

SEXISM IN PARLIAMENT**India needs more women in legislatures to combat the likes of Azam Khan**

The triple talaq bill was passed in the Lok Sabha on July 25, silencing Opposition voices that the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill, 2019 should not be pushed through in a hurry, and without scrutiny. But the dissent on the nitty-gritty of the bill was overshadowed by the sexist remarks made by Samajawadi Party MP Azam Khan, directed against Bharatiya Janata Party member Rama Devi who was in the Chair. Referring to an intervention by Minority Affairs Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, Mr. Khan quoted a couplet, "... tu idhar-udhar ki na baat kar (do not digress)." When Ms. Devi asked Mr. Khan to address the Chair, he made an "objectionable" statement, marking a new parliamentary low. The irony that this was said while the House was discussing an issue concerning women was not lost on Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, who quipped: "Don't politicise an issue that affects women." Women and Child Development Minister Smriti Irani pointed out that Mr. Khan's comment was a "blot on all legislators including men". Mr. Khan, a veteran from the Uttar Pradesh Assembly but a first-time MP who is no stranger to controversy, was banned from campaigning for 72 hours in the recent Lok Sabha polls after his misogynist remarks against BJP candidate Jaya Prada. While Mr. Khan has been asked to apologise to the House, some women members have renewed the pitch for the passage of the women's reservation bill.

The 17th Lok Sabha has the highest number of women MPs, 78, comprising 14.39% of the House. This is higher than 2014 and a long way from the first election in 1951-52, when they made up only 5% of the House. The global average stands at 24.6%, and neighbours Bangladesh, Pakistan and Nepal have quotas for women in Parliament. In India, the women's reservation bill or the Constitution (108th) Amendment Bill to set aside one-third of seats in Parliament and State Assemblies for women was passed in the Rajya Sabha in March 2010. However, the Bill couldn't overcome odds and the opposition in the Lok Sabha and went into cold storage. Critics have cited several reasons behind the bill being thwarted, not least that the quota for women would be appropriated by powerful stand-ins. But this could hold true for men as well. The Bharatiya Janata Party, which has an overwhelming majority in the Lok Sabha (303 of 543 seats) and has rushed through more than a dozen bills in this session, must take the lead. Slogans such as 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' will sound like mere lip-service if political parties don't speak out against gender prejudice. Women must have greater political representation in decision-making bodies as a first step towards changing chauvinistic mindsets, and Parliament needs to show the way.

<u>Words</u>	<u>Kind</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
Combat		Battle, fight, tackle, attack, counter, appose
Scrutiny		Inspection, survey, scan, study, perusal
Dissent		Disagreement, argument, dispute, demur
Nitty gritty		Basics, essentials, fundamentals, kernel
Over shadow		Dominate, to make less enjoyable because of sadness fear, worry
Intervention		Involvement, intercession, interceding, interposing
Decouple		Separate, disengage, dissociate
Digress		Deviate, diverge, turn aside, turn away, depart
Irony		Sarcasm, sardonicism, dryness, sharpness
Quip		Joke, jest, pun, sally, banter
Point out		Identify, show, indicate, allude, refer, touch upon
Vete		Go away
Controversy		Disagreement, dispute, argument, dissension
Bolt		Spot, dot, mark, speck, blotch, smudge, smear
Ban		Prohibit, forbid, proscribe, embargo, bar
Misogynist		Woman hater, male chauvinist
Set aside		Save money, ignore
Overcome		Surpass, surmount, outshine, out class, out do
Odds		Challenges, gauntlets
Thwart		Foil, frustrate, back, forestall
Appropriate (v)		Steel, nobble, pilfer, purloin, embezzle
Stand in (n)		Substitute, replacement, reserve, surrogate, second
Chauvinistic		Exaggerated, patriotism

BAN OR REGULATE

There are issues with crypto currencies, but a ban might not be the best answer

The recommendation of an inter-ministerial committee that India should ban all private crypto currencies, that is, Bitcoin and others like it, hardly comes as a surprise. Indian policymakers and administrators have time and again made clear their distaste for them, their existence owed almost entirely to advanced encryption technologies. In his Budget speech in 2018, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said the government doesn't consider them legal tender. The Reserve Bank of India has repeatedly warned the public of the risks associated with dealing with crypto currencies. Bitcoin, the

most prominent among them, has yo-yoed wildly in value, even over short periods of time. A May 2019 article by Bloomberg, citing data from block chain analysis firm Chainalysis, said “speculation remains Bitcoin’s primary use case”. Its use in illegal online marketplaces that deal with drugs and child pornography is well-documented. There have been cases of consumers being defrauded, including in India. Given all this, it is understandable that the committee, under the chairmanship of Subhash Chandra Garg, the former Economic Affairs Secretary, has come across as being wary of private crypto currencies even while advocating a central bank-issued cryptocurrency.

Governments and economic regulators across the world are wary of private crypto currencies. As they need neither a central issuing authority nor a central validating agency for transactions, these currencies can exist and thrive outside the realm of authority and regulation. They are even deemed a threat to the official currency and monetary system. The question then is whether banning crypto currencies is the most effective way to respond. The inter-ministerial committee believes it is, going so far as to draft a law that mandates a fine and imprisonment of up to 10 years for the offences of mining, generating, holding, selling, dealing in, transferring, disposing of, or issuing crypto currencies. But six of the seven jurisdictions that its report cites have not banned crypto currencies outright. Many of them, including Canada, Thailand, Russia and Japan, seem to be moving on the path of regulation, so that transactions are within the purview of anti-money laundering and prevention of terror laws. China, which India has taken a cue from, has gone for an outright ban. Even there, the report says, “owing to the network-based nature of crypto currencies, after banning domestic crypto exchanges, many traders turned to overseas platforms to continue participating in crypto transactions.” Trading in China is now low but not non-existent. But why would an outright ban be a superior choice to regulation, especially in a field driven by fast-paced technological innovations? The report, unfortunately, doesn’t clarify that point.

<u>Words</u>	<u>Kind</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
Owe		Be in debt, indebted, be in arrear
Prominent		Important, well known, eminent, pro-eminent
Yoyo		Move up and down, fluctuate, oscillate, see saw
Speculation		Conjecture, theorizing, hypothesizing, supposition
Defraud		Swindle, cheat, rob, deceive, hoodwink
Wary		Careful, cautious, circumspect, chary
Thrive		Flourish, prosper, burgeon, bloom, make strides
Realm		Domain, sphere, area, arena, department
Dispose of		Throw away, discard, jettison, abandon, eject

Jurisdiction	Authority, dominion, sway, ascendancy
Cite	Quote, reproduce, commend, praise, extol
Outright	Completely, entirely, utterly, into to
Launder	Obtain money illegally
Prevention	The action of stopping something from happening
Innovation	Change, alteration, revolution, upheaval
Stand	Drive, propel, leave
Pro-active	Enterprising, energetic, driven, go ahead
Condemn	Rebuke, reprimand, chide, vituperate
Ameliorate	Improve, better, enhance, help, boost
Fiscal	Financial, economic
Overwhelming	Profuse, enormous, immense, inordinate
Prejudice	Detriment, harm, disadvantage, impairment