

SYSTEM OF RESERVED SEATS OF WOMEN IN PAKISTAN AND ITS SHORTCOMINGS.

Ms. Ghazala Farah

M.Phil Scholar
Department of Political Science,
University of Balochistan, Quetta.

Dr. Adil Zaman Kasi

Associate Professor,
Department of Political Science,
University of Balochistan, Quetta

Abstract

The history of the world shows that women have been considered far behind than men in almost all societies. Although half of the population of almost every country consists of women but even then they don't have their due share in policy making and decision making bodies of their respective countries. Rather policy making has been considered as no go area for women for centuries even in most modern countries. Male oriented and patriarchal system is one of the basic factor of deprivation of women from their fundamental human rights including political rights as well. Some other factors are also responsible for less political empowerment of women in third world countries including Pakistan. Women face a number of obstacles like family and society restrictions, lack of education, typical house hold duties and above all the lack of awareness from their fundamental human rights. Although the basic condition to run a democracy successfully is that decision making centers (legislature)

should have proportional representation from all segments of society irrespective of gender but unfortunately all over the world “women voice” is not up to the mark or according to their total strength. Same is the situation in Pakistan.

The research paper will focus that what efforts have been made to grant women their due share in legislative bodies of country by giving them system of reserved seats and what are the short coming of this system.

Keywords

Women, reserved seats, short comings, Pakistan.

Introduction

Pakistan came into being following a long political struggle. Both men and women played active role in Pakistan movement. After the birth of Pakistan, the new born state had to face many problems one after another. These problems included constitutional problems, fragile economy, wars, marshal laws and many others. Facing all these problems Pakistan was also struggling to give women their due share in legislature and also to politically empower half of the population who had been mostly confined to their traditional duties. The status of women in Pakistani society is not considered as equal to men. Men are considered on commanding and dominating position because of their financial responsibilities. A so called division have been made between men and women as far as division of labor is concerned. Men are considered as bread winner, thus they have commanding position on the other hand women are dependent on men socially, financially and politically as well. Thus the women have been kept far behind than men. Male oriented patriarchal society, restrictions from family and society, traditional duties of giving birth and upbringing of children, child marriages, force marriages, deprivation from quality

education and awareness have further worsened the condition of women in Pakistani society. (Sajid, 2017)

The study mainly focus on the political condition of women and efforts of different governments to give women their due share in policy making bodies by giving them legislative quotas. And the shortcomings of gender quota system. Previous researches are mostly based on giving statistical data about legislative quota of women, but the present study will also focus on some advantages of legislative quotas for women.

Historical background of reserved seats in Pakistan

Women have witnessed a number of phases as far as their political empowerment is concerned. It is quite encouraging that women have been given recognition in legislative bodies right from the birth of Pakistan although not up to the mark but to some extent they have been present in central and provincial legislatures.

Prior the creation of Pakistan, all India act 1935 introduced the gender quota system for women for the first time in the history of sub-continent and 3% seats were allocated for women. (Roofi 2016)

The upcoming three constitution of Pakistan witnessed a sharp variation in allocation reserved seats for women. 1956 and 1962 constitution allocated six seats for women in the legislature which was unicameral at that time. 1973 constitution increased the number of reserved seats for women up to 10 seats. These seats were allocated for women for the period of 10 years. General Zia-ul-Haq increased this number up to 20 seats. After the regime of General Zia, the elected democratic governments of Benazir and Nawaz Sharif remained disinterested to legislative quota for women, as a result they could not increase or even revive these seat due to instable political governments. The number of reserved seats was

increased in 2002 by General Pervaiz Musharaf up to 60 seats. (Women representation in Pakistan by Pildat)

Shortcomings of system of legislative quota for women

System of reserved seats for women in legislative and decision making bodies has been adopted in Pakistan almost right from the beginning. This system was introduced to bring women in main stream of politics. No doubt this system paved the way for women of Pakistan to enter in political arena but the outcome of women elected on reserved seats had not been up to the mark which was the main objective of this system. There are a number of reasons as to why the political participation of women remained less meaningful in policy making of the country without addressing the shortcoming of system of legislative quota for women the democratic and parliamentary system will remain fragile. These flaws or shortcomings are as under. (Awan 2016)

1) Induction Mode

The main issue of quota system for women is the indirect election. Indirect election affects the credibility of women being a legislator. Usually the women who are indirectly elected on reserved seats remained inactive in legislative bodies. The male dominant factor often makes them dependent. Inducted through indirect election also deprived women from being real representative of electorates. It is also evident that indirectly/nominated females often do not fulfill the essential requirements of being a legislature. They are often a family member of some political elite having less interaction with the common people or party members. (Bari.F 2015)

General PervaizMusharaf introduced a list system for the election on reserved seats. It was said that each political party will get these seats according to their representation in the house. The article 51 sub-article 6

(d) of the chapter 2 of the amended constitution provided the details of election of women on reserved seats by adopting list system. Several political and women rights groups strongly opposed this list system. Their stance was that election through list system badly affect the dignity and performance of women as MPA or MNA. Supreme Court of Pakistan in full bench hearing dated 8th July 2010 also raised a question over list system and indirect election for women adopted by Pervaiz Musharaf. The stance of supreme court was that women could be selected and not elected through this mode of induction. (Dean and Platt 2016)

2) Insufficient Percentage of reserved seats for women

No doubt efforts have been made to enhance political participation of women in Pakistan. A quota system has also been introduced at national and provincial levels. But 17% or 16% quota for women is not sufficient for half of the population. According to 6th population and housing census the ratio of men and women is 51% and 48.76%. it means women almost constitutes half of the population of Pakistan. It is also a fact that Pakistani women are not financially or socially strong they are dependent and deprived so giving them 17% or 16% quota is just a joke to half of the population who is already deprived from education, social status, even fundamental human rights. Although Pakistan has guaranteed appropriate gender quota on several national and international forums but still there is a huge gap between commitment and implementation. (Dr. Qazi Ahmed Kamal 2013)

Since mid-90s women from all social, political and NGO forums are demanding that if not 50% the government must raise 17% gender quota up to 33% in national and provincial assemblies and local government bodies. They are also demanding that instead of indirect

election, women should be directly elected on reserved seats. It is also demanded that all political parties should grant tickets to at least 25% women to compete election on general seats. At the forum of all party's women conference in Karachi 2007 same demand of 33% reserved seats for women was put forward. (Zakria 2016)

3) Patronage/Dynastic politics

It is the fact that quota system is only serving and facilitating the females of feudal, political and industrial elites or the blood relation of the ruling parties. The main cause of this dynastic or patronage politics is indirect election of women on reserved seats. The females coming from elite background has very less to do with party policies, politics or problems of the country or even for their gender. They open remain disinterested, dependent and inactive in the house and thus become a liability for their political party rather than becoming a useful, active and dynamic worker. The women from elite classes also don't have proper political training or know how of the problems of the country or their part policies. Patronage or dynastic politics is also considered to be un democratic and less useful but as far as women's reserved seats are concerned. (Ashraf, 2012)

4) Un Democratic

The people who don't like quota system strongly opposed this particular system by saying it "undemocratic". They believe that indirect election through list system deprives voters from their right to choose the candidates of their own choice. They further argue that by legislative gender quota females have been preferred over men which is against the rules of equality to emphasize further. They argue that by the virtue of gender quota the representative is elected on merely gender basis and not on eligibility. Gender becomes the criteria while abilities, vigilance and

leadership qualities are neglected. This negligence may become dangerous for the democratic parliamentary systems. Women from elite class often cause burden over economy as well as the system rather than becoming a useful part of it. Women elected on gender quota are not politically empowered. They are considered to be less powerful than their male counterparts. They are not given proper respect. People think that they have become MNA or MPA by virtue of their gender and they don't consider these females as genuine representatives of the people. Sometime these females are often humiliated being called "kherati" MPAs or MNAs. Elected on reserved seats have no voice within or outside the system. Their only role remains is to appear on television and defend/propagate the policies of their political parties made by the male members of the party. (Latif, 2012)

Some advantages of gender legislative quota system

- 1)The increase in number of women have been witnessed in political arena where the legislative quotas for women have been introduced.
- 2)In most of the countries specially in third world countries, politics is considered to be the male dominated field. The legislative quotas for women force male political elites to provide some space for women to enter in politics.
- 3)Induction of women in decision making bodies through reserved seats provides women several opportunities to prove them as a seasoned and devoted politician. They can become a role model for other women to follow their footsteps and start their political career.
- 4)It's a tradition not only in Pakistan (or Balochistan) but throughout the world that male dominated political parties often nominate a few women for their representation but legislative quota bound these parties to search,

nominate and train more females to serve their manifesto.

5) Female legislators (elected on legislative quota) work for their gender and can solve many social and economic problem including removing barriers for women to participate in politics.

6) In most of the countries including Pakistan the main reason behind low women representation is discriminatory attitude of society towards women. Quota system is a sort of compensation for these discriminations. (Jabeen, 2017)

Conclusions and Recommendations

Legislative quota system for women is not less than a blessing in the country having gender disparities, issues of social restrains for women, terrorism and lack of education etc. Pakistan is suffering from almost all the problems which can become hurdles in the path of women political participation. That is why right from the beginning gender legislative quota system has been adopted in almost all the constitutions of Pakistan. Women elected on reserved seats have always played positive roles in law making process.

System of legislative gender quota is a mean to bring forward women in the mainstreams of the politics of the country. This system has been adopted in the modern world as well. No doubt this system has its own short comings and flaws which should be tackled cleverly to make this system more useful and beneficial for the country. But it's also a fact that women elected on reserved seats have not always been kept in background and forced to work in the shadow of their male counter parts. They have been brought forward to play their role in different capacities. Even in the province of Balochistan a female elected on reserved seat Miss Rahila Hameed Durrani was elected as first female speaker of the provincial

assembly. Other women elected on reserved seats both in Balochistan provincial assembly and in federal assembly as well are also contributing in the proceedings of law making. They participate in arguments, present the resolution and give their feedback. (Ashraf, 2012)

Recommendations

- 1) Political parties should make their laws more flexible to ensure more induction of women to them.
- 2) Election within party should be held regularly and a handsome quota for female candidates should be fixed (approximately 33%-35%).
- 3) It is evident that gender legislative quota system has improved the number of female MNAs and MPAs but the need of the time is that gender gap between male and female legislators should be bridged. Female on reserved seats should be inducted in cabinets both on national and provincial levels, and equal chances and tasks should be given to both males and females.
- 4) Political parties should change their male dominated political culture and give chances to the eligible, dynamic and potential women to certain heights.
- 5) Respect for women elected on reserved seats should be ensured.
- 6) Women elected on general and specially on reserved seats should be given their due funds to be utilized on the general and development projects.
- 7) Reserved seats should also be filled by direct election to restore the dignity and political legitimacy of female politician elected on legislative gender quota.
- 8) It is evident that the number of women in ministries in different

committees like standing committees, parliamentary committees either on national or provincial level is very low. It is recommended that to abridge the gender disparity and to ensure effectiveness of political representation of women, women should be inducted in all levels of legislation and decision making process.

9)The government should take certain measures to restrict Jirgas or Panchayats because these system sometimes create hurdles for women to vote or participate in political process.

10)Election commission should also take measures that women should actively participate, vote and campaign in election.

11)A nationwide campaign should be launched to highlight the role of women in politics. (Pande, Rohini and Deanna, 2011)

NOTES AND REFERENCES

M.SAJID,(2017),GENDER QUOTA AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT IN LEGISLATURES, FWU GENERAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES. PG 133

ROOFI,Y,(2016),GENDER QUOTAS AND WOMEN’S DESCRIPTIVE REPRESENTATION IN PAKISTAN: CHALLENGES AND NEW CHOICES, PAKISTAN JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES. (PISS) PG 263

WOMEN REPRESENTATION IN PAKISTAN’S PARLIAMENT (2004), PILDAT AWAN,M.A,(2016), POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN PAKISTAN, GOETHE UNIVERSITY FRANKFURT. PG 3-5

BARI.F,(2015),BRIDGING THE FAULT LINES : RETHINKING THE GENDER QUOTA APPROACH IN PAKISTAN, HEINRICH BOLL STIFTUNG

DEAN,H.PLATT.L,(2016),GENER AND DISADVANTAGES. OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE. P3

KAMAL.Q,(15 JULY 2013) QUOTA SYSTEM'S DISADVANTAGES, DAWN.

ZAKRIA,Z.(2016), STRENGTHENING WOMEN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP FOR EFFECTIVE DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN PAKISTAN, SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND PAKISTAN.

ASHRAF,S.(2012),LEGISLATIVE QUOTAS FOR WOMEN (A GLOBAL AND SOUTH ASIAN OVERVIEW OF TYPES AND NUMBERS). AURAT FOUNDATION

LATIF,S.(2012),THE FLAWED ARGUMENTS IN FAVOUR OF RESERVED SEATS FOR WOMEN, BLOGS (THE EXPRESS TRIBUNE).

JABEEN,N.(2017),GENDER QUOTA AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN LEGISLATURE. FWU JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES. PG 138

PANDE,ROHINI AND DEANNA FORD (2011) GENDER QUOTA AND FEMALE LEADERSHIP, WORD DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2012. PG 23