

Women Participation in Local Government in Pakistan(1958-2001)

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Abstract

Societies can never develop without women participation. Local government system gives better chances for the contribution of citizens in governance at the local level and good choice policy thus proof to strengthen the political participation of women at local level. In Pakistan Local government system for the first time was introduced by Gen. Ayub Khan and then by other rulers of Pakistan with different seats of women representation & participation in their respective governments. This research is an attempt to analyze to the history of women participation in local government in Pakistan.

Key words: Local government, Pakistan, Women, Representation & Participation

1. Introduction

Women in fact constitute half of our society. Their participation is key to the national and international activities of social life. Societies cannot achieve development goals due to gender bias. Therefore, participation of women is essential in case of social and economic development of a state. Decentralization gives better chances for the contribution of citizens in governance at the local level and good choice policy thus proof to strengthen the political participation of female at local level. The concept of local government is not new in Pakistan. In 1958 General Ayub Khan for the first time introduced a comprehensive system of LG under the name of Basic Democracies system (BDS) across the country, but there were no women reserved seat in this system. The first important step to guarantee women's representation in the local governments was taken by Gen. Zia ul Haq, when in 1979; all provinces were ordered to reserve seats for female in the local councils.

The ratio was fixed discretely by every province. Every province except Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, made widely similar provisions for reservation for women seats. At the

union council two seats and 10 percent seats (or a minimum of two seats) in District Councils, Town Committees, Municipal Committees, Municipal Corporations and Metropolitan Corporations were kept for female. Although, in Khyber pakhtunkhwa for female at the union, district council/town committee level no reservation was made. Under these laws, in all four provinces three successive LG elections were conducted in 1979, 1983 and 1987, respectively. Indirect elections (by already elected, mostly male councilors) on female reserved seats were held. In 1993 in the Local Bodies ratio of women members was 1.32 percent out of the total membership (10.4 percent) in NWFP. In 1998, Nawaz Sharif government increased 100 percent of women reserved seats (or doubling of female reserved seats) in the local government system. But, no elections were held in Khyberpakhtunkhwa (former NWFP).

Later, General Pervaiz Musharraf initiated L.G system under the Devolution of Power Plan 2000 with the view to ensure good governance through female active participation in politics at local level. This system was different from the previous one in the sense that 33% quota was given to ensure women empowerment & active participation at local level. This research work is an attempt to analyze the history of women participation in Pakistan till General Pervez Musharraf Devolution Plan 2001.

1.1. Objectives of Research

- The objective this research is to analyze women participation at local level in Pakistan.
- The aim of this research is to present full picture of women representation & participation in local government systems of Pakistan.

1.2. Research Methodology

This Research is qualitative in its origin. Descriptive analytical method has used. This research is qualitative in nature therefore main objective is in depth study rather than generalizations. To conduct this research Primary and secondary sources have consulted. Survey reports have also used as source.

1.3. Decentralization and Local Government

According to Kakhonen decentralization is an approach of managing delivery of public services at gross that level more efficiently and effectively (Kakhonen. 2001). Brilliants define decentralization as a strategy to develop the capacity of subnational institution in order to develop and enable local leadership effectively of the needs of local people (Brilliants. 2004). According to Munawar, 2005: Decentralization is of three types i.e. fiscal, political and administrative decentralization. Political powers and responsibilities of central government are devolved to lower units through local government system under political decentralization. Political decentralization is a kind of democratic decentralization that provides powers to subordinate and marginalization groups including women in to decision making and policy formulation.

Robson defines local government in legal terms as follows:

“In general local government can be said to involve the concept of community technorial, and not sovereign, which has the legal right to organize their own affairs and associatio to control its own affairs. This trainee pro-supposes the survival of the local power with the ability to work independently of outer control to manage their own affairs. Johan (1997) defines local government as:

Local government is as intra-sovereign government unit within an independent state dealing with local affairs, run by local authorities and subordinated to the state government. In the light of above mentioned definitions, it may be said that local government is the activation of state machinery at grass-root level to provide service delivery to the people and empower local communities including marginalized groups such as women, peasants, worker and minorities.

2. Women Political Empowerment

Power and authority occupy centre place in everyday life. Welfare and conflict jointly determine decision at various levels of the society. When power rest only with men and elite classes it corrupts the authority. So for a just society equal access to a control of political process is essential. Politics involves gaining and exercising power and authority in the affairs of any state or country. It enables people to manage, materialize and decide what the conflicts are and how to resolve them, what the issues in welfare and how, when and from whom to settle them. Gender political participation is one of the useful strategies to make sure the inclusion of both male and female political representative of different segments of the society in politics on the basis of parity (Ilyas.2011) Both male and female have equal right to take active part in politics in any democratic state and society political participation is the practical exercise of politics. It is both cooperative. It is equally important that all sections of the society do cooperate or compete for the collective and individual good simultaneously. This cooperation and competition must be encouraged on the basis of gender involvement in decision making, allocation and access to resources for social and economic development. No progress can be achieved without such participation on equal terms. It is the violation of human rights when half of population remains absent from the affairs of the state. According to Communes:

“How can a government be successful if 50% of its population cannot read and write? How can the government communicate to the people? Both men and women need to understand the laws of the country. You cannot have the participation without the rule of law, without understanding what the legal boundaries are” (Ilyas.2011)

2.1 Decentralization and Women Empowerment

Women political empowerment justifies the process of decentralization. Decentralization provides greater opportunities for women not only to take active part in local politics but increase consciousness and awareness among them, because women have easy access to local government institutions due to relatively large number of seats available for them, less competition and low cost campaign at local level. The decentralization has helped women in societies to participate in the local government. According to Goetz in most countries majority of women join local than national politics as these countries have introduced quota at the local level (khan. 2006).

NailssaKabeer writes:

It is probable that too much involvement and control in L.G structure perhaps more related purpose for deprived female than increasing female seats in national parliaments. After all these decisions that directly affect the lives of the poor. In recognition of this a number of seats in India, where there is now a reserve 33% of seats for women in local governments have added more temptation for local communities to encourage the participation of women (Ilyas.2011)

2.2. Advantages of Decentralization or Devolution for Women

Decentralization or devolution has the following significance:

Participation and representation of various interest groups in the community is vital to the system of democracy and good governance. Gender welfare is part of the rights of citizenship. And therefore must reflect the administrative structure and the process of gender sensitivity and awareness through equitable distribution of resources for women and men and pay equal concern for women with special needs, as well as in public services (National Committee for the Status of Women). Provide decentralized opportunities for females to participate in local politics that can facilitate them to get equal representation in decision-making structures and can help in the formulation of women policies that respond to the absence of women from this policy-making bodies means that such policies can only be men feature, leaving women are more marginalized and this is the fact that female have different needs, interests and representatives of the only women can understand and represent women's collective interests . (Khan.2006)

Decentralization provides opportunities for female councilors to emerge as role models for female in their society. Pattan development organization (2006)reveals that easy approach to female councilors and their helpful manner towards their constituents give them respect and social status. They start to lead the respect and acceptance due to the active commitment with the local communities (National commission on the status of women). Decentralization acts as political nursery which prepares them for future politics. Because contact them and commitment in local governance caused the emergence of political awareness among them, and provide for the women's councilors opportunities for active participation in national political life.

2.3. History of women participation in local government in Pakistan

The foundation of local government in Pakistan starts from the British colonial rule, when Lord. Rippon in 1882, through Punjab municipal Act, introduced LG in Punjab in the forms of municipalities. This system was further transformed in 1912 when the punchayat Act was enforced. In 1917 The Committee recommended the appointment of decentralization is the official municipal committee, who supported and extended by 1925. Finally the government autonomy and provinces were permitted to frame legislation on local government (Naz. 2005). At that time some Muslim female were dynamic in the public sectors, and this guided them to the social reform movement. The attempts of Begum Shah Nawaz were in fact important. She was an energetic member of All India women's conference and was the first one who on the platform of women's Indian association demanded 10% quota for female in the legislative assembly but 3% was accepted in the franchise committee.

After independence the elite women in Pakistan continuously advocated female political empowerment through legal modifications. Begum Shah Nawaz from West and Begum Shaistakramullah from East Pakistan were female representatives in Pakistan's first constituent assembly (Ali.2012) (Hafiz. 1981). In 1951 the constituent assembly implemented adult franchise system for the country. There was also a demand in the assembly for the reservation of 3% female seats in the central and provincial assemblies. When the first constituent assembly was dissolved in 1951, the new elected assembly through indirect elections was no female. In 1956 first constitution of Pakistan provided 10 seats quota for women (5 seats for west and 5 seats for East Pakistan's. The important

feature was “the law of female suffrage and female reserved seats”, adult voting right, under which female were not only entitled to vote for a general seat but also for female reserved seats. But elections were not held under this constitution because of the proclamation of first martial law on 8 October 1958 (Aurat Foundation).

2.4. Women Participation in Local Government During Gen-Ayub Khan Period (1958-1969)

One of the first acts of the martial law regime was to keep the politicians away from the public life. He not only banned political parties but also detained some of their leader (Yousaf. 1998). Gen. Ayub Khan wanted to replace the national leaders by local one. He therefore introduced the Basic democratic system under the Basic Democracies order 1959. In 1960, through the Municipal Administration Ordinance (MAO) municipal committee and town committee were created. A total of 80,000 (later their number was increased to 1, 20000) directly elected basic democrats (councilors) formed the Electoral College for the election of provincial assembly and national assembly as well as the office of the president. (Yousaf.1998) The representation of Masses was not inclusive of women and thus became inaccessible by women. During the period (1959-69), women were mostly denied their political role at different level of representation. They were allowed controlled participation and kept away from vital process of decision making and exercise of authority. (Yousaf.1998) The second constitution of Pakistan was adopted in 1962 by the military dictator, Gen Ayub Khan and reserved 6 seats for women 3 from each wing. In 1962 constitution, female suffrage was abolished and female were to be indirectly elected by the assembly (Auratfoundation)

2.5. General Yahya Khan Period and Female Reserved Seats

In 1969 Gen. Yahya Khan another dictator imposed martial law, abrogated the constitution of 1962, and promulgated legal framework order (LFO) promising general elections. The LFO offered 13 reserved seats for female in the one house assembly of 313 to be elected indirectly. The election under LFO was carried out on 7 December 1970, but the assembly thus elected could not summon its meeting due to the cession of East Pakistan. The elected 144, members from West Wing formed the constituent assembly, having six women members elected on the reserved seats.

2.6. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto Period and Female Participation in Local Bodies (1971-1977):

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was elected as Prime Minister of Pakistan restoring the parliamentary form of democracy. The assembly succeeded in framing country constitution and on 14th August 1973 new constitution was promulgated. This constitution provided 10 reserved seats for the female in the national assembly but no seat in senate. The 1973 constitution ensured local government system as provincial matter and later, the provincial governments made their own laws for the local government system, which were;

- Punjab local government Act 1975.
- Balochistan Local Government Act 1975
- NWFP (KPK) Local government Act 1975.
- Sindh peoples Local government Act 1972.

Under this system, special representation was given to women that were 5% only for Zila and urban councils through reserved seats (Islam. 2012). But none of the province

holds local government elections during this period. In 1977 the Z.A Bhutto was ousted by Gen. Zia ul-Haq martial law (Naz, 2005).

2.7 Zia ul-Haq's period and women participation in Local Government (1977-88):

Gen. Zia ul-Haq followed Gen. Ayub Khan's local government system with some modifications. He promulgated 1979 ordinance introduced almost identical local government system for all of the four provinces.

- NWFP local government ordinance 1979.
- Sindh local government ordinance 1979.
- Punjab local government ordinance 1979.
- Balochistan local government ordinance 1979.

The major step to guarantee female representation in local government was taken in 1979, when the provincial government was bound to keep seats for female in local councils. The ratio of reservation was to be decided individually by each province. All provinces with the exemption of Khyber Pukhtunkhwa generally prepared similar conditions. At the union council level two seats and in district councils 10% seats (or minimum of 2 seats), town committee, municipal committee and Municipal Corporation were kept for female. Three consecutive local government elections were held in the country in 1979, 1983 and 1987 respectively under these laws. Jabeen and Jadoon (2005) In 1985 women reserved seats were increased from 10, 20, under the RCO order (P.O. 14-08-1985) and its time was also prolonged to 10 years. In 1985 general elections were held on non party basis and women reserved seats were 20. On 28 May 1988 Zia-ul-Haq dismissed the assembly and on 16 November 1988 next party based general elections were held after Zia ul-Haq death with reserved seats of 20. In Zia's scheme women were almost non-entrants into political process. The Zia council had women as its member on a reserved seat as were the workers peasants and minorities represented by one member each. These representations were only formal having no powers, meaningless roles and responsibilities (Ilyas, 2011)

2.8 Female participation in Local Government under Benazir Bhutto government (1988-90 / 1993-1996)

In 1988 general elections, Benazir Bhutto was elected as the first women prime Minister of Pakistan. During her first term, 1988-90 no local government elections were held, but during her second term of government 1993-1996 as Prime Minister, the Punjab local government ordinance contained a provision of 33% female reserved seats at all level in local bodies. But no elections were held under this ordinance. In 1996, the government provided Punjab LB system based on panchayat (village committee) in villages and Mohallah committee in cities / towns. However elections were not held in the entire country.

2.9 Female participation in local government under Nawaz Sharif governments (1990-1993 / 1997-1999)

In 1990 Nawaz Sharif became Prime Minister of Pakistan for the first time. In 1991 local bodies elections were conducted in Punjab and in 1992 in Baluchistan. In his first government the percentage of female reserved seats was kept similar as proposed by the 1979 ordinances. In 1993 Local Bodies were dissolved in Punjab. According to the statistical data 8,295 female members (10.4%) out of the total 79,155 were there nationally before the dissolution of the assembly. The province wise proportion was 11%

in Punjab, 12% in Sindh, 1.32% in KhyberPakhtunkhwahand 16% in Balochistan. In 1997 women representation in National Assembly fell to just 4% after the lapse of reserved seats, 2.4% in senate and 4% in the four provincial assemblies (Reys. idea). In 1998 the federal government announced a 100% increase in the local government setup. However female reserved seats in the town and district council in Punjab increased from the earlier 905 to 1,368 which was an increase of just 463 (3.7%) seats. In the meantime elections to union council in Punjab, in which nearly 5000 seats (12.5%) were kept for female out of total numbers of 40,000 never, held. On other hand the Balochistangovernment increased female reserved seats from 16.4% to 25.85 (1873 out of 7246). In the Khyber pakhtunkhwa Province, where there were 68 female reserved seats out of 5603 (1.2%), increased the number to 184 out of a total of 6256 (2.9%). In Sindh the number increased to 3,546 out of a total of 15417 (23%). But elections were not conducted in NWFP and Sindh (Naz. 2005).

Table 1: Women representation in local government till 1999

Period	Regime	Representation
1958	Ayub Khan	No Specific representation
1971-77	Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto	No elections
1977-88	Zia ulHaq	2 seats were reserved at Union council and 10% for all provinces except NWFP
1988-90	Benazir Bhutto	No elections were held
1990-93	Nawaz Sharif	Same like 1979 LG Ordinances
1993-96	Benazir Bhutto	Local government elections were not held
1997-1999	Nawaz Sharif	12.7% in Punjab, 25.8% in Balochistan, 23% in Sindh and 2.09% in NWFP.

Source: (Jabeen. 2005)

2.10. Civil Society Movements for Female Political Representation in Pakistan

It was in this background; human rights and women's rights organizations began a campaign to represent 33% female in all level of assemblies. Prior to launch an extensive movement compromise was made, and due to the female miserable situation in Pakistan, it was important that representation to the maximum extent possible in the decision-making councils, there is a need for continuous positive move. Aurat Foundation started a special movement, and demanded from 1995 onwards to the mobile phone network to call on this issue. Along with other rights organizations, Aurat foundation also set out the lobby legislation and the govt in powers in 1988 a nationwide movement was undertaking

by advocacy organizations to secure support for the principal of reservation and a 33% representation. After enormous advocacy movement by civil society organizations, leaded by Aurat foundations all the provinces passed common resolution in 1998-1999. Advising the central government to restore and increase female reserved seats in the legislatures the Balochistan assembly was first to agree to such a decision, raising female reserved seats in local government from 16.4 to 25.8%, the heights of any success of its kind in the entire history of Pakistan. The Ministry of Women Development arranged one day conference in Islamabad in May 2000, on the topic of female legislative representation. Upheld the majority boycotted the opinion of 33% of female reserved seats in all legislative structures. It should fill all these seats through direct election by the voters of the common women and non party base (Aurat Publications).

2.11 Gen. Pervez Musharaf (1999-2008) and Women Participation in lg

On 12 October 1999, Gen. Pervez Musharaf imposed Martial law and on 23rd March 2006 he introduced the new local government system called devolution power plan. The devolution of power plan was drafted by the National reconstruction Bureau (NRB). Devolution power plan introduced 33% reserved seats for women all level. The government announced the final plan on 14, August 2000 (Javid and Khan.2006). For women Representation and women participation Devolution power plan for the first time introduced 33% quota for women at all level of L.G. Similarly the representation of workers, peasants was also increased up to 33% in all union and other councils, through reserved seats that include 50% women representation belonging to workers and peasants seats (Islam.2012). A total of 39,964 seats were kept for women at all tiers. 36,066 seats out of 39,964 were in the union councils, 1749 seats in the tehsil councils, 1988 seats in the district councils and 161 in the town councils. Overall, the reserved seats for women compressed 27.7% of the total seats in the entire local government system. The number of women's seats is given below:

Table 2: Women Seats reserved as % of total seats

Level of council	N.C	T.Seats	W. R. Seats	W.Seats % of total
UOC	6,022	126,462	36,066	28.5%
T.C	305	8,192	1,749	21.35
Town C	30	773	161	20.8%
District C	96	8,806	1,988	22.6%
		144,233	39,964	27.7%

Source: Naeem Mirza Women's participation local government election 2000-2001.

On contrary women were able to fill nearly 90% of the reserved seats in these union councils 96% in tehsil council, 99.5% in Town council and 95.8% in district councils.

Table 3: situation of elected women

Female councilors elected on reserved seats in all U.Cs	35,963
Female elected on reserved seat for Minorities	126
Female elected as Nazim and Naib Nazim	16
Table No of female councilors in local Councils	36,105

Source: Javid and Khan . 2006

2.12 Structure and Composition of L. G system under the Devolution Plan 2001

The local govt. system under the Devolution of Power Plan was consisting of three main levels:

- Union council
- Tehsil council
- District council

Every level had a political structure consist of Nazim and Naibnazim and elected body, several committees and an organizational structure.

2.12 Composition of Union Council

This was the primary tier of local government. It comprised 21 seats.

- 8 general Muslim seats (Open for men and women)
- 4 women's Muslim reserved seats
- 4 workers and peasant, reserved seat (open for men and women)
- 2 workers and peasants' seats reserved for women only.
- One reserved seat for minorities open for men and women.
- One Nazim and NaibNazim (in Panel) open for men and women

2.13 Town / Tehsil Council

This tier was consisting of all NaibNazims of Union council in a town or Tehsil automatically had to become members of the town council or of the tehsil council which also had:

One Nazim and One NaibNazim (In a panel)

33% seats reserved for women

5% seats reserved for peasant and workers.

5% seats subject to a minimum of one seat reserved for minorities.

2.14 District Council

This was the heights division making tier of the local government and comprised Nazims of the union councils in a district who had automatically to become the members of the district councils which also had:

One Nazim and Naibnazim

33% seats reserved for women

5% Seats reserved for peasant and workers.

5% seats reserved for minorities.

The local government ordinance of 2001, in response to civil society advocacy, reserved 33 percent of the seats in all tiers of local government for women. There was concern that women would either be unwilling to contest the local government elections or their participation would be constrained by cultural and social barriers. On the contrary, 36,000 women entered local governments, filling 90 percent of the seats reserved for women. This silent revolution was replayed in 2005 when 156,925 women candidates contested the local elections and 98.3 percent of reserved seats for women in the Union Councils were filled. Women's participation in direct elections indicated a more open society, responsive to changing social realities and the determination of women to become a part of mainstream politics, despite an unfavourable environment. The performance of these women in the local councils also disproved apprehensions

about women's ability to participate in governance and produce results for their constituencies. Their success was also evidenced by the tremendous acceptance and pride exhibited by their families and neighbours and the acknowledgement of their constituencies. Their involvement and advocacy also led to the passage of several pieces of pro-women legislation and policies by the federal and provincial government. Many of these women also became active community workers and advocates.

Even after the dissolution of the local governments, many of these women have remained active participants in their communities, providing social, political and economic support to their community members. A large number of the women who started out as councillors at the Union Council level also emerged as Members of Provincial Assemblies in the 2008 and 2013 general elections.

3. Conclusion and Recommendation

Equal women political participation has a vital role in the entire process of female progress and development. This is not only a requirement for easy justice and democracy but seen as an essential condition for female's benefits. The objectives of parity, progress and harmony cannot be gain without the women active involvement in local government. Throughout Pakistan local government history it can be seen that women has given very small representation. Aware of the need the Devolution Power Plan 2001 (LGS) provided 33% of women representation of women in all three levels. (Ilyas.2011) But, in spite of this major raise in women's reserved seats, no significant result has seen. But despite of all one thing is very significant about women political participation that they gained a legitimate space in the local political institutions and got the opportunity to raise their position, although they were still a minority. The presence of women in these positions of representation was an imperative step in changing the political plan of the male-dominated, especially in Pakistan. At least they had got the chance to be present in meetings, and interaction with male members and participate in important discussions and also ensured their capacity to navigate through the social hierarchy (Khan and Ara.2006).

The mere presence of female councilors in local politics does not mean that the interests and welfare of female in society were embodied. Without the requirements and welfare of women are taken into account, without the chance for them to contribute in and have power over decision-making, planning and active involvement sustainable results will not come. Women's political participation is not only about increasing their representation, but for usefulness and impact. They should be able to participate in open, transparent and accountable processes of decision-making in the institutions and mechanisms of policy-making, not as beneficiaries / objects of Women Development Policy but as agents/subjects of developmental change. Their success is indicated by the extent to which they are able to influence institutional rules, norms and practices and consequently shape the policy agenda and decisions about the use and allocation of resources. Impact will be seen on the other hand in the benefits, capabilities and rights that they are able to secure for women to address gender disparities and will change their lives, especially the poor women's lives.

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