

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN

Dr. Munawar Hussain*

Saima Noor†

Dr. Ronaque Ali Behan‡

Abstract

Women's participation and representation in politics at the state level is considered important for gender equality and women's empowerment, but their participation in politics on equal footing with men, remains a distant dream. In this research, an effort has been made to combine gender and politics in terms of a cross-national study to explore the status of women in politics and explore the factors that led them to raise voice against patriarchal society. It is difficult for women to survive with equal rights in that society where religious, economic, and patriarchal mindsets are the main factors that hinder women from actively participating in politics. Women are facing violence and discrimination in politics because male-dominated societies have institutionalized and created a mechanism that is against women's rights such as structural, ideological, and functional in politics which have strengthened gender inequality. The descriptive method has been used in this paper to find out women's low participation in the politics of India and Pakistan. The facilitator model is used to identify the patterns of societal as well as structural factors in politics, which prevent and restrict the full participation of women in politics. Findings suggest that the patriarchal and gender-stratified structures govern the society and the women of both countries face violence, but the nature of violence is different in each case. In India, there has been political discrimination against women based on the caste system, and in Pakistan, feudal

* Assistant Professor at Area Study Centre for Africa, North and South America, Quaid I Azam University Islamabad.

† Visiting faculty of Pakistan Study at Quaid e Azam University and International Islamic University.

‡ Lecturer, Area Study Centre, Far East & Southeast Asia, University of Sindh, Jamshoro.

structures are the main causes of women's low participation in politics.

Keyword: *Women in Politics, Gender and power, Pakistan and India, Inequality.*

INTRODUCTION

The presence of women in politics can be witnessed in the legislatures across the world, but every country has its political playing field. Nevertheless, women are under-represented in the parliaments and deprived of their equal role in the decision-making process. Their representation in politics had been secured by reserving seats, but women are not welcome in state politics, which has been dominated by men. Thus, the participation of women in politics, on equal footing with men, remains a distant dream. The paper deals with the analysis of the political position of women in the politics of India and Pakistan and tries to find out the main reasons behind the low representation of women in politics which has negatively affected society. A society can only fully develop if all of its members are equally participating in all fields of life, such as education, health, politics, economics, etc. Research findings have demonstrated that women's participation in politics depends on cultural norms, society attitude patriarchal structure toward the woman's role in their life.

It is difficult for women to survive with equal rights in that society where religious, economic, and patriarchal mindsets are the key factors that obstruct women from actively participating in politics. In the subcontinent, all women leaders reached the top levels because of dynastic politics. For example, In the case of Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto came into power due to her connection with Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. In the case of India, Indira Gandhi came to power because she was Jawaharlal Nehru's daughter.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The given literature has revealed several causes which act as barriers to the low political participation of women in India and Pakistan.

Women in Indian Politics: Empowerment of Women through Political Participation by Niroja Sinha: Niroja Sinha contributed to this subject with her book 'Women in Indian politics' where she discusses various impediments to women's political participation in India. Her conceptual framework revolves around the factors of gender and structure. Sinha notes that environmental factors, socioeconomic and cultural are all directly related to gender. India is a vast country where women have a marginal level in politics. There is a culture of discrimination against women at all levels of life. The author has explained these concepts for finding out the bottleneck situation of women's underrepresentation in politics.[§]

Unfolding the Realities: Silenced Voices of Women in Politics is a report to explore the violence confronted by women politicians in the region of South Asia. It looks over various kinds of violence, threatening practices, and intimidation that adversely affect women's participation in politics. Besides, elaborate cultural, structural, institutional, and agency explanations expose all factors as causing and reinforcing patriarchy, weakening female politicians. The report is concluded on forward-looking regional level strategies for future research and initiatives to counter violence against women in politics. But it does not explain the reasonable outlook to evaluate the women's discrimination and violation in comparative states of South Asia.** Further,

Women imbalanced political participation in India by Manorama Gupta explores the cause of the marginalization of women in politics. The

[§] Niroja Sinhā, *Women in Indian Politics: Empowerment of Women Through Political Participation* (Michigan Gyan Publishing House, 2000).

** Dr.Manju Tuladhar, *Unfolding the Reality Violence Against Women in Politics: Silenced Voices of Women in Politics* (Nepal: SAP Publication, December, 2007)

gender power relation In India is deeply embedded in electoral politics. Women were exploited not only in seat allotment but also faced discrimination in the echelon of major political parties. The article explained women's participation in Indian politics and the paper has explained the reasons behind the low level of participation of women in Indian politics. The political empowerment of women in India is fashioned by cultural and social barriers in the form of violence, discrimination, and illiteracy.^{††}

In Pakistan, a project initiated by 'Search for Common Ground in Pakistan' (SFCG) named Women's Initiatives for Learning and Leadership (WILL). The purpose of the baseline research is to assess the specific need of women Politian for the development of democratic governance of Pakistan. The papers discern the attitude of the stakeholder for women's political empowerment in Pakistan. In 2011, the US State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL) awarded the project entitled Strengthening Women's Political Participation and Leadership for effective democratic governance in Pakistan.^{‡‡}

The Gender Face of Asian Politics (2006) by Azar Ayaz and Andrea Fleschenberg, is a collection of papers presented by national and international scholars on women in politics. The scholars in their presentations have discussed women's role in the war, public policy and politics. Further, the writers attempt to illustrate the hurdles and the challenges confronted by women in their way to take part in national politics. Moreover, the book covers the impact and forms of female political representation and participation in India and Pakistan.^{§§} The entire literature on women in politics in India and

^{††} Manorama Gupta, *The Imbalanced Political Participation of Women in India*. (New Delhi, Journal of Humanities and Management Sciences (IJHMS) Volume 4, Issue 1, 2016).

^{‡‡} Dr Muhammad Zakria Zaker, 'Strengthening Women's Political Participation and Leadership for Effective Democratic Governance in Pakistan' (Lahore, SFCG, 2016).

^{§§} Azar Ayaz and Andrea Fleschenberg, *The Gender face of Asian Politics*, (Machigan:Oxford University Press ,2009).

Pakistan covered the women's corridor of power in the field of politics. Women's imbalance in political participation signals gender inequality which still prevails in the existing political structure of India.^{***} Although India has a stable democracy, India is still ranked 98th in the world for its women's participation in politics reported by the Inter-Parliamentary Union.^{†††}

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research is based on qualitative methodology, to investigate cultural, structural processes, historical change as well as any phenomenon regarding women's political participation in India and Pakistan. In this regard, this research has been conducted through descriptive methods. The descriptive methods of study produce information for a comprehensive understanding of human actions and the explanations that govern such actions. The descriptive method of research is effective to evaluate how, why, and when a particular situation occurred and influences the population.

An overview of the women's political participation in India and Pakistan

Women are marginalized in politics because male-dominated society has institutionalized and created a mechanism for perpetuating a relationship of inequality which has its causes in prehistory.^{‡‡} The Leadership role of women of both India and Pakistan is confined because women face obstacles due to the South Asian social and cultural patterns which are deeply rooted in the region's traditional norms, beliefs, and values. Women face numerous hurdles in political participation and generally, in their

^{***} Swarna Raja Goplan, One year of Modi government: The Gender Equality Report Card, Daily News, May, 25, 2015

^{†††} *Women's Participation in Politics: India Ranked 98th*, The Hindu, March 8, 2011 New Delhi

^{‡‡} Hilda Scott, "Introduction: Women in Politics." *International Journal of Sociology* 8, No. 3, 1978.P 3-11

political recruitment process through the electoral process. There has been gender inequality in politics due to the lack of political institutions, low socio-economic conditions, and cultural factors, which have been reflected in the electoral structure, lack of party support, and both countries' culturally, biased attitudes toward the political participation of women.

The participation of women in politics is traced back to the twentieth century, but the actual partaking depends upon the demand and supply-side factors in politics. Pamela Paxton and Melanie M. Hughes, in their book, *Women, Politics, and Power* identify social, cultural dynamics determining the supply side of political participation of women while politics determines the demand for active involvement of women in political affairs.^{§§§} Two sets of factors produce women's representation in politics across the countries: supply-side factor and demand-side factor. ^{****} Supply-side factor brings women to their own resolve and skill to contest with men for political office while the demand-side factors are the characteristic of the nations, electoral system, and the role of the political parties that engage in activities that pull women out of the supply of willing candidate.⁺⁺⁺⁺

Countries that are in transition of democracy have fewer women in the political field than in the developed states whose Gender Development Index, Human Development Index is at a far higher level. The Index rank of India and Pakistan based on gender equality can be divided into four broad areas Health and survival, access to education and economic opportunities, and political participation. Data provided the values of the human development index and gender development in both India and Pakistan. This is amply

^{§§§} Jayalakshmi Gopalan, "Women in Politics in South Asia." Prajnya Resource Centre on Women in Politics and Policy, Background Paper Series 1, 2012.

^{****} Pamela Paxton, and M. Hughes Melanie. *Women, Politics, and Power: A Global Perspective*. CQ Press, 2016.

⁺⁺⁺⁺ Ibid

demonstrated in all these indices that gender inequality exists in the spheres of education, income, and state politics in both countries.^{###}

Table 3.1: Human Development Index (HDI) and Gender Development Index (GDI)

Country Ranking human development index(HDI)and Gender development index (GDI)											
Country	GDI	GII	Rank	GDI group	Share of seats held in parliament % held by women	HDI		Expected years of school		Expected gross national income per capital	
	Value	Value				%age held by women	Value				
								Female	Male	Female	Male
Pakistan	0.726	0.536	130	5	19.2	0.436	0.601	7	8.5	1450	8100
India	0.795	0.563	121	5	12.2	0.525	0.66	11.3	11.8	2116	8656

Source: Earliest and most current comparative data indicated; retrieved and calculated basis of data provided from: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/global-reports>

Table 3.1 demonstrates the gender development index value of Pakistan is 0.726 while India is 0.795. Expected years of school for male and female ratio are 7 for Pakistani girls and 11.8 for Indian girls. The values show that there is still a gap exist in the male and female ratio for education. The share of seats held by women in both states is 19.2 for Pakistani women and 12.2 for Indians. Indian women are more constrained for empowerment. The expected gross national income of Pakistani women is 1450 as compared to men, 8100 while in India women have 2116. Pakistan's rank number is 130 all over the world, but India at 121 numbers in the context of the human development index

^{###} Andrea Fleschenberg and Farzana Bari, "Unmaking Political Patriarchy Through Gender Quotas?." Policy Brief, Publication Series: "Reviewing Gender Quotas in Afghanistan and Pakistan, 2015.

Table 3.2: Country's Ranking Gender Empowerment Measurement /Gender Inequality Index

Country's Ranking Gender Empowerment Measurement/Gender Inequality Index (GII)							
Country	HDI	2000	2005	2010	2013	2019	Trends
Pakistan	146	–	0.613	0.561	0.563	0.538	Seats held in Parliament, female
India	135	–	0.621	0.59	0.563	0.488	Seats held in Parliament, female

Source: Earliest and most current comparative data indicated; retrieved and calculated on the basis of data provided by: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/global-reports>

Table 3.2 shows the Gender Empowerment Measurement for India and Pakistan in different years. The Human Development Index value for Pakistan is 146 while for India it is 135. The inconsistent role of democracy regarding women's participation in politics varies in states. Cross-national research reveals that the state of democratization does not keep any substantial impact on the political empowerment of women.^{§§§§} States have displayed a major role in the political contribution of women. In Nordic countries, states had facilitated the participation of women in politics. The quota system is another way to increase women's access to the decision-making process. State's electoral system, constitutional as well as political party play an important role for inclusion of women in politics.

Barriers to women's political participation in India and Pakistan

The pursuit of equality embraces the goal of bringing more women into politics because, at the turn of the 21st century, there has been discrimination against women in politics. There has been gender

^{§§§§} Kazuki Iwanga. Women's Political Participation and Representation in Asia: Obstacles and Challenges. (Denmark: NIAS Press, 2008).

inequality in politics due to the lack of political institutions, voter intimidation, persecution, arbitrary arrests and assassinations, political violence and discrimination in politics low socio-economic conditions, and cultural factors, which have been reflected in the electoral structure, lack of party support, and both countries culturally, biased attitudes toward the role of women in politics.

Political Violence and discrimination in Politics

Violence against women in politics is traditionally incurred because of the patriarchal structure of the system and only those women are targeted who challenge male domination and patriarchy. Indira Gandhi was assassinated by Sikh extremists on 31 October 1984, by her two bodyguards while Benazir Bhutto lost her life on 27 December 2007 in Rawalpindi. These were clear examples of violence against women in politics. Violence against women in politics has been defined as

"the connotation of any act of violence that results in or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women politicians, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty in public or private life."*****

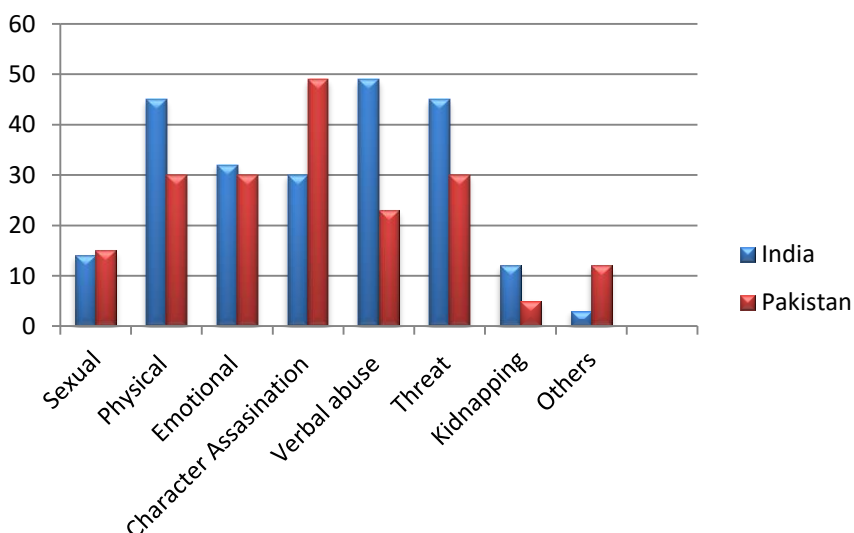
The Constitution of Pakistan and India gave equal rights to women and did not confine their role in contesting elections. Constitution of India: Article 14, 16 Ensure Equality of Status, Article 15 says State shall not Discriminate among any Citizen on the Ground of Sex, Religion, etc. Article 25 of the constitution of Pakistan states that there shall be no discrimination on the basis of sex.

In India and Pakistan, violence against women in politics remained unrecognized due to the prevalent culture of silence and patriarchy within the governmental institutions. Moreover, social division,

***** Women, U. N. "Violence against Women in Politics: A Study Conducted in India, Nepal, and Pakistan." 2014.

religion, and current power structure were also the central factor that led to the violence against women in politics (VAWIP). The existing system of politics of both states has completely denied the existence of violence against women in politics (VAWIP). Within this context, the majority of women politicians face impediments and discrimination of varying degrees which adversely impact the participation of women in the political process. Traditionally, politics is considered to be a male domain and those women who decide to take part in politics are considered as the challenge to the masculine status quo. Since politics is considered a dirty game, the legislation of both states has not mentioned violence against women in politics. Fear of violence and gender discrimination have restrained women from participating actively in politics.

Graph 1: Survey Responses to various types of Violence against women in politics (VAWIP)



Source: www.unitednation.org/en/women/endviolence/pdf/vaw

In South Asia, violence against women in politics stretches from intimidation and character assassination to torture, sexual assault, and murder. During elections, some callous ways are exercised to stop them from taking part in the political process. These include blunders in the voter lists of women, harassment during the polling process, non-availability of identity cards for women, the display of firearms, and looting of ballot boxes. Hence, women of both states have faced both psychological and physical abuse as well. Violence against women in politics is a pervasive and perpetrated violence that deters women from fully participating in politics. The violence against women in politics can be categorized into three forms: structural, functional, and Institutional.

Criminalization in politics

Criminalization in politics is also a cause of the limited participation of women in politics. An Indian NGO Association for Democratic Reforms, (ADR) issued a list of the male Indian Parliamentarians who acknowledged that they had been accused of violence against women (including rape, assault, and outraging the modesty of women) but even then they were nominated for elections by the major political parties. Most of the contestants having criminal charges and records were still elected and entered into the process of politics because the public did not easily access their criminal reports. 30 percent of the members of the 15th Lok Sabha of India had criminal cases against them.⁺⁺⁺⁺

In Pakistan's history Nusrat Bhutto, wife of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto fought against Zia's tyrannical rule. She was called Mother of Jamhoriyat by PPP supporters as she confronted brutalities, prisons, and tortures including baton charge in Gaddafi Stadium, Lahore due to which she had to be admitted to UCH, Lahore. Character assassination is also used as an instrument to harm the reputation and accomplishments of women in politics. Ex--CA Member from

Rupandehi, Netra Prasad Panthi, stated, when men fail to find fault in women's activities or progress, they raise questions about women's character.

Ashish Tripathi cited the comments in an interview in times of India against women stating that there is a common custom to comment on women. For example, as Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) referred to an opposition (Samajwadi Party) woman contestant, Nafisa Ali, in the 2009 election in Lucknow. "Look at her white hair, had SP brought Aishwarya Rai (former Miss World and Bollywood actress) to Lucknow, I would have enjoyed it more. In the case of Pakistan, there have been rumors regarding women's characters who have been being at high levels of politics these women politicians are Nilofar Bakhtyar, Hina Rabbani Khar, and Sherry Rehman. Malala Yousafzai, the teenage activist for girls' educational rights was badly shot by the Taliban. However, Malala became an international figure after being shot.

Institutional Structure

The structure manifests itself through the institutions and units such as political parties, religious groups, police, judiciary, and Non-Governmental organizations along with the media. These institutions take violence against women in politics as an invisible form of violence against women and monitor the participation of women in politics. United Nations agencies such as the United Nations Development Fund for Women and the United Nations Population Fund identified violence against women as a key factor that constrained women's political participation. Their report shows a connection between violence against women in politics and lack of women's political participation

In South Asia, South Asian Partnership is the first organization that has raised the violence against women in politics as an issue and published a report in 2006, which was a case study of violence

against women in politics in India and Pakistan.#### The South Asian Partnership provides the complete guidebook against violence against women in politics. The South Asian Partnership conducted a conference in South Asia in 2006, 2008, and 2010 through the UN platform, the motive behind these conferences was to consolidate numerous ways that women use to manage the issue of violence against women in politics.

Cultural and Ideological and Traditional Norms

According to George (2019), women's participation in politics is often shaped by the ideological discourse that drives the social structure of the society. The Patriarchal structure is the biggest hurdle in their progress. Cultural attitude towards women's role in society, especially in rural areas is remaining strong. They are not allowed to come outside of their houses for higher education. Furthermore, there is gender discrimination in politics where women have a marginalized position within a given political party because political parties consider women as unfit to contest in the field of politics. Due to this women are less likely to be allotted tickets. The concept of public and private dichotomy women split into two dimensions, one is a man and woman and another one is political and apolitical which indicates two appealing equations.

Women = Private

Private = Apolitical

Men = Public

Public = Political

Therefore Man considered Public a political, while women are considered private and apolitical. This division shows the strong patriarchal trend along with political discrimination against women in both India and Pakistan. So women's political empowerment highlighting three factors: Ideological, structural, and political. Ideology shaped the attitudes of both Indian and Pakistani societies.

Women, U. N. "Violence against Women in Politics: A Study Conducted in India, Nepal, and Pakistan." 2014

Both countries' men have a strong bias against women's participation in politics. In Pakistan, the feudal structure constrains women's participation in public. Women's participation in Indian politics remains low due to many factors, including the rigidity of the caste system.

Political Legislation on Women's Participation in India and Pakistan

The legislature for women's political inclusion has been identified by three factors in both India and Pakistan. These are political, ideological, and structural factors, which strongly influence the percentage of women in both countries' respective parliament. The cross-national research on women's legislature for their political inclusion has been identified by two factors in both India and Pakistan. These are ideological and structural influences on the percentage of women in parliaments. These two factors have shaped the attitude of society, whether material objective or moral values. The ideal society is deeply embedded in the framework of belief and value setup. Therefore, to empower women in politics, the first need is to identify the problem and second to develop an approach to resolve these problems. In Pakistan legislation on women had faced a serious hurdle specifically due to the feudal lord's exploitation through social customs. They suppress women by not providing them with education. Those women who are qualified and economically independent are active in politics as candidates and become a cause of the dramatic increase of women's representation in the national legislature.^{sssss}

The several women in legislature in each state have been dependent upon the differences in the electoral system. This system can be

^{sssss} Sheri Kunovich, and Pamela Paxton. "Pathways to Power: The Role of Political Parties in Women's National Political Representation 1." *American Journal of Sociology* 111, No. 2, 2005). p 505-552.

categorized into four broad areas: Proportional and semi-proportional systems of representation (PR) includes women based on multi-member districts and party lists, which may be open or closed, and in which seats are distributed to candidates on a party list based on the proportion of the vote won by that party. Majoritarian systems are based on the single-member districts (M-SMD), whereby one candidate is nominated once she receives more than 50 percent of the vote. Finally, under mixed systems, some representatives to an assembly are elected following Majoritarian rules, while others are added using proportional rules.*****

The two systems one is proportional representation and the mixed system is considered to be better for the women's inclusion in politics because the under proportional representation system parties has to publish the list of candidates and there's a pressure to balance their party tickets across gender cause to the huge number of women in politics.+++++

As the states of the Inter-Parliamentary Union said there is recognition of women's credibility and their political participation is essential over 10 years. The country's strategic affirmative action also tends to enhance women's political empowerment through some evolving mechanism. There are some national quota laws for women to participate in politics and legislation.

***** Karen bird, "The Political Representation of Women and Ethnic Minorities in Established Democracies: A Framework for Comparative Research."Canada:. Department of Political Science McMaster University Hamilton,2003

+++++ Pippa Norris, "Choosing Electoral Systems: Proportional, Majoritarian and Mixed Systems." (International Political Science Review 18, No. 3, 1997). P 297-312

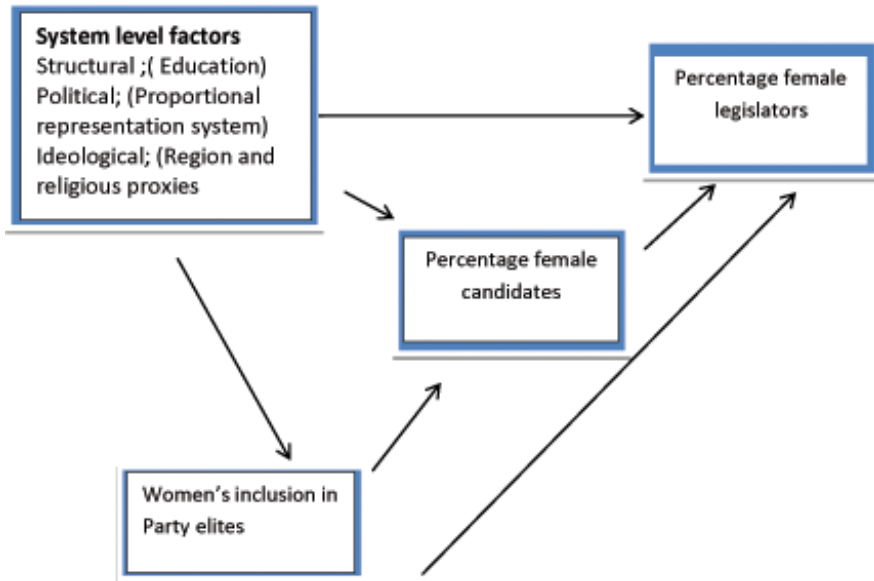
Figure 1: The process of women's entry into politics

Figure 1 demonstrates the general theoretical model of women in politics. This process explains the participation ratio of women in legislation through factors, that take women in politics as a process with three visible outcomes. First, the state-level factor whether the state has a proportional representation system or the number of women in labor directly influences the interest. Second, women in party elite have an impact on the percentage of women being elected as candidates or representatives. The third percentage of women elected yields lawmakers from contestants by the ratio of female legislators to female candidates.

FINDINGS

In this regard, this study has been conducted through descriptive methods. The descriptive methods of study produce information for a full understanding of human actions and the factors that govern such behaviours. The descriptive method of study is effective to evaluate how, why, and when a particular situation occurred and

influences the population. The paper has provided a comparative analysis of Indian and Pakistan women in politics. It has discussed the nature of women's political participation in both countries along with the barriers they face in increasing women's political empowerment in the respective countries. Although both countries' constitutions provide an equal opportunity for men and women, women face sociocultural, political, and economic challenges in attaining equal rights. Within this context, women in both countries have low representation in politics. Indian women have not achieved their desired status because of the prevalence of the caste system and patriarchal structures in India. In the case of Pakistan, women's low-level political participation is due to their lack of financial resources, politics considered to be a male domain, *Purdah*, segregation, religious extremism with feudal and tribal structures.

Women have faced discrimination in politics due to different indices of social and economic gaps related to gender inequality which brought gender disequilibrium in politics. There is a need to implement the laws and change the societal norms to achieve a balanced approach in politics. Despite certain obstacles such as gender discrimination, cultural resistance, religious extremism, patriarchy, unequal social, economic power structure, women have struggled for power that should be based on equality and justice. Both India and Pakistan have marginalized women, although constitutions of both countries have given equal rights to men and women, the gender gap persists in the domain of politics. There is a dire need to overcome sociocultural bias against women in both countries to ensure women's effective participation in politics.

This comparison of Indian and Pakistani women has been studied at individual, society, and state levels. There are five striking similarities and three significant differences between Indian and Pakistani women in politics. Among similarities, both states have provisions in their respective constitutions for ensuring women's participation in politics, yet in reality, women have been

discriminated against in politics. Both states have signed the United Nations Conventions on the elimination of discrimination against women, which guarantee women's political and civil rights. Both have a Quota system for women's participation at the local level.

Second, both states have NGOs working for women's rights in Pakistan such as SAP, Aurat Foundation, which are working for women's rights and are committed to the empowerment of women. In India, certain NGOs such as the All India Institute of Local Self-government (ALLISG) and Pink Gang advocate for change through strengthening women's participation and bringing them into leadership roles. Their goal is to change the perceptions of women about the necessity to be involved in politics to transform its structure.

Third, demographic data from both India and Pakistan shows that there is inequality of women due to the prevalence of patriarchal structures which have created hurdles to the participation of women in public life. In most cases, the lives of women are confined by cultural and traditional complications (the view that women are inferior to men), religion, political disorder, violence, resources, and a dearth of opportunities. Further, the demographic figures illustrate poor literacy rates, meager health rates, and poverty.

Fourthly, family connections in both India and Pakistan have enabled women to get political positions, but it has not necessarily led to other women being elected because, in politics, male dominance is the main cause of creating hindrance for the political empowerment of women. Nusrat Bhutto, Benazir Bhutto, Ghanawa Bhutto belonged to Pakistan's political families, and Indira Gandhi, Sonia Gandhi, Maneka Gandhi also held strong political backgrounds in India. The hurdles and barriers are just for the middle-class women who are at the mercy of political parties for entering into politics.

Finally, women of both countries face violence in politics, but the nature of violence is different in both states. In India, sexual and physical abuse has been common, while in Pakistan, character assassination has prevailed. When men feel biased against women, then men abuse women's character. When women candidates decide to enter into politics, they face intimidation, defamation, and antagonism from men once women are elected. Moreover, financial and political power is not always shared with women once they are elected. Nasreen Wali khan from KP was the first woman who won elections on a general seat against a man. Discrimination against women in both states increases male domination, inequitable divisions of labor, which can prevent the involvement of women in public life. Moreover, traditional rules and practices embedded in cultures override the statutory law in both countries. In Pakistan, feudal lords exploit the women through their evil customs, and in India, women are discriminated against based on the Caste system.

The divergence in women's political participation in India and Pakistan has existed due to factors such as the presence and absence of democracy, religious differences, and the presence and absence of the caste system. The core ingredient for the political empowerment of women is the democratic government. Pakistan is weak in democracy because there have been various factors such as continual Martial laws, weak institutions, corruption, and lack of educated middle class. The government has not been strong enough to support women in politics, but in India, due to the prevalence of a strong democracy and educated middle class, strong institutions; the government has handled women's issues through mutual collaboration and preferred the voice and choice of individuals

Second, among dissimilarities, the participation of women in India and Pakistan has been affected by religious differences in both countries. Pakistan is an Islamic state and being a Muslim country, Pakistan's constitution and laws were created according to Islamic sharia laws. Pakistan's women faced an obligation of purdah but

India, being a secular country, faced no such compulsion of Hindu women for women's involvement in politics. Pakistani leader Benazir Bhutto faced the strongest opposition from the military government as well as from religious groups. At the international level, she had faced opposition from the Taliban for not being eligible as the political leader of a Muslim country. But in the case of India, Indira Gandhi did not face any such opposition.

Lastly, the existence of the caste system in India and its absence in Pakistan had consequences for the political participation of women in India and Pakistan. In India, there has been political discrimination against women based on the caste system. In the late 1960s and 1970s, a movement began against the caste system named the Dalit movement. Dalit is derived from the Sanskrit verb, meaning broken or cracked. Dalit feminists articulated that the Dalit women were oppressed by the upper caste men by the patriarchy which led to Dalit women's oppression at the hands of their men. Last but not least, agricultural women workers were exploited by the upper caste landowners. In 1995, the national federation of Dalit women organized for raising questions about discrimination against lower caste seriously because despite having the constitutional guarantee of equal rights, Dalit women faced deprivation in all spheres of life. Uma Chakravarti, a famous feminist historian explained the relationship between feminism, politics, gender, and caste in her work *Gendering Caste*.

In politics, women have faced a low status because there has been no support available to them from the elected members of the party. This was confirmed by the Panchayat Vice president from the upper caste in Gujarat by saying: 'To empower Dalit women in politics means to empower them against us so if I make her ability to participate equally, then she will go against me. It's better to keep her away from politics.'

Specifically, Dalit women's ratio in the current Indian Lok Sabha has only 12 Dalit women MPs which is a mere 2.2% of the parliamentarians as a whole.####

In 2007, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination over the underrepresentation of Dalits in all levels of government presented a report to the government of India, where Dalit candidate was deterred from standing for elections. If she was elected, then she was forced to resign and not actively participate in other bodies to exercise their mandate. Many Dalit women were denied the right to vote as well. In Pakistan, there is no such caste system that affected women's political participation.

Although the Constitutions of both India and Pakistan gave equality to men and women in politics, women remained marginalized in both countries' politics. The reason behind women's political discrimination is gender inequality; the patriarchal nature of traditional politics, norms, customs deeply rooted in both countries' societal structures. Both Pakistan and India, take males as role models for the acquisition of political power, while women are perceived as submissive. If some women attained had top-level positions, it was due to their belonging to political families. The majority of the women were discriminated against in the field of politics. Women faced discrimination and violence at all levels. There is a lack of support of political parties to women in the field of politics, lack of implementation of laws, low level of political education of women and men have wrong perceptions about women's ability to pursue political goals.

Pakistan's feudal structure does not permit women to empower themselves politically. It does not allow women to get an education. The obligation of purdah has also limited women within four walls of the home. Indian women faced challenges due to their gender,

####Jayshree Mangubhai, 'Obstacles to the Effective Political Participation of Dalit Women' (India: Second Forum on Minority issue Geneva, 2009). p 1-3

norms, and customs which did not favor women. Caste discrimination has also restricted women from empowering themselves. A broad analysis of India and Pakistan's women's political participation indicated that man-made political culture and processes prevail against women

Female participation in legislation can decrease gender bias and bring prosperity, thus augmenting the pool of talent for both India and Pakistan. "Effective provision of greater volumes of public goods could help previously disadvantaged groups to more quickly eliminate such biases while offering greater political participation, which the system can draw or allow greater deliberation and innovation to eliminate mistakes in the process."§§§§§§

. If more women come to the decision-making process, then more women will come forward for participation in politics and question the male assumption about women's political inclusion that politics is only a male domain, that women are passive politically, and that men are stronger than women. The higher levels of female representation in parliament are associated with lower levels of corruption up strong patriarchal structures to offer women a breathing space in politics.

CONCLUSION

From ancient times, women have been discriminated against through women played a central role in the agricultural revolution due to their being gathered in the hunting and gathering societies. As societies evolved from magical to religious to scientific, women continued to be subservient to men. Despite matriarchy being practiced in certain societies, the culture of South Asia continued to be strongly patriarchal. One could imagine those female Hindu deities would empower Hindu women of India, but that did not occur. Patriarchal structures strongly promoted discrimination

§§§§§§ Ibid

against women within South Asian culture, which in turn, inhibited women's political participation in both India and Pakistan. India and Pakistan need to loosen up strong patriarchal structures to encourage the political participation of women. The political emancipation of women is much needed for women to play a strong role in the tasks of development in both India and Pakistan. Yet only linkages with political families enable them to play a leadership role in politics. While they easily became prime ministers, due to their family connections, the rest of the women remained politically marginalized. Unfortunately, constitutional provisions in favor of gender equality along with quotas and reservations for women have not proved to be enough for women's effective political participation. Only wisdom and vision can loosen.

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