

WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS UNDER DEVOLUTION OF POWER PLAN (DOPP):A CASE STUDY OF BALOCHISTAN

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Abstract

The purpose of research is to gauge the impact on women in the devolution of power in Balochistan. Since the creation of Pakistan, it has weak historical record of political and social services and its delivery is widely blamed on over centralized and inefficient national government. Military Governments had focused on local bodies system more than civilian rulers. The dictators paid more attention to local government to remove the suffocation because national politics was banned. There were three military dictators which took over the country and then introduced local government systems in Pakistan. Firstly, General Muhammad Ayub Khan introduced basic democracies in 1959, secondly, General Muhammad Zia -ul- Haq enforced local bodies system in 1979 and then General Pervez Musharraf announced devolution power plan in 2000.

According to the 1998 census, population of the country was 130.6 million and almost half of population covered women community. The share of women in Balochistan was 49.39% in that census. General Pervez Musharraf enforced devolution of power plan in 2001 with the purpose to give the proper share to this neglected sex. Therefore, he reserved 33% for women in all tiers i.e. from union council to district council. The total reserved for women councilors in Pakistan was 39964 including 3454 in Balochistan Province. The results show that women participation was weak in the rural areas of Balochistan as compared with urban areas. There were no separate funds or schemes for women. However, Women awareness increased in the politics. The ladies councilors were unable to reduce domestic violence. Unfortunately, they were also unable to perform political activities due to the low education system, ethnicity, political traditional influence and tribal society of Balochistan.

Keywords: *Devolution plan, Women Empowerment, Tribal Society, Domestic Violence & Ethnicity*

Introduction

General Pervez Musharraf took over in 12th October 1999 in a counter coup and dissolved the elected Government of Nawaz Sharif. Military Government introduced devolution of power plan in 2000 for grass root democracy. National Reconstruction Bureau (NRB) designed the decentralization structure (Khan, 2004). The most important and salient feature of this decentralization power plan was 33% ratio of women in the councils. It huge women representation was first time in the history of Pakistani local politics. The reserved seats for women were in all tiers like union council, Tehsil and District council. The strategy adopted for empowerment of women through the devolution of power plan. (Alam and Wajidi, 2013) For this purpose provinces passed ordinances to function the plan. In same way Balochistan also passed ordinance 2001. The power plan installed on 14th August 2001 in the country. Women elected in union council directly.

Local bodies' elections were held twice and overall turnout was 40% in 2001 and 47.38% in 2005. Women polling station turnout was under 10% and 21.45% in Balochistan (Benett, J. (ed), 2007:23). There were 39964 women councilors elected in Pakistan and 3108 in Balochistan. Forty percent of seats were won unopposed and 777 seats were lying vacant due to reluctance. The seats of women decreased from 21 to 13 in the second term of elections.

Balochistan almost based on tribal society where woman have not dominancy. (Marayam, 2017). Womenfolk are confined to cultural and religious barriers. They are not accepted as leader in the traditional society (Adnan, 2015). The 33% representation of the women could not bring any change for betterment of the social status of women in the prevailing social values.

Literature Review

Literature review on decentralization is vast and has been approached by the number of disciplines. The issues and opportunities discussed and pointed out demerits of devolution of power plan. (Peterson, 2002) Female could not play effective and impressive role in decision making process due to thinking weak pillar of society. The fiscal issue also disturbed the process of decentralization. (Keefer et al, 2003). United Nation committee has discussed role and causes Discrimination against women (CEDAW) in Pakistani areas. Men have been dominating roles particularly in rural areas due to Orthodox custom of Balochistan. The political and democratic behavior was low in all tiers of the council. (Saima Amanullah, 2006). Shah (2010) has discussed the political and social status of women and traditions of tribal people of Balochistan. He mentioned that conservative mind set was hurdle to women empowerment. Safiya Saira, (2010) explores gender aspects and impacts on 33% reserved seats for

women in union council, Taehsil, Town and District council. PCST (2014) explores women empowerment and male dominating society of Pakistan. There was observed cultural mind set and discriminatory traditions. Iqtida (2015) has research worked about women councilors' empowerment in Pakistan. The basic issues were highlighted in that research study.

I restrict my analysis to the participation of women in devolution plan in Balochistan. I discussed hurdles and seek the role of woman as a counselor in the tribal society and impacts in local politics.

Significance of the Research Study

The woman is an equal important member of the society. Women play a key role in building the society on the healthy foundation. Their role is not an isolated social activity, rather it is determined, promoted or impeded by the social, political and economic element of a national history. There was about half population of women according to fifth census of Pakistan. Therefore, General Pervez Musharraf increased women reserved seats and provided an opportunity for that sex. If half population which consists of women is sitting in their homes and do not take part in social or political activities.

Such situation would directly affect promotion of the society. In this way, the 33% participation of women in local bodies will be all in vain. Women of Balochistan live in tribal setup where they cannot play freely role like men in the society.

Objectives of Research

There are following objectives of the research study.

- 1) To analyze the women participation in the devolution of power plan (DOPP).
- 2) To highlight the need for participation of women in the local government system.
- 3) To assess the capabilities of female councilors.
- 4) To observe various difficulties in the way of lady councilors.
- 5) To count the success or failure of participation of women in the local level politics.

Methodology

The study is based on observation and common sense. This is also supported by evidence collected through following methods.

- a) Review the literature and relevant legislation.
- b) The interviews with former woman members of local councils like districts, Tehsils and union councils.
- c) All published and non- published material related to research topic is analyzed. Primary and secondary resources utilized.

Data Collection

The data for the research paper is collected from different sources. The primary data is collected from former women councilors through interviews. The other sources are different books, newspapers; magazines. This research paper is extracted from Ph.D. thesis “Devolution of Power in Balochistan (2001-2009), (A Case Study of Its working and Structure)” which is researcher’s own PhD thesis.

Women’s Local Politics

Constitution of Pakistan gives equal rights to both women and men. But practically, women are rarely equal to their male in the society(Mazhar-ul-Haq,2005). In Balochistan, women comprise nearly half of the total population but their status is much lower than that of men in every field of life particularly in the rural area of the province (Prof. Aziz Muhammad Bugti, 2009).Balochistan is the largest province by area of Pakistan. It has thinly population, occupies not only in the geo politics of Pakistan rather it enjoys much strategic significance (Balochistan Review, 1999). Balochistan province has 347190Sq /Km and its density is 19 persons per sq /Km. Balochistan is the largest province and it covers 44.6 % of the total area of Pakistan. (Dr. Mahmood Ali Shah, 2008) According to the census of 1998, the women population was 47.97% in the country. The female population of Balochistan was 49.39 % in the said census. Women literacy rate was 14.1% in this province. It is divided politically and tribally into many pockets. On the top are Baloch and Pakhtoon. (Sultan Muhammad Sabir, 2005) Besides it, Sindhi, Punjabi and Saraiki population is in small size.

The females are the weaker, marginalized, neglected folk of the society and have always been more deprived than their males particularly in the Balochistan. There are almost no proper opportunities of women education, health and participation of politics. The gap between male and female have been widened in Balochistan especially in the rural areas. In this way, we can say that gender- based inequality is greater in the Balochistan as compared to the rest of the provinces of Pakistan.(Shah, 2008)Women folk economically depend on their males. Men dominance, polygamy and declining rights of women are very common in the province.

Social traditions have been also restricting mobility of women. In this way participation of women is limited in the local politics of Balochistan.

Military government took a step in 2000 to resolve women related community problems at grass root level and more empowered through politically, socially and economically (Malik, 2002). Prior to the devolution of power plan set up of local government system in the country.

Table 1(A)

Province	Province Governor/ CM/ IG P
Division	Division Commissioner /Director/DIG Police
District	District Deputy Commissioner /Deputy Director/ SSP

Table 1(B) Structure of devolution of power plan (DOPP)

Provinces	Provinces Governor/Chief Minister/IG Police/Provincial Local Govt. Commission/Provincial Safety Commission
Districts	Districts Nazim/District Coordination Officer/District Police Officer/District Council/District Safety Commission/Executive District Officer

Source: Devolution or De- evolution? (Critical Study of Devolution plan 2000, by Seema Abbasi.

Devolution of power plan was based on grass root democracy. The decentralization is also a provincial subject under the section of 140(A) of Constitution of Pakistan 1973. The purpose of local bodies reforms was devolution of political power, decentralization of administrative and financial power, effective and transparent decision-making steps at the local level. (Seema, 2006)

Table 2

Women Empowerment	
Through Reservation of 33% seats in devolution of power plan (DOPP)	*Political Empowerment *Economic Empowerment *Social Empowerment

Source: Maqami Hakoomtoo ka Taqabli Jayza by Abu Muhammad Awon Choudhry

The devolution of power plan was designed not only to increase the number of women represented in local government by the reservation of 33% seats but it was also expected to bring a significant political, social, economic change and impact on marginalized groups of society like women, peasants etc. It provided a tremendous opportunity for women to play an important role in the developmental process and decision-making at the local level politics. (Asif, 2015)

For this purpose Balochistan Government passed ordinance in 2001. There were following tiers of council constituted according to this Ordinance.

Village and Neighborhood Council

Union council

Town council

Tehsil council

District Council / City Government.

Village and Neighborhood Councils were not formed due to the neglect of sitting government and remaining tiers were formed in Balochistan. The elections of the councils were based on non-political party basis. (Bukhari, 2008) The nazim and naib nazim of the district contested elections as a panel and they were elected by the respective council.

Following table shows the composition of union council in 2001.

Table 3

Seat categories	Strength
Nazim	1
NaibNazim	1
General Seats for Male	8
General Seats for Women	4
Peasant/Labour Seats for Male	4
Peasant/Labour Seats for Female	2
Minority Seat	1
Total Seats	21

Source: Figures are extracted from, *Siyasiyat*, by Muhammad Yousaf.

The local bodies elections were held for 6022 Union Councils, 305 Tehsil Councils, 30 town councils (including two towns of Balochistan and 96 District Councils (including 22 districts of Balochistan) (Muhammad Asif Malik, 2002). The union council level elections were held directly but at the other levels, indirect elections were conducted in the country. Following statement shows the total members of the union council in local government elections 2001.

Table 4

Name/Council	No. of Council	Total Seats	Reserved Seats for Women
District	96	8806	1988
Tehsil	305	8192	1749
Town	30	773	161
Union	6022	126462	36066
Total	6453	144233	39964

Source: Figures are extracted from Self Government in Pakistan by Muhammad Asif Malik.

The post of the Deputy Commissioner (DC) and Assistant Commissioner (AC) had been abolished who traditionally controlled the executive, judicial and revenue functions in the district. A new administrative system introduced under devolution of power, controlled by Nazim and an administrative officer called District Coordination Officer (DCO). (Zahid, 2015) The magisterial powers were transferred to the district and session judges and police powers to the Nazim. Zila Nazim was responsible to perform functions relating to law and order in the District. (Kamran, 2006). The post of the Commissioner had abolished altogether.

The following table shows women reserved seats in union council, Tehsil council, Town Council and Districts.

Ladies councilors of Balochistan

Table 5

Seat Categories	Total Reserved Seats	Elected	Vacant Seats	Percentage Coverage
Union Council	3108	2374	734	76%
Tehsil Council	151	129	22	85%
Town Council	22	22	-	100%
District Council	173	152	21	87%
Total Councilors	3454	2677	777	78%

Source: Figures are extracted from “Local Self Government in Pakistan” by Muhammad Asif Malik.

The Following table shows expenditure and honorarium

Table 6

Seat Categories	Fixed Honorarium
union member	1000 /.
Tehsil/Town member	3000 /.
District council member	5000 /.

Sources: Figures are extracted from “Local Government in Balochistan from Raj to Musharraf by Prof. Emeritus, Dr. Mahmood Ali Shah.

The members of the union council were decreased 21 to 13 in 2005. The seats of women also decreased 8 to 4. Union Nazim and Naib Nazim contested as a separate candidate. (Muhammad Baber, 2008)

Following statement shows the total members of the union council in local government in 2005.

Table 7

Seat categories	Strength
Nazim Seat	1
Naib Nazim Seat	1
General Seats for Male	4
General Seats for Women	2
Peasant/Labour Seats for Male	2
Peasant/Labour Seats for Female	2
Minority Seat	1
Total Seats	13

Sources= Figures are extracted from Local Governments in Pakistan, 1947-2015, (Past, Present, Future), by M. Zahid Islam.

Women were elected directly in the union councils and indirectly in District councils.

Data of District Quetta (Zarghon / Chiltan Town)

Table 8

Male members	68
Peasant/workers	3
Minority	3
Reserved seats for Women	22
Total Strength	96

Sources: Figures are extracted from "Local Government in Balochistan from Raj to Musharraf, by Emeritus Prof. Dr. Mahmood Ali Shah.

Findings of Research

Male oriented society discouraged to the women and there were highly reflection of customary values over them particularly in rural areas of Balochistan.

There is unequal status of male and female in the society. Gender disparity exists in traditional values of tribe structure. Level of literacy was low. Women are weaker pillar in the tribal system. It is not easy to play vital role in cultural life of Balochistan.

District Government was not proposed any legislation to improve welfare services for women. Lady councilors had not played any pivotal role in different sections like education, vocational skill, domestic violence, poverty, employment through local politics. There was not any allocated budget or micro credit programme for women.

Analysis

The interviews with former lady councilors and their views are following.

Mrs. Aysha is household women. Her Family belongs to conservative school of thoughts. She elected as union councilor member. She faced hurdles by her community. There was not given importance women representative. It was only male dominated voice in the surroundings.

Mairaj Bibi is former Thesil councilor. She informed that Technocratic Training was not function. There was no any scheme for develop for the women. She had limited exposure of work. The coordination between extensive staff and elective representation was not satisfactory. There was not fully support and encouragement for lady councilors in the meetings.

Fareeda is former District council member. She told that she faced many number of difficulties home to meeting in the council. There were no particular impacts on delivery services for women. The real transfer of powers was not functioned to the local level. Women voters were not fully integrated in to electoral rolls. Voter education, knowledge of the process was very limited, particularly in rural areas and where the level of illiteracy was high.

Elections held on the non- party system but in reality, political pressure was at the heart of the elections process. Political parties had been openly supporting to their candidates. There were over whelming indications that facilities, awareness, traditional values and political sense impeded the participation of women in the electoral process. The female turnout was 10% in local bodies' elections 2001 but it increased up to 21.45% in elections 2005 but opportunities were remained weak. Many areas of the province, women voter did not understand processes of the

voting. Pressure had been put on them to withdraw and affected the democratic environment.

Discussion and Results

Women were not aware of the logistical difficulties of holding elections at the local level. There was no help desk for the building capacity of new elected members. The women were not informed of council agenda. Forty percent of union council seats were unopposed in local bodies' elections. Feudal lords or sardars, especially in rural areas of Balochistan, had always preferred a centralized system for their own desires. Because such a structure favored them.

There was no encouragement for lady candidates or voters. The revenue provided to the district according to a specific formula by provinces and they were also authorized to generate income by taxation but in reality, the fiscal structure of the country was almost centralized during the devolution of power plan. No lady member was selected in any committee of union council to district council.

Conclusion

Overall development of the country depends upon the maximum utilization of human resources including men and women. The Constitution of Pakistan gives equal rights to both male and female. But in practice, women are not equal to their male in the tribal set up of Balochistan. There were two kinds of forces controlling the law and order situations as like police and Levies in Balochistan. The police system was also different from other areas in Balochistan. The different districts were divided into A and B areas. The A area was controlled by the police while B area by the Levies. The Levies comprised of the tribal people. Being an irregular force though was not properly trained. They were only loyal to the sardars (chief).

Section 18(1) of Balochistan Local Government Ordinance 2001, the Zila Nazim was responsible to perform functions relating to law and order in the District. But unfortunately, the Zila Nazim had failed to perform the said functions. They were inexperienced as compared with a professional bureaucrat who was responsible for law and order in the previous system. Executive powers were divided into many hands, nazims, District Coordination Officer (DCO) and District Police Officer (DPO). Actually, there was no cooperation between these pillars of powers and no one was ready to take the responsibilities. Nazim belonged to different political parties, ethnic groups and tribes. Nazim was a tribal chief or his close relative. Therefore, he hesitated to take action against his own tribe man and similarly he feared to take an action against other tribes men because that will turn in to a tribal rivalry.

The performance of women was weak in the devolution of power. This weak participation was the outcome of the variety of reasons as like tribal set up, social customs, less educational ratio, scattered population and long distances. Financial control was weak and not systematic. The majority of the districts hardly have any funds of their own; therefore, they totally rely on the grant from the province. There were not any special funds for women development. The participation of the 33% women was an appreciable step which had provided to the about half women population. The women hardly participate by efficiently and effectively particularly in the rural areas and they hardly participate in any meeting. They just thumb impression on the decision of the councils.

Just increasing the number of women councilors, providing them administrative types of training and awareness is not enough. There is the need for considerable work to be undertaken the government and women councilors themselves to propose new policies for women development and use the local government as an institution to economically and socially empower women at grass root level. The female councilor needs to identify the issues of common concerns and to collectively put pressure on the local bodies to address these issues. They also need to learn how to generate pressure on the male councilor to involve them in decisions making process and provide the funds for women related schemes. However, no example was available where women councilors had developed a platform by themselves against the women violence, demand for women rights and education. No platform was created where they politically and socially supported women at grass root level. The dependency of women councilors on male councilor and government for funds only would never empower them politically and economically. To play the vital role in women development, gender disparity will be eliminating in the society.

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