



## Women Political Participation in Urban Local Government: A Study of Karnal District in Haryana

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### Abstract

The reservation policy for women in local governance has created an opportunity for women to actively participate in the political arena. It is crucial to have women actively involved in decision-making bodies to promote greater female participation in public life. Haryana, known for its rich culture, unfortunately does not reflect the same progress for women in the political sphere. However, it can be concluded from the above discussion that the provision of reservation has played a significant role in increasing women's political participation in the state and the country. It has made significant improvements in the status of urban women. It cultivated in women a sense of self-assurance, a keen understanding of politics, and a strong sense of self. However, there is still much progress to be made in empowering women and encouraging their active political involvement.

**Keywords:** Women, Democracy, Political Participation, Empowerment, Town Committees,

### Introduction

Every democratic nation establishes institutions for local self-governance. They are widely regarded as the bedrock of democracy. These institutions cater to the needs of the local community. No government can fully investigate local issues. Local institutions are capable of handling these issues. Local self-government institutions are established through legislation enacted by the legislature. Local self-government is a matter that falls under the jurisdiction of the state in India. Due to this, the state legislature has the power to establish local institutions through legislation. The local government's jurisdiction is confined to a specific area, and its primary role is to offer civic amenities to the population within its boundaries. A local government functions in line with the regulations set forth by the statute that created it. It is under the control and oversight of the state or provincial government. However, there are a wide range of activities carried out by local government. Local governments have been implementing various initiatives to regulate citizens' behaviour and provide essential services. These include mass transportation, housing for the less fortunate, electricity supply, healthcare centres, parks, and playgrounds, among others. Undoubtedly, local government plays a crucial role in the everyday lives of citizens, surpassing the significance of state or federal government. Understanding local government is crucial for professional purposes. As per P. Stones, local government refers to the segment of a country's government that focuses on matters concerning a specific locality. The defining features of a local government include its legal status, the authority to collect taxes within its jurisdiction, involvement of the community in decision-making, and the autonomy to operate without central oversight. The current form of urban local government in India has its roots in British colonial rule. The establishment of a municipal corporation for the city of Chennai in 1687 marked the beginning of local government in the country. This institution provides a platform for citizens to gain political and popular education on matters of local and national significance. It not only alleviates the workload of the Centre, but it also serves as a check on the increasing influence of bureaucracy. It emphasises the importance of power distribution and decentralisation, resulting in administrative and political decentralisation. This place is a hub of skilled individuals who possess the qualities needed for both local and national leadership positions.

### Women Empowerment & Political Participation

The Indian Constitution opened a new chapter in the history of women's equality. Article 15(3) empowers the states to make any special provision for women and children even in violation of the fundamental obligation of non-discrimination among citizen inter-alia of gender. Women's voters in elections have increased steadily since the first general election in 1952. However, their representation in the National Parliament has never exceeded 10%. Municipal bodies in India aim to mobilizing people's effective participation in decision-making and management of local affairs and development schemes. The 74<sup>th</sup> CAA 1992 reserved one-third of all seats in membership and chairmanship in municipal bodies for women. The reservation of one-third of seats in urban local bodies for women

has opened up new avenues for women's participation in municipal politics across the country. This clearly indicates a shift in the traditional norm. A similar provision for one-third reservation to women in the Lok Sabha and state Legislative Assemblies is being considered by the parliament as part of the 81st constitutional amendment. These provisions are primarily intended to raise women's awareness and achieve greater gender balance in decision-making. To assess women's political participation, three indicators are used: Participation of voters and candidates in the political process in elections. Second; political attitudes such as political awareness, commitment, and involvement. Finally, Their influence in the political process. However; the participation of women is still very low even after this constitutional protection and legal framework. The issue of low female participation is of particular concern to democracies, and without changing it; true democracy will never be achieved.

### **Objectives of the Study**

- To analyze the factors influencing the political Empowerment of women.
- To examine the awareness level and participation of women leaders' town committee.
- To examine the pros and cons of women political participation

### **Review of Literature**

**Rajani. Jha and Sarita. Kamthan (2012)**<sup>1</sup> study entitled, "leadership in urban India: a case study of Allahabad in Uttar Pradesh" They discussed the two important aspects of leadership, firstly, the level of awareness of leaders second participation level. Study does not present a very impressive picture of the city's emerging leadership, some factors like such as sex, age, education, economic status and caste that influence leadership. Study show that, high educational level may not be a symbol of high political awareness but can play a significant role in decision making and functioning.

**R. Mathaiyan (2014)**<sup>2</sup> in his research work, "women empowerment through local government" The study highlight on the gender basis role of elected representatives in urban bodies. The study shows that the 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment 1992 played an important role in increasing women's participation in local government. The Act provides constitutional guarantee, So that these institutions can work in a democratic way. One-third of the Act is reserved for women. The reservation of seats for women in local bodies has enabled women to participate actively in decision-making bodies in both rural and urban areas. Study; show that his role in public life was limited to casting votes. He denied down opportunities to participate in the decision-making process.

**Anindya Basu & Sukla Bhaduri (2015)**<sup>3</sup> in her research paper "role of elected women representatives in local area development" the paper aims to explore the role of elected women representatives and their achievements. However, empirical studies show that higher class women are more likely to enter the local bodies. The husbands of elected women were found to have a significant influence in the running of the local body at the start of the study. The study reveals several factors that limit the active participation of women in the political arena. Firstly, conservative norms, second, the banning of caste and class, the third factor is the lack of experience.

**Vipin Kumari (2018)**<sup>4</sup> entitled her research work "Women Leadership in Urban Local Bodies: A Study of Elected Women Leaders in Haryana". The 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act added a new dimension by making constitutional provision for the reservation of 1/3 of municipal seats for women. The study found that the majority of elected women believe that the structure of municipalities and NGOs lacks gender mainstreaming and gender balance, which they face difficulties in balancing their responsibilities. The hostile environment and flawed party system, prevailing cultural beliefs, corruption, lack of transparency have also discouraged women's participation in municipal affairs.

### **Methodology**

The present study is confined to women elected representatives at former & present of towns committees of Karnal District of Haryana . The study is descriptive and exploratory research designs have been employed. The Data was collected for the present study from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data which was the base of our study was collected by interview schedule, through questionnaire . Secondary data was collected from books, Haryana urban local bodies report, journals and such other relevant documents and newspapers like Haryana tribune, Pratidin etc. Study area is taken only about the political participation of women in selected town committees namely; Gauripur Town Committee, Bilasipara Town Committee, Chapar Town Committee, Sapatgram Town Committee, Golokganj Town Committee. For this study, a sample of total forty women representatives, eight women selected from each town committee, four former women representative and four present women representative were selected from each municipal committee. Field study was conducted to collect primary data in the selected areas of the study.

**Analysis & Interpretation**

**Table No.1** Awareness Levels of Women in Town Committees

Awareness	Respondent View	
	Yes	No
Do you aware about the powers & functions of TCs	28 (70%)	12 (30%)
Do you aware about the sources of funds of TCs	20 (50%)	20 (50%)
Do you aware about the problems of urban areas	23 (57.50)	17 (42.50)
Do you know about the Urban Developmental Programmes or Schemes	18 (45%)	22 (55%)
Are you aware of your powers, functions and role after being elected	25 (62.50%)	15 (37.50%)

Table 1 Show that 70% of female representatives are aware of the powers and functions of Town Committee while; 30 percent of the women are don't know. 50 percent of the women representatives are aware of the sources of funds of town committees and rest 50 percent don't know. 57.50 percent/majority women councillors are aware about the problems of urban areas while 42.50 don't know. In a further query 55 percent women don't know about the Urban Developmental Programmes and Schemes while; 45 percent women are aware. Majority of (62.50%) women representatives are aware of your powers, functions and role after being elected followed by; 37.50 percent not aware.

**Table No.2** Participation level of Women Representatives in Town committees

Participation level	Respondent View	
	Yes	No
Do you attend the meetings of Town Committees	30 (75%)	10 (25%)
Do you participate actively in the meeting	24 (60%)	16 (40%)
Do you offer any suggestion to solve any problem or issue	20 (50%)	20 (50%)
Do you bring up any issues concerning your ward's problems at town committee meetings?	18 (45%)	22 (55%)
Do the people of your constituency approach you with their problems	10 (25%)	30 (75%)
Are you able to solve the problems of the people alone	14 (35%)	26 (65%)
Are you depending on family members or political party members to solve people's problems?	25 (62.50%)	15 (37.50%)

Table 2 showed the percentage of women representatives on Town committees. study show that the majority of 75 percent the women representatives regularly attend in the meetings of town committees while; 25 percent women not attend the regularly meetings of town committees. It has been discovered that 50 percent of the female representatives offer a suggestion to solve any problem or issue, while; the other fifty percent women do not offer any suggestion to solve any problem or issue. In a further query 75 percent women reported that did not people approach with their problems; instead, they approach the women's representatives' husbands or other male family members. 65 percent women are unable to solve people's problems in alone, while the remaining 35 percent women are able to solve people's problems on alone. Study observed that, the majority of women 62.50 percent depend on their husband or other male family members or party workers to solve people's problems.

**Table No.3** Obstacles or Problems of Women Representatives in the participation in Town committees

Problems	Frequency	Percentage
Burden of Household activities	12	30
Dominating/bias attitude of the male counterparts	12	30

Lack of people's cooperation	6	15
Work done by their family members	7	17.50
None of these	3	7.50
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 3 indicates that majority of 60 percent the women representatives were of the face of burden of household activities and Dominating/bias attitude of the male counterparts, followed by 17.50 percent respondent opinion that their work done by their family members; and 15 percent women respondents stated lack of people cooperation and rest 7.50 percent None of these. "It has been also found that the women members belong to politically background family do not face any kind of biases especially from the male counterparts".

**Table No.4** The main hurdles in the Development of your ward

Hurdles in the development of ward	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of experience	7	17.50
Lack of party members cooperation	3	7.50
Lack of TCs officials cooperation	15	37.50
Lack of public cooperation	5	12.50
More political interference	10	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 4 reveals that 37.50 percent women representative reported that the hurdles in the development of ward lack of officials cooperation followed by 25 percent who reported more political interference; 17.50 percent said lack of experience, 12.50 lack of public cooperation and rest 7.50 percent lack of party member cooperation.

**Table No.5** Suggestions for improving empowerment of Women in Urban Local Governance

Suggestions	Frequency	Percentage
Increased in reservation quota	10	25
Awareness about their rights	8	20
Improvement in socio-economic status of women	2	5
Change in thinking attitude of society	4	10
Training programmes to enhance the capacity of women representatives	16	40
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 5 lists recommendations for increasing women's empowerment in urban local government. 50 percent women representatives were of the opinion that Training programmes and change in thinking attitude of society to enhance the capacity of women representatives. 25 percent women suggest increased in reservation quota, followed by 20 percent women representative reported that awareness about their rights and rest 5 percent women stated that improvement in socio-economic status of women would be helpful for women to improve.

**Finding of the study**

Study observed that 70% of female representatives are aware of the powers and functions of Town committees while; 30 percent of the women are don't know. 50 percent of the women representatives are aware of the sources of funds of town committees and rest 50 percent don't know. 57.50 percent/majority women councillors are aware about the problems of urban areas while 42.50 not aware. In a further query Majority of (62.50%) women representatives are aware of your powers, functions and role after being elected followed by; 37.50 percent not aware. It is observed that majority of 75 percent the women representatives regularly attend in the meetings of town committees. Study observed that, the majority of women 62.50 percent depend on their husband or other male family members or party workers to solve people's problems. Study indicates that majority of 60 percent the women representatives were of the face of burden of household activities and Dominating/bias attitude of the male counterparts. It has been also found that the women members belong to politically background family do not face any kind of biases especially from the male counterparts. During the field study, we found that most of the women representatives have been elected for the first time as the seat was reserved for women. Earlier these seats were occupied by their husbands or any other male members of the family. As most of the women representatives are new and inexperience and do not possesses any formal training to enhance their capacity . It is reveals that 37.50 percent women representative reported that the hurdles in the development of ward lack of officials cooperation; followed by 25 percent who reported more political interference.

**Conclusion & Suggestions**

Women's participation in decision-making bodies is extremely important in the process of increasing women's participation in public life. Haryana , which is thought to be the symbol of rich culture, despite this, progress of

women in political sphere is not in tune with its culture, because in ancient and medieval period women were dependent on men and all expenses of their livelihood were met by It was the sole cause for a pathetic attitude of women in political, economic and in other spheres. Reservation policy for women in local governance has provided women a chance to participate in political arena. It would lay the way for acquiring political power at the local level and enabling participation in decision and policy making at the higher levels. Women would be a part in the project of planning, execution and implementation of development schemes if they were empowered politically. But, still lots of work have to be done related to the women empowerment in a plural society like India; From the above discussion, it may be concluded that the provision of the reservation has helped women to increase political participation across the state and the country. It has been able to bring many positive changes in the status of urban women. It instilled in women such qualities as self-confidence, political awareness, and identity. But there is a long way to go to empower women and turn them into politically participative. The need for to create a barrier-free environment for women by civil society, NGOs, policymakers, lawyers, and most importantly family members. Political education should be imparted amongst the women representatives and Training on administrative work must be provided to them so that they understand the role and procedure of urban local bodies. Last, but not the least, broadening the perspective of men towards women empowerment.

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