

FOR THE USE OF  
MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

Not for Publication

OCCASIONAL PAPER SERIES—1/2008



**RESERVATION OF SEATS FOR WOMEN  
IN LEGISLATIVE BODIES:  
*PERSPECTIVES***

Rajya Sabha Secretariat  
New Delhi  
July 2008

## CONTENTS

	PAGE NOS.
<i>Preface</i>	
I	
Introduction .....	1
Indian Perspective .....	1
Constitutional Provisions .....	2-3
Representation of Women in Parliament/State Legislatures .....	3
<i>In Lok Sabha</i> .....	3-4
<i>In Rajya Sabha</i> .....	5
<i>In State Legislatures</i> .....	6-7
Women contestants in General Elections .....	7—9
II	
Reservation for Women in Local Bodies - Encouraging trends .....	9-10
Reservation for Women in Lok Sabha/Assemblies - Previous efforts ....	10—12
Reservation for Women in Lok Sabha/Assemblies - Current Initiative .....	12-13
Differing perceptions about the reservation for Women .....	13-14
Alternate Proposals .....	14-15
III	
Gender Quotas/Reservations in Legislatures – General Perspectives ....	15-16
<i>What are Quotas?</i> .....	16
<i>Types of Quota</i> .....	16
Quotas/Reservations: Pros and Cons .....	17—20
Quotas for Women in legislatures: International scenario .....	20-21
Political Parties and Quota .....	21-22
Need for stronger quota rules .....	22—24
Summary .....	24-25

## P R E F A C E

This publication titled “Reservation of Seats for Women in Legislative Bodies: Perspectives” is the first in a series of ‘Occasional Papers’ proposed to be brought out on topical issues from time to time for the benefit of the Members of Parliament. It seeks to present varied perspectives on gender quota, integrating different viewpoints on the issue of women’s reservation in legislatures. This paper is based on published sources which have been cited appropriately and the authenticity of the information contained therein vests with the respective sources.

It is hoped that Members would find this paper relevant and useful.

NEW DELHI  
18th *July*, 2008

V. K. AGNIHOTRI  
Secretary-General  
Rajya Sabha

## Tables & Charts

- Table 1 : Number of women elected to Lok Sabha
- Chart 1 : Percentage of elected women in each Lok Sabha
- Table 2 : Women Members of Rajya Sabha and their percentage (1952-2008)
- Table 3 : Women Members in Legislative Assemblies and their percentage
- Table 4 : Gender-wise break-up of contestants to Lok Sabha in General Elections (Sixth to Fourteenth)
- Chart 4 : Gender-wise break-up of contestants to Lok Sabha in General Elections (Sixth to Fourteenth)
- Table 5 : No. of Women contestants and Women elected in General Elections
- Chart 5 : Women contestants and number of Women elected in General Elections
- Table 6 : Women candidates from National Political Parties
- Annexure-I* : Women in Parliaments of other countries
- Annexure-II* : Countries with Constitutional Quota/Election Law Quota Regulations in their Parliaments

## I

### Introduction

In the last decade of the twentieth century, the issue of political empowerment of women gained momentum throughout the world. In 1990, the United Nation's Economic and Social Council endorsed a target of 30 per cent women in decision-making positions in the world by 1995. This target was far from being met by 1995, only 10 per cent of the world's parliamentarians were women. Today, around 16 per cent of the world's parliamentarians are women<sup>1</sup>, still far from the target of 30 per cent. This figure implies that politics is still predominantly a men's business, with men making up 84 per cent of parliamentarians. And in India, in the fourteenth Lok Sabha there are only 51 women, constituting 9.51 per cent of the House and in the Rajya Sabha there are only 23 women members constituting 9.50 per cent of the House.

### Indian Perspective

In India, normatively, women have been given an exalted position in society. During ancient times they were treated at par with men even in political and philosophical spheres. However, down the centuries, the position of women in society deteriorated and politically they were pushed to the background. It was only in the twentieth century, particularly during the freedom movement under the charismatic leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, that involvement of women was accepted as the natural course in India. In fact, Gandhiji's notions and approach towards the role of women in the freedom struggle stood in sharp contrast to the age-old prejudices against them ingrained in the Indian psyche. The social condition of women was quite appalling in those times and it was primarily due to the conscious efforts of the leadership, at the forefront of the freedom struggle, that women fought against the might of the British empire in partnership with men.

Gandhiji believed that women have to play a much meaningful role in politics, making it more accountable, transparent and corruption free. Writing in *Harijan* on 21 April 1946, he emphasized the need to "enroll women as voters, impart or have imparted to them practical education, teach them to think independently, release them from the chains of caste that bind them so as to bring about a change in them...If they will do this, they will purify the present unclean atmosphere."<sup>2</sup> He prophetically said, "as long as the women of India do not take part in public life, there can be no salvation for the country."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Drude Dahlerup, (edited), 'Women, Quotas and Politics', Routledge, 2006, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> "What about Women?" in *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 90, 25 February-19 May 1946, p.231.

<sup>3</sup> Speech at Women's Conference, Sojitra, Gujarat in *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol.30, 27 December 1924 -21 March 1925, p.108.

Our freedom struggle was viewed by the national leaders in a wider perspective of restructuring the socio-economic and future political set up, to provide in it, among other things, equality of both men and women. It is worth mentioning that way back in 1920 Smt. Sarojini Naidu and Ms. Margaret Cousins led a group of women to demand equal rights of representation for the fair sex in the Indian Provincial Legislatures. Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak was of the view that political action on the part of women could be independent of their social status and that political action was possibly more important than social reform in empowering women. The attitude of our national leaders was evident from the Resolution on Fundamental Rights and Economic Programme which was adopted in 1931 by the Indian National Congress.<sup>4</sup> The Congress declared that it could agree to a Constitution which provided for equal rights and obligations of all citizens, without any bar on account of sex and provided for adult suffrage. Thus, although the British Government turned down the demand for women's franchise, the Indian National Congress in 1931 adopted a resolution in favour of women's franchise and representation.

In independent India, women have held important political and administrative positions. For instance, Shrimati Indira Gandhi guided the destiny of the country as Prime Minister for more than one and half decades. Women have also served as Governors, Chief Ministers, Ministers in Union and State Governments, Presiding Officers of Legislative Bodies, Judges of the High Courts and Secretaries to the Government of India. Currently, we have a woman as the President of our Republic. Despite the fact that Indian women have held important positions both at the national and international levels, women's participation in the political arena and in the decision making bodies is not in proportion to their population, except in the local bodies. Their effective participation, even in these bodies, leaves much to be desired.<sup>5</sup>

### **Constitutional Provisions**

Adoption of our Constitution heralded a new era of equality for women of India. It guarantees equal political rights including the right to vote to women. Also, almost all the provisions contained in the UN Convention on the 'Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women' are there in the Indian Constitution. Not only does the Constitution guarantee equal political status to women, there is even a scope for 'positive discrimination' in their favour as is evident in Article 15(3) of the Constitution. There are many other

---

<sup>4</sup> AICC Resolution on Fundamental Duties and Economic Programme, Bombay, 1931.

<sup>5</sup> Yogendra Narain, *et al* " Political Empowerment of Women," *Journal of Indian Institute of Public Administration*, Vol. LI, Jan-March, 2005.

provisions in the Constitution which lay stress on equality between men and women. Article 14 provides for equality before law. Article 39(a), states that the State shall direct its policy towards securing equally to men and women the right to an adequate means of livelihood, and 39(d) enjoins the State to direct its policy towards securing equal pay for equal work for both men and women. Article 42 provides for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief and Article 51(A) (e) refers to the fundamental duty of citizens to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women.

### **Representation of Women in Parliament/State Legislatures**

Political representation was initially based on the premise that it deals primarily with individuals. It was believed that though very few women were actually joining politics at a given time; the overall improvement in terms of education and employment opportunities would necessarily percolate into the political sphere too and their representation would commensurately increase. During the first general elections, 66 women contested the elections to Parliament and 19 were elected to the House of the People. Shri Jawaharlal Nehru was quite appalled at the low representation of women in Parliament. Expressing his anguish and pondering over the issue he wrote thus on the matter in his letter to the Chief Ministers:

I have been meeting our new Members of Parliament. There are over 700 of them as between the two Houses. I have noticed with great regret how few women have been elected. I suppose this is so in the State Assemblies and Councils also. I think we are very much to be blamed. It is not a matter of showing favour to any one or even of injustice, but rather of doing something, which is not conducive to the future growth of our country. I am quite sure that our real and basic growth will only come when women have a full chance to play their part in public life. Wherever they have had this chance, they have, as a whole, done well, better if I may say so, than the average man. Our laws are man made, our society dominated by man, and so most of us naturally take a very lopsided view of the matter. We cannot be objective, because we have grown up in certain grooves of thought and action. But the future of India will probably depend ultimately more upon the women than the men.<sup>6</sup>

### ***In Lok Sabha***

Even six decades after Independence, the representation of women in the Lok Sabha do not present an impressive picture. It has not crossed 10 per cent (Table 1). In the First Lok Sabha, there were only 22 women

---

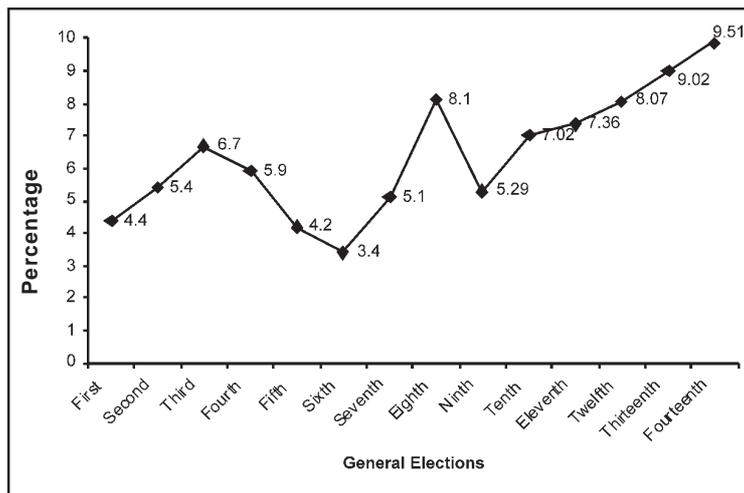
<sup>6</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, *Letters to the Chief Ministers*, Volume II, p.615.

constituting 4.4 per cent of the House. It increased marginally over the years except in the Sixth Lok Sabha when the House had only 19 women members. In the Thirteenth Lok Sabha, there were 49 women members. However, in the Fourteenth Lok Sabha, the strength of women members is 51.

**Table 1: Number of Women Elected to Lok Sabha**

General Elections	No. of Women Elected	Percentage
First	22	4.4
Second	27	5.4
Third	34	6.7
Fourth	31	5.9
Fifth	22	4.2
Sixth	19	3.4
Seventh	28	5.1
Eighth	44	8.1
Ninth	28	5.29
Tenth	39	7.02
Eleventh	40	7.36
Twelfth	44	8.07
Thirteenth	49	9.02
Fourteenth	51	9.51

**Chart 1: Percentage of Elected Women in each Lok Sabha**



Source: *Who's Who Lok Sabha*

***In Rajya Sabha***

Similarly, in the Rajya Sabha, in 1952, the number of women members was merely 15 constituting 6.94 per cent of the membership of the House. Over the years, the percentage of women has increased and now, out of 242 members, 23 are women constituting 9.50 per cent of the House. In the Rajya Sabha, the representation of women has never crossed 12 per cent (Table 2).

**Table 2: Women Members of Rajya Sabha and their Percentage (1952-2008)**

Year	Number	Percentage
1952	15	6.94
1954	17	7.79
1956	20	8.62
1958	22	9.52
1960	24	10.25
1962	18	7.62
1964	21	8.97
1966	23	9.82
1968	22	9.64
1970	14	5.85
1972	18	7.40
1974	18	7.53
1976	24	10.16
1978	25	10.24
1980	29	11.98
1982	24	10.16
1984	24	10.24
1986	28	11.98
1988	25	10.59
1990	24	10.34
1992	17	7.29
1994	20	8.36
1996	19	7.81
1998	19	7.75
2000	22	9.01
2002	25	10.20
2004	28	11.43
2006	25	10.41
2008	23	9.50

*Source: Who's Who, Rajya Sabha*

### *In State Legislatures*

Women representation in State legislatures has also been equally dismal. At present the average percentage of elected women in State Assemblies is 6.94 per cent, the highest being 14.44 per cent in Haryana and the lowest being 1.34 per cent in Karnataka. States like Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Union Territory of Puducherry have no representation of women in their Assemblies (Table 3).

**Table 3: Women Members in Legislative Assemblies and their Percentage**

Sl. No.	Name of State/UT	Total No. of Seats	Women Members	Percentage
1	Andhra Pradesh*	294	28	9.52
2	Arunachal Pradesh*	60	0	0.00
3	Assam*	126	13	10.32
4	Bihar#	243	25	10.29
5	Chhattisgarh*	90	5	5.56
6	Delhi*	70	6	8.57
7	Goa*	40	1	2.50
8	Gujarat*	182	16	8.79
9	Haryana*	90	13	14.44
10	Himachal Pradesh*	68	5	7.35
11	Jammu & Kashmir#	87	2	2.30
12	Jharkhand<	81	5	6.17
13	Karnataka*	224	3	1.34
14	Kerala*	140	7	5.00
15	Madhya Pradesh*	230	19	8.26
16	Maharashtra*	288	12	4.17
17	Manipur*	60	0	0.00
18	Meghalaya#	60	2	3.33
19	Mizoram*	40	0	0.00
20	Nagaland#	60	0	0.00
21	Orissa*	147	11	7.48
22	Punjab*	117	7	5.98
23	Puducherry*	30	0	0.00
24	Rajasthan*	200	13	6.50
25	Sikkim#	32	3	9.38
26	Tamil Nadu#	234	22	9.40
27	Tripura#	60	2	3.33
28	Uttar Pradesh*	403	25	6.20
29	Uttarakhand#	70	4	5.71
30	West Bengal#	294	37	12.59
	TOTAL	4120	286	6.94

Source: \*Website of the respective Assemblies/State Governments;

# Website of Election Commission of India;

<Who's Who, Jharkhand Assembly.

It is unfortunate that in India after 58 years of the working of the Constitution, women are still fighting for their empowerment; women's representation in Parliament is merely 8 per cent. It is not surprising that the Global Gender Gap Report 2007 of UNDP had placed India at a disappointing rank of 114 out of 128 countries studied, based on indicators, among others, of political empowerment.

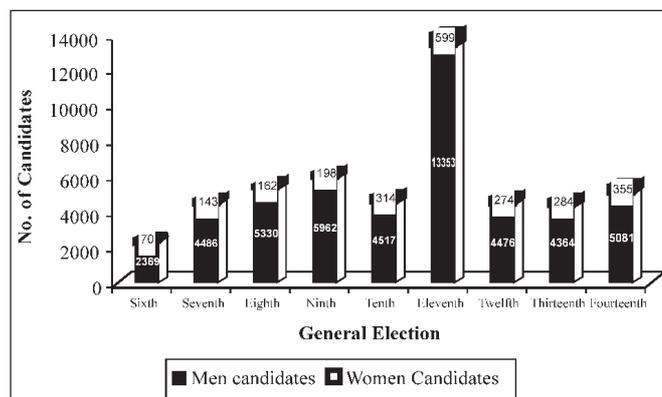
### Women contestants in General Elections

Even though women enjoy equal political rights, very few of them are actually participating in the elections. In the Sixth General Elections out of the total contestants of 2439 only 70 candidates were women and in the Fourteenth General Elections, out of the total numbers of contestants of 5435, only 355 were women. Though the number of women participating in the elections may be increasing gradually, they continue to constitute a very small percentage of the total number of contestants (Table 4).

**Table 4: Gender-wise break-up of Contestants to Lok Sabha in General Elections (Sixth to Fourteenth)**

General Elections	Total contestants	Men contestants	Women contestants
Sixth	2439	2369	70
Seventh	4629	4486	143
Eighth	5492	5330	162
Ninth	6160	5962	198
Tenth	4831	4517	314
Eleventh	13952	13353	599
Twelfth	4750	4476	274
Thirteenth	4648	4364	284
Fourteenth	5435	5081	355

**Chart 4: Gender-wise break-up of contestants to Lok Sabha in General Elections (Sixth to Fourteenth)**



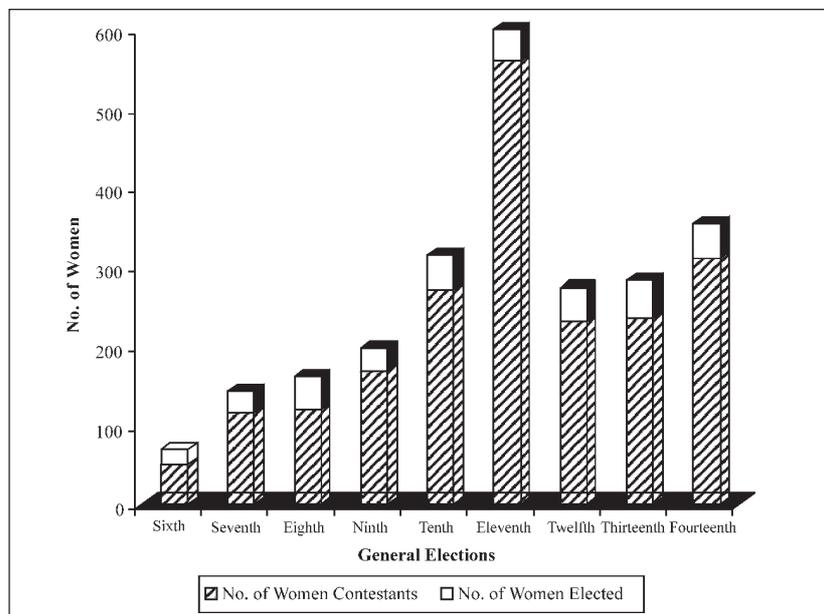
Source: Election Commission of India

Another startling fact is that out of the number of women who actually contest the elections, the percentage of women who finally make it to the Lok Sabha is very less. In fact, over the years, the percentage of women who have found their way to the legislature has reduced. In the Sixth General Elections, 27 per cent of the women contestants won the elections and by the Fourteenth General Elections, less than 15 per cent actually made it to the Lok Sabha (Table 5).

**Table 5: No. of Women contestants and Women elected in General Elections**

General Elections	Total No. of Women contestants	No. of Women elected	Percentage
Sixth	70	19	27.00
Seventh	143	28	19.58
Eighth	162	42	25.92
Ninth	198	29	14.64
Tenth	314	44	14.01
Eleventh	599	40	6.67
Twelfth	274	43	15.69
Thirteenth	284	49	17.25
Fourteenth	355	50	14.08

**Chart 5: Women contestants and Number of Women elected in General Elections**



Source: Election Commission of India

There is no denying the fact that a political party is an authentic institutional voice in a democracy. In a multi-party democracy, such as India, the role of political parties in elections, in mobilizing public opinion and also in governance process cannot be overemphasized. Therefore, the backing of a political party for the success of a candidate in election is also imperative. This trend was evident when women contestants fielded by political parties won in larger numbers in comparison to independent candidates (Table 6).

**Table 6: Women candidates from National Political Parties**

General Elections	Total No. of Women contestants	Women contestants from Political Parties	No. of Women elected	No. of Women elected from Political Parties
Sixth	70	41	19	17
Seventh	143	77	28	27
Eighth	162	63	42	39
Ninth	198	87	29	26
Tenth	314	N.A.	44	N.A.
Eleventh	599	125	40	36
Twelfth	274	107	43	31
Thirteenth	284	104	49	35
Fourteenth	355	110	50	30

*Source : Election Commission of India*

## II

### **Reservation for Women in Local Bodies — Encouraging trends**

Given the low representation of women in politics, there has been a consistent demand for more meaningful ways to increase their representation in decision-making bodies. In pursuance of this notion of empowerment of women, the Constitution (Seventy-third Amendment) Act, 1993 and the Constitution (Seventy-fourth Amendment) Act, 1993 reserved seats for women at the local level bodies, namely, the Panchayats and Municipalities with the hope that these measures will set the trend to provide women their legitimate place in public life. After these amendments, Articles 243 D and 243 T were added to the Constitution to provide that not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by the direct election in the local bodies (Panchayats and Municipalities) would be reserved for women and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in the local bodies.

This, indeed, makes a historic beginning for the effective participation of women in the decision-making process at the grassroots level. In the elections to these local bodies, more than one million women have been elected every five years. In 2006, 9,75,116 women were elected to Gram Panchayats; 58,094 women to Panchayats at Intermediate level; and 5779 women to Panchayats at the District level.<sup>7</sup> It is but natural that a larger number of women have participated in these elections and this signifies a very encouraging trend for women's empowerment. Though it has taken time for women to translate their numerical strength into active participation in the rural and semi-urban areas, the results have been truly astounding.

Before reservation, the percentage of women in this area was merely 4.5 per cent, which after reservation has gone upto 40 per cent. As per the *Fifteenth Anniversary Charter on Panchayati Raj*, "Today more than 26 lakh representatives stand elected to the three levels of Panchayats. Of these, over 10 lakh are women. The last fifteen years of Panchayati Raj, have thus succeeded in empowering marginalized groups who have gained political representation and valuable experience. Many of them have successfully taken on the challenge of governance and brought about enduring social change through their close links with the community."<sup>8</sup> Women have prioritized issues of health, education and access to basic services and in some cases have been able to ensure a significant change in living conditions for the entire community. The efforts and work of several women representatives in Panchayats in Maharashtra, Gujarat and West Bengal have been widely acclaimed.

### **Reservation for Women in Lok Sabha/Assemblies — Previous efforts**

Attempts to have seats reserved for women in the Lok Sabha and the State Legislative Assemblies have had a chequered legislative history. After years of painstaking struggle by the women's groups, the Bills for women's reservation were earlier introduced in Parliament in 1996, 1998 and 1999, respectively, without being passed. The Constitution (Eighty-first Amendment) Bill, 1996, was introduced on 12 September, 1996. Some of the significant features of the Bill were as under:-

- (i) One-third of the total number of seats filled by direct elections in the House of the People and in Legislative Assemblies of the States shall be reserved for women.
- (ii) One-third of seats shall be reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes from amongst the seats reserved for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes

<sup>7</sup> Mid term appraisal—State of the Panchayats 2006-07 (Vol.,-I), Ministry of Panchayati Raj

<sup>8</sup> Fifteenth Anniversary Charter on Panchayati Raj - "Inclusive Growth through Inclusive Governance", April 2008.

under clause (1) of article 330 and clause (1) of article 332 of the Constitution.

- (iii) No reservation of seats in Lok Sabha for women from a State having less than three seats in Lok Sabha.
- (iv) If the number of seats reserved for the Scheduled Castes or the Scheduled Tribes was less than three in any State, no reservation for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes was provided for in the State.
- (v) The seats were to be reserved for women by rotation in the manner laid down by law of Parliament.
- (vi) No time limit up to which reservation for women was to continue.
- (vii) It did not provide for reservation of seats for women belonging to the Other Backward Classes.
- (viii) It did not provide reservation of seats for women in the Rajya Sabha and the Legislative Councils of the States.

After intense debates and dissenting opinions, the Bill was referred to a Joint Committee of Parliament consisting of 31 members from both Houses of Parliament. The Committee chaired by Smt. Geeta Mukherjee presented its report<sup>9</sup> on 9 December 1996.

The Committee in its report, *inter alia*, recommended as under—

- (i) The words ‘not less than one-third’ occurring in the Bill should be replaced with ‘as nearly as may be, one-third’.
- (ii) The Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi should also be brought under the purview of the Bill.
- (iii) The provision for reservation of seats for women should also be made in respect of nominations made under article 331 and 333 of the Constitution.
- (iv) The provision of reservation for women should cease to have effect on the expiry of a period of fifteen years from the commencement of the Constitution (Eighty-first Amendment) Act, 1996.
- (v) The issue of extending the benefit of reservation to Other Backward Classes may be considered by the Government at the appropriate time.

---

<sup>9</sup> The report of the Joint Committee on the Constitution (Eighty-first Amendment) Bill, 1996.

- (vi) The Government should work out the modalities for providing reservation of seats for women in Rajya Sabha and in the Legislative Councils and bring out suitable legislation in this regard at the appropriate time.

The Constitution (Eighty-first Amendment) Bill, 1996, as reported by the Joint Committee of Parliament, lapsed with the dissolution of the Eleventh Lok Sabha.

Thereafter, a similar Bill, namely, the Constitution (Eighty-fourth Amendment) Bill, 1998 was introduced on 14 December 1998. The said Bill also lapsed on the dissolution of Twelfth Lok Sabha.

Yet another attempt was made by introducing the Constitution (Eighty-fifth Amendment) Bill, 1999 in Lok Sabha on 23 December 1999. But this Bill also could not be pursued due to lack of consensus amongst the political parties.

#### **Reservation for Women in Lok Sabha/Assemblies — Current Initiative**

The Constitution (One Hundred and Eighth Amendment) Bill, 2008, popularly known as Women's Reservation Bill, was introduced in the Rajya Sabha on 6 May 2008.<sup>10</sup> The Bill aims at eliminating gender inequality and discrimination against women, by political empowerment of women, so as to fulfill people's mandate of Women Empowerment as envisaged in the National Common Minimum Programme of the Government and seeks:

- **reservation for women**, as nearly as may be, one-third seats of the present strength of the House of the People and the Legislative Assembly of every State;
- to provide, as nearly as may be, one-third **reservation for women** including one-third the number of seats reserved for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes in the House of the People and in the Legislative Assembly of every State to be reserved for women of that category;
- to provide for **reservation for women** in respect of nominations of members of Anglo-Indian community in the House of the People and in the Legislative Assemblies of the States;
- to provide **reservation for women** in the Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi; and
- to provide that **reservation of seats for women** should cease to have effect on the expiration of a period of fifteen years from the enactment of the Bill.

<sup>10</sup> Rajya Sabha Parliamentary Bulletin, Part I, dated 6 May 2008.

The Women's Reservation Bill introduced in the Rajya Sabha has been referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Personnel, Law and Justice, headed by E.M. Sudarsana Natchiappan for examination.<sup>11</sup> The 31 Member Committee has been seized of the matter and would submit its report, to both Houses of Parliament after making wider consultation on various issues involved in the Bill.

### **Differing perceptions about the reservation for Women**

The Bill has evoked mixed reactions across the political spectrum, both inside the House as well outside. While some political parties are unanimous that the Bill, which seeks to provide 33 per cent reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and the State legislatures, be passed in its present form at the first available opportunity,<sup>12</sup> others are demanding quota to be fixed for the women belonging to backward sections of the society within this 33 per cent. Otherwise, they contend, benefit of this reservation is likely to be cornered by the women belonging to upper and well-off sections of our society.

One party has stated that it is committed to the demand for the 33 per cent reservation for women. It has, moreover, favoured the Election Commission's proposal for making it mandatory for parties to reserve 33 per cent seats for women.

Most of the parties have pledged their support for the Bill provided there is consensus on it. Some parties while maintaining that they are not opposed to women's reservation, contend that the interests of women from *Dalits*, backward classes, Muslims and other religious minorities should be adequately protected. Others are of the view that if 33 per cent reservation for women is added to the already existing 22.5 per cent for scheduled castes and tribes, then more than 55 per cent of seats in Parliament would be reserved.<sup>13</sup> This would not be fair to other sections of the population. However, they favour making it mandatory for political parties to give 10 per cent of election tickets to women. They also argue that if inadequacy of representation is the issue, Muslim women also deserve this kind of benefit as there are only two women in the present Lok Sabha from this category.

Reserving one-third seats in our legislatures would undoubtedly bestow special powers and privileges on the approximately 180 women who would make it to Parliament and many more to State legislatures on the strength of

<sup>11</sup> Rajya Sabha Parliamentary Bulletin II, dated, 9 May 2008.

<sup>12</sup> "Don't delay Women's Bill any further, says DMK", *The Hindu*, 19 June 2008.

<sup>13</sup> "Women's Bill: What is the fuss about?," *Rediff News*, 24 August 2005

the quota system. It would also create new aspirations among women at large. However, the larger question is whether it will actually “empower” ordinary women citizens.

Has the presence of 500 plus male legislators in Parliament empowered the men of India? Have these MPs facilitated the growth of men’s freedom from abuse and harassment? Freedom from hunger and malnutrition? Do men feel secure and safe in today’s India? If most men in this country have not benefited from the preponderant presence of male parliamentarians, why should we naively believe that 180 women in Parliament will change the fate of women in India?<sup>14</sup>

### **Alternate Proposals**

Few alternate proposals have been suggested to address the concerns of women’s reservations without having 33% reservation for women in Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies. These are enumerated as under:

- to make it mandatory for every recognized political party to nominate women candidates for election in at least one-third of the constituencies.<sup>15</sup>
- to increase the strength of the Legislatures to the extent of one-third of the total number of existing seats and provide one-third (*i.e.* to increase seats by 33% and make reservation) seats to women.
- to implement the proposal of the Election Commission of India (known as the Gill formula) to make it mandatory for the recognised political parties to ensure putting of minimum agreed percentage for women in State Assembly and Parliamentary elections so as to allow them to retain the recognition with the Election Commission as political parties.<sup>16</sup>
- to provide for adequate enabling measures for improving the conditions of the women socially, educationally and economically so that women stand up on their own with their intrinsic strength. Occupation of seats in legislatures must be earned by women not through a scheme of reservation but through a positive enabling environment alive with gender equality in terms of access and opportunities, distribution of resources and so on.

<sup>14</sup> Madhu Kishwar, ‘The Logic of Quotas? Women’s Movement splits on the Reservation Bill’, *Manushi*, Issue No. 107, July-August 1998.

<sup>15</sup> The Proposed Alternative Women’s Reservation Bill, *Manushi*, Issue No. 116.

<sup>16</sup> Reforming politics: A Symposium on rethinking democratic institutions and practices, *Seminar*, No. 506, October 2001.

- *The Economic Times*, in an editorial, suggested that given the lack of consensus on the issue of quota for women in the Parliament, they should effect a tactical shift in their emphasis towards other areas of institutional life. They should, for one, put in place legislation mandating quotas for women on boards of companies. Norway, with its legally mandated 40 percent quota for women on boards of its companies, could be a good example to follow.<sup>17</sup>

### III

#### **Gender Quotas/Reservations in Legislatures – General Perspectives**

It is an accepted fact that without being proportionately present in the political system, a group's ability to influence policy-making, or indeed the nature of representative system, is rather limited. Greater the number, greater the possibility of wielding power and influence. However, despite the women constituting about half of the world's population as well as the labour force, they do not have any major and effective say in the decision making and priority setting. 'Women in National Parliaments-(World Classification)' prepared by Inter-Parliamentary Union is placed in the *Annexure-I*. Not involving women in decision-making therefore, is blatantly against the democratic framework. Democracy, by definition, cannot afford to be gender-blind.

The equal participation of women and men in public life is one of the cornerstones of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) adopted by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in 1979, and in force since 1981. India is a signatory to the Convention. Despite that, discrimination in matters of representation of women in decision-making bodies continues.

In 1995, the UN Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing generated renewed pressure for the implementation of the CEDAW provisions: the Beijing Platform for Action identified 'inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels' and 'insufficient mechanisms at all levels to promote the advancement of women' as two areas of significant concern where action was critical for the advancement of women.

Given the slow pace at which the number of women in politics is growing, different policy measures are being introduced to bring about gender balance in political institutions. Quotas present one such mechanism to increase, and safeguard, women's presence in Parliaments and are now being introduced in many countries. What are the arguments for and against the use of quotas? What types of quotas have led to substantial increase in women's political

<sup>17</sup> *The Economic Times*, New Delhi, 7 May 2008.

representation in practice? Which quotas work best in different electoral systems and how can they be effectively enforced are some of the questions that have been discussed below.

### **What are Quotas?**

Quotas for women entail that women must constitute a certain number or percentage of the members of a body, whether it is a candidate list, a parliamentary assembly, a committee or a government.

Quotas aim at increasing women's representation in publicly elected or appointed institutions such as governments, parliaments and local councils.

Gender quotas draw legitimacy from women's under-representation due to exclusionary practices of the political parties and the political institutions at large.

Quotas place the burden of candidate selection basically on those who control the selection process, first and foremost the political parties.

Quotas force those who nominate and select to start recruiting women and give them chance which they otherwise would not get.<sup>18</sup>

### **Types of Quota**

The two most common types of electoral gender quotas are candidate quota and reserved quota.

#### ***Candidate quota:***

It specifies the minimum percentage of candidates for election that must be women, and apply to political parties' lists of candidates for election. It could be done in following manners:

*Legal candidate quotas* are laid down in the Constitution, in electoral laws or in political party laws. Such quotas as are enacted in legislation, force all political parties to nominate/select the required percentage of women.

*Voluntary party quotas* are adopted voluntarily by political parties, and are most common in centre-left-leaning parties, while liberal and conservative parties generally tend to be reluctant about or strongly opposed to adopting quotas.

#### ***Reserved quota:***

It sets aside a certain number of seats for women among representatives in a legislature, specified either in the Constitution or by legislation. One might argue that reserved seats should not be counted among

---

<sup>18</sup>Drude Dahlerup and Lenita Freidenvall, 'Quotas as a "Fast Track" to Equal Representation for Women' in *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, Vol.7, No.1, 2005, pp 26-48.

electoral quotas. However, reserved seats today come in many different types, some excluding, others including, the election of women, rather than appointment, to fill these seats. In Uganda 56 seats, one elected in each district by a special electorate, are reserved for women. In Rwanda, 30 per cent of the seats, elected by a special procedure, are reserved for women according to the Constitution. In Tanzania 20 per cent of the seats are reserved for women and allocated to the political parties in proportion to the number of parliamentary seats won in an election. Reserved seats can also be filled by appointment, as in Kenya and some Arab states.

Previous notions of having reserved seats for only one or for very few women, representing a vague and all-embracing category of women, are no longer considered sufficient. Today, quota systems aim at ensuring that women constitute at least a 'critical minority' of 30 or 40 per cent or aim for 'gender balance' as demanded in various international treaties and conventions. Quotas may be seen as a temporary measure, that is to say, until the barriers for women's entry into politics are removed.

Most quotas aim at increasing women's representation because the problem to be addressed is usually the under-representation of women. This is particularly relevant since women constitute more than 50 per cent of the population in most countries, but worldwide they hold less than 16 per cent of the parliamentary seats.

#### ***Gender-neutral quotas***

Quota systems may, however, be constructed as gender-neutral also. In this case, the requirement may be, for example, that neither gender should occupy more than 60 per cent or less than 40 per cent of the positions on a party list or in a decision-making body.

While quotas for women set a maximum for men's representation, gender-neutral quotas construct a maximum limit for both sexes. Gender-neutral quota rules are sometimes used as a strategic choice in order to refute the arguments of opponents of quotas that they are discriminatory against men.

#### **Quotas/Reservations: Pros and Cons**

Various arguments have been put forward the world over, for and against, the introduction of reservations as a means to increase the political presence of women. These are given as under:

##### ***Pros***

- Quotas for women do not discriminate, but compensate for actual barriers that prevent women from their fair share of the political seats.

- Quotas imply that there are several women together in a committee or assembly, thus minimizing the stress often experienced by the token women.
- Women have the right as citizens to equal representation.
- Women's experience is needed in political life.
- Men cannot represent the interest of women. Only many women can represent the diversity of women.
- Election is about representation, not educational or other qualifications.
- Women are just as qualified as men, but women's qualifications are downgraded and minimized in a male-dominated political system.
- Quotas do not discriminate against individual men. Rather quota rules limit the tendency of political parties to nominate only men. For the voters, the opportunities are expanded, since it now becomes possible to vote for women candidates.
- Introducing quotas may cause conflicts, but only temporarily.
- Several internationally recognized conventions on gender equality have set targets for women's political representation, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) which 179 countries are now party to, as well as the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action.
- How can it be justified that men occupy more than 80 per cent of the parliamentary seats in the world?

### *Cons*

- Quotas are against the principle of equal opportunity for all, since women are given preference.
- Political representation should be a choice between ideas and party platforms, not between social categories.
- Quotas are undemocratic, because voters should be able to decide who is elected.
- Quotas imply that politicians are elected because of their gender, not because of their qualifications, and that better-qualified candidates are pushed aside.
- Many women do not want to get elected just because they are women.

- Introducing quotas creates significant conflicts within the party organization.
- Quotas for women will be followed by demands for quotas for other groups, which will result in a politics of sheer group-interest representation.<sup>19</sup>

Electoral gender quota represents ‘the fast track’ to equal representation of women in contrast to ‘the incremental track’. It rejects the idea of incremental improvement in women’s representation. It is assumed that an increase in resources might not automatically lead to equal representation. Exclusion and discrimination are regarded as the core of the problem and the solution to which could very well be affirmative action. There is growing impatience and the Scandinavian experience cannot be considered as a model today because it took 70 to 80 years to get that far. Today women are not willing to wait that long.<sup>20</sup>

In general, quotas for women represent a shift from one concept of equality to another. The classic liberal notion of equality was a notion of ‘equal opportunity’ or ‘competitive equality’. Removing the formal barriers, for example, giving women voting rights, was considered sufficient. The rest was up to the individual women.

Following strong feminist pressure in the last few decades, a second concept of equality is gaining increasing relevance and support—the notion of ‘equality of result’. The argument is that just removing formal barriers does not produce real equal opportunity. Direct discrimination, as well as a complex pattern of hidden barriers, prevents women from getting their share of political influence. Quotas and other forms of active equality measures are thus a means towards equality of result. The argument is based on the experience that equality as a goal cannot be reached by formal equal treatment as a means. If barriers exist, it is argued, compensatory measures must be introduced as a means to reach equality of result.<sup>21</sup>

Research on women’s representation shows that women are often met with double standards. Women politicians are accused often of lacking

<sup>19</sup> Drude Dahlerup, ‘Increasing Women’s Political representation: New trends in Gender Quotas’, in *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2005.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, ‘Quotas-A Jump to Equality? The Need for International Comparisons of the Use of Electoral Quotas to obtain Equal Political Citizenship for Women’, in *The Implementation of Quotas: Asian Experiences*, *Quota Workshop Report Series*, Jakarta, Indonesia, 25 September 2002.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, ‘Increasing Women’s Political representation: New trends in Gender Quotas’, in *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2005, pp.144-45.

knowledge and education but at the same time criticised for representing a small group of educated elite women; women politicians are often accused of being tokens of their clans, families and parties. The concept of tokenism or 'proxy women' is often used against women elected on the basis of quota regulations. The argument is that quota women are dependent on their husbands and families, political parties or an autocratic leader both before and after the elections.

It is important also to state the obvious: quota provisions do not solve all problems for women in politics and that they may even create new ones. If there are prejudices in society, quotas or reservations do not themselves overcome this difficulty. However, it might make it possible for women to surmount some of the barriers that prevent access to certain opportunities. They could enable a 'jump start' where women have almost no representation at all.

#### **Quotas for women in legislatures: International scenario**

More than 40 countries have introduced electoral quotas by amending the constitution or introducing different types of legislation. In more than 50 other countries, major political parties have voluntarily introduced quotas requiring women to comprise a certain percentage of the candidates they nominate for election. Because of quotas, countries like Argentina, Costa Rica, Mozambique, Rwanda and South Africa are now contending with the Nordic countries, nations which for many decades have topped the ranking in terms of women's parliamentary representation.<sup>22</sup>

An overview of the use of legal electoral quotas in several countries is given in the *Annexure-II*. As the table shows, most legal gender quota systems were introduced only during the last decade. Different types of quota are prominent in the world's regions. In Latin America, the leading region in terms of quotas, constitutional or legal changes have opened up the way for gender quotas in politics. In the regions of Africa, the Balkans and South Asia many different types of quota regimes have been introduced recently. In Western Europe quota mainly come in the form of voluntary party quotas, but with France and Belgium as exceptions. In Eastern and Central Europe very few parties have passed quota regulations and no legal gender quota regulations for Parliament are in place. The legacy of quotas as 'forced emancipation' under communism strengthens the opponents of quotas in this region, even if this legacy partly rests on a myth. In the Arab world, quotas as reserved seats for various groups (religious, ethnic and clan) are well known, and very recently a number of countries have included 'women' as a group for whom certain seats should also be reserved.

<sup>22</sup> Drude Dahlerup, (Ed.) *Women, Quotas and Politics*, Routledge, 2006, pp. 3-7.

As a consequence of gender quotas, a dramatic change has taken place recently in the global ranking order of countries based on their level of female political representation. As a result of quota provisions, Rwanda, Costa Rica, Argentina, Mozambique and South Africa are now placed very high in the world league of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. The five Nordic states, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, which for a long time were virtually alone at the top of the ranking table, are now being challenged.

History seems to prove that the implementation of a quota system is made easier in a new political system than in an older one, where most seats might be 'occupied'. In general, it is less complicated to implement quotas for an appointed post than for an elected one. Also, gender quotas are easier to implement in proportional list systems than in plurality-majority systems, where each party only presents one candidate in each constituency. In post-conflict societies, the international community today is putting strong pressure on the actors of reconstruction to take effective measures to include women. Thus we see gender quotas of 25-35 per cent being introduced in strongly patriarchal cultures where very few women were represented earlier, for example, in the post-conflict societies of Afghanistan and Iraq. Quota provisions have also been introduced in the Balkans following strong pressure from the local women's movements in alliance with the international community.<sup>23</sup>

### **Political Parties and Quota**

At the time of elections, the quota system touches the very foundation of the democratic process, and according to opponents it may clash with the principle of the voters' right to choose the representatives they want. However, nominations are the crucial stage and the power of the nominations rests with the political parties, not with the voters. Since the political parties in most countries are the real gatekeepers to political office, quotas may lead to a dispute between the central and regional/local branches of the political parties. The local branches often fight for their right to choose their own candidates without the interference of the central party organization. Undoubtedly, it is easier to introduce quotas for women when other forms of quotas are also formally introduced, for example, quotas based on occupational or ethnic criteria. Regional 'quotas' which distribute the parliamentary seats to various parts of the country, not just according to their share of the population, but giving non-proportional shares of the seats to certain regions over others, are in fact used in most countries. However, such arrangements are seldom called quotas.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup>Drude Dahlerup, 'Increasing Women's Political representation: New trends in Gender Quotas', *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2005, pp.141-48.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

The ‘fast-tracking’ of women into legislatures through gender quotas is not necessarily accompanied by sufficient sensitization among parties and voters to the need for women in political life. For their part, political parties play an ever-increasing role in the management of parliamentary politics, and it is therefore at the party level that the principle of equality must be put into practice. Political parties, which are traditionally male bastions, need to be further encouraged to revise their statutes, admit more women into their internal structures and include them as candidates in elections.

The examples of France and Belgium are illustrative. From a paltry 5.6 per cent in 1995, women now represent 17 per cent of the French Senate (an increase of 11.4 percentage points). Over the same time period, women’s parliamentary representation in the Belgian House of Representatives increased from 12.2 to 35.3 per cent (23.3 percentage points). In both countries, the electoral laws were amended (France’s in 2000; Belgium’s in 2002) to oblige political parties to present an equal number of men and women on their electoral lists.

Some political parties in France showed tremendous resistance to complying fully with the law. In some instances, they even preferred to pay a fine rather than include women on their electoral lists. While change has come gradually, the results of the latest elections to the French Senate, which saw women’s representation improve from 11 to 17 per cent, give cause for some optimism.<sup>25</sup>

### **Need for stronger quota rules**

Whether a quota system meets its objective depends largely on the process and method of implementation and enforcement. While reserved seats are by their nature enforceable, candidate quotas are often not enforced. If the method of implementation is not clearly defined and enforceable, a candidate quota requirement of 30, 40 or 50 per cent is not likely to be met. The quota must be embedded in the selection and the nomination processes of political parties from the very beginning.

Political parties may meet the requirement that 30 per cent of their candidates must be women but place them at the bottom of the lists, in largely unwinnable positions. Additionally, if the number of seats to be filled in a constituency is small and many parties stand for election, by and large men will be elected as they usually hold the top positions on a party list. In some countries using a proportional representation (PR) electoral system with open lists, voters may demote women candidates (or promote male candidates),

<sup>25</sup> Sonia Palmieri and Kareen Jabre, ‘Case Study: The IPU, Promoting Partnership between Men and Women in Parliament: The Experience of the Inter-Parliamentary Union’ in *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2005, p. 220.

thereby negating women's chances of election. For these reasons it is crucial that quota systems and their rules for enforcement are introduced that work with the electoral system. Several quota laws have been amended, or today are drafted, with placement mandates specifying which positions women are to hold on electoral lists.

While quotas seek to ensure their proportionate presence in Parliament, there is no guarantee that women will be able to use that power effectively. The debate about quotas, particularly in some Asian countries, continues today with the criticism as to how reservations have afforded women the visibility, but not empowered them. There is the dire need for training of women and the need for greater gender sensitivity in the administration. There is the need to look beyond numbers to develop strategies to increase women's skills and ability to participate actively in politics. There are always questions around whether quotas should be instituted on a temporary or permanent basis. Some argue that quotas should be considered as a temporary measure, not only for strategic reasons when seeking to have them introduced, but also because the quota in itself should change perceptions about gender equality, thereby levelling the playing field for men and women to contest elections on an equal basis.

While significant gains have been made in Scandinavian countries, they should not be considered the model, as it took 80 years to shift from no women in Parliament to 35-45 per cent. In Scandinavia, quotas were not introduced until women already had obtained 20-25 per cent in Parliament, thus consolidating women's political power. Quotas ensure a quantitative jump, shifting from a concept of equality of opportunity to equality of result. However, this will only happen if quotas are properly implemented. In Sweden, the Social Democratic Party has an internal quota of a minimum of 40 per cent women, combined with a 'zipper' system\*. Similarly, the African National Congress party in South Africa has a 30 per cent quota for women. Yet countries like France have different electoral systems and different quota rules, which have a direct effect on the number of women elected in the system. For example, the implementation of quotas was successful at the local level but less successful at the national level in France.

The lack of comparative research makes it difficult to generalize about successful strategies and to present 'best cases' of how quotas can be implemented. It is, therefore, extremely important to generate more comparative research and to learn both positive and negative lessons of individual country experiences with quotas.

---

\*Alternating one man, one woman on the party list.

Without specifications regarding the ranking of candidates on party lists, as well as sanctions for non-compliance, quota provisions may be merely symbolic. On the other hand, where electoral gender quotas have fulfilled these qualifications, they have proved extremely effective in increasing the political representation of women the world over.

### **Summary**

- (i) The aim of quota systems is to increase considerably the political representation of women.
- (ii) Successful quota systems lead to:
  - the active recruitment of women by political parties in order to have a sufficient number of qualified candidates to fulfil the quota;
  - a larger minority of women, rather than a token few, who will be able to influence political norms and culture; and
  - women having the possibility to influence the decision-making process as individuals or with specific points of view and concerns.
- (iii) It is not sufficient to pass rules that ensure women 30 per cent of the seats. The next step of implementing quotas is critical. With respect to implementation, the following should be kept in mind.
  - The more vague the regulations, the higher the risk that the quota regulations will not be properly implemented. Quotas for candidates do not automatically lead to the election of more women.
  - Pressure from women's organizations and other groups is necessary for the successful implementation of quotas.
  - There must be sanctions for non-compliance with the quota requirement.
- (iv) Contrary to what many supporters of quotas believed or hoped for, in quite a lot of countries conflicts over quotas for women seem to return again and again with each electoral cycle. In other countries where there had been vehement discussions about the introduction of quotas, the conflicts died down once the quota system was in place. But in still other parts of the world, gender quotas have been introduced after almost no controversy at all.
- (v) It is important to remember that quotas for women do not remove all barriers for women in politics. Stigmatization of women politicians may even increase in quota systems. Difficulties combining family life, work

life and politics still remain a severe obstacle to women in the political field. Further, political representation cannot stand alone, but must be complemented with necessary socio-economic changes in society at large.<sup>26</sup>

Domestic responsibilities, lack of financial clout, rising criminalisation of politics and the threat of character assassination are making it difficult for women to be part of the political framework. Although there is no single remedy for increasing women's presence in Parliament, the discussions on quotas and electoral systems point to some important options.

There is also some agreement that quotas in themselves are not sufficient to change fundamentally women's under-representation in politics. Yet quotas are a key step towards ensuring inclusive decision-making processes and policy development, thereby involving women in the decisions that have a direct bearing on their lives as well as on the society as a whole. Underpinning all efforts is the need to foster political will that nurtures and promotes true gender equality.

### References:

1. Annual Report of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj.
2. Drude Dahlerup (ed.), *Women Quotas and Politics*, Routledge, 2007.
3. Global Gender Gap Report 2007, UNDP, World Economic Forum.
4. Report of the Joint Committee of Parliament on the Constitution (Eighty-first Amendment) Bill, 1996.
5. Report on Regional Workshop towards Women's Political Empowerment, Economic and Social Commission for Asian and the Pacific high-level Intergovernmental Meeting to review regional implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, 26-29 October, 1999.
6. State of the World's Children 2007, UNICEF.
7. Statistical Reports of Lok Sabha Elections, The Election Commission of India.
8. Supporting Gender Mainstreaming, Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, United Nations, March, 2001.
9. The Constitution of India (As modified up to November, 2006), Lok Sabha Secretariat.
10. The implementation of quotas: Asian experiences, Quota workshop report series, Jakarta, Indonesia, September, 2002.
11. *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers* (2005), International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA).
12. Madhu Kishwar, The Logic of Quotas, Women's Movement Splits on the Reservation Bill, *Manushi*, Volume No. 107.

---

<sup>26</sup>Drude Dahlerup, 'Increasing Women's Political representation: New trends in Gender Quotas', *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2005, pp.151-52.

13. Who's Who, Lok Sabha, Lok Sabha Secretariat.
14. Who's Who, Rajya Sabha, Rajya Sabha Secretariat.
15. Women in National Parliaments, Report of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2004.
16. Yogendra Narain, *et. al.*, Political Empowerment of Women in India, *Indian Journal of Public Administration*, Vol. LI, Jan-March 2005.

**Internet sites visited:**

<http://eci.gov.in>

<http://www.ipu.org>

<http://www.idea.int>

<http://rajyasabha.nic.in>

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/gendermainstreaming.htm>

## Women in Parliaments of other countries

Rank	Country	Lower or single House				Upper House or Senate			
		Elections	Seats*	Women	% W	Elections	Seats*	Women	% W
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	Rwanda	10 2003	80	39	48.8%	9 2003	26	9	34.6%
2	Sweden	9 2006	349	164	47.0%	—	—	—	—
3	Cuba	1 2008	614	265	43.2%	—	—	—	—
4	Finland	3 2007	200	83	41.5%	—	—	—	—
5	Argentina	10 2007	255	102	40.0%	10 2007	72	28	38.9%
6	Netherlands	11 2006	150	59	39.3%	5 2007	75	26	34.7%
7	Denmark	11 2007	179	68	38.0%	—	—	—	—
8	Costa Rica	2 2006	57	21	36.8%	—	—	—	—
9	Spain	3 2008	350	127	36.3%	3 2008	254	72	28.3%
10	Norway	9 2005	169	61	36.1%	—	—	—	—
11	Belgium	6 2007	150	53	35.3%	6 2007	71	27	38.0%
12	Mozambique	12 2004	250	87	34.8%	—	—	—	—
13	Nepal	4 2008	568	191	33.6%	—	—	—	—
14	Iceland	5 2007	63	21	33.3%	—	—	—	—
15	New Zealand	9 2005	121	40	33.1%	—	—	—	—
16	South Africa <sup>1</sup>	4 2004	400	132	33.0%	4 2004	54	22	40.7%
17	Austria	10 2006	183	60	32.8%	N.A.	61	15	24.6%
18	Germany	9 2005	613	194	31.6%	N.A.	69	15	21.7%
19	Uganda	2 2006	332	102	30.7%	—	—	—	—
20	Burundi	7 2005	118	36	30.5%	7 2005	49	17	34.7%
21	United Republic of Tanzania	12 2005	319	97	30.4%	—	—	—	—
22	Peru	4 2006	120	35	29.2%	—	—	—	—
''	The F.Y.R. of Macedonia	7 2006	120	35	29.2%	—	—	—	—
''	Timor-Leste	6 2007	65	19	29.2%	—	—	—	—
23	Belarus	10 2004	110	32	29.1%	11 2004	58	18	31.0%
24	Guyana	8 2006	69	20	29.0%	—	—	—	—
25	Switzerland	10 2007	200	57	28.5%	10 2007	46	10	21.7%
26	Portugal	2 2005	230	65	28.3%	—	—	—	—
27	Afghanistan	9 2005	242	67	27.7%	9 2005	102	22	21.6%
28	Namibia	11 2004	78	21	26.9%	11 2004	26	7	26.9%
29	Trinidad and Tobago	11 2007	41	11	26.8%	12 2007	31	13	41.9%

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
30	Australia	11 2007	150	40	26.7%	11 2007	76	27	35.5%
''	Grenada	11 2003	15	4	26.7%	11 2003	13	4	30.8%
31	Vietnam	5 2007	493	127	25.8%	—	—	—	—
32	Kyrgyzstan	12 2007	90	23	25.6%	—	—	—	—
33	Iraq	12 2005	275	70	25.5%	—	—	—	—
''	Suriname	5 2005	51	13	25.5%	—	—	—	—
34	Lao People's Democratic Republic	4 2006	115	29	25.2%	—	—	—	—
35	Andorra	4 2005	28	7	25.0%	—	—	—	—
''	Ecuador	10 2006	100	25	25.0%	—	—	—	—
''	Lesotho	2 2007	120	30	25.0%	3 2007	31	9	29.0%
''	Monaco	2 2008	24	6	25.0%	—	—	—	—
36	Singapore	5 2006	94	23	24.5%	—	—	—	—
37	Liechtenstein	3 2005	25	6	24.0%	—	—	—	—
38	Seychelles	5 2007	34	8	23.5%	—	—	—	—
39	Honduras	11 2005	128	30	23.4%	—	—	—	—
40	Luxembourg	6 2004	60	14	23.3%	—	—	—	—
41	Mexico	7 2006	500	116	23.2%	7 2006	128	23	18.0%
42	Tunisia	10 2004	189	43	22.8%	7 2005	111	17	15.3%
43	Lithuania	10 2004	141	32	22.7%	—	—	—	—
44	Pakistan	2 2008	338	76	22.5%	3 2006	100	17	17.0%
''	United Arab Emirates	12 2006	40	9	22.5%	—	—	—	—
45	Mauritania	11 2006	95	21	22.1%	1 2007	56	9	16.1%
46	Eritrea	2 1994	150	33	22.0%	—	—	—	—
''	Senegal	6 2007	150	33	22.0%	8 2007	100	40	40.0%
47	Ethiopia	5 2005	529	116	21.9%	10 2005	112	21	18.8%
48	Republic of Moldova	3 2005	101	22	21.8%	—	—	—	—
49	Bulgaria	6 2005	240	52	21.7%	—	—	—	—
50	Serbia	5 2008	250	54	21.6%	—	—	—	—
51	Canada	1 2006	305	65	21.3%	N.A.	93	32	34.4%
''	China	3 2008	2987	637	21.3%	—	—	—	—
52	Italy	4 2008	629	133	21.1%	4 2008	322	58	18.0%
53	Croatia	11 2007	153	32	20.9%	—	—	—	—
54	Estonia	3 2007	101	21	20.8%	—	—	—	—
55	Philippines	5 2007	239	49	20.5%	5 2007	23	4	17.4%
56	Poland	10 2007	460	93	20.2%	10 2007	100	8	8.0%

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
57	Democratic People's Republic of Korea	8 2003	687	138	20.1%	—	—	—	—
58	Latvia	10 2006	100	20	20.0%	—	—	—	—
59	Dominican Republic	5 2006	178	35	19.7%	5 2006	32	1	3.1%
60	Cambodia	7 2003	123	24	19.5%	1 2006	61	9	14.8%
''	United Kingdom	5 2005	646	126	19.5%	N.A.	750	148	19.7%
61	Guinea	6 2002	114	22	19.3%	—	—	—	—
''	Slovakia	6 2006	150	29	19.3%	—	—	—	—
62	Venezuela	12 2005	167	31	18.6%	—	—	—	—
63	Nicaragua	11 2006	92	17	18.5%	—	—	—	—
64	France	6 2007	577	105	18.2%	9 2004	330	60	18.2%
''	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	12 2005	22	4	18.2%	—	—	—	—
65	Cape Verde	1 2006	72	13	18.1%	—	—	—	—
''	Sudan	8 2005	443	80	18.1%	8 2005	50	3	6.0%
66	Tajikistan	2 2005	63	11	17.5%	3 2005	34	8	23.5%
''	Uzbekistan	12 2004	120	21	17.5%	1 2005	100	15	15.0%
67	Mauritius	7 2005	70	12	17.1%	—	—	—	—
68	Bolivia	12 2005	130	22	16.9%	12 2005	27	1	3.7%
69	United States of America	11 2006	435	73	16.8%	11 2006	100	16	16.0%
70	El Salvador	3 2006	84	14	16.7%	—	—	—	—
''	Gabon	12 2001	120	20	16.7%	2 2003	91	14	15.4%
''	Panama	5 2004	78	13	16.7%	—	—	—	—
71	Dominica	5 2005	31	5	16.1%	—	—	—	—
72	Turkmenistan	12 2004	50	8	16.0%	—	—	—	—
73	Kazakhstan	8 2007	107	17	15.9%	8 2005	47	2	4.3%
74	Czech Republic	6 2006	200	31	15.5%	10 2006	81	11	13.6%
75	Burkina Faso	5 2007	111	17	15.3%	—	—	—	—
76	Zambia	9 2006	158	24	15.2%	—	—	—	—
77	Angola	9 1992	220	33	15.0%	—	—	—	—
''	Chile	12 2005	120	18	15.0%	12 2005	38	2	5.3%
78	Greece	9 2007	300	44	14.7%	—	—	—	—
79	Cyprus	5 2006	56	8	14.3%	—	—	—	—
80	Israel	3 2006	120	17	14.2%	—	—	—	—

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
81	Guinea-Bissau	3 2004	100	14	14.0%	—	—	—	—
''	Russian Federation	12 2007	450	63	14.0%	N.A.	169	8	4.7%
82	Cameroon	7 2007	180	25	13.9%	—	—	—	—
83	Djibouti	2 2008	65	9	13.8%	—	—	—	—
84	Republic of Korea	4 2008	299	41	13.7%	—	—	—	—
85	Zimbabwe	3 2008	207	28	13.5%	3 2008	93	?	?
86	Ireland	5 2007	166	22	13.3%	7 2007	60	13	21.7%
''	Jamaica	9 2007	60	8	13.3%	9 2007	21	3	14.3%
87	Sierra Leone	8 2007	121	16	13.2%	—	—	—	—
88	Malawi	5 2004	193	25	13.0%	—	—	—	—
89	Liberia	10 2005	64	8	12.5%	10 2005	30	5	16.7%
''	Paraguay	4 2008	80	10	12.5%	4 2008	45	7	15.6%
90	Niger	12 2004	113	14	12.4%	—	—	—	—
''	Syrian Arab Republic	4 2007	250	31	12.4%	—	—	—	—
91	Bahamas	5 2007	41	5	12.2%	5 2007	15	9	60.0%
''	Slovenia	10 2004	90	11	12.2%	12 2002	40	1	2.5%
92	Uruguay	10 2004	99	12	12.1%	10 2004	31	4	12.9%
93	Guatemala	9 2007	158	19	12.0%	—	—	—	—
''	Maldives	1 2005	50	6	12.0%	—	—	—	—
94	Bosnia and Herzegovina	10 2006	42	5	11.9%	3 2007	15	2	13.3%
95	San Marino	6 2006	60	7	11.7%	—	—	—	—
''	Thailand	12 2007	480	56	11.7%	3 2008	150	24	16.0%
96	Indonesia	4 2004	550	64	11.6%	—	—	—	—
97	Azerbaijan	11 2005	123	14	11.4%	—	—	—	—
98	Botswana	10 2004	63	7	11.1%	—	—	—	—
''	Hungary	4 2006	386	43	11.1%	—	—	—	—
''	Montenegro	9 2006	81	9	11.1%	—	—	—	—
''	Saint Lucia	12 2006	18	2	11.1%	1 2007	11	3	27.3%
''	Togo	10 2007	81	9	11.1%	—	—	—	—
99	Ghana	12 2004	230	25	10.9%	—	—	—	—
100	Benin	3 2003	83	9	10.8%	—	—	—	—
''	Malaysia	3 2008	222	24	10.8%	N.A.	59	17	28.8%
''	Swaziland	10 2003	65	7	10.8%	10 2003	30	11	36.7%

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
101	Antigua and Barbuda	3 2004	19	2	10.5%	3 2004	17	4	23.5%
''	Central African Republic	3 2005	105	11	10.5%	—	—	—	—
''	Morocco	9 2007	325	34	10.5%	9 2006	270	3	1.1%
102	Mali	7 2007	147	15	10.2%	—	—	—	—
103	Barbados	1 2008	30	3	10.0%	2 2008	21	4	19.0%
104	Gambia	1 2002	53	5	9.4%	—	—	—	—
''	Japan	9 2005	480	45	9.4%	7 2007	242	44	18.2%
''	Kenya	12 2007	224	21	9.4%	—	—	—	—
''	Romania	11 2004	330	31	9.4%	11 2004	137	14	10.2%
105	Armenia	5 2007	131	12	9.2%	—	—	—	—
106	India	4 2004	541	49	9.1%	7 2006	243	24	9.9%
''	Turkey	7 2007	549	50	9.1%	—	—	—	—
107	Brazil	10 2006	513	46	9.0%	10 2006	81	10	12.3%
108	Cote d'Ivoire	12 2000	203	18	8.9%	—	—	—	—
109	Malta	3 2008	69	6	8.7%	—	—	—	—
110	Bhutan	3 2008	47	4	8.5%	12 2007	25	6	24.0%
111	Colombia	3 2006	166	14	8.4%	3 2006	102	12	11.8%
''	Democratic Republic of the Congo	7 2006	500	42	8.4%	1 2007	108	5	4.6%
112	Samoa	3 2006	49	4	8.2%	—	—	—	—
''	Somalia	8 2004	256	21	8.2%	—	—	—	—
''	Ukraine	9 2007	450	37	8.2%	—	—	—	—
113	Madagascar	9 2007	127	10	7.9%	4 2008	33	4	12.1%
114	Algeria	5 2007	389	30	7.7%	12 2006	136	4	2.9%
''	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	3 2006	468	36	7.7%	—	—	—	—
115	Congo	6 2007	137	10	7.3%	10 2005	60	8	13.3%
116	Albania	7 2005	140	10	7.1%	—	—	—	—
117	Nigeria	4 2007	358	25	7.0%	4 2007	109	9	8.3%
118	Saint Kitts and Nevis	10 2004	15	1	6.7%	—	—	—	—
119	Mongolia	6 2004	76	5	6.6%	—	—	—	—
120	Jordan	11 2007	110	7	6.4%	11 2007	55	7	12.7%
121	Georgia	5 2008	150	9	6.0%	—	—	—	—
122	Sri Lanka	4 2004	225	13	5.8%	—	—	—	—
123	Chad	4 2002	155	8	5.2%	—	—	—	—
124	Lebanon	5 2005	128	6	4.7%	—	—	—	—

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
125	Kiribati	8 2007	46	2	4.3%	—	—	—	—
126	Haiti	2 2006	98	4	4.1%	2 2006	30	4	13.3%
127	Vanuatu	7 2004	52	2	3.8%	—	—	—	—
128	Kuwait <sup>2</sup>	5 2008	65	2	3.1%	—	—	—	—
129	Comoros	4 2004	33	1	3.0%	—	—	—	—
''	Marshall Islands	11 2007	33	1	3.0%	—	—	—	—
130	Iran (Islamic Republic of)	3 2008	286	8	2.8%	—	—	—	—
131	Bahrain	11 2006	40	1	2.5%	12 2006	40	10	25.0%
132	Egypt	11 2005	442	8	1.8%	6 2007	264	18	6.8%
''	Sao Tome and Principe	3 2006	55	1	1.8%	—	—	—	—
133	Papua New Guinea	6 2007	109	1	0.9%	—	—	—	—
134	Yemen	4 2003	301	1	0.3%	4 2001	111	2	1.8%
135	Belize	2 2008	32	0	0.0%	3 2008	12	4	33.3%
''	Micronesia (Federated States of)	3 2005	14	0	0.0%	—	—	—	—
''	Nauru	4 2008	18	0	0.0%	—	—	—	—
''	Oman	10 2007	84	0	0.0%	11 2007	70	14	20.0%
''	Palau	11 2004	16	0	0.0%	11 2004	9	0	0.0%
''	Qatar	6 2006	35	0	0.0%	—	—	—	—
''	Saudi Arabia	4 2005	150	0	0.0%	—	—	—	—
''	Solomon Islands	4 2006	50	0	0.0%	—	—	—	—
''	Tuvalu	8 2006	15	0	0.0%	—	—	—	—
''	Equatorial Guinea	5 2008	100	?	?	—	—	—	—
''	Tonga	4 2008	30	?	?	—	—	—	—

Source: Website of Inter-Parliamentary Union (as on 31<sup>st</sup> May, 2008)

\* Figures correspond to the number of seats currently filled in Parliament

1 - South Africa: The figures on the distribution of seats do not include the 36 special rotating delegates appointed on an ad hoc basis, and all percentages given are therefore calculated on the basis of the 54 permanent seats.

2 - Kuwait: No woman candidate was elected in the 2008 elections. Two women were appointed to the 16-member cabinet sworn in in June 2008. As cabinet ministers also sit in parliament, there are two women out of a total of 65 members.

**Countries with Constitutional Quota/Election Law Quota  
Regulations in their Parliaments\***

1	2	3	4	5
	Quota Type (in Constitution and/or in Law)**	Year Introduced	Present Quota System (Percentage)	Percentage of Women in Parliament (Most Recent Election)
<b>Americas</b>				
Argentina	C,L	1991,1991	30	34.1 (2003)
Bolivia	L	1997	30	18.5 (2002)
Brazil	L	1997	30	8.2 (2002)
Costa Rica	L	1996	40	35.1 (2002)
Dominican Republic	L	1997	25	17.3 (2002)
Ecuador	L	1997	20	16.0 (2002)
Guyana	C	N/A	33	20.0 (2001)
Honduras	L	2000	30	5.5 (2001)
Mexico	L	2002	30	22.6 (2003)
Panama	L	1997	30	9.9 (1999)
Paraguay	L	1996	20	10.0 (2003)
Peru	L	1997	30	17.5 (2001)
<b>Europe</b>				
Belgium	L	1994	33	35.3 (2003)
Bosnia and Herzegovina	L	2001	33	16.7 (2002)
France	C, L	1999, 2000	50	12.1 (2002)
Macedonia	L	2002	30	17.5 (2002)
Serbia and Montenegro	L	2002	30	7.9 (2003)
<b>Africa and Middle East</b>				
Djibouti	L	2002	10	10.8 (2003)
Eritrea	C	N/A	30	N/A (2001)
Jordan	L	2003	6 seats	5.5 (2003)
Kenya	C	1997	6 seats	6.7 (2002)
Morocco	L	2002	30 seats	10.8 (2002)
Rwanda	C, L	2003	30	48.8 (2003)
Sudan	L	N/A	10	9.7 (2000)
Tanzania	C, L	2000	20-30	22.3 (2000)
Uganda	C, L	1995, 1989	56 seats	24.7 (2001)

	Quota Type (in Constitution and/or in Law)**	Year Introduced	Presents quota System (Percentage	Percentage of Women in Parliament (Most Recent Election)
1	2	3	4	5
<b>Asia</b>				
Afghanistan	C	2004	25	25.0 (2004)
Armenia	L	1999	5	4.6 (2003)
Bangladesh	C	2004	45 seats	2.0 (2001)
Indonesia	L	2003	30	11.0 (2004)
Korea, Democratic Rep.	L	N/A	20	N/A (2003)
Nepal	C, L	1990, 1990	5	5.9 (1999)
Pakistan	L	2002	60 seats	21.6 (2002)
Philippines	C, L	1995, 1995	20	17.8 (2001)
Taiwan	C	1997	10-25	22.2 (2001)

\* Lower House or single House in unicameral legislature. Bolivia, Brazil, Pem, Greece, Serbia and Montenegro, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Bangladesh, China, India, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines and Taiwan also have *constitutional* quotas for local and/or regional parliaments. See <<http://www.quotaproject.org>>.

\*\* C refers to quota provisions stipulated in the constitution, and L refers to quota provisions stipulated in law.

Source: Dahlerup, Drude and Lenita Freidenvall, 2005. 'Quotas as a "Fast Track" to Equal Representation for Women'. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 2005 March; and <<http://www.quotaproject.org>>.