women aspiring to enter in politics, as it provides greater leadership opportunities. The Women's Reservation Bill 2023 strengthens democracy by empowering young women and promoting gender equality in India. The Paper also assesses that the bill is expected to increase young women's inclusion in politics. Additionally, it critically examines the impact of Women's Reservation Bill 2023 on young women leaders.

Keywords- *Women's Reservation Bill 2023, Political Participation, Political Representation, Reserved Seats, Young Women, Empowerment, Leadership*

Introduction

In a developing economy like India, equality among citizens is important but according to the Gender Gap Index 2025 it will take approximately 123 years to fill the gender gap. Most of the schemes of women upliftment focuses on social, educational and economic empowerment of women but along with that political empowerment is also important. Women should be respected as equals because they are equally capable in all other fields as they are in their family duties. As per World Bank data, females constitute approximately 48.4 % of the total Indian population. Women are not represented equally in the political arena as there are only 74 women out of 543 seats in Lok Sabha which is about 13.44%. In Rajya Sabha, the number is even less than this which is 24 women members and it is about 10.7% of the total seats. As per the government records, the current representation of women in 19 state legislative assemblies is less than 10%. Though the representation of women increased in the past few years as their representation in Lok Sabha was only about 5% in 1952 and about 11% in 2023.

The Women's Reservation Bill 2023 is a historic step in Indian politics. It ensures one-third political reservation of seats for women in national, state and local elections. This bill will be implemented not only in all the states but also in the Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir, Puducherry, Delhi as these Union Territories have legislative assemblies. It was introduced as 128th Constitutional Amendment Bill and after being passed by both the houses of parliament, receiving the assent of President, it became 106th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2023. The reserved seats are divided into three categories- general, scheduled caste, scheduled tribes seats and one-third of the seats in each category must be reserved for women and all these seats must have one-third of the female political leaders in total also. This bill is likely to be implemented by the 2029 Lok Sabha elections and will remain in effect for 15 years from the date of its implementation

and its duration can be extended by the Parliament. In the Women's Reservation Bill, the reservation of seats is based on the concept of rotation of the reserved seats.

In this study, the young women are the focus because they are the foundation of future leadership and forms the political landscape of the country. Young women are more educated and aware of social issues and are capable of changing the current political scenario of the country. Over the past years, women's political representation has remained very low and the Women's Reservation Bill is expected to increase the political participation and visibility of the women in the political process. Although, a number of studies have examined the women's political representation in India and little attention has been given to the political aspirations of young women. The impact of the Women's Reservation Bill on young women's participation and leadership ambitions remains largely unexplored. This research paper examines the influence of reservation on young women and the process of gradually empowering the generation of female leaders by reducing the gender gap. It also focuses on the role of women leaders in policy making and long-term participation in politics and in bringing social change.

HISTORICAL AND POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Even after the presence of some great female politicians in Indian politics like Sarojini Naidu, Indira Gandhi, Mayawati, Mamata Banerjee, Sushma Swaraj etc. The overall representation of women as political leaders continued to be very low in India. The implementation of women's reservation can be considered as a key catalyst for long term socio-economic transformation.

The concept of one-third reservation for women in Indian politics was introduced by Rajiv Gandhi in 1989. Firstly, the Women's Reservation Bill was proposed by the Law Minister of the United Front Government Ramakant D Khalap in September 1996 but it could not be passed. Then between 1998 and 2004 BJP government, Atal Bihari Vajpayee tried many times to pass this bill but failed in 2000, 2002, 2003. In 2004, Dr. Manmohan Singh also tried to get this bill passed but he could not succeed. In 2010, the revolutionary movement came and this bill was passed in Rajya Sabha by 186 votes but there were a lot of controversies so, the government decided to hold this bill. As it was opposed by almost all the local political parties like RJD, Samajwadi Party, JDU etc. as these parties were blaming that this bill is not for the marginalised communities. The Panchayati Raj System implemented in 1993 by 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act can be considered as the base of the Women's Reservation Bill. As by these acts, 33% seats were reserved for the women in rural and urban local government which increases the political participation of women. In 1983, Karnataka became the first state to implement 25% reservation for women in local body elections by the 'Nyaya Panchayat Act' which was followed by some other states also before the implementation of 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts. States like Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, Maharashtra are providing more than 50% of reservation to women in local elections.

Previous studies indicate that women's representation in parliamentary and other elections has been very low. Gradually, as numerical data became available the picture became clearer, highlighting the need to discuss the role of reservation in increasing women's political representation across all elections. However, little attention has been paid to the impact of the Women's Reservation Bill on political leadership aspirations of young women. This gap makes it somewhat difficult to fully understand the future of female political leadership in the country.

EXPECTED IMPACT OF WOMEN RESERVATION BILL ON YOUNG WOMEN ASPIRATIONS

This new century has brought both opportunities and challenges for women. Particularly in the fields of education and politics, this century is very different from the previous ones. The Women's Reservation Bill 2023 will increase the awareness and aspirations of young women leaders in India in many different ways.

The actively participating young women in politics increase the role model effect by inspiring the upcoming generations and this increased participation will create a new generation of more informed female leaders.

Young women are encouraged as the reservation guarantees opportunities for representation. Due to their participation in politics, young women get the opportunity to raise the issues and concerns of their generation. The increased inclusivity of women in political leadership encourages them to positively participate in social change, become more aware of their rights, pursue education. The Women's Reservation Bill will enhance the political opportunities for the young women leaders to represent themselves in the Parliament, State Legislatures and in Local government. The presence of women in politics normalizes female leadership and reduces gender bias. Over time, it develops the leadership qualities among the young women which will help them in shaping policies and governance. The Women's Reservation Bill will create mental readiness accepting the women in parliament as political leaders.

BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES

The social inequalities of the society and the structural barriers still continue to restrict the complete participation of women in politics. The concept of rotation of seats in the Women's Reservation Bill is considered as a demotivating factor as it makes the political leaders less accountable. Additionally, the reservation process does not guarantee participation for rural or marginalized women, nor does it include seats for women in Rajya Sabha and Legislative Council.

Women have low political exposure in political leadership which may be due to patriarchal mindset, gender stereotype, limited networking opportunities, more burden of work, economic inequalities. This lack of political experiences increases the risk of allied capture, proxy representation and tokenism of women by the male relatives, male-dominated parties etc. who wants to use them like a rubber stamp for their own benefit. The safety concerns acts as political barriers for women as they are face greater risks of threats or harassment during door-to-door outreach, elections, public meetings and campaigns which may restrict their participation in political leadership. There is also a lack of security protocols for women, which may discourage them from participating.

Several other barriers hinder the effective implementation of Women's Reservation Bill including the lack of financial resources, time constraints, gender stereotypes, young women's lack of political experience, caste and religious factors, literacy, lack of family support, etc. which need to be removed and addressed carefully.

DISCUSSION

Reservation can only work as a support system in promoting women's gender equality in politics. Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan and several other countries have higher political representation of women. In Cuba, women hold around 55% seats in the National Assembly and in Rwanda, this number exceeds 60%. Our neighbouring countries are also encouraging women to participate in politics by implementing laws and reservations. Although the Women's Reservation Bill is a remarkable step by the government of India but it also faces several challenges. The bill cannot be implemented before the next census of 2026 and it is likely to be introduced during the general elections of 2029. This delay in the implementation of the bill will also delay opportunities it promises for women which will slow down the social progress.

The Women's Reservation Bill cannot be implemented without delimitation, which can be carried out after the upcoming census. The current delimitation, based on Article 82 which mandates readjustment of constituencies after every census is valid until 2026. This bill is expected to be implemented after 2026, as the current delimitation is based on the 2001 census. The new census will be used for delimitation and for redrawing boundaries of Parliamentary, Assembly Constituencies to ensure the equitable representation of votes from each constituency is scheduled for 2026. Currently, the constitutional boundaries are frozen until 2026 as per the 84th Constitutional Amendment, and therefore considerable time is needed for the

implementation of this bill. In terms of political participation, developed nations provide women with equal opportunities while in developing countries, women's political participation and representation are strengthened through electoral quotas. The turnout of female voters in India is now higher than that of male voters in many constituencies, signaling a shift in the country's democratic landscape. This shows that women are becoming aware of their rights and responsibilities.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Although theoretical equality has been granted to women by the constitution but the ground realities are different. The Women's Reservation Bill 2023 is expected to increase young women's participation and visibility in politics. Women can become effective political leaders and can bring positive changes in the society as the reservation give them opportunity to participate in the decision-making process, implementation of the reforms and promotes social equality.

The bill has a significant impact on young female leaders as it inspires them to dream of leadership. Some of these impacts are short term, while others may last much longer. In the short term, it will increase the inclusion of women, enhance their confidence, decision making abilities, leadership skills, and helps to create a new cadre of informed and capable women leaders. Overtime, it can bring the changes in social and cultural norms, narrowing gender gaps and strengthening democracy at the grassroot level. The participation of the younger generation brings fresh energy and introduces new ideas that evolve with time. There are many challenges that hinder the impact of this bill but to maximize its effects workshops, leadership training and mentorship programs should be implemented. Webinars and social media campaigns can prove effective in creating awareness. Women must raise their local issues which will encourage them to participate in politics and help their common issues with a stronger voice. They can effectively highlight the issues of women, children and marginalised communities which are often unaddressed. Participation of women will help bridge the gender gaps in politics and women empowerment.

Reservation is a long term investment which may not guarantee equality but it can increase the possibility of creating a more balanced political system and a better society. This bill strengthens democracy through the inclusion of young political leaders by removing social and structural barriers but its impacts must be closely monitored after its implementation.

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