

# Political Participation and Representation of Women in Jammu and Kashmir Politics

Shafeeqa khurshid

Research Scholar, Vikram University, Ujjain, India

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**Abstract:** Women constitute half of the world population, but they are the largest excluded category in almost all respects. Women are neglected at family, community and societal levels and living as an oppressed class. Historically they have been exposed to extreme form of physical, sexual and psychological violence and enjoy least socio-economic status. They have been victims of gender based violence and their miseries got intensified further due to patriarchal nature of society. Women attempted diversified strategies to liberate themselves from shackles of exploitation and feminism was a major response to challenge patriarchy at global platform as well as within national boundaries.

Like other states of India the position of women in the state of Jammu and Kashmir remained subordinate all over the state. Moreover the problems of women have been further enhanced due to age old political trauma in the state. However from the early decades of 20th century, women in the state of J & K got conscious about their subjugation due to emergence of political consciousness, expansion of modern education, spread of cultural awareness and deterioration of economic conditions. Women participated in socio-political movements in 1930's and the subsequent years there has been rising pattern of women leadership in the state politics of Jammu and Kashmir. Many of the women also fought against Pakistani invaders in 1947.

The groups like women's wing of peace brigade and women's resistance force are worth maintaining in this regard, undoubtedly, the political representation of women in the state is far from satisfactory due to less political consciousness and the cross fire of conflict between India and Pakistan, but there has been seen rising political awareness among women in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Role of women in panchayat Raj institution (PRI's) is attracting a lot of serious attention in the present context in the state. The present study examines the role of women in the political arena and their growing political consciousness with special focus of identifying the causes responsible for their marginal representation in the state politics.

**Keywords:** J & K Politics, Empowerment, Feminism, women's position in Legislature.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The nature of the society in Jammu and Kashmir is heterogeneous in terms of its ethnic composition as well as religious orientation. The heterogeneity of the state is multilayered and can be seen at racial, linguistics, cultural and religious levels. Dogras, Chibalis, Paharis, Mongolian, Kashmiris, Ladakhies, Gujjars are the various racial groups inhabiting the state. The position of women varies from religion to religion, culture to culture and region to region. Despite the different socio-cultural patterns the position of women has remained subordinate all over the state. They are an integral part of the social conscience of a nation and their contribution to society and humanity is great. But, throughout the globe, women form a weaker section and are under the supervision and control of men-folk in all walks of life. They are at the receiving end of much socio-political ill-treatment harassment and are driven out of the mainstream of politics. Since ages, women carry the burden of ensuring the survival of their families, combining, escalating domestic responsibilities with integration in to a labor market. Such conditions serve only to deepen women's experience of poverty, inequality, exclusion, alienation and violence, as was the case with other societies, the women in the traditional Kashmiri society in pre-modern times suffered in all fields of life especially economic, social, cultural and political fields.

The emergence of the feminist movements launched struggles against these social inequalities and gender discriminations. Feminism must not be anti-men. The focal point of resistance must be against male abuse of power and the subjection of women to the personal satisfaction of men. Thus, the aim of feminism is to empower women. As a result feminist theory developed out for women activism. Feminist theory resulted in emergence of different movements. United Nations started paying heed to women's issues. This notion of women empowerment was later adopted by other countries of the world. India too hot influenced by this notion of women empowerment.

Women's empowerment is still a debatable issue in India. Women is treated as a second class citizen especially in state like Jammu and Kashmir ,and the reason besides are illiteracy ,customs ,traditions ,poverty ,ignorance ,her own lack of interest and motivation. Her lack of interest in her own political empowerment leads to such government policies, which lack proper insight and direction. It is important for the empowerment of women that the women actively, participate in the process of nation.

Despite the different cultural patterns and variations in the relative freedom and mobility of women in various social strata in the three regions, women all over the state have been traditionally marginal. They have been suffering from various disabilities, prejudices and social biases. However the situation in the state started undergoing a noticeable transformation from the early decades of the 20th century. Bashir A. Dabla in his study puts forward two sets of factors that mainly lead to this change. Firstly ,the emergence of political consciousness ,expansion of modern education ,spread of cultural awareness ,deterioration of economic conditions and large scale social awakening created direct and indirect opportunities in which women could feel and think about their position. Secondly, the impact of outside developments in the Indian sub continent especially in erstwhile -British, Punjab and Delhi, had apositve impact on overall situation. The Kashmir valley interaction with a exposure to the outsiders made adoption of changes easy and relevant.

## 2. WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR POLITICS

The Jammu and kashmiri people were enfranchised in 1934 for the first time and was done on a very limited scale. As far as women were concerned, the right to vote was limited to those who have passed the middle standards or an equivalent examination. The excuse for its limited scale is as given by the Franchise commission was,"The inclusion of women voters would increase the administrative difficulties of the election". But with the establishment of the popular government headed by Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, the state elections to the constituent Assembly in 1951 were based on universal Franchise. The part X of the constitution of J & K dealt with the election in the state. It proposed the right of women to elect and to be elected in all institutions on the basis of equality with men and also the grant of equal rights to women in all the fields of the national life including that service in the state. In addition, the provision to Section 47 provides that if the Governor is of the opinion that women are not adequately represented in the assembly, he may nominate not more than two women to be members thereof.

Women in jammu and Kashmir did not yet enter in the assembly before the election 1972. In this election for the first time the majority of women contestents (four out of six) won. This election thus ,paved way for the ingress of highest percentage ( 5.33%) of women in assembly. Since then, the number of women in the assembly has never been more than 3%. This is despite the fact that except 1977 & 1983 elections, the number of women contestents had constantly increased. In, most of the assembly elections, many women forfeited their deposits. Since the trend continued in 2002 election also, thus the government was compelled to nominate two women as per the constitutional provisions. There was not a single women minister in the state for a long time. Sakina Itoo was made minister in 1996.

As per the data available in 1972 election out of 8 women contestents 4 stood as independent candidates and 4 were in election fray on INC ticket. Similarly, in 1977 election, the number of independent women candidates was 2 out of a total of 4 and 2 contestents were from Janta Dal. 9 out of 23 women in 1987 election stood as independent and 3 contested on the ticket of JKPP and 1 of INC. In 1996 elections 3 out of 15 were in election fray as independent ,5 were from INC ,3 from BJP ,2 from JD ,1 each from NC and JPP. In 2002 INC and PDP both fielded 4 women contestents each. NC and Samajwadi Janta Party (rashtriya ) gave tickets to 3 women candidates each. 2 JKNPP women candidates got the mandate of the party while Janta Dal ,BJP ,National congress party ,Lok Jan Shakti Party and Janta Dal Secular made bet on 1 women candidate each. In 2008 there were 68 women among 1,354 candidates and % of women contestents 4.95 % and the seats won by women 3.4% . In 2014 election only 3 % women get tickets 26 out of 829 candidates were women 3 %

were contested in these election. In terms of party wise break up out of the total of 26 ,5 women contested on NC tickets , 4 on BJP ,3 each on congress and SP ,and one each on PDP ,BSP ,JKNPP, RPI tickets. Seven women entered the electoral fray as non - party independent. However, the total number of women who really go elected as MLA was only two.

One of the biggest setbacks that the women of the state have faced in last few years relates to the provisions of the 73rd and 74th amendments of the Indian constitution. These amendments related to the panchayat raj institutions (PRI's) have brought about a silent revolution by the provisions related to 33 % reservation for women in the institutions in the local self- government. They have brought a drastic transformation in India as far as participation of women at the gross root level politics is concerned. As per an estimate there are nearly seven lakh women panches, Sarpanchs and the chairpersons of panchayat. The institution of rural local self government however, in J & K the participation of women remains nadir in the local bodies. As compared to elsewhere the number of women contesting the Panchayat elections has remained significantly low in the state. In the panchayat elections held in J & K in 2002 after a span of 23 years , out of total candidates only 2.46 % were women. As far as results are concerned out of total 22,700 elected panchs and Sarpanchs only 28 and 2 respectively are women.

In 2011 the state government of J & K passed a law reserving one -third of the seats for women in panchayats ,gross -root administrative bodies in villages. Each panchayat consists of five panchs and is lead by a Sarpanch. Women succeed in gaining one -third of panch seats in 2011, according to state records but a female sarpanch is still rare only three women won the 2125 Sarpanch seats in Kashmir and 25 women won the 1956 seats in Jammu.

### 3. OBJECTIVES

1. To know the role of women in the political arena and their political consciousness in J & K
2. To examine the causes responsible for low level participation of women in politics in J & K
3. To highlight the trends in the recruitment of women candidates by political parties for contesting elections in J & k.
4. To explore the constraints faced by women in performing their role in electoral politics.

### 4. METHODOLOGY

The Information from this paper has been primarily collected from secondary sources I,e Books , Journals ,Government Reports & Internet.

#### WOMEN IN J & K ASSEMBLY:

Year	Total seats	Women candidate	Elected women	Runner up
1962	75	01	00	00
1967	75	01	00	00
1972	75	06	04	00
1977	76	04	01	01
1983	76	07	00	01
1987	76	13	01	01
1996	87	15	02	03
2002	87	30	02	02
2008	87	67	03	04
2014	87	26	02	01
	<b>Total</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>13</b>

Source: [http://eci.nic.in/eci-main/1/Election\\_statistics.aspx](http://eci.nic.in/eci-main/1/Election_statistics.aspx).

**GENERAL CONSTITUENCY: WINNING WOMEN CANDIDATES:**

Constituency	Women MLA	Party	Year
Hazratbal	Asiea	PDP	2014
	Shameem Firdous	NC	2014
Amirakadal	Zainab Begum	NC	1972
Wachi	Mehbooba Mufti	PDP	2008
Noorabad	Sakina Itoo	NC	2008
	Sakina Itoo	NC	1996
Bijbehara	Mehbooba Mufti	INC	1996
Phalgam	Mehbooba Mufti	PDP	2002
Banihal	Hajra Begum	INC	1972
Basohli	Kanta Andotra	INC	2004
Tikri	Normal Devi	INC	1972
Jandrah Gharota	Shanta Bharti	INC	1972

Source: [http://eci.nic.in/eci-main/1/Election\\_statistics.aspx](http://eci.nic.in/eci-main/1/Election_statistics.aspx)

**STATUS OF WOMEN IN VARIOUS PARTIES IN J & K ASSEMBLY:**

Party	Winner	Runner up	Total
PDP	03	02	05
NC	04	03	07
INC	08	04	12
JANATA PARTY	01	01	02
BJP	00	02	02
INDEPENDENT	00	01	01
G. T	16	13	29

Source: <http://eci.nic.in/eci-main/1/>

From 1962 till date, only 171 women candidates have electorally tried and tested their fate, out of which only 16 have emerged as winners.

**5. CONCLUSION**

Empowerment of women is a need of hour. It will enhance both the quality and quantity of human resources with which development is possible. Thus if any nation has to develop women empowerment is must. Any improvement in the status of women is almost impossible without cooperation and change of hearts from the part of men. Men must be involved in this process. Otherwise it would become like clap with one hand which is impossible. On the other hand, it is also necessary to arise self-consciousness and awareness in each individual women.

The position of women in the political arena of state is again far from satisfactory. Like other Indian states, they remain on the periphery of the political arena. Women's presence in the political process of J & K is abysmally low.

The women reservation Bill is still pending in the Indian parliament. The Bill reserved 1/3rd of seats in Lok Sabha, the national lower house and in State Legislative assemblies for women. The Rajya Sabha, the upper House of parliament passed the Bill in 2010. The Lower House has not yet voted on it. So, there is an urgent need to bridge the gender gap in the State because no society and civilization can move forward without the participation of its half population.

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