



Delimitation debate or political double speak?



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Sonia Gandhi's recent article on delimitation is topical and worthy of reading, but those who have followed governance under the UPA and NDA closely would be tempted to call it a 'tissue of lies'-flawed in content yet presented convincingly.

The article clarifies that there is no disagreement on women's reservation, but the fact that it is linked to delimitation seems to have irked the author. It is common knowledge that delimitation is a constitutional necessity and is not something that any political party can play with; moreover, it was long overdue. With the passage of the Women's Reservation Bill, integrating both into the same exercise is the most logical step any government should take.

Madam Sonia Gandhi called the upcoming special session an act of 'bulldozing' by the Prime Minister and questioned the 'tearing hurry' for such a session. Clearly, she seems to have forgotten that the UPA not only delayed women's reservation by a few decades, but when it was finally passed in 2023, Rahul Gandhi demanded implementation "today" within hours of the Bill's passage, and the Leader of the Opposition, Mallikarjun Kharge, forcefully demanded that the reservation Bill be implemented from the 2024 elections itself-is that not tearing hurry?

For the common man, all this must be very confusing. Congress delayed for decades what women had been demanding for decades-it is common knowledge that the Reservation Bill was first introduced 30 years ago. They had 27 years to consult among themselves and with anyone they wanted. The Women's Reservation Bill first came in 1996. The UPA held power for a full decade, from 2004 to 2014.

The Rajya Sabha passed it in 2010. For four consecutive years-2010, 2011, 2012, and 2013-the Bill was never introduced in the Lok Sabha. Smt Sonia Gandhi was Chairperson of the UPA; she had the majority and the mandate, yet nothing happened. The "tearing hurry" on the special Parliament session that Smt Gandhi is complaining about now is exactly the urgency Congress demanded back in 2023. So why mislead the country with a false narrative when the NDA is trying to do what the Constitution mandates, and that too in an efficient manner?

The fear expressed by the Congress leader in her article on delimitation is nothing but 'political polemics in plain sight'. PM Modi is action-oriented and does not believe in delay. As the delimitation

exercise is linked to the census cycle, which was delayed due to the COVID onslaught, PM Narendra Modi reassured the country that the census will indeed be conducted and that his government has not abandoned the process. As far as her fear of imbalance of power among states is concerned, PM Modi has already assured legal protection for states that have controlled their populations. Delimitation is a constitutional requirement and, having been delayed for five decades, is crucial for fair and proportional representation. As far as the data is concerned, the government is using the 2011 Census data-the last completed and verified census-as the basis for delimitation. This ensures that states which have responsibly controlled their populations are not penalised, while others that failed to do so are not rewarded with disproportionate representation.

Madam Sonia Gandhi, in her piece, said that the Prime Minister is resisting a 'caste census' and quoted the examples of caste census exercises carried out by Bihar and Telangana. I wish to throw some light on the same. The Telangana 2025 caste survey was severely criticised for alleged manipulation and low accuracy. The survey reports a population increase of only around 2 lakh in 10 years, which contradicts official records of over 14 lakh births and 13 lakh marriages. Naturally, there were doubts about the data's credibility. The survey had the BC population share pegged at 51 per cent in 2014, but that dropped to 46 per cent in the 2024-25 survey, so allegations of deliberate undercounting were not ruled out. Critics also claim nearly 16 lakh people were unaccounted for and that many households were not covered. So why bring that up as an example, Madam Sonia?

The NDA is not avoiding discussion; it is actively seeking it. The government has called for a special session of Parliament precisely to do that democratically-Congress should seize the opportunity to debate, deliberate, and decide on this issue. For decades, issues of women's reservation and delimitation have been stuck in endless debate without action. What the country needs is decisive action, especially after experiencing game-changing reforms like digital infrastructure and the geopolitical stature the country enjoys today.

The fundamental question is: what does Congress want? Do they want the NDA to follow in their footsteps and go for piecemeal reform? The NDA, which is committed to long-term solutions, will aim for concrete structural reforms addressing systemic issues. Congress will have to stop trying to put brakes on a system that is already running on high-octane fuel.

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