Women's Reservation in Parliament and Legislative Assemblies

Prelims: *Current events of national and international importance | Polity and Governance*

Why in News?

The government is exploring ways to implement the Women's Reservation Act (Constitution 106th Amendment Act, 2023) by increasing Lok Sabha seats based on Census 2011.

- **The Women's Reservation Act (Constitution 106th Amendment Act, 2023) –** Provides **33%** reservation for women in Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies.
- Reservation includes seats for women within SC and ST reserved constituencies.
- To be implemented after delimitation and Census.
- Passed in September 2023 as the *Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam.*
- **Delimitation –** Current Lok Sabha strength is 543 seats.
- Reservation requires redrawing constituencies to allocate one-third seats for women.
- Delimitation ensures fair distribution of reserved seats across states and categories.
- Without delimitation, proportional representation cannot be guaranteed.
- Last delimitation - 2002, based on 1971 Census; seats frozen till 2026.
- **Increase based on Census 2011 –** Government proposes using Census 2011 data instead of waiting for the ongoing Census (expected to conclude by 2029).
- Lok Sabha seats may be increased by *50% (to 816),* maintaining existing state proportions.
- Addresses concerns of southern states about losing seats due to population-based delimitation.
- Ensures quicker implementation of women's quota, possibly from *2029 general elections.*

- **Current State of Women's Representation in Politics –** Women constitute 14% of Lok Sabha (78 MPs in 2019).
- Representation in State Assemblies is even lower (9%).
- India lags global average (26% women in national parliaments).
- Countries with higher representation: Rwanda (>60%), Sweden (47%).
- **Women's Representation in Local Government –** 73rd and 74th Amendments (1992) mandated 33% reservation for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies.
- Many states (e.g., Bihar, Rajasthan) increased this to 50% reservation.
- Resulted in over 1.4 million elected women representatives at grassroots level.
- Considered one of the largest experiments in inclusive democracy worldwide.
- **The 73rd Amendment,1992 –** Inserted *Part IX* in the Constitution (Panchayats).
- Mandated *one-third reservation for women* in seats and offices of chairpersons.
- Empowered women in local governance and decision-making.
- **The 73rd Amendment – Success in Inclusive Participation –**
- Brought millions of women into politics at the grassroots.
- Enhanced women's role in *development, social justice, and governance.*
- Created a pipeline for women leaders to enter higher levels of politics.
- **Lottery / Rotation System –** Proposal to decide seats for women by lottery system.
- Rotational reservation ensures fairness but raises concerns about continuity of women leaders.
- **Significance of women's participation in politics –** Ensures inclusive democracy and balanced representation.
- Women legislators bring focus on health, education, welfare, and social justice.
- Strengthens legitimacy of democratic institutions.
- Helps achieve *SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 16 (Strong Institutions).*

Reference

The Indian Express | Women's reservation

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