

## **Political Empowerment of Women Councilors: A Myth or Reality in Multan**

**Muhammad Javed Akhtar**

Professor, Department of Pakistan Studies,  
Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan, Pakistan  
Email: javidsalyana@bzu.edu.pk

**Shahla Gull**

PhD Scholar, Department of Pakistan Studies,  
Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan, Pakistan

### **Abstract:**

*The role of Pakistani women in politics can best be explained in the working of democratic ideas, principles and institutions which remained under test of different regimes. The disruptive political process marked Pakistan as a case of immature polity in which political actions are not easily marked as different from the socio-religious ones. In this context women are further relegated behind from the male partner in the competitive socio-political set-up. They are given the responsibility of social and political affairs by the patriarch not in equal terms. Further, they have been checked in their social mobility by the customary practices and religious norms. Their private affairs are even under these considerations, and they are not able to define their social and political role. This study is focusing upon the phenomenon of women councilors' empowerment after the increase of their due share at local councils in 2001. Their level of participation in politics has given the sense of sharing to alter the norm that politics is male domain. They remained effective in altering the paradigm of male dominance in town council town level politics.*

**Keywords:** Empowerment, Patriarch, Political Participation, Paradigmatic Shift

### **I. Introduction**

Women empowerment, particularly the aspect of its political empowerment, could only be understood if it is being contextualized in relation to the political system of the state in which it is empirically tested and experientially verified. The empirical reflection will provide the substantial evidence by which the concept of women political empowerment is to be grasped. It will also reflect the sociological and cultural bases of political empowerment of women. Women of Pakistan are bound to act and behave under the operation of different socio-cultural norms that facilitate to grasp the sense of knowing their status in the society. The social construction of women has segregated their role from the male members of the society which is easily and sharply distinguished and differentiated in the domain of politics. Politics is 'public' realm of activity which is separated from 'private' –specific for women. This view has considered politics as male entrepreneur due to cultural traditions of the society. The political aspect of women's life is being judged that how far they had been able to utilize their abilities and capabilities to relieve themselves from the shackles of dependency. So politics is legitimate course by

which they can get emancipation from oppression which may vary from society to society. This study will provide an understanding about the social construction of women's role in politics. It will also highlight the conventional pattern of doing politics by which women had been debarred to take active part in the public sphere.

## **II. Questioning Subjugation of Women**

The societal evolution of Pakistan is under the influence of internal and external forces which has defined its character either as conventional or modern one. These forces are material in nature or in the form of ideas have moulded the perception of people to adjust with. The traditional patterns of the society have projected women as the symbol of honour and sanctity that was further enforced by religious explanations and interpretations. So the domain of their life is seemingly compartmentalized into public and private spheres by those, likely to be called as patriarch. The patriarch is the male who defines the role of women. Filomena M. Critelli expressed similar concerns over the status of women in the society of Pakistan. She stated that 'in rural and tribal settings patriarchal customs establish male authority and power over women's lives to such an extreme that women may be sold and bought (Critelli, 2012: p.673). The domain of politics is supportive for the women in the traditional society of Pakistan to make their existence economically and socially significant. The women leadership in Pakistan and Bangladesh, particularly Benazir Bhutto in Pakistan and Khalida Zia, Hassina Wajid in Bangladesh as Prime Minister projected the image of their respective states as symbol of modernity. The founding father of Pakistan, Quaid-e-Azam M. Ali Jinnah relevantly epitomized the importance of ladies in the advancement of the country in the accompanying words, "no nation can rise to the height of glory unless your women are side by side with you; we are victims of evil customs. It is a crime against humanity that our women are shut up with in the four walls of the houses as prisoners. There is no sanction anywhere for the deplorable condition in which our women have to live" (M Ali Jinnah 1944). Jinnah was exceptionally mindful of the benefit of drawing women into governmental issues and the movement for Pakistan. In 1938 Jinnah said in League's Annual Session, "No nation could make progress without the cooperation of its women. If Muslim women support their men as they did in the days of the Prophet of Islam, we shall soon realize our goal" (Ahmad, 1997: p.60). The image of women is more progressive, reflected through the ideas of founding father of Pakistan, set aside different myths about the state's stance over the women participation in socio-political affairs.

Women's political rights were first granted by New Zealand in 1892, in America 1916 and in U.K. in 1922. In the case of Subcontinent, they got the right to vote in 1928 but it was conditional. In the preparation of 1935 Act, Indian ladies were invited to England to provide their input in relation to their concerns and consequentially their right to vote was conditionally accepted which later came to fruition in 1946 without any qualifications. Pakistan's polity as part of colonial legacy witnessed some of the changes in the urban centres by the intrusion of new technologies, industrialisation, communication network and consumerism. This transformation laid down the bases of social awareness, but on the other hand it dislocated the local communities which in turn increased the influx of women into labour force. This kind of women's mobility is also indebted to colonialism and was being accepted as norm of rationality. It provided a challenge to what was being accepted the status of women in society is 'asymmetrical that is divinely ordained' (Kandiyoti, 1991: p.9).

The role of Pakistani women in politics can better be explained in the working of democratic ideas, principles and institutions. The disruptive political process of Pakistan's political institutions in the form of dismissal of governments and rapidly changing of ministerial offices categorises it as an immature and undeveloped democracy. This kind of political functioning marked Pakistan as case of immature polity in which political actions are not easily marked as different from the socio-religious ones. This kind of political behaviour is being described by LucyanPye as diffused one. This reflection of democracy in Pakistan has forced the leaders to say that 'genius of Pakistan is not able to conform to the ideals of democracy'. So they have to introduce the controlled democracy rather than the consensus based model of functional democracy. They gave primacy to formal democracy rather than the substantive democracy. Women of Pakistan were also made to conform to this kind of formal democracy in which some of the functions of government making are performed but the concerns of their development are easily ignored. In this prevailing scenario, women of Pakistan were facing different challenges in which the issue of their identity which should be constructed by themselves was of high importance. This issue led them to secure the space in political decision making to mark their identity as individual being and active being on the basis of 'political being'. Democratic institutions' legitimacy established only if all and sundry is allowed to take part in the process of decision making without any discrimination. Democracy means to build up consensus on issues. It is a legitimate share of all citizens to develop the consensus. Democracy as a process creates a conducive environment in which participation must be ensured at the level of mass voting and then this is being transferred from one level to another likely from electorate to electors.

Then the electors take part in making the decisions for the total benefit of the community. In establishing the necessary criteria for a democratic process, the democracy theorist Robert Dahl names effective participation of all adults (men and women), inferring equivalent and powerful participation in the self-governmental process and granting all adult citizens this participation equally (Dahl, 2000 : pp.37-38). Hence in the light of this statement, in a democratic country, there should be no discrimination between men and women to take part in politics. The state of Pakistan also ensured equality of all citizens in the constitution but in practice it is still a challenge which has to cross different barriers to open up the space for women.

### **III. Cultural Exposition of Pakistani Women**

Pakistan is a democratic country but unfortunately it is politically less developed as compared to other advanced countries. Women comprise almost half of the population in Pakistan but politically they have been kept behind intentionally in the arena of politics. The major factors behind this phenomenon are the religious interpretations of the clergy class and the contradiction between cultural values and political values. In Pakistan women are also deprived of basic human rights due to structural (customs, values, rituals and stereotypes) differences. In our society men have obvious rights due to culture, customs and norms. In structural differences rights are always being articulated, means things are in a manner which is due to some specific condition. These are instrumental things which create discrimination. Here is the need of structural adjustments to eliminate differences between men and women. To create a space for women, their political participation is necessary so that they would be able to articulate themselves. Gender discrimination can be eliminated only on the basis of first

accepting the sense of equality between the both sexes and then projecting this equality at every level of structural representation.

It is pertinent to note that religion has played an important role to restrict women's active participation in politics in Pakistan. It is religious indoctrination and its interpretation which have demonstrated the role of women in society. The clergy class in Pakistan interpreted the Quranic Ayyah's and Hadith according to their own ideals to reduce the status of women. The clergy has always denied to women equal status as given to men. Their religious interpretations limited the role of women to the private (domestic) sphere by calling them sanctified (in the name of honour). They always urged women to remain in the confinements of their homes. According to their interpretations, public (social) sphere was being considered prohibited for women because of its mandate of free mixing. Purda (veiling) was also being considered another hurdle for women's political activism in Pakistan especially in the early years of independence. Filomena M. Critelli again rightly observed the role of religion in determining the women conditions in the society of Pakistan. She said that Custom, religion and law operate in an intertwined fashion and shape the rights available to women in the family and society. ...Women and girls continue to confront profound disadvantages in marriage and divorce due to region-based customs, idiosyncratic interpretations of Islamic law and weak enforcement of existing laws to protect women's rights (Critelli, 2012 : p.676).

#### **IV. Contesting Perspectives of Women Political Role**

Different views are presented to project the women as rational being and in relation to their capacity, opportunities are explored to make them as change maker rather than change observer. Therefore in the sphere of economic activity they were first considered as the cosharer of economic benefits around the globe while in the second half of the twentieth century it was declared that they should be the part of change which should be made by themselves to shatter the shields of glass ceiling. In the domain of politics it was perceived around the globe that women should have power to realise their dreams and therefore they were chanting their slogans that 'personal is political'. So the suffragist enhanced their level of participation but also provided them a stage from which they argued for their meaningful representation. Later this developed a perspective of 'critical mass' to achieve their desired goals if their representation is increased to the level of more than 30%. Pakistan also felt this need and however gradually increased the quota of women at all level of political representation in Pakistan. Critical mass, as a concept indicates women's descriptive and substantive representation. "Critical mass" connects women to an arrangement that has an effect upon lawmaking bodies and serves to create strategy change. Donley Studlar and Ian McAllister outline critical mass hypothesis that a critical mass of women, once came to " would encourage and legitimize the presence of women in legislatures, leading to even more women being chosen" (Studlar and McAllister, 2002: p.234).

Jaquette has highlighted women as critical mass in these words, "Today, women are recruited aggressively into politics not to right past inequities or to recognize their equal citizenship but to bring a different, explicitly female perspective to the political arena and to appeal to the women's vote. Whether the rationale for increasing female representation is equality or difference, women will have an unprecedented opportunity to put their stamp on politics and to increase the range of alternatives available to policymakers across the globe" (Jaquette, 1997: p.36).

Under this understanding of women representation through quota as critical mass was a courageous step to bolster the status of women in the society in all aspects of life. So as a strategy, Musharaf's regime made an allotment of women quota at local level of governance in 2001. To follow the scheme of critical mass, 33% quota of women representation was ensured at local level to deter the threat of hindrance of conservatism and cultural status-quo. Pakistan also showed its commitment to international protocols for empowering women through the mechanism of structural changes.

Pakistan as a democratic state adopted measures to eliminate the existing gender disparities while observing some of the conventional bondages. Pakistan has ratified 'Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women' (CEDAW) in 1996 and the 'Beijing Platform of Action' (1995). Pakistan has acquainted with some critical activities of incorporating women into political institutions to bolster the image of state as progressive one and by granting this concession it has beaten the impression of her conservativeness. Under Local Government Ordinance 2001, Pakistan had introduced the quota of 33% at local level, while at national and provincial levels it was 17%. So here it is pertinent to mention that these diverse thoughts and perspectives can also be coalesced to mark the status of women in the society of Pakistan, but the need of the time is that how could we share the commitments of different corners working in the realm of women empowerment by grasping the merit of their frameworks which are shared as democratization, universal human rights and egalitarianism. The debate of empowerment of women is easily come to notice and judged if the relevant concepts of male domination are understood in their proper context. Politics is a process of power sharing and authority utilization for the welfare of the community where it is accepted in its legitimate status. So the women of Pakistan have to secure the access to power sources and then be able to share and utilize it to alter their besieged fate. Their participation in politics will sensitize them about the phenomenon of power sharing which will progressively bring them equal to men in most aspects of life and in social behaviour.

## **V. Patriarchy as Sociological Factor of Male Dominance**

It is generally to be noticed that if the issues of political empowerment of women has to be investigated then prevailing traditional setup should be counted for the evaluation of women's role as 'political agent of change'. The relevant issue is that how masculinity expressed itself in determining the social process of the society and by what way it assigned to women a status. Evidently patriarchy is the aspect of masculinity which has very important role in prescribing for women that is acceptable in the society. Patriarchy in its definitional aspect should be understood as relevant cause of women's socio-political life in the society of

Pakistan. For the most part, "patriarchy" implies male control. Kate Millett likewise strikingly depicts the degree of male control in current patriarchal social orders when she clarifies that "the military, industry, technology, universities, science, political offices, finance in short every avenue of power within the society is entirely in male hands" (Millette, 1970: p.25). Millette's judgement about the male domination is based upon the social and traditional factors which further weakened the women's performance in public sphere even if they get the chance to be part of it. She stated that patriarchy is an arrangement of male control which shapes ladies' relationship in domestic and public spheres. Patriarchy is the underlying driver of women's avoidance from open circle. Deniz Kandiyoti called South Asian Societies as "classic patriarchy" described as ladies'

settlement to the current frameworks as opposed to challenge or stand up to (Kandiyoti, 1988: p.278).

Pakistan is one such nation in South Asia at the same time encountering "classic patriarchy". This aspect of life has increased the discretion of men in controlling the lives of women and they seem as adjunct part of their determining schema. Women are relegated to domesticity and private circle is the focal point of their exercises while their open space appearance is restricted. Patriarchy, by and large, placed male in a staggering part in Pakistani society. Andrienne Rich watches that patriarchy is a "social ideological, and political structure in which male by influence, direct weight or through custom, tradition, law, and conventions, behaviour, guideline and the division of work, make sense of what part women may or ought not play in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male( Rich, 1977:p.57).

Patriarchy doles out 'gender specific' part to men and women. Along these lines, this philosophy dispenses women to family parts, and opens the outside expressways to the men. In our society the general presumption is that the political exercises have a place for men and ladies by nature have a place with the 'private sphere' and "politics" is something irregular or odd for them.

## **VI. Formal Picturesque of Women**

The political role of women is inevitable for their just endeavour to attain their rights and in relation to it their responsibilities as equal citizens of the state. Hierarchical structure of the society is not neutral to accept the women as co-sharer of power, but responsibility of the state is to consider its citizens as equal, is the first premise from which the other construction of women will readily to be generated. If the women have to make their identity own then they have to be empowered by granting them a due role in politics. The word "empowerment" is utilized as a part of a wide range of contexts and by various organizations. Its importance relies upon the context in which it is being utilized. Rowlands considers empowerment to be a base up procedure that can't be planned from top-down. To Rowlands, empowerment does not just mean to have admittance to basic leadership but additionally make them capable and qualified to involve in that leadership space (Rowlands, 1995:p.101). Empowerment is not described as an accomplishing energy to overwhelm others, yet rather energy to act with others to impact change'(Stein, 1997:p.7). Empowerment of women is not be achievable through the structural transformation but necessary to dissolve the perspective of essentialism while granting the status of equality to them. Women's strengthening in their capacity and ability along with their sex equality needs "change" in formal structures likely in the constitution, sanctions, tenets and codes. These changes need a vigorous effort to break the grip of cultural traditions and make the women available for new formations in which they may find the support for accommodation. Government of Pakistan has adopted different measures to enhance the status of women and to ensure responsiveness including women political participation and engaging them in decision making process. As women constitute almost half of the population of Pakistan the constitution of Pakistan ensures equal status to women and provides protection for their rights including the rights to vote and contest elections. Article 25 of the constitution 1973 states that;

- All citizens are equal before law and entitled to equal protection of law;
- There shall be no discrimination on the basis of sex alone;

- Nothing in this article shall prevent the state from making any special provision for the protection of women and children.

Similar Article 34 of 1973 constitution of Pakistan further clarifies about the status of women. It states that 'steps shall be taken to ensure full participation of women in all spheres of national life'. Both these sections of Pakistan's constitution reflecting the face appearance of the state as modern one while as a society still there are hurdles which have to be removed to give women due share of participation in public life. In spite of the fact that all the previous constitutions, 1956, 1962, 1973 and provisional order 1985 that accommodated the reservation of seats for ladies in common and national Assemblies, however, this reservation stayed low and constrained their representation from 5 to 10 percent. It is just through the Devolution of Power Plan, 2001, that ladies were given 33 percent representation at all the three levels of government through common quota. It projected the concept of people's authority at grass root level and its utilization by them made it an effective channel of their true representation. It was a breakthrough in the political history of Pakistan to grant a substantive share to women in politics and also fulfilled the constitutional guarantee available to women to their role in politics. Article 32 of 1973 constitution of Pakistan has been implemented which stated that 'the state shall encourage local government institutions composed of elected representatives of the areas concerned and in such institutions special representation will be given to peasants, workers and women'.

There is an agreement that gender quota is a powerful apparatus in increasing women representation in power circles and guaranteeing their nearness to formal structure of politics. The representation of women in union council through local bodies' elections has eased their access to political and administrative affairs of that unit of governance which in one way or the other affected the base of resource utilization and their redistribution. Women's assertion as a political worker could only be made possible at the level of union council if they had been connected with the social and financial redistributive equity in the society.

Similar concerns have also been shared by the report of United Nations Development Program on local governance of Pakistan. Report commented over the situation of local governance as 'This consists of elected local authorities having the authority and responsibility to address all problems that are within their legal mandate and ability to solve. This increases the overall quality and effectiveness of governance and increases power at sub-level, as well as representation and participation of citizens' (UNDP, 1999:p.34). This system of government involved people in the affairs of government and the system of local governance has the capacity to hold the incumbents accountable due to its limited circle of governance and jurisdiction. Waseem rightly pointed out that 'it promises greater accountability and transparency between the people and state' (Waseem, 2006:p.167).

The women seemingly hailed the devolution plan introduced by General Musharraf and they welcomed the reservation of 33% seats for women. It had been demanded by the women rights activists and human rights organizations say that institutions of Local Government should be egalitarian and not hierarchal and they should also be accountable and not autocratic. The striking element of this arrangement was to reinforce the local government framework and the exchange of force at the grass root

level. Article 140A of the Constitution of Pakistan, 1973 accommodates the foundation of a local government framework and devolution of political, authoritative and money related obligation and power to the chose agents of the local governments. The local government empowers the general population to deal with their own particular issues at local level. The general population practice their energy and tackle their issues at the grass root level.

### **VII. Research Methodology**

The research is descriptive and explanatory in nature. Subject to this exploration is to investigate the part of ladies in local governmental issues to show that how far the social qualities had given the space to the ladies. In addition to it modern values will be evaluated in the perspective that either at what level they are contradictory to the cultural values or at what level they may be in adjustment with them. This perspective is indicating that the domain of this research is qualitative and it is based on deductive and as well as inductive method to proceed. The present study is restricted to 'Shah Rukn e Alam Town' to assess the role, representation and the impact of empowerment on women in the local government of district Multan. The primary source as data has been gathered through mixed nature (open and close ended) questionnaire to support the generalisations. Open ended interviews of lady councillors, Nazim and Naib Nazim (convener) have been conducted. Proceedings of Town Assembly and City Council have also been used to determine the level of women empowerment.

### **VIII. Issue of Women Empowerment: An Analysis of Socio-political Bases**

Women's share in power implies adequate representation at all levels of governance to advance the interests and opportunities for their sister community. In the underlying section of analyses of the responses, different socio-political factors have been identified which have in one way or the other tried to obstruct the real empowerment of women.

#### **A. Critical Analysis of the Respondents of the Questionnaires and the Issue of Women Empowerment**

This study has explored the trends of political awareness of the women of the region of Multan. This study dealt with the issue of women's empowerment on the bases of cultural and political factors. These two bases were exposed to determine the political empowerment of women. This section of the study is based on the observation of the participants of the system and the stake holders of the system to judge not only the vitality and strength of the local government system in terms of deliverance but as well to project the image of women that how far they had been accommodated into the political process for asserting their political rights judiciously to actuate the sense of equality. Proceedings of the different union councils, town councils and district councils have also been explored to see that how the mechanism of working at the level of union council was operative and in what way women councillors made their input and contribution in different discussions over policy issues. The reflection of the level of their participation will be oozed out while peeping into the record of the union council proceedings. It will substantiate the responses of the questionnaires in relation to the understanding of the phenomenon of women empowerment.



### B. Socio-cultural Influence on Women's Political Decision Making

In this section of analysis, all related themes of questions, asked from women councillors and male voters, have been lumped together to project the influence of social milieu on the political choice of women contesters.

**Table 1: Women Councillor**

<b>Q2. Did you decide for yourself the candidature in the elections?</b>					
		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	<b>Yes</b>	7	28.0	28.0	28.0
	<b>No</b>	18	72.0	72.0	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	25	100.0	100.0	

**Table 2**

<b>Q3. Did the family and members of your locality influence your decision of candidature?</b>					
		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	<b>Yes</b>	17	68.0	68.0	68.0
	<b>No</b>	8	32.0	32.0	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	25	100.0	100.0	

**Table 3: Male Voter**

<b>Q2. Are women influenced from their family or community pressure?</b>					
		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	<b>Yes</b>	77	77.0	77.0	77.0
	<b>No</b>	23	23.0	23.0	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	100	100.0	100.0	

The response of the both questions showed that their opinion was under the influence of their kith and kin along with the pressure of locality where they had been resided. It has indicated that there were other factors and elements which were involved in their personal opinion. Similarly the response has depicted that both their family and society had influenced over their decision. It meant that women councillors had their opinion but they were not independent in assertion of that opinion. This is a question mark over the freedom of women's opinion which seems to have been influenced by cultural norms and patriarchal structures of our society. It is the overall culture of our society where women are always dependent on their male members. Nevertheless, women were making their presence felt in politics. According to Farzana Bari, "the fact that a huge number of women had taken active political role itself triggered social change, creating waves in the country's barnyard where traditional power structures still dominate the social and political lives of people (Bari,2009).

### C. Political Decision Making and Women's Political Assertion

The fundamental principal of Local Government is to involve people in decision making to empower them. In this section of analysis, women's involvement in decision making and their political assertion will be examined.

**Table 4: Women Councillor**

<b>Q4. Did you have affiliation with any political party?</b>					
		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	<b>Yes</b>	18	72.0	72.0	72.0
	<b>No</b>	7	28.0	28.0	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	25	100.0	100.0	

**Table 5**

<b>Q7.Were you involved in decision making?</b>					
		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	<b>Yes</b>	17	68.0	68.0	68.0
	<b>No</b>	8	32.0	32.0	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	25	100.0	100.0	

**Table 6**

<b>Q8.Did you face the hostile behaviour of your male colleagues?</b>					
		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	<b>Yes</b>	19	76.0	76.0	76.0
	<b>No</b>	6	24.0	24.0	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	25	100.0	100.0	

**Table 7: Male Voters**

<b>Q7.What do you think that women should gain equal political powers?</b>					
		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	<b>Yes</b>	48	48.0	48.0	48.0
	<b>No</b>	52	52.0	52.0	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	100	100.0	100.0	

In Musharraf's regime practical measures had been adopted to attract women in politics by reserving their seats to maintain their equal political status without any discrimination. It was the beginning of a new chapter in the political participation of women in Pakistan. According to Beijing Platform for Action 1995, "Women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision making process and access to power are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace". So it is evident from this statement that women should also be given equal status in decision making process.

The response of lady councillors has provided that women councillors' inclusion into Tehsil Council or Town Assembly was due to their political affiliation which is being endorsed by their response. The response of lady councilors has provided that women were well aware of their status in the local tier of the local government in which they were functioning. It has also endorsed that women have the capability to involve themselves in decision making process of the local government. So it is evident from this statement that women should also be given equal status in decision making process.

The debate has provided the social influence in terms of male dominance. It reflects our male dominated political culture where women are considered to live in private sphere because it is apprehended by our men that women can just perform their household responsibilities better than the political affairs. It has indicated that women were involved in decision making process but they had to face opposition from their male colleagues. Male voters replied that women cannot play active role. it is the overall culture of our society where women are always dependent on the male members of their society. This debate reflects the strong projection of social influence in terms of male dominance in our society. In this regard we can include that the former working theories of development were not based on gender focus, that's why Claudia Derichs called them gender blind. Claudia criticizes traditional transitions theories as gender-blind although women have proved to be important agents of social and political change (Fleschenberg,

2009: p.xvii). This statement reflects that women have enough potential to create social and political change in the society. To conclude this debate, AzraAsgher Ali and M.Javaid Akhtar remarks in their article on ‘Women Empowerment’ are worth mentioning, “The news is good. Women have entered in the political/electoral process in large numbers-the process is irreversible” (Ali and Akhtar,2012: p.226). Women’s increased political participation has opened the new formal spaces and choices for women and also has inspired a large number of common women to think about new possibilities for their participation in public sphere.

#### D. Women’s Priority Issues versus General Development

This section would help to depict that among men and women, who took part more actively in women specific issues related to their social development.

**Table 8: Women Councillors**

<b>Q6.What you did to uplift the social status of women?</b>					
		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	<b>Social Work</b>	20	80.0	80.0	80.0
	<b>Education</b>	3	12.0	12.0	92.0
	<b>Health</b>	2	8.0	8.0	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	25	100.0	100.0	

**Table 9: Male Councillors**

<b>Q7.Did you work practically for the social uplift of women?</b>					
		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	<b>Yes</b>	18	72.0	72.0	72.0
	<b>No</b>	7	28.0	28.0	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	25	100.0	100.0	

These above given statistical description indicates that women councillors were more concerned about social upgradation of of their fellow beings. It has indicated that women councillors had significant political insight for the social up gradation of women as compare to their male colleagues. In the below section, the record of the proceedings has also provided an insight in to the issues which were relevant more to women. AzraRajjab requested in the procession of the house, for the grant of 5 lac rupees for the availability of sewing machines for widows and deserving women at the local level. This showed that women members of the town worked practically for the social up gradation of their fellow gender who were economically dependent upon their men (Rajjab, 2007).

Here is presented another proceeding by women member of the town regarding health sector.Town member NailaBano suggested in her presentation that the construction of free dispensary was indispensable for the poor people. She argued that maternity centre was the major concern of the local inhabitants. She requested for the provision of a free dispensary for poor people who cannot afford expensive doctors and pharmacy (Bano, 2005). This proceeding has indicated the great concern of female members regarding health issues of the common masses.

Ms Rahat Zertaj in her table item argued against the privatization of educational institutions. She stated that this step of government would definitely close the doors of education to general people and would increase illiteracy (Zertaj, 2002). Hence women members of the City Council appealed to the government to withdraw this provision. In

another proceeding women member ShaziaArif demanded for the construction of a room along with veranda for a Government Girls School. These proceedings have depicted that women were well aware of educational importance. So it is being endorsed in their proceedings that they worked practically for the social up gradation of general women. The above mentioned discussion shows that not only the responses but also the proceedings reflect that women councillors took part in the decisions actively and brought the different issues which have their nature of social development to the notice of the Nazim and male Councillors of the house. It is pertinent to note here that women councillors worked enthusiastically and diligently for their empowerment.

#### **E. Acquisition of Financial Powers**

The most important element of this system was that financial schemes would be viable on the basis of regeneration of its own resources while applying taxation. In this section of analysis, questions were asked from women councillors and male voters to project the social influence.

**Table 10: Women Councillor**

**Q14-Do you think that financial autonomy was pre-requisite for the better functioning of the town affairs?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	23	92.0	92.0	92.0
	No	2	8.0	8.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

**Table 11: Male Voters**

**Q8.Do you think that for the better functioning of political affairs, financial autonomy was pre-requisite for women?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	61	61.0	61.0	61.0
	No	39	39.0	39.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Pakistan is signatory to Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). National Plan of Action for CEDAW execution has been produced. It is required to submit customary reports to the UN Committee to present advancement of the National Plan of Action. As per National Plan of Action, projects for 2011-12 included, “activities of the federal, provincial and district governments and some attached departments/autonomous organization will be consolidated for empowerment of women through political, legal and socio economic reforms. For skill enhancement of women especially rural women, existing infrastructure/institutions in the provincial government and of NGOs in potential rural areas in least developed regions will be utilized. Services to women in distress would be expanded. Women issues would also be addressed through Alternate Dispute Resolution in order to provide free, quick and effective method to dispense justice”.

When women enter in politics on their male family head’s decisions then they become mediator and decision makers and public service deliverer for common people, especially for their neighbouring women. They become responsible to serve their area and people through acquiring more and more resources from the council to get their area related development works done. In this section of analysis, the purpose to highlight the financial powers does not mean funds allocation for women because finance was

provided on the basis of the proposal of schemes. The remarks of Farzana Bari reflect the development situation in Pakistan. She stated that, “access to education, employment and health is directly linked with women’s ability to create space for themselves in politics and development”(Bari,2005: p.9). The above mentioned tables have provided that women were well aware of the fact that financial powers were necessary for the general social up gradation. On the other hand the response of the male voters has reflected the social projection of male influence. The fundamental principal of Local Government is to empower people by involving them in decision making process. The most important element of this system is that the finance would be generated from itself from taxation. In our society, there is squeezed base of economic activity and relatively there is low level of taxation, necessary to fulfil the development needs of a district.

#### F. Issue of Equal Representation

In this section of analysis, the nature of the questions was related to equal representation of women in politics to depict the social influence of male domination in our society.

**Table 12: Female Voters,**

<b>Q8.What do you think that women should have equal representation in politics?</b>					
		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	<b>Yes</b>	76	76.0	76.0	76.0
	<b>No</b>	24	24.0	24.0	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	100	100.0	100.0	

**Table 13: Male Voters**

<b>Q5.Women should have equal representation in politics as compare to men?</b>					
		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	<b>Yes</b>	41	41.0	41.0	41.0
	<b>No</b>	59	59.0	59.0	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	100	100.0	100.0	

**Table 14: Nazim**

<b>Q8.Do you think that women should gain equal representation in politics?</b>					
		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	<b>Yes</b>	6	60.0	60.0	60.0
	<b>No</b>	4	40.0	40.0	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	10	100.0	100.0	

**Table 15: Male Councillors**

<b>Q4.Do you think that according to representation all members were granted equal status without gender and social discrimination?</b>					
		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	<b>Yes</b>	7	28.0	28.0	28.0
	<b>No</b>	18	72.0	72.0	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	25	100.0	100.0	

The use of quotas and other temporary special measures is regulated in CEDAW article 4, and the CEDAW Committee strongly encourages the use of quotas for the political empowerment of women. A quota system implies that, “Women must constitute a certain number or percentage of the members of a body...”(Dahlerup,1998: p.92). In

this section of analysis women equal representation has been questioned to show the relation with the variable.

Collected data has provided that general women were also aware of the capabilities of their fellow gender and they were fully confident about their capacity and capabilities to engage themselves in community. On the other hand male voters denied this statement. When the same question was asked to male councillors with a slight difference, 72%(No) response depicts that social and gender discrimination had not been avoided in election. It again shows the male domination in social set up of the community. Nazims gave 60% response in the favour of women councilors. This debate depicts the cultural norm of male dominant society where women are always considered inferior to their opposite gender. Female voters' response shows that they have faith in the abilities of their fellow gender. It is pertinent to note here that more than half of the response of Nazims was in the favour of women equal representation which leads to the transformation in women empowerment. The statement of the Chair Person of the 'Punjab Commission on the Status of Women' Fouzia Waqar also indicated the endorsement of the above mentioned question. She argued that, "it is substantial for the best governance that women should be given more representation and participation in local government system so that they can play their effective role at the grass root level. She said that women have always proved their representation in the local bodies system. A general women can access easily to the lady councillor (instead of MPA) without any hesitation for the solution of her problems because lady councillors are more aware of the problems of their locality and surroundings"(Daily Kabrein:17 October, 2015).

## **IX. Conclusion**

Many bold and positive steps had been taken in Musharraf era and one of them was the reservation of 33% quota of women to attract fresh breed of women into politics and to make them feel their presence in politics on the basis of equality. There are some of the insights have been drawn from the responses of the respondents in relation to the subject of women's interest to take part in politics and how far the system in itself was supportive in encouraging them to be the part of it. This could be divided into two segments, first one is about the impact of women political initiative and the second one is related to the institutional constraints and as well the role of the social taboos in restricting the women socio-political mobility. This new system and political model has boosted up women. Due to the opening and development of this system women are now very well aware of their due political rights. They are now aware of their position in office. They are now able to struggle whatever the circumstances have allowed them to move in. Women were appreciated and they participated in discussion on the issues of general in nature and sometimes specifically related to women. They were well aware of general development and their presence in terms of their participation in discussions was in itself marking their due concerns on the different issues of local development. It has been found that they were able to get the attention of their male colleagues at the level of union council and town council which was the first opening in their upward mobility at the ladder of politics. They take part to make their opinion at the local level rather than to impose it over others. They were encouraged seemingly in the system to develop the consensus on the issues of local nature. This depicts that women were mobilized and its rippling effect was also realized in the society. This is the starting point of their practical inclusion in politics. The question is now that how much they are able to implement or execute their decisions. This is the question of their structural constraints rather than the

question of awareness. The women who were elected as councilors of the local governments had not enough skills to accomplish their role. The training was much necessary to understand the role of local self government.

When we talk about the constraints which were faced by women, one thing is important to note that their level of participation had been restricted. This restriction is not being imposed by one individual but by the inbuilt construct of the system in whole is responsible for their limited role. This restriction is varied in levels. Sometimes this restriction has been imposed by the structure. Due to this structure it is visible that women are not at the office of Nazim and they are under the dominant position of Nazim. So the Nazim is at the cordial position, who is controlling the affairs of the Union Council. Hence women are in subordinate position to Nazim and they have to rely much over the decisions which have been taken by their Nazim. Another thing is pertinent to note that how much the institutions, society and Union Councils were supportive to women in their political roles. Bureaucratic system has also created hurdles or barriers to women political participation. Due to these factors women are not able to get their due share in politics. Though this system has conferred very little powers to women councilors but it was the starting point of what became a new political system for them. Now it is women's responsibility to take meaningful steps for gaining a deeper understanding of women's political participation to have a meaningful impact over political issues and problems at the local level.

## References

- Abid-I-Qulb, S. (2004). *Development of Local Government in the Punjab: A Critical Assessment*. Lahore: Beacon Books.
- Ahmad, Akbar.S.(1997). *Jinnah, Pakistan and Islamic Identity: The Search for Saladin*. London: Routledge.
- Ali,A.A. and Akhtar, J. (2012). Empowerment and Political Mobilization of Women in Pakistan : A Descriptive Discourse of Perspectives, *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences(PJSS)*, Vol.32, No.1.pp.221-228
- Aurat Publication and information Services Foundation(2006). *Citizens Campaigns for Women's Participation in Local Government Elections 2001 and 2005*. Retrieved from [http://www.af.org.pk/Citizens\(13.05.2016\)](http://www.af.org.pk/Citizens(13.05.2016)).
- Bari, F. (2005). *Women's Political Participation: Issues and Challenges (Draft)*. EGM/WPD-EE/2005/EP.12, Bangkok, Thailand.
- Bari, F. (2009). *Role and Performance Assessment of Pakistani Women Parliamentarians 2002-07*, Pattan, Islamabad.
- City Council Proceeding (2002). Multan.
- Critelli, F.M. (2012). Between Law and Custom : Women, Family Law and Marriage in Pakistan. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, Vol. 43, No.5.pp.673-693
- Dahl, Robert (2000). *On Democracy*. New Haven, N : Yale University Press.
- Dahlerup, D. (1998). 'Using Quotas to Increase Women's Political Representation', in Karam, Azza. (ed.). *Women in Parliament : Beyond Numbers*. International IDEA.
- Dahlerup, D. (2009). Increasing Women's Political Representation: New Trends in Gender Quotas. In Karam, Azza (ed.). *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*. Stockholm, Sweden: International IDEA.
- Daily Khabrain*(Urdu), October 17, 2015.

- Fleschenberg, A. (2009). Some Introductory Reflections, in Ayaz, A. and Fleschenberg, A.(ed.). *The Gender Face of Asian Politics*. Karachi: Oxford University Press.
- Global Gender Gap Report (2014),World Economic Forum (The Global Gender Gap index was first introduced by the world Economic Forum in 2006 as a framework for capturing the magnitude of gender based disparities and tracking their progress. The index benchmarks national gender gaps on economic, political, education and health criteria.
- Hartmann, H. (1996). The unhappy marriage of marxism and feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union. In V.D. Lippit (ed.). *Radical Political Economy: Explorations in Alternative Economic Analysis*. London: M.E. Sharp.
- Jaquette, J.S. (1997). Women in Power: From Tokenism to Critical Mass, *ForeignPolicy*, No. 108,pp. 23-37.
- Johannes (2003). *Institutions and Development: An Overview*. OECD Development Centre. Johnson, A. (1997). *The gender Knot: Unravelling our Patriarchal Legacy*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Kandiyoti, D. (1988). Bargaining with Patriarchy. *Gender and Society*, Vol.2, No.3.pp. 274-290.
- Kandiyoti, D. (1991). Women, Islam and the State. *Middle East Report*, No 173. 18
- King, E. and Mason, A. (2001). *Engendering Development : Through Gender Equality in Rights, Resources and Voice*. World Bank Policy Research Report, Washington D.C.
- Millette, K. (1970). *Sexual Politics*. New York: Doubleday.
- Muhammad Ali Jinnah (1944). *Pakistan-A Country Study*.US library of Congress Report.
- Naqvi, T. H. (2000). *Governance's Blueprint for Devolution of Power, Restoration of Democracy*. Contemporary Affairs Digest, Book Twenty Three, Lahore: CaravanEnterprises.
- National Commission on the Status of Women, (2010). *Study on Local Bodies System and its Impact on Women*. Islamabad.
- Rai, M. Shirin (2000). *International Perspective on Gender and Governance*. Great Britain: Macmillan Press.
- Rich, A.(1977). *Of Women Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*. New York: Norton.
- Rowlands, J. (1995). Empowerment examined. *Development in practice*.Vol.5, No.2. pp. 101-107.
- Shah Rukn-E-Alam Town Proceeding(2005). Multan.
- Shah Rukn-E-Alam Town Proceeding(2007). Multan.
- Stein, J.(1997). *Empowerment and Women's Health :Theory, Methods and Practices*. London: Zed Books.
- Studlar, D.T. and McAllister, I.(2002). Does a Critical Mass Exist? A Comparative Analysis of Women's Legislative Representation since 1950. *European Journal of Political Research*,Vol. 41,No.2.pp. 233-253.
- UNDP (1995).*Human Development Report*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- UNDP (1999). *Decentralization: A Sampling of Definitions*.
- Waseem, M.(2006).*Democratization in Pakistan; A Study of 2002 Elections*. Karachi: OxfordUniversity Press.
- World Developing Report (2002). *Building Institutions: Complement, Innovate, Connect, and Compete*.