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Title: Discussion on the motion for consideration of the Electoral Reforms Commission Bill, 2006.

SHRI C.K. CHANDRAPPAN (TRICHUR): Sir, I beg to move:

"That the Bill to provide for setting up of an Electoral Reforms Commission and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto, be taken into consideration."

Sir, this is a very important issue. There have been a series of efforts to reform the electoral system in India in the past. It is necessary because we are one of the largest democracies in the world and for the last 60 years, since Independence, we have been successfully practising a democratic system. It is a very vibrant democracy. We cannot claim to be the situation as same in our neighbourhood countries which became Independent along with us. So, naturally, for us, democratic system is very precious. It is for that reason that this House took up the matter in all earnestness, had discussions and had also decided to set up Commissions. But unfortunately we could not come to definite conclusions about reformation of the electoral system in our country.

Sir, if I remember correctly, you also probably would remember as you too were a Member of the House then, there were two Commissions set up so far in the recent past. One was the Indrajit Gupta Commission on Electoral Reforms and the other was the Dinesh Goswami Commission on Electoral Reforms. Before that there was another Commission set up on electoral reforms under Shri Y.B.Chavan. I remember that when I became a Member of this House for the first time in 1971, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee had asked for a discussion on electoral reforms. But unfortunately so far we could not come to any conclusion on this. I think, it is high time that we take a decision so that our democratic system could benefit out of this and resultantly become stronger.

Sir, this Bill of mine is a Private Member's Bill and thus might suffer from a few limitations. What I have proposed in this Bill is to set up a Electoral Reforms Commission. I also have prescribed its composition. The Chief Justice of India, one of the retired Election Commissioners and one of the existing Members of the Election Commission should be its Members. What I have suggested is that this Commission should go into the problems relating to elections and submit before this House their suggestions. The Government should accordingly take decisions. [\[R69\]](#)

Now, some of the important problems that I wanted this Commission to look into are these. The first one is the question of State funding of elections. Our election has become something which is unaffordable for the common man. It is so expensive and also, in this process of election, as is complained by various quarters, muscle power, money power and other powers play a very important role. So, there is a suggestion made by both Indrajit Gupta Committee and also the Goswami Committee. They said that there should be State funding for elections and also ban certain other spending by private quarters so that election can be held in a manner that everybody will be on a equal footing in terms of their money power. So far, the Government has not taken any decision about it. I think it is high time that we must take a decision about State funding of elections.

Secondly, a very important issue that I am raising is about the present method of election. Here, representatives are directly elected from constituencies. It is good. But we have seen some developments which are not so good for our democracy. For example, there was Assam agitation and the State was in turmoil after Assam Accord. Similarly, after the Accord in Kashmir, when elections took place, only a small percentage of people voted. So, those who had been elected to the Assembly hardly represented a small fraction of people because the system is so worked out that if you get one vote more than the candidate behind you, you will get voted. Suppose he gets nine votes and I get ten votes, I get elected. But the total electorate may be ten lakhs. So, this situation should go.

Therefore, I suggest that there should be two types of constituencies. Half of the constituencies should be filled by List System and proportional representation. It is a bit difficult but it is ideal. This kind of a system is successfully being practised in South Africa. The List System creates certain other conditions also. There are people who may be very great writers, very big intellectuals, painters and scientists but in today's situation, it is very difficult for them to contest elections and get elected to the Lok Sabha. These people are not used to that kind of work. But when there is a List System, the parties are given the priority to submit a list before the election deciding the priorities. In that priority list, if these kinds of people who will be essentially good for strengthening the democratic system in our country are put at a higher level of priority, then that party will get many votes and get elected. And these people can get a chance to get elected to

Parliament and other Assemblies.

Now, another important thing is this. One very big controversy is going on in India which is about the reservation of women in Parliament and State Assemblies. Theoretically, everybody is supporting it. A very few people are against it. Actually, they are not against it but they say that it should be reformed a little bit more. But we could not do that so far.

Women Parliamentarians of South Africa came here and explained their position. They said that there is a List System. The proportion they decide is 50 per cent. The list should begin with a woman, the second should be a man and the third should be a woman[MSOffice70] and so on.

So, they get top priority. So, my suggestion is, in our country also we can practise this list system for fifty per cent of the Lok Sabha constituencies, out of which fifty per cent should be reserved for women. Then, without any problem of caste, religion and money power, they can be elected. Money power is curbing the deserving people who are socially and politically active and who are useful to the society. They can get elected in the list system. What I suggest is that fifty per cent should be elected through list system. Of that fifty per cent, fifty per cent should be reserved for women. So, in the total strength of Parliament, 25 per cent will be reserved for women.

For the remaining fifty per cent of the seats, I suggest that we can follow the present system of direct elections to the constituencies. There I propose fifteen per cent reservation for women. If you work it out, it may come to 34 to 35 per cent. If this system is followed, there will be healthy practice. It will be a very healthy practice, in the sense that money power will be curbed because there will be State funding and there will be prohibition of private people to come in and help the candidates in whichever way they do today. Once that is curbed, money is not a big factor.

With proportional representation system and list system, with fifty per cent reservation for women, we get an opportunity to have elections in half of India without much influence of caste, religion or any other chauvinist sentiments that might create problems in a certain situation. A more objective approach will be there in those fifty per cent seats. People can compare the list of mine with the list of yours and decide which is better and accordingly elect. They can also take individuals into consideration. So, I propose that this list system should be there for fifty per cent of the seats. For the remaining fifty per cent, I already explained my suggestion.

If we practice this system, that would strengthen our democracy. It can strengthen our democracy much more than what it is today. Take, for example, our experience with regard to 33 per cent reservation in panchayats and local bodies. This House had passed a Bill giving 33 per cent reservation for women in panchayats and local bodies. We have been practising it for nearly two decades and it is very successful.

We have seen that educated and enlightened women are coming to the forefront and work because there is a new opportunity open to them, which was not there earlier. Once that opportunity has been opened up to them, educated, energetic and socially committed women are coming up to take up the responsibility of working in these local bodies.

I would like to cite the example of Kerala because I can talk with confidence. We found that these women are more dedicated to the cause to which they are elected today. They are more sincere. Various studies undertaken by various institutes have agreed that they are less corrupt. So, those women who are less corrupt, more dedicated and more sincere are playing a very important role in panchayat raj institutions in Kerala. I think similar will be the experience in other States also.[MSOffice71]

Now, if that kind of a situation comes, naturally the question will be raised. If they are successfully functioning in the Panchayati Raj Institutions, then why not in the Parliament or in the State Legislative Assemblies. That question has been very forcefully now put across by women organisations, political parties, social activists and everybody. The only thing is that we are not taking a decision because we have our own problems. Now, this is probably a way out that a new system by which without creating any other problem, half the election can be done and women can find their rightful place in the Parliament and in the State Legislative Assemblies also.

It was late Shri Rajiv Gandhi who brought this one-third reservation. ...(*Interruptions*)

MR. CHAIRMAN : Shri Chandrappan how much time will you take?

SHRI C.K. CHANDRAPPAN : Sir, I will take another five or ten minutes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It is because we will sit up to 6 o' clock.

SHRI C.K. CHANDRAPPAN : Yes, Sir. I will wind up in two or three minutes and then somebody else may be given a chance

because I do not want that the Bill to fall through. It is an important Bill.

So, what I am saying is that this House should seriously discuss this problem. I am not saying that this Bill should be adopted. Anyway, the hon. Minister will request that you kindly withdraw the Bill. But we could not take a final decision on electoral reforms. That should be seriously discussed by this House and we should discuss it in a dispassionate manner so that we may come to certain conclusions which will help the Government to come to a decision.

Sir, with this hope I commend this Bill for the consideration of the House.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Motion moved:

"That the Bill to provide for setting up of an Electoral Reforms Commission and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto, be taken into consideration."

SHRI K.S. RAO (ELURU): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I thank you very much for giving me this opportunity.

Sir, my hon. friend, Shri Chandrappan, more so a Member from Kerala, is always interested in the electoral reforms. ...(*Interruptions*) It is not only he but also the entire country is interested in electoral reforms. More particularly, the party in the Opposition will invariably be interested in discussing this issue in depth under the apprehension that the party in power is misusing their position so that the elections are not held in a free atmosphere and they take advantage to see that their own people are elected. But when the same Opposition goes to the Ruling Benches, they forget all these things. They forget about the reforms. Then, they continue till the next Lok Sabha and the next Lok Sabha. This is the unfortunate situation which is prevailing in this country. Every Member of Parliament individually, no matter which party he belongs to, is interested in electoral reforms. He is interested in the free and fair elections. They want to ensure that no Returning Officer must be given the extra authority wherein he will misuse his position. Even at the time of filing the nomination, he will say, he gave wrong and false information or some other information is available. So, he might cancel the validity of the nomination itself. He can be screened at that point itself. That is the fear of the Members who are invariably out of power. But they also want the same thing. They want to get the same thing done by their Returning Officer when they are in power. So, this is very unfortunate. I have been seeing it in the last several Lok Sabhas. If all of us were to be sincere to see that these elections go really free, fair and they reflect the real will of the people, then absolutely there will not be any question and they will not be sitting in the pit and making slogans and asking for suspension of the Question Hour and then discussion and all those things. If we, the Members of Parliament, were to think in absolute terms without aspiring for power by wrongful means, if all of us were to stand on the ethics and norms and say that let I may be get defeated, but I will maintain these norms, these ethics, these guidelines, these rules, we do not require somebody else to comment.[\[a72\]](#)

**18.00 hrs.**

We do not require the Judiciary to interfere into our arena. If this were to be the attitude, then there need not be any discussion at all. But this discussion continues. It will continue for the next Session and after that also. So, it may continue for another 20 to 30 years. Shri Chandrappan, Members like you will have the opportunity to open the discussion many a time. Next time also, you can open the discussion.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Shri Rao, since it is Six of the Clock now, you can continue you speech next time.

SHRI K.S. RAO : Do you want me to continue my speech next time?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes.

SHRI K.S. RAO : Thank you, Sir, I will continue my speech next time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The House stands adjourned to meet tomorrow, the 1<sup>st</sup> December, 2007 at 11 a.m.

**18.01 hrs.**

# The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock

on [\[r73\]](#) Saturday, the 1<sup>st</sup> December, 2007/Agrahayana 10, 1929 (Saka).

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J2 cd [\[r32\]](#)

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Cd by m3 [\[a57\]](#)

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Shri [\[r60\]](#)Mohan Singh ctd.

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[\[r73\]](#) Friday, March 10, 2000/Phalguna 20, 1921 (Saka).