

Gender inequality



**ASSIGN
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As the whole world was celebrating March 8 as Women's Day, and the Union government was bringing in the women's reservation Bill, the Congress in J&K joined hands with the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and allowed its MLC to introduce the Permanent Resident (Disqualification) Bill (PRDB). The ill-motivated PRDB seeks to snatch the citizenship rights of the daughters of J&K who had already married outside the state and who would marry non-state subjects of their choice in the future.

The PRDB says that daughters of J&K shall forfeit their right to own immovable property, inherit ancestral property, obtain government jobs and seek admission to state-run professional institutions and universities in case they marry non-state subjects. The Bill also seeks to snatch the citizenship rights of those non-state subject females who are married to state subjects on the termination of their marriages.

To be more precise, the Bill seeks to overturn the three landmark judgements on the issue of gender equality — judgements delivered by J&K High Court on October 7, 2002, September 24, 2004 and August 8, 2005. The high court had taken no less than 20 years to come to the conclusion that " a female state subject does not lose her status as a state subject on her marriage to a non-state subject". Hitherto, the practice was to make an endorsement of " valid till marriage" on the state subject certificates issued to unmarried daughters of state subjects.

The Bill was introduced after careful planning, despite it having the potential of provoking the people of Jammu province to explode the way they did in 2004 on the same issue. The manner in which the Bill was introduced indicated that ruling NC and its arch political rival in Kashmir and main

opposition PDP had worked in tandem to achieve what both these parties had failed to achieve in 2004. The Bill needs to be defeated as it means not just the denial of natural rights to female state subjects but will hasten the process of the state's disintegration - a process which is already on.