



## Political Representation of Women: Challenges in Achieving the Leadership

M. Naveen Kumar

Assistant Professor, BMS College of Law, Basavanagudi, Bengaluru, naveenkumar@bmscl.ac.in

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### ABSTRACT

Women's political participation is regarded as an essential in achieving equality; however, the gender equality policies of India remain under scrutiny. After independence in 1947, there have been many initiatives to increase the political representation of women by the decentralization of power in various local self-government institutions of India. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act has increased the engagement of marginalized segments of society, including women, into the decision-making role in political institutions. Therefore, this study attempts to explore the political leadership of women representation in BBMP (Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike), through the use of secondary data, such as document analysis of the Panchayati Raj Institutions amendment act and experts interview with elected women representatives in Bengaluru urban district of the Karnataka state. The paper seeks to identify the challenges of women in political leadership positions in Karnataka, Findings from the study reveal that there is considerable progress in women's equality in the leadership role; however, there are certain crucial obstacles that still exist for women to be active in the political realm to exercise the true power.

### Introduction:

True democracy is a system which, in Abraham Lincoln's words, is a government of the people, by the people and for the people. The success of democracy depends largely on the participation of all citizens



in politics regardless of gender. While most of the democracies have given a system which has government elected by all the sections of societies, it is debatable whether the government comprises of all the diverse sections and importantly whether the government works for all the people of the democracy.

International conventions and treaties upheld that men and women have an equal right to participate fully in all aspects of the political process. Article 21 of the Universal declaration of Human Rights says, everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country and has the right of equal access to public service. Again the theory of representation suggests that all citizens should enjoy the same opportunity to participate in politics regardless of gender, race and so on.

India is predominantly a patriarchal country with more than 50 % of the population constituting women. The argument for the inclusion of women in politics is to enable this half of the population to participate in the decision-making process of the country. As rightly stated by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that, “everyone has the right to take part in the Government of his/her country. The empowerment and autonomy of women and the improvement of women's social, economic and political status is essential for the achievement of both transparent and accountable government and administration and sustainable development in all areas of life.

### **Review of Literature**

B.PAC undertook a study to assess the participation of women in politics in the state of Karnataka. The study suggests that between 1957 to 2018 elections, the participation of women has increased from 4 % to 8 %, while the representation of women in the KLA has fallen from 7% in 1957 to 4 % in 2018. In 1993, when the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments introduced local self-governance, it was an unparalleled step to consciously empower women as decision-makers with 133 of the seats reserved for women. Today, 14 states have a 50%-58% representation of women in Panchayat Raj Institutions. Jharkhand leads the way with 58%, closely followed by Rajasthan and Uttarakhand. The Karnataka State long ago exceeded the 33 % representation of women in the local body elections including the Panchayat Raj Institutions.

Women won 43.7 percent of seats in gram panchayats, 41.2 percent in taluk panchayats, and 37.1 percent in Zilla panchayats in the elections held in 2005. In the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP), because of the increase in the reservation for women from 33 % to 50 %, the total number of women



councillors in BBMP has gone up from 71 in 2010 to 101 in 2015, marking 51% representation in the council.

### **Objectives of the study**

1. To know into their problems related to working conditions of elected Women representatives
2. To know about why women are not able to rule or take decisions independently.
3. To understand about influence of male in politics.
4. To look into reasons why women are unable to join politics directly without nepotism
5. To suggest some recommendations.

### **Sampling**

The Sample in the present study consisted of 05 females ex-corporators of Bangalore, as fresh elections for the BBMP councillors is not yet conducted.

### **Collection of data**

The study is based on the analysis of secondary data available in the public domain supplemented by telephonic interviews with women representatives of BBMP.

### **Limitations and scope of the study**

The present study is valuable to policy makers, students, general public and anybody interested in understanding the patriarchal dominance in politics. It is therefore not an elaborate study. Its limitation is applicable to small areas within the Bangalore city.

Only 05 Respondents are selected for the study and Male were not selected as only few women were selected as samples.

But its scope is such that it acts as an inspiration to students and researchers to carry out similar studies elsewhere and contribute to knowledge. Any study has its own scope in terms of applying the study to the society, and the scope here gives different solutions to the society.

### **Data Analysis**

Gender Distribution (BBMP 2016): The primary data indicates a near-equal gender distribution among the corporators of the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) in 2016.



Female Representatives: 51%

Male Representatives: 49%

This suggests that female representation has achieved a slight majority, likely influenced by reservation policies in local body elections.

Age Structure of Respondents: The survey of five key respondents (A through E) reveals a mature demographic leaning:

Age 20-30: 1 respondent (20%)

Age 30-40: 2 respondents (40%)

Age 40-50: 2 respondents (40%)

Political Affiliation and Background: The data highlights a strong reliance on established political structures and familial connections:

Party Association: A vast majority of elected candidates are affiliated with a Political Party, with only a small fraction contesting as Independents

Family Connection: Among female representatives, there is a significant trend of political inheritance. The overwhelming majority entered politics through a connection with their Husband or Father, while a very small segment identifies as politically independent.

#### 4. Educational Qualifications of Female Representatives

The educational background of elected women varies, showing a trend toward higher education despite some disparity:

- Graduate/Degree Holders: This represents the largest group (appearing 3 times across the bar chart categories).
- Schooling (SSLC/PUC): A moderate number have completed their 10th standard or Pre-University Course.
- Illiterate: A smaller but notable portion of the representatives have no formal education.



## Key Findings

The data suggests a "Glass Ceiling" vs. "Open Door" paradox. While the 51% female representation shows that the "door is open" (likely due to the 50% reservation policy in Karnataka), the heavy reliance on family political backgrounds suggests that a "glass ceiling" still exists for women who do not have established political lineages. The analysis reveals that while women hold a slight majority (51%) in the BBMP (2016), their entry into politics is heavily mediated by political parties and family legacies (male relatives). Educationally, there is a positive trend toward graduation, though the age of representatives is predominantly concentrated between 30 and 50 years.

- Women representatives feel that they have empowered but they are still under the control of their male counterpart in one or the other way
- The main reason for high female representation is due to the reservation of seats for women in local bodies.
- Female reservation has provided the leadership for the women who can access power but not to women who is eligible for the representation.

## Suggestions

- Events and workshops meant to hone/ develop the skills of women leaders.
- Creating communication groups for the women corporators, where they will be given leadership insights and mentoring in easy-to-understand manner.
- Facilitating more and more ward level events that drag corporators out from their shell to mingle with people (like composting santhes being held in Bengaluru.)
- Creating ward committees, area sabhas, and more and more citizen engagement programmes, making the involvement of women mandatory in decision making.
- Selection to ward committees and area sabhas should be based on elections rather than nominations, this will allow women to test the political waters before they decide to contest for bigger roles.
- A corporator does not really have the financial incentive to do a good job. They are currently paid Rs 7,500 per month, form BBMP, along with a little more allowance calculated per council meetings and stand committee meetings. This system is designed for corruption.
- The government should increase the honorarium of corporators to a decent amount, so that vested interests do not look forward to making money by becoming politicians. This step will enable the



women and men who are competent and honest, but do not have the financial bandwidth to get into politics, to come out and contest elections in future. This is going to be good for the future of the city.

## Conclusion

The present chapter provides the summary, conclusion and policy recommendations pertaining to the present study. Apart from presenting the summary and conclusion of the study, the concluding chapter lists out some policy recommendations in order to meet the persisting gap between the descriptive and substantive representation of women in the local bodies. The basic aim of the present study entitled “Political Representation of Women Challenges in Achieving the Leadership”, was to find out the substantive impact of the descriptive representation of women achieved by the implementation of the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendment acts in 1992 and 1993. The constitutional amendments guarantee 33% reservation of seats for women at the local government institutions including village panchayats at the rural and municipal councils at the urban level. The necessary objectives have been framed in order to arrive at a conclusion.

It's been found that the 73rd and 74th Amendment Acts has played a positive role in bringing out women to the public sphere. As in the present study the data reveals that the respondents mainly belonged to the middle class and were educated, though the levels of education did vary between the urban local bodies. Women respondent having higher degrees belonged to the urban like some had even M.Phil. Though most of the respondents at urban local bodies remained housewives some were employed as teachers before entering the politics. Most importantly, family pressure was found out to be the main reason for women to enter the public sphere at both level followed by personal interests irrespective of the educational and professional background of the respondents. It is also noteworthy here that the personal interest to enter politics is also increasing among women at the grassroots level of politics.

Therefore, politics seems to be no more a man's game. The findings of the present study therefore supports the findings with regard to the husband's interference and family pressure to be one of the main obstacles for women to make a substantive impact in the decision making process at their respective levels.

During the analysis of the knowledge about existing constitutional laws concerning women in India, sexual harassment act was more popular among urban members when compared to the rural. The rural



women representatives are more aware of the Domestic Violence Act. It is further found that the respondents associated with NGOs were lesser dependent on their

Husbands to carry out the official work and took their decisions independently. Women representatives associated with NGOs were more independent and assertive irrespective of the level of education. Respondents have felt that Training is very important for women to enter into politics. Issues like sanitary and hygiene followed by developmental issues were addressed more of during the proceedings of the meetings by the urban respondents whereas issues like Sanitary and hygiene were raised more by the rural women.

Therefore the Educational qualification was not found out be the criteria for making any impact on raising the substantive action among respondents, it therefore rejects the hypothesis that increase in the level of education would lead to better understanding of the issues. Some of the obstacles for the substantive representation of women were also found. The obstacles were analysed into three broad categories like political or institutional, socio-economic obstacles and psychological or philosophical obstacles as listed out by Shedova (2005). During the study it was found that the political or institutional obstacles were more prominent, while NGOs have been playing an important role in overcoming the socio-economic and psychological obstacles.

There is a need to build new pathways into politics to foster new learnings and to create new forms of articulation across and beyond existing democratic space to enhance the potentials of women's political participation through gender sensitization, capacity building and skill development at all levels. It could thus be said that the descriptive representation of women attained due to the adoption of the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendment acts has not completely led to the substantive representation of women. At the same time it can neither be denied that the reservation has played an important role in gaining women's self-confidence to step out of their private sphere. The government of India has been adopting various socioeconomic policies to promote self-confidence among women. Moreover there is also a need for stronger institutions support for women to develop strategies to understand and promote women interest especially at the decision-making level.

The conclusion could well be ended with an optimistic note quoting Hon'ble Vice President of India Dr. Hamid Ansari: "Despite the challenges of 'proxyism', women representatives have performed exceptionally in the local bodies, in terms of leadership, integrity, responsiveness and sensitivity. The projection in this study is that after 10 to 15 years, women may occupy more than 50% seats in all the tiers of the Local bodies.



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