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Title: Reported dharna by women MPs for introduction of Women Reservation Bill in Parliament and State Assemblies.

SHRIMATI C.S. SUJATHA (MAVELIKARA): Thank you, Madam.

The women Members of Parliament are staging a *dharna* in front of the statue of Mahatma Gandhi outside the Parliament House demanding introduction of the Women's Reservation Bill.

The women in the country for long have been demanding one-third reservation in the State Assemblies, and in the Parliament. All political parties also promise to bring necessary legislation to this effect during every election time. But from the experience that we have gained in all these years we find that they take an elusive stand when it comes to implementing the promise into practice. The Women's Reservation Bill that was promised is pending for over a decade now. The BJP-led NDA Government deliberately delayed the introduction of this Bill on the pretext of 'consensus', even though the Parliament had the requisite number for passing the proposed Bill. All the major political parties including the Left Parties, the BJP and the Congress are openly extending their support to it. But the UPA Government is also trying to follow the same tactics. The present Government had assured the nation, through the Common Minimum Programme, the introduction of this Bill. But even after completing more than three and a half years in office, so far, no steps have been taken in this regard.

It is a shame that even after nearly six decades of nation's Independence, 50 per cent of the population is kept out of Parliamentary or Legislative processes, which is putting question marks on our democratic system itself.

The hon. Prime Minister and the UPA Chairperson have assured the representatives of women's organizations long back that the Bill would be introduced in the Parliament. But the issue has not figured in the agenda so far. Therefore, I urge upon the Government to include this matter in the agenda for the present Session, and introduce the Women's Reservation Bill in the present Session itself and keep the promise given to the nation and the women of this country.

MADAM CHAIRMAN : I also associate myself with this issue raised by the hon. Member. The names of the following hon. Members may also be recorded as having associated themselves with this issue.

Dr. K. S. Manoj

Shrimati P. Satheedevi

Shri A. V. Bellarmin

Shri Pannian Ravindran

Shri P. Karunakaran

Shri C. K. Chandrappan

Shri N. N. Krishnadas

Shri K. Francis George

Shrimati M. S. K. Bhavani Rajenthiran

SHRI KHARABELA SWAIN (BALASORE): Madam, the National Executive of BJP has passed a resolution to give 33 per cent reservation to women in our Party posts. Therefore, we have made a beginning.

MADAM CHAIRMAN : Our Party has also done it.

SHRI KHARABELA SWAIN : Let the Communist Party also start like this instead of giving this type of lip service ...(*Interruptions*)

MADAM CHAIRMAN : Nothing will go on record. Please do not waste the time of the House as it is your Party matter.

(*Interruptions*)\*

MADAM CHAIRMAN : Nothing will go on record. This is your Party matter, and do not discuss it here. Please sit down.

(*Interruptions*)\*

MADAM CHAIRMAN : Please sit down. It is your Party matter. Do not discuss it here.

SHRIMATI P. SATHEEDEVI (BADAGARA): We have already completed the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our Independence. We have been ruled by various Governments, and our Constitution talks about equality. Now, we are in the fourth year, since the time the UPA Government came to power. The UPA Government made an assurance in the Common Minimum Programme that within five years, they would be providing for 33 per cent reservation for women of our country in all the decision-making bodies. In the last AICC Conference, the UPA Chairperson Smt. Sonia Gandhi expressed her dissatisfaction over the situation wherein the UPA allies and the Opposition parties are not allowing this Bill to be brought before this august House.

MADAM CHAIRMAN : The matter has already been raised.

SHRIMATI P. SATHEEDEVI : I urge upon the Government to place the Bill before the august House and let the face of the political parties who are opposing it be revealed before the world. ...(*Interruptions*)

MADAM CHAIRMAN : Please do not interrupt her.

SHRI KHARABELA SWAIN : It is the RJD and the SP which are opposing it, and we are not opposing it. ...(*Interruptions*)

SHRIMATI P. SATHEEDEVI : During the five-and-a-half years rule of the NDA Government, you have not dared to bring that Bill before the House. ...(*Interruptions*)

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Nothing will go on record now. Those Members who

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\* Not recorded

want to associate with this matter should send their names written on a slip and give it at the Table.

*(Interruptions)\**

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Madam Archana Nayak, if you want to associate, you kindly send your name on a slip.

*...(Interruptions)*

SHRIMATI P. SATHEEDEVI : I urge upon the Government to bring the Bill before the House and let the face of the political parties, who are standing in the way, who are against women's rights and who are against women's equality, be revealed before the world.

SHRIMATI ARCHANA NAYAK (KENDRAPARA): Madam, I would like to urge upon the Government the need for bringing the Women's Reservation Bill in the Parliament. Equal status for women in the highest decision-making institution of the nation is still a dream for the people of our country. Whenever attempts were made for bringing Women's Reservation Bill in Parliament, it was denied on one pretext or another. There seems to be near total unanimity among most of the political parties on somehow stalling the Bill as long as possible. It is really strange to note that while we could introduce 33 per cent reservation of seats in the Panchayats, we are failing to introduce the same in our Parliament and State Legislative Assemblies. In Lok Sabha, there are only 48 women Members out of the total strength of 545 Members. If the Government is really serious about passing the Women's Reservation Bill, it will have to bring the Bill and adopt the majority route instead of the consensus route.

Therefore, I urge upon the Government to bring the Bill seeking to provide for 33 per cent reservation for women in Parliament and the State Legislative Assemblies and get the same passed in this Winter Session.

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\* Not recorded