

# Women's Reservation Bill, 2023

## Main Exam: General Studies Question Paper-2

(Indian Polity)

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### Why in News:

- Recently, a bill giving 33% reservation to women in Parliament and State Assemblies has been introduced in the Lok Sabha.
- This women's reservation bill has been named '**Nari Shakti Vandan Act**'.
- After passing from the Lok Sabha, this bill will be introduced in the Rajya Sabha.
- The Women's Reservation Bill is being ignored for 27 years for so-called reasons.

### History of Women's Reservation Bill:

- In 1975, during Indira Gandhi's Prime Ministership, a report titled 'Towards Equality' talked about women's reservation.
- Most of the members in the committee that prepared the report were against reservation. Women wanted to enter politics on their own strength and not through reservation.
- Former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi had tried to pass a bill in the 1980s to provide one-third reservation for women in panchayat and local body elections, but it was opposed by state assemblies.
- The Women's Reservation Bill was first introduced as the **81st Constitutional Amendment Bill** on **12 September 1996** by the government of HD Deve Gowda.
- Congress was supporting this coalition government from outside. Mulayam Singh Yadav and Lalu Prasad were the two main pillars of this government, who were against women's reservation.
- In June 1997, once again an attempt was made to pass this bill. At that time Sharad Yadav had made a controversial comment condemning this bill.
- He had said, "What will the upper caste women understand about our women and what will they think?"
- In the year 1998, in the 12th Lok Sabha, N Thambidurai, the then Law Minister in the NDA government of Atal Bihari Vajpayee, had tried to introduce this bill. But this bill could not be passed.
- In 1999, the NDA government tried to reintroduce this bill during the 13th Lok Sabha.
- In the year 2003, the NDA government again presented this bill but the MPs opposed it during the question hour itself.

- This bill was passed in the Rajya Sabha in 2010 during the UPA government, but it could not be passed in the Lok Sabha.
- Before the 2019 elections, Congress had made women's reservation an issue.

## About Women Reservation Bill:

- This bill provides for 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and Assemblies.
- If this bill becomes law, one-third of the seats in the Lok Sabha and Assemblies will be reserved for women.
- That means 33% seats in Lok Sabha will be reserved for women.
- Out of the present 543 seats in the Lok Sabha, 181 seats will be reserved for women.
- Similarly, 33% of the seats in the assemblies will be reserved for women. For example- there are 70 seats in Delhi Assembly. Its 23 seats will be for women.
- Its implementation may take a long time. It is being told that this law will come into force when the census is delimited. That means, there will be no reservation for women in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.
- Delimitation will not happen until the census is conducted. The 2021 census has not been conducted yet. The census is likely to be conducted only after the 2024 elections. Under the Constitution, delimitation is banned till 2026. Now when the 2021 census is held, the delimitation of Lok Sabha seats will happen only after that. It is possible that the benefit of women's reservation will be available in the 2029 or 2034 Lok Sabha elections.

## Features of this Bill:

- The power to pass this bill lies only in the Parliament.
- After this bill is passed by the Parliament, it will be implemented in the assemblies of all the states of the country.
- It will not be necessary to take approval from all the states for this.
- Women will get 33% reservation in the assemblies of all the states and union territories of the country.
- Women will get the reservation benefit of this bill only in Lok Sabha and Assemblies.
- Women in Rajya Sabha and Legislative Council will not get the benefit of this women's reservation bill.
- There is no provision for separate reservation for SC-ST women in this bill.
- Reservation will be available only within the SC-ST women reservation, that is, out of the seats reserved for the SC-ST category in the Lok Sabha and Legislative Assemblies, only 33% of the seats will be reserved for women.
- At present, 84 seats in the Lok Sabha are reserved for Scheduled Castes and 47 seats are reserved for Scheduled Tribes.

- After the bill becomes law, 28 out of 84 SC seats will be reserved for SC women.
- Similarly, out of 47 ST seats, 16 will be reserved for ST women.
- At present there is no provision for reservation for OBC category in the Lok Sabha. After removing the reserved seats of SC-ST, 412 seats are left in the Lok Sabha.
- Along with general, OBC candidates also contest on these seats.
- According to this, 137 seats will be for women of general and OBC category.

## Will state approval be required?

- According to Article 368 of the Constitution, if the law of the Central Government has any impact on the rights of the states, then in such cases the approval of at least 50% of the assemblies will have to be taken for the law to be made. That means, if the central government has to implement this law across the country, then it will have to take the approval of at least 50% of the assemblies.
- That is, if the Central Government has to implement this law across the country, then it will have to be passed by the Legislative Assemblies of at least 15 states.
- Present status of women in Parliament and Assemblies:
- Women's representation in Parliament and most assemblies is less than 15 percent.
- According to government data, women's participation in 19 assemblies is less than 10 percent.
- Out of 543 members in the current Lok Sabha, the number of women is 78, which is less than 15 percent.
- Women's representation in Rajya Sabha is about 14 percent.
- Women's participation in many assemblies is less than 10 percent.
- Currently, women's representation in the following assemblies is more than 10 percent:
- Bihar (10.70 percent), Chhattisgarh (14.44 percent), Haryana (10 percent), Jharkhand (12.35 percent), Punjab (11.11 percent), Rajasthan (12 percent), Uttarakhand (11.43 percent), Uttar Pradesh (11.66 percent), West Bengal (13.70 percent) and Delhi (11.43 percent).
- There are 8.2 percent women MLAs in Gujarat Assembly while there is only one woman MLA in Himachal Pradesh Assembly.

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### Main Exam Questions

**Discuss the salient features of the Women's Reservation Bill, 2023.**