

Females in Political Arena of Pakistan: A Historical Review 1947-2013

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Abstract

The current study elaborates the detailed view of female leadership in Pakistani political arena. It shows their space and representation in politics of Pakistan and presented a detailed view about females in Pakistani politics from 1947 to 2013. This study also describes their position for political policymaking which defines the context of women's political empowerment as well as their participation in democratic process. Female leaders' style of politics and role to strengthen the democratic norms and values has also been debated in context to defined political indicators as well as women empowerment dimensions. The political mentoring and priming of the female leaders and challenging positions for them had also been examined in this study. The study is done by using the qualitative content analysis technique and may enhance the understandings about the females in Pakistani political sphere. The study is concluded as that female political played their role significantly in the democratic and power corridors of Pakistan. Women politicians have served on all parliamentary positions and their role has been well considered. Former Prime Minister of Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto, was the first female of Islamic world who reached to this position. She was the symbol of female representation in the parliament.

Keywords: political arena, policymaking, democratic process, parliamentary positions, power corridors

Introduction

The question about the females' participation in Pakistani political arena always remained unanswerable and there are various doubts about their role and performances regarding strengthening the political as well as democratic sphere in the country. Generally, it is considered that the females actively participated in Pakistani politics just from two decades earlier when huge amount of reserved seats were allocated for them. This study gives the detailed answer about females' participation in political affairs at least during the last century.

Pre-Independence State

The first demand raised for the political rights of women in the areas in 1920s as separate seats in parliament for females were claimed by activists. The demands of female activists about their political role were not acknowledged at first but reached to international forums as well as local power-corridors. The demand of female activists was caught by Indian National Congress molding as, "vote for every adult without any discrimination of gender, sex, cast and religion" (Haque & Aslam, 2016).

The state of Pakistan movement also have names of vibrant females, like Begum Shahnawaz, Begum Amjadi Bano (also known as Begum Muhammad Ali Jauhar), Begum Raana Liaquat (first "First Lady of Pakistan"), Fatima Jinnah, Shaista Suhrawardy, Begum Karimdad Khan, Begum Salma Tasadduq, Fatima Begum and Zubaida Shah, who actively contributed in independence drive and played heuristic role to aware and educate the females about basic issues of society. The right of vote for Indian females, first time, was awarded by Act of India 1935 and it was declared that "Muslim females could vote for only Muslim females and ten percent quota was determined for females" (Visram, 1992). All India Muslim League raised voice for reserving the special seats for women during British rule but unfortunately, League did not arrange special seats for females in early two assemblies, after independence. There was no female in the Second Constituent Assembly of Pakistan but two, Shaista Suhrawardy and Jahanara Shahnawaz, in the First (NAP, 1947). Both were nominated on general seats and nothing was on reserved seats for women.

Post-Independence Scenario

After independence, females' sharing in political affair remained questionable. There was no reserved seat for women in first and second constituent assemblies but females, Begum Shaista Suhrawardy and Begum Jahanara Shahnawaz, succeeded to reach in the First Constituent Assembly on general seats. Shaista Suhrawardy was vibrant political figure of the time and well known in international diplomatic, educational and political corners. Begum Suhrawardy was a research scholar and known in Europe as first Muslim female earned Doctorate degree from University of London. She represented Pakistan in Morocco as attaché in late 1960s. Smith (2008) praised her as, "She was the first lady chaired presided the All-India Muslim League women committee and also the only women who chaired Muslim Students Federation before independence. She participated in active politics and elected member of Constituent Assembly. Begum Shaista actively participated in independence movement and assembled the women and young girls from all over the Indian areas and gathered them for independence movement.

Nothing was done on political, democratic, and constitutional front for one and half decade in favor of women's participation in political affairs. The First Constitution of Pakistan enforced in 1956, provided females ten reserved seats in unicameral parliament but elections under this constitution (to be held in Nov 1958) did not be held and Martial Law was enforced (Pakistan Times, 1958). Six seats were reserved for females in National Assembly (three from each province, East and West Pakistan) and five in both provincial assemblies (NAP, 1962; WPA 1962). The general elections were held in 1962 six females reached in National Assembly, three from West Pakistan (Begum MujeebunNisa from Karachi, Begum Khadija Khan from Lahore, Begum Zari Sarfraz from Mardan); and three from East Pakistan (Begum Shamsun Nahar from Dhakka, Begum Roquyya Anwar from Dacca and Begum Serajunnessa from Sylhet). Instead of these six elected on reserved seats, one female, Zahara Aziz from Lyallpur (Faisalabad), was elected as Member National Assembly on general seat (Pakistan Times, 1962; NAP, 1962; PAP, 1962). Begum MujeebunNisa, Khadija Khan, Zari Sarfraz from West Pakistan and Doly Azad (Ramna; Dacca), Mariam Hashimuddin (Mymen Singh) and Begum Razia Faiz (Khulna) from East Pakistan were elected member national Assembly in 1965 (NAP. 1965).

There was not a single female member National Assembly in direct elections, but nominated on special seats. Instead of that, the period, 1973 to 1988, has significant importance in political history regarding women participation. During that first ever women wing of any political party was established. The studies showed that Peoples Party was the first ever political party in Pakistan which planned women wing of the party and formed this wing as the enduring and distinct part of the political activities. Begum Nusrat Bhutto was patronizing this newly established women wing which later on became the very crucial component for struggle to restore the democracy in the country against a Military Dictators. Nusrat Bhutto played vibrant role to and look after the whole party, but women wing remained within Nusrat Bhutto. The concept organize the women to take part in political endeavors and strive for democratic state. Nusrat Bhutto personally look after the women wing of PPP till her death, even Benazir Bhutto had joined the politics of women wing was adopted by other political parties' years later to PPP (PPP, 2013).

There were six special seats for women in 10th National Assembly in 1972. Not a single female could win general elections. President of Pakistan Zulfikar Ali Bhutto called first session of the assembly on January 10, 1972. After taking oath of the members, the elections of special seats was announced and Shireen Wahab from Peshawar, Nargis Naeem from Faisalabad, Nasim Jahan from Lahore, Zahida Sultan from Rahim Yar Khan, Ashraf Abbasi from Larkana and Jenifer Jehanzeb were elected members of National Assembly on special seats (NAP, 1972). The female member Dr. Ashraf Abbasi elected Deputy Speaker in 1972 and served on this position till the tenure ends. She was the first female Deputy Speaker in Pakistan and again elected on the same position in 1988 (NAP, 1988). The elections of National Assembly were held in 1977 but could not be completed due to unrest in the country and agitation against the government by PNA. The political unrest was hitting the all corners of the country, the efforts of administrative stability by government remained fail. The Army Chief General Zia ul Haq imposed Martial Law in the country, arrested Prime Minister Bhutto and his cabinet members and assemblies were dissolved (DAWN, 1977).

After the promulgation of the Martial Law, the PPP workers pretested against dissolution of the assemblies as well Bhutto government. Not only male but also female workers paid sacrifices with their own will in a political and democratic movement against Military rule. A huge number of PPP workers including females were arrested around the country and jailed without any

allegation. Some workers exiled from the country and some sent to *Shahi Qilla*. A female political activist, Mrs. Zubaida Malik, was also prisoned in *Shahi Qilla*, that was considered as high imprisonment and torturing jail during Zia regime. Mrs. Malik was the single female political activist who has to face *Shahi Qilla* for years, his son was also imprisoned there (personal communication with Noor-un-Nisa Malik, District President PPP Women Wing, January 12, 2020).

The Benazir Bhutto and her mother Nusrat Bhutto were also house apprehended soon after the arrest of Bhutto (Bhutto, 1988). Zubaida Malik was not a single woman who paid sacrifices during struggle for restoration of democracy but a large number of females arrested and jailed. Begum Nargis Naeem, Ashraf Abbasi, Sajida Mir, Neelum Husnain, Shahida Rai, Nasim Jahan, Zahida Sultan and many other females participated in struggle for restoration of democracy. They were beaten by Police and jailed (personal communication with Noor-un-Nisa Malik, District President PPP Women Wing, January 12, 2020). Nahid Khan and some other workers forcefully exiled from the country and were not allowed till the Benazir came back in 1986 (Bhutto, 1988). Lodhi (1980) also elaborated the sacrifices of PPP women and workers.

During the elections 1988, Benazir Bhutto had returned in the country and she personally supervised the election campaign of PPP. Party got victory at national level as well as in Sindh and NWFP provinces but did not victorious in Punjab. Benazir Bhutto became Prime Minister, the first ever female Premier in the Muslim world (Government of Pakistan, 2018). The face of Pakistan was enlightened internationally with the female Prime Minister but also the female Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly. The PPP gave a chance Ashraf Abbasi to start the journey where she was stopped by Zia regime. Begum Abbasi second time elected Deputy Speaker of Pakistan and served for the country and democracy till the Assembly was dissolved by the President Ghulam Ishaq Khan in 1990 (Dawn, 1990). Benazir was accompanied with five female politicians in federal cabinet which brightened the political face of Pakistan around the world. Begum Nusrat Bhutto was senior minister, Begum Rehana Sarwar served in the Ministry of Women Development, while Mrs. Mehmooda Shah State Minister for Special Education, Begum Nadir Khakwani State Minister for Population Welfare and Mrs. Shahnawaz Wazir State Minister for Education served in the federal cabinet of premier Benazir. The female ministers performed their duty well in all respect and there will be no corruption charges on any of female minister

even all the male cabinet members faced corruption charges when the assemblies were dissolved (Dawn, 1996).

The general elections 1990 were held with a miserable announcement for females regarding women empowerment in the country. The general elections were held but the reserved women seats remained vacant. The National Assembly of Pakistan saw just two faces of females during that tenure and that were Begum Nusrat Bhutto and Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, both were elected on general seats from rural Sindh (NAP, 1990). The considered modern cities did not acknowledged women as candidate and did not gladdened them with election victory. Both the women of Bhutto family got victory and faced men all around in the Assembly (Dawn, 1990). The Nawaz Sharif (founder of PMLN in upcoming days) led IJI government was formed but this period may be recognized as the bad time regarding women empowerment. There was not a single woman in Federal Cabinet.

Benazir Bhutto was gotten another chance to form the government in 1993 after winning the general elections but female participation remained questionable. The reserved seats for women remained suspended and there was a single woman in the National Assembly except two Bhuttos, Nusrat and Benazir. Mrs. Shahnaz Javed was nominee of PPP and elected from Sahiwal on general seats, she accompanied the Benazir Bhutto in that tenure and assisted her in many terms (NAP, 1993). Although, there were limited number females in parliament but Benazir represented the country as Head of government. There were four female politicians in the parliament after the general elections 1997. Except two Bhuttos, Benazir and Nusrat, other two, Abida Hussain and Tahmina Daultana, were nominated in federal cabinet (NAP, 1997).

The political participation of women was increased by General Pervez Musharraf at Federal, Provincial as well as Local level. The Assemblies were reorganized, the general seats were increased and reserved seats for women were declared permanent part of the Assembly. The women seats were declared almost 20 percent of the general seats, 60 seats for women reserved for women in National Assembly. In result of general election 2002, handsome amount of females were seen in National Assembly. The general elections of 2002 had a significance in the history of women representation in politics in Pakistan. Twelve women were elected for National Assembly except 60 upon reserve seats. PMLQ was stood aside the PPP regarding women

representation in Assembly. Four nominees of PPP, Dr. Fahmida Mirza, Mrs. Shamshad Bachani, Dr. Azra Afzal, and Samina Khalid Ghurki elected on general seats. Five nominees of PMLQ Zubaida Jalal, Hina Rabbani Khar, Ghulam Bibi Bharwana, Saima Akhter Bharwana, and Mrs. Eman Wasim were elected on general seats. Sumaira Malik nominee of National Alliance and Rubina ShaeenWatto (independent) were also won the election on general seats. One female, Asiya Nasir (nominee of Majlis-e-Amal) was elected upon minorities' seat (NAP, 2002).

There were 72 women in the Assembly and represented all the moderate and conservative parties. Mutahida Majlis e Amal (MMA), an alliance of Jamat e Islami, Jamiat e Ulama e Islam and other theological parties, also had women representation in Assembly. Although most of the leaders of the MMA had opposed the women representation in previous times but as they gotten a chance for representation, they nominated their family women to represent the Assembly. JI had opposed the leadership of Benazir Bhutto and launched movement with help of PMLN, but Amir JI Qazi Hussain Ahmed nominated her daughter, Samia Raheel Qazi, for member National Assembly and she became (NAP, 2002).

The PPP was biggest individual party in the Assembly but collation of PMLQ with other pro-establishment parties formed the government under the supervision of Zafarullah Jamali. PPP nominated Naheed Khan, Belum Hasnain, Fauzia Habib, Shakeela Khanum, Mehreen Answer Raja, Yasmeen Rehman, Rukhsana Bangash, Nasim Akhter, Sherry Rehman, Ruqia Soomro, Fauzia Wahab, Rubina Saddaat, Nafisa Raja, ShuguftaJumani for the party representation in the Assembly. For the representation of PMLQ Mahnaz Rafi, Hajra Tariq, Tanzeela Amir, Donya Aziz, Kashmala Tariq, Saira Tariq, Riffat Amjad, Atiya Inayatullah, Bushra Rehman, ShahzadiUmerzadiTiwana, Bushra Rehman, Farzeen Ahmed, Rahila Yahya, Aasiya Azeem, Firdous Ashiq, TehminaDasti, Bushra Anwer, Rozina Tufail, Tahira Ashraf, Onaza Ehsan, Shahnaz Sheikh, Faiza Junejo, Zeb Gohar Ayub, Noor Jahan Panezai were nominated. PMLN had a small number of representations in this Assembly as Maimona Hashmi, Ishrat Ashraf, TehminaDaultana. National Alliance, a collation party of PMLQ, had the representation with the names of Meena Laghari, Gul e Farkhanda and Ayla Malik. MMA nominated SamiaRahil Qazi, Farhana Banoori, Nayyar Sultana, Razia Aziz, Jamila Ahmed, Ambreen Naeem, Inayat Begum, Shahida Akhter Ali, ImranaKhawera and BilqeesSaif (NAP, 2002).

The nominees of PPP and PMLN seemed to be seasoned politicians and they were aware about the political and democratic system of the country. They were also cognizant about the procedure of the assembly business. PMLQ had a mixed lot in the assembly, some were aware and mostly were new in power corridors. The MMA nominee females were new in assembly and they had no idea about the assembly business, and they had no chances to know about it, as their profiles showed.

The next elections were announced to be held in January 2008 and Benazir Bhutto was allowed to come back in Pakistan in October 2007. As the Benazir Bhutto reached Pakistan, she had to face a terrorist attack in her rally (Express, 2007). Hundreds of PPP workers injured and killed in attack (Gall & Masood, 2007). At the arrival of Benazir Bhutto thousands of PPP workers from all over the Pakistan were gathered in Karachi where the welcome rally was attacked. The huge crowd in welcome rally made the opposing parties especially regime worried about upcoming elections. The bomb attack and injuries made the situation more in favor of PPP and opposition was exposed with its hidden motives. The election campaign was its peak and PPP gaining public support more and more that Benazir was assassinated in Rawalpindi during a public gathering (Dawn, 2007). And an era of women empowerment in Pakistan ends with the assassination of Benazir Bhutto.

Benazir Bhutto was so empowered in the party although there were male around her, but she had all the powers in hand and all the meetings of the party affairs were chaired by her. There was a different culture in PPP, the party workers had the right to speak up and no decision was imposed upon the workers. The party workers were free to express even before the Chairperson. Benazir Bhutto gave the right to express for every person and everyone have to speak out. The decisions were made by Benazir Bhutto but she did not impose the decisions but decided with the consent of every person in the meeting, especially the workers. This democratic culture had not been seen in any other party of that time period. The feudal astonished to come in meetings of PPP and see the boldness of workers in front of party leaders and leadership patience and handling technique. The Benazir Bhutto handled the workers with love and respect and did not impose decisions. The workers respected her and accepted all the instructions and decisions done by Mohtarma (Hussain, 2015).

Although there was no substitute of Benazir but the journey of women political empowerment was not end with her death. After the election 2008, PPP nominated Fahmida Mirza for Speaker National Assembly, nominated Shery Rehman first and later on Firdous Ashiq Awan for Minister of Information and Broadcast, Hina Rabbani Khar for Minister of Foreign Affairs. Tehmina Daultana for minister of Science and Technology, Samina Ghurki for Special Education, Shugufta Jamani for Religious Affairs, Farzana Raja incharge Benazir Income Support Program and Shanaz Wazir Ali as especial Assistant to Prime Minister in political affairs, Rahila Baloch for science and Technology (NAP, 2008). The PPP had nominated Shahla Raza in 2013 and Rehana Laghari in 2018 as Deputy Speaker Sindh Assembly (PAS, 2008).

The situation after next general election presented another scenario of political women empowerment in the country. PMLN got chance to form government after these general elections, nine women won on general seats, four belong to PMLN and five to PPP. All the PMLN winning female candidates belong to Punjab and PPP candidates to Sindh. The PPP women leaders Faryal Talpur, Azra Afzal Pechuho, Fehmida Mirza, Shazia Mari and Shams un Nisa as well as PMLN women leaders Ghulam Bibi Bharwana, Saira Afzal Tarar, Shazia Mubasher and Sheza Mansab Ali won on general seats (NAP, 2013). Later on Kulsoom Nawaz Sharif was also won from NA 125 when the Nawaz Sharif declared disqualified by court (Dawn, 2017). The Nawaz Sharif led PMLN government did not had any female federal minister but three state ministers. The Maryam Aurangzeb for Ministry of Information and Broadcast, Anusha Rehman for Ministry of Information Technology and Tele communication, Saira Afzal Tarrar for Ministry of National Health Services. The PMLN leader Maryam Nawaz had no official portfolio but considered much influential lady in that tenure. The media reported that important decisions in that tenure were done under the supervision of Maryam Nawaz, but she had no official portfolio in government and also not in party”.

Conclusion

The female leaders played crucial role in Pakistani political arena and although they were not in handsome numbers before 2002 but reached in power corridors significantly. Former premier Benazir Bhutto became symbol of women political empowerment in Pakistan. The scenario shows that PPP empowered females politically more than every party. PPP leader Benazir Bhutto became Prime Minister twice and nominated females for significant positions of political empowerment like speaker, deputy speaker, important ministries, before to opponent parties.

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