

Women's Political Empowerment and Urban Local Bodies (A Case Study of Madhya Pradesh)

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India is a participatory democracy. In India people's participation in political activities occupies a central place. The participation of women in politics become an imperative for making sense of democracy and development. It is now proved that politics ultimately decides the fate of people. The political leaders after winning in election hold various posts of political decision making like a M.P. (Member of Parliament), M.L.A. (Member of Legislative Assembly), Mayor, Chairman of Nagar Palika Parishad, Ward Member, and hold other positions of the social economic and political organisation. These leaders play an active role in the formation of Law and regulations.

There are many examples of women's participation in politics directly or indirectly. Many great Indian women like Rani Laxmibai, Sarojni Naidu, Kasturba Gandhi, Vijay Laxmi Pandit, Anne Besant, Indira Gandhi, Pratibha Devi Singh Patil from different states of India; from the Madhya Pradesh : Uma Bharti, Jamuna Devi, Nazma Heptullah, Sumitra Mahajan, Vijaya Raje Scindia, Maya Singh, Yashodhara Raje Scindia Malini Gaur, Meenakshi Natrajan and many other's are the motivational icon for the women's participation in the politics.

Mahatma Gandhi also said in the favour of women's empowerment. He declared that, "It means – equal status to women opportunity and freedom to herself."

Enactment of 74th Constitutional amendment act (1992), mandated the setting up of municipal government in Urban area's with the objective of the all power in a democracy rightfully belongs to the people. The power was mandated to be given to the people via the Local Bodies (referred to as municipalities) namely Municipal Corporation, Municipal Councils and Nagar Panchayats (Three-Tier Government System), Which Would have regularly elected representatives and they have a decisive role in planning provisions and delivering services through institutional changes as well with the setting up of Ward Committee, District Planning Committee, Metropolitan Planning Committee, to Co-ordinate with the State Government.

In the context of Madhya Pradesh State with an area of 308245 Sqkm. is the second largest state in India. The population of Madhya Pradesh has as per 2011 census is 7.27 crore, of which male and female are 3.76 crore and 3.51 crore respectively. Female population is 48.28% of the state population. So the active participation of women's in different fields are mandatory for the overall development of Madhya Pradesh.

In Urban area's of Madhya Pradesh, Local urban bodies play an important Role in the Social, economical, cultural and infrastructural development in the concern area. So participation of women in political process related with Legislature, executive and Judiciary are very essential. Political empowerment of women is in the central to the achievement of the goals of the quality, development and peace, without political participation if would be very difficult for women to increase effectiveness, challenging and resolve social issues.

I. OBJECTIVES :

- Study and examine the participation of women in Urban local self government in the context of demographic structure of Madhya Pradesh.
- To Explore the constraints (Societal norms and attitudes) faced by women in political empowerment.
- Suggest possible suggestions for involvement and participation of women to increase their contribution in the Socio-economic development of the state.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY :

This study mainly as descriptive in nature and based on secondary data and informations, collected from published reports of Madhya Pradesh Urban Local Bodies elections from 1995 to 2014-15. Paper mainly focused on Urban Women's political empowerment through Urban Local Bodies.

Madhya Pradesh was the first state in the country, which conducted the Urban Local Bodies election in the implementation of Three-Tier government system in 1994. After that regular election of local bodies smoothly conducted till 2014-15. But in 2020 election of Local Bodies postponed due to some political reasons and Covid-19. It will be expected in April 2021.

Election of Urban Bodies conducted in 1994, 1999-2000, 2004-2005, 2009-2010, 2014-2015 respectively. Chhatisgarh State is included in the urban bodies election of 1994 and 2000. Upto 3rd Election of Urban Bodies 1-3rd seats was reserved for female candidate and from IV Urban Bodies election (2009-2010) reservation for women candidate increased from one third to fifty percent. It was a revolutionary step of the Madhya Pradesh government in the field of women's political empowerment in the state.

A facts about the representation and participation of female candidate in local urban bodies election from 1994 to 2014 in the state could be understand with the following table and diagrams.

Table
LOCAL URBAN BODIES (NAGRIYA NIKAY) ELECTION-MADHYA PRADESH
ELECTED WOMENS CANDIDATES (1994-2014)

Category of Representative	1 st Election 1994*			2 nd Election 1999-2000*			3 rd Election 2004-2005*			4 th Election 2009-2010*			5 th Election 2014-2015		
	Total No.	Winning Female Candidate	Percentage	Total No.	Winning Female Candidate	Percentage	Total No.	Winning Female Candidate	Percentage	Total No.	Winning Female Candidate	Percentage	Total No.	Winning Female Candidate	Percentage
Mayer	17	06	35.29	13	05	38.46	13	04	30.76	13	07	53.84	14	07	50
Municipality President	92	31	33.69	77	25	32.47	69	24	34.78	64	48	75.00	64	33	51.56
Nagar Panchayat President	256	85	33.20	218	75	34.40	149	49	32.88	191	123	64.39	209	109	52.15
Total Representatives	365	122	34.06	308	105	34.09	231	77	33.51	268	178	64.41	287	149	51.23

Source : Madhya Pradesh Election Commission Bhopal

*(1) 1994 & 1999-2000 Data of Chhattisgarh are included.

(2) Data shown in 2004-2005, 2009-2010, 2014-2015 Present Madhya Pradesh

As per State Election Commission Madhya Pradesh data (2014) there are 14 Municipal Corporations i.e. Bhopal, Burhanpur, Dewas, Gwalior, Indore, Jabalpur, Katni, Khandwa, Ratlam, Rewa, Sagar, Satna, Singrauli and Ujjain and 85 Municipal Councils and 235 Nagar Panchayats. In 2014 elected female candidates in urban bodies i.e. 07 in Municipal Corporation 33 in municipal councils and 109 from Nagar Panchayats, that will be 51.23%. This was the above 50% which is appreciable.

Women's politician related with Urban Bodies administration have serve as Mayer [Sameeksha Gupta (Gwalior), Krishana Gaur (Bhopal), Mamta Gupta (Rewa), Mamta Pandey (Satna), Premvati Khairwar (Singrauli), and Mamta Jonwal (Ujjain)]. Remarkable work in the field of proposed Metro Projects in Metro cities, Integrated water supply and sewage system, Road constructions and urbanisation, Development of Public places, expansion of marketing and Commercial Activities, Sewer Treatment Plants, Development of historical monuments, natural resources and social and cultural heritage conservation, Electricity and Waste Collection and its disposal. In the Leadership of women Administrator proved their identity and given a motivational choice for more participation of women in politics at different levels.

In 2014-15 Elections of Urban Bodies 33 Municipal Councils and 109 Nagar Panchayats are reserved for women. In the Leadership of women politician delivered good governance related with infrastructural development, Awareness Programmes, Implementation of Development plans, civic-basic amenities and urbanisation related issues. Many appreciable work done by municipal councils in the field of Swachhata Abhiyan, Solid Waste Collection and its management during Corona Virus infection period.

Two municipal councils (Morena and Chhindwara) upgraded as Municipal Corporation in September 2014, and Fourteen Nagar Panchayats upgraded to municipal councils and Fifty seven Nagar Panchayats newly created during 2014 to 2020). These fifty seven small town will first time participate in urban body election as Nagar Panchayat in 2021.

Next urban body Election will possibly conduct in April 2021. Reservation process for female candidates completed by rotation by the government in January 2021. There are Eight Municipal Corporations, Fifty seats in Municipal Councils and one hundred forty six seats in Nagar Panchayats reserved for women. There have been evidences that due to reservation policy for urban bodies election in Madhya Pradesh. Certain women got elected in to the setup, but they acted merely as the mouth-piece of their male family members. This

indicates that there is a possibility of on-roll women participation to be higher than what it actually exists on ground. So we see political participation of many women representative as a proxy candidate.

Reservation for women in politics has possibly impacted their Inheritance Rights as well as marriage negotiations in Madhya Pradesh. Quasi-random implementation of these reservation to identify impact of female representation on enforcement of historic reforms, granting Hindu women equal right to inherit property, Hindu-succession act, records of land inheritance and political participation.

Political participation of women at the Local and Community Level is the way to achieve the highest level of government. women's political participation in Local Urban bodies of Madhya Pradesh is not limited with only participation but simultaneously related to participation in decision making process, political activism and political consciousness etc.

The presence of women in local government serve as an encouragement for other women to enter diverse professions, and leads women's role in society and public space. People have gained confidence in women as good Public Administrators. In after seeing women making a positive difference in other people's life.

III. FINDINGS :

1. Some women representatives act as proxy representative of their male family member. She can not take bold and appropriate decision according her choice.
2. Lack of quality education and political knowledge, social norms and attitudes and less participation in decision making process are very big hurdle in the involvement and participation of women in political field.
3. Women help groups, female wings of political parties and Socio-cultural organizations can play a very important role in women's political empowerment.

IV. SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT:

Political empowerment closely related to power and status. There are different methods of empowerment economical, social psychological and intellectual.

Political empowerment has provide ample scope for bringing about changes in the status through boosting upward mobility of women in Urban areas. Over the last three decades various efforts of Central Government and State Government have been implemented through women's organisations, N.G.O.'s International N.G.O.'s and governmental organisation for actively working towards women's political empowerment. Following measures can be used to increase political empowerment of women in such areas.

(i) Training and Empowerment :

Local women's organisations and N.G.O.'s play a substantial role in increasing women's participation in politics such as women democracy networks (W.D.N.) Women's Political Education Forum (W.P.E.F.) Women's Cultural Institutions (W.C.I.) and women groups has been used to increase women's political engagement.

Conducting Training such as developing media skills, designing campaign and building knowledge about key local policy issues along with long-term mentoring has assisted in building women confidence to take on leadership role beginning at grass root levels political work enhance their carrier.

(ii) Obstacles to Women's Political Participation :

The obvious obstacles are Traditional and Cultural barriers that are entrenched and social norms and attitudes against women as leader and decision makers. It is important for women to have the necessary social and family support to over come these obstacles.

The other obstacles facing by women are economical barrier, the lac of access to information and communication technology. Information Communication Technology can be used to raise awareness of women's political activism and organise campaign for advocacy.

(iii) Develop Competency of Women Candidate :

Government support by holding Seminars, Training Programme Political events. Women participation and access to political institutions established formal and informal women caucuses to provide support inside the urban bodies and proportional representation electoral system, reducing violence against women in politics and full support by political party for women; are mandatory to develop competency of women candidate.

V. CONCLUSION :

India has a rich history of increasing political participation of women since its independence. Political empowerment of women is a major path to the women in decision-making process or increased decision making power that will lead to women's empowerment in the true sense. Decision making power gives greater opportunities to influence matters that affect our lives in the community and the society at large scale. Participation in decision making process is the mile stone for gender equality in policy framework changes in India. Seventy Fourth Constitutional amendment is playing a vital role in more inclusion and increased political participation of women at grass root level not in Madhya Pradesh but at national level.

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