

A Comparative Study of Women in Local Government in India and Pakistan

Nadeem Malik*

Development Studies Program, School of Social and Political Sciences, The University of Melbourne, Australia.

**Corresponding Author: Nadeem Malik, Development Studies Program, School of Social and Political Sciences, The University of Melbourne, Australia*

ABSTRACT

Women's participation and representation in politics at the local level is considered important for gender equity and women's empowerment. The recent wave of decentralisation in the late 1990s in India and Pakistan promised to solve women-related community problems at the grass-root level and more importantly, to empower them socially, economically and politically. This article demonstrates the extent to which such aspirations could be realized.

Keyword: *women's political representation, local government, India, Pakistan*

INTRODUCTION

The decade of the 1980s saw an increasing enthusiasm for decentralisation in developing countries. The concept itself was part of the good governance agenda of the World Bank and donor countries in the first world (Malik, 2016). It was thought that the failure of earlier development paradigms (especially the structural adjustment program) was due to bad institutional arrangement, corruption, and lack of accountability of government institutions (Malik, 2016). It was believed that unless more inclusive, appropriate and modern market-oriented institutions were introduced in developing countries, people's empowerment, economic growth and poverty reduction was not possible (Malik, 2016).

The decentralisation approach was based on the assumption that bringing decision making closer to grassroots communities, would strengthen electoral institutions, democracy and civil society making bureaucracy more efficient and less corrupt. Also, priority was given to more female representation in local government institutions. It was believed that decentralisation would empower women as well (Malik, 2016).

However, what the empirical evidence suggests is that the predatory interests had managed to reinvent themselves in the new democracy at the local level. Thus, decentralisation could not produce 'good governance' idealized in the neo-institutionalist scheme of the international financial

institutions and the donor countries. With few exceptions, this is most vividly illustrated by the rise of political gangsters in the leadership of parties, parliaments and executive bodies at the local level in most countries¹. The failure of decentralizing was due to inadequate local government framework, ineffective implementation or capture of local government by interest groups or a combination of these factors (Malik, 2009).

There are, of course, limits to the way the examples of local governance experiments can be generalised across all countries within the less-developed world. Local officials can certainly be found who have performed relatively well compared to other governments in developing countries such as in the cases of Karnataka in India and Porto Alegre in Brazil (Dickovick, 2011; Heller, 2001; Manor & Crook, 1998;). However, in most cases in developing countries, the reforms that took place, in the absence of any reforms in the power structures, did not allow for them to be sustained (Malik, 2016). They were dissipated under pressures of money politics and political thuggery, which underpinned the working of democracy in most of these countries at the local and national levels.

¹For example, see: Paul S (2001); Paul S, Lewis BD (1996) Rondinelli D, McCullough J and Johnson R (1989); Rosenau JN (1995);

Schonwalder G (1997); Smith BC (1985); Souza C (1998) of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs 40: 145-148.

In some cases, this has led to the re-centralisation of governance.

The cases of decentralisation in India and Pakistan present an interesting comparison. After independence, India formed a republican polity with the universal adult franchise and initiated the process of political modernisation and democratisation in the country. However, political modernisation remained confined to the state and national level politics. The rural society was mostly feudal. The first challenge was, therefore, to transform rural society into a more democratic one. This necessitated the implementation of democratic decentralisation in the country. The democratic decentralisation was conceived in the form of panchayat raj institutions². This provided opportunities to rural women to take leadership roles in the panchayats. This, however, did not mean that women were necessarily politically empowered throughout India.

In most cases, they were used as proxies for their male members of the family who represented them in panchayats. Nevertheless, the process provided space for women to learn politics and achieve a certain level of independence gradually. The state of Karnataka, for the reasons given in the next section, became exemplary in terms of more women representation and empowerment.

Unlike India, the case of Pakistan demonstrates that right from the outset, the purpose of decentralisation was not to decentralize power and authority but to meet two prime objectives. First, strengthening of civil and military bureaucracies to establish the most centralized and coercive government structures through the political marginalisation of mainstream political parties and; second to co-opt newly emerging politicians from local councils who could act as conduits between the local constituencies and military established governments (Malik & Rana, 2019).

The history of decentralisation in Pakistan reveals that the central tendency underlying major experiments with local governments primarily conducted by military regimes was to accumulate power further (Malik & Rana, 2019). The civilian governments, on the other hand, were reluctant to establish strong local governments because provincial ministers and members of provincial parliaments wanted to keep development funds in their hands to build their networks of personalised patronage (Malik &

² Local government institutions are known as 'panchayat raj institutions' in India

Rana, 2019). Such a situation existed because of continuous and long periods of military rule that systematically weakened political parties and democratic political culture that could bring any meaningful change (Malik & Rana, 2019)..

In this context, despite a long history of women's struggle in Pakistan since the pre-partition period, women were not given significant representation in the national and provincial assemblies or local governments. The few women in the national and provincial assemblies have been usually from the upper classes and inherited their seats in the national and provincial legislatures from families or because of the blessings of male political leaders (Khattak, 1996). Moreover, women's issues were never given precedence in their agenda. In local governments, women hardly had any significant representation. However, in 2000, the military regime of General Musharraf provided substantial representation (33 percent) to women in local governments. This was an outcome of the long-standing demand and struggle of women's organisation, such as Women Action Forum, Aurat Foundation, Shirkat Gah, and the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan along with a worldwide trend towards decentralisation and gender empowerment and international donors' pressures

Overall, one of the major reasons for keeping women away from the corridors of state institutions and politics was due to Pakistan's identity as a Muslim state, which the military (according to the notion of Two Nation Theory)³ tried to maintain to distinguish Pakistan's identity from India (Jalal: 1991). It was professed that the Islamic interpretation of social relations stressed women's role within the household (ibid: 1991). Women's participation outside the home, therefore, was always considered to be against the very identity of the Muslims of Pakistan (ibid: 1991).

³ The Two Nation Theory was an ideological weapon used by the Muslim League during its struggle for the formation of a separate homeland for the Muslims of the subcontinent. It was professed that Hindus and Muslims are two different nations, as they have different religions and therefore could not live together. This theory had no utility after the formation of Pakistan for the Muslims as the other nation was no more. However, the first military government in Pakistan revived this theory in order to subvert the very concept of Pakistan as a federation having different nationalities. According to the Two Nation Theory, it was emphasized that Pakistan is not a federation but one nation as the majority of population is Muslim. The concept of a nation was thus explained in communal terms. This also had a significant impact on women's rights and political representation.

WOMEN IN LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN INDIA

It is generally acknowledged that democratic decentralisation has widened the base of democracy in India by involving the marginalized and the women in the process of governance (Mueller, 2016). Democratic decentralization has given way to the emergence of women’s representation and leadership in the panchayats. Previously, the patriarchic society had confined women to the household chores. The traditional caste panchayats which were decision-making bodies of the villages denied access to women as well as the low cast Dalits. Women lacked a voice in upper-caste rural socio-political life. However, lower caste women had several opportunities to participate in local governments (Kudva, 2003). The constitutional mandate making one-third of the seats in the panchayat reserved for women facilitated the process of incorporating more women. It is noteworthy that there are more than 1 million elected women panchayat members in the country, which is 42 per cent of the total elected panchayat members (Kudva, 2003). Thus, in some of the states, the number of women panchayat members exceeds the proportion that is provided in the law.

However, the extent to which women have been empowered is not clear. One example that is presented as a success story in terms of overall decentralisation and women’s empowerment, especially at the rural level is that of Karnataka. The secret behind Karnataka’s success is strong governance based on a competitive party system, free press, professional civil service and a sustained mechanism of public scrutiny of those in power. In short, Karnataka has a public culture of accountability. Nevertheless, the above prerequisites for successful decentralisation were present in taka before decentralisation reforms and were not an outcome of the latter, which proves that societies with a more developed public culture of accountability and strong civil society have a better chance of successful decentralisation including women’s empowerment.

In Karnataka, a large number of women became presidents and members of panchayats because of reserved seats and offices of Chairpersons. The enhanced quota for women (compared to the previous regime) and the category-wise reservation has also brought into panchayats a large proportion of ‘first generation’ elected representatives (see Table1). Women’s membership out numbers the assigned quota of one- third reservation. Together for all the three panchayats, 42.91 percent (almost 43percent) of the membership is occupied by women.

Table1. Membership Representation of Women in Karnataka PRIs

No.	Panchayat	Total members	Women
1	Zilla Panchayat	1005	373
2	Taluk Panchayat	3695	1555
3	Gram Panchayat	91402	39318
4	Total	96102	41246
5	Percentage to the total	100.00	42.91

Source: Government of Karnataka.

The increased presence of Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) in Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) which had otherwise been an exclusively male domain, brought about by the vigorous implementation of State initiatives has given a semblance of political identity for women in the landscape of governance across the State. One of the underlying philosophies of the State towards engendering governance is to empower women—a process that to some extent enabled them to overcome the traditional barriers which place certain handicaps in their participation and performance as elected representatives.

Overall, in Karnataka due to well-established system of public accountability and well-developed civil society, we see a considerably evolving strategies to break the barriers not to force women to fit into the political arena but to make the political system more women-friendly (Sivanna& Gayathridevi, 2012). In terms of positive outcomes, several micro-level studies point out that about 80-90per cent of women attend panchayat meetings regularly. Given their sheer numbers, one might conclude that democracy has become more participatory than before at least at the grassroots level (Mohanty et al. 2013). Despite facing numerous problems, women’s performance in Karnataka matches that of males and is in no way inferior to them. The fact that women are probably more suitable for running village panchayats than their male counterparts is now accepted by a sizeable segment of the population (Sivanna & Gayathridevi, 2012).It is now well documented that women elected in panchayats have shown impressive performance, especially in health and education sectors and bringing a significant change in the living conditions of their communities (Deininger et.al, 2011).

However, it is observed that the caste background of women is an important factor in their emergence as panchayat leaders (Deininger et.al, 2011). Unlike in the case of male leaders, the dominant caste has not facilitated the emergence of women leaders in their communities. It is noteworthy that most of the panchayats’ women

leaders are from the lower social order. The fact that in some states, the number of women in panchayats has exceeded the one-third provision can be explained very convincingly concerning the caste system and its bearing upon the rise of women's leadership. It is observed that the upper castes because of their stronger thrust on patriarchy are reluctant to let their womenfolk to enter the village politics. Therefore, the representation of women from upper castes is restricted only to whatever is provided by the law, i.e. one-third. The situation is quite encouraging in case of representation from the lower castes (Sivanna & Gayathridevi, 2012). The number of women leaders in panchayats from lower castes is considerably higher than the one-third reservation provided by the law. The high caste women are restricted to domestic activities. They rarely come forward to take up work in the various government schemes operated in the village. Their families are highly patriarchal, and therefore women are not allowed to participate in public affairs (Sivanna & Gayathridevi, 2012). This is the reason for the overwhelming representations of lower caste women in the PRIs. She opines that the higher castes have not allowed their women to enter PRIs due to the rigid caste values and the fear of being marginalised if their women exercise political power by holding village-level political offices

In other words, the lower castes are electing more women to represent them in the panchayats, whereas the upper caste is just adhering to the legal provision of one-third. It can be argued that contradictory to the earlier picture' wherein the dominant upper castes used dummy lower-caste women to contest elections from the seats reserved for general women, the lower caste women have wrested more seats from their male counterparts than from the upper caste women.

Despite the prevalence of patriarchy and male-dominated political system, an increasing number of women are entering the electoral fray at the local level. There is a significant improvement in the support extended by the families to their female. However, when we look at their participation in politics vis-à-vis their political affiliation, there has only been a marginal increase in the number of households with female members having affiliation with political parties. Even those having political affiliation, a very small percentage of women are the office bearers of political parties either at local or district levels.

It is significant to note here that despite being drawn into village politics consequent to their

entry into gram panchayats (GPs) and despite enjoying a better support from the family members to join any political party, women have, by and large, remained alienated from the mainstream politics or continue to remain obscure in the larger politics. This is not to suggest that women contesting GP elections have remained non-partisan or were above political leanings; a vast majority do have clear political leanings. The picture that emerges from the preceding discussion suggests an overwhelmingly male-dominated political process where women continue to play a 'useful' but non-descriptor secondary role in the larger politics.

WOMEN IN LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN PAKISTAN

The government formed after the independence of Pakistan was liberal (Shaheed, Zia and Warraich: 1998). It, therefore, took some measures such as universal franchise, equal rights to education and employment and reserved seats for women in the national and provincial legislatures (ibid: 1998). Three military regimes made the most significant attempts to introduce local governments: 1) Basic Democracy Ordinance, 1959 by General Ayub Khan, Local Government Ordinance, 1979 by General Zia-ul-Haq and the Devolution Plan, 2001 by General Musharraf. Ayub Khan and General Zia-ul-Haq regimes did not provide women to be part of local governments (Malik & Rana, 2019). General Musharraf, however, for the first time, provided 33 percent reserved seats to women in local governments. This was possible because of the worldwide wave of good governance and decentralisation paradigms informed by neoliberalism that saw an intensification of labour by women in the South as the 'solution' to poverty as well as gender inequality (Wilson, 2011).

Overall, successive governments did little to improve women's political participation. According to Shaheed, Zia & Warraich (1998), the Constitutions of 1955–58 provided ten reserved seats to women members for a period of 10 years (ibid: 1998). Women's territorial constituencies were delimited for this, giving a double vote to women in these constituencies—one for a general seat and one for a reserved seat. However, no elections were held under this Constitution, and the Constituent Assembly was dissolved in 1954 (ibid: 1998). The decade of the military government that followed subverted the democratic process and barred women from political representation. The 1962 Constitution introduced by General Ayub Khan discontinued territorial

representation and indirect elections were introduced (ibid: 1998). The elected college that was comprised of members of the National Assembly elected women on reserved seats (ibid: 1998). The number of reserved seats for women was six (ibid: 1998). This trend continued until 1969, when Ayub's regime was overthrown by a mass political movement (ibid: 1998). The trend of Ayub's measure of indirect elections of women through reserved seats continued in each subsequent Constitution framed in later years, which harmed women's political participation. In Ayub's era, the right of women representation was neglected in first local bodies elections, held in 1959 under the Basic Democracy Ordinance.

It was not until 1971 when the first democratic government of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) led by the late Zulfikar Bhutto took overpower that the state accorded a better status to women. It was PPP's government that introduced the Constitution of Pakistan 1973. The Constitution, for the first time, accorded a much better status to women, stating that there would be no discrimination based on sex (Farida Shaheed 1998). Other measures were also taken by the Pakistan People's Party (PPP); for instance, the formation of a Women's Wing in the party. The Constitution of 1973 increased women's reserved seats to five percent in the national and provincial assemblies but maintained the earlier principle of indirect elections (ibid: 1998). Regarding women's participation in local governments, Article 32 of the 1973 Constitution made special provision for the representation of peasants, workers and women in local government institutions (Government 2007). However, during this period, local government elections were not held, and no opportunities were available to women to participate.

In 1977, General Zia-ul-Haq took control of the state of Pakistan in a military coup and imposed martial law in Pakistan. He ruled for 11 years (1977–1988). Zia's period was marked by brutal military rule. He declared that earlier governments were too liberal and western in their thinking and ostensibly pledged to Islamize the Pakistani state and society (Saigol 1997). Women suffered most during the Islamization period (ibid: 1997). The government authorities during this period were actively mobilised against women's participation in all spheres of public life and accompanied this with measures rescinding women's rights and reducing their public visibility. It was during this period that the anti-women laws such as the Hudood Ordinance were introduced in the constitution of Pakistan (Naz 2001). The Council of Islamic Ideology was

formed, which was known for disseminating some of the more retrogressive opinions regarding women rights (Shaheed 2002)⁴. When martial law was lifted in 1985, the Eighth Amendment was introduced in the constitutions, which validated all ordinances passed by the martial law regime (ibid 2002). The problems faced by women in many areas of law were left unresolved.

Zia formed the Ansari Commission in July 1983 to formulate an Islamic political framework. The Commission suggested limits to women's political participation and made recommendations including separate electorates for women and men; the barring of women and non-Muslims from becoming head of state; and ensuring that women candidates to the assembly be above 50 years of age and have written permission from their husbands to contest for seats in the national and provincial assemblies. Interestingly, Zia never acted upon these recommendations and instead doubled the quota of reserved seats for women to ten percent in 1984 (Shaheed 2002).

During this period, the provincial governments of Punjab, Sindh and NWFP passed their respective Local Government Ordinances while the Baluchistan Government passed its Local Government Ordinance in 1980 (Khattak, 1996). This had important implications for women's representation in local governments. For example, while the Punjab government reserved seats for women at all levels of local government; the other three provincial ordinances were vague on the issue of women representation (ibid: 1996). The other three provinces stated that the provincial governments, through notification (Ministry of Local Government: 1994: 19, 169, 359, 513) would decide the matter (ibid: 1996). As a result, the other provincial governments (except NWFP) gave women two reserved seats at the Union Council

⁴Set up in 1962, the Council of Islamic Ideology did not have any teeth before Zia-ul-Haq's period. The Parliament had the absolute authority to completely ignore the advice, if it so willed. However, the Islamic Council of Ideology formed by Zia-ul-Haq not only reconstituted the earlier versions of the council, but also increased its membership to make it effective. The function of the council was to review the laws and make them according to Quran and Sunnah. The recommendations made by the council included fixation of prayers, interval during working hours, promulgation of Hudood Laws, interest free banking, Nazim-e-Zakat, appointment of Nazimeen-e-Salat, to make the teaching of Islamic and Pakistan Studies as compulsory subjects on B.A/B.Sc. level, introduction of the Laws of Qisas, Diyet, Evidence, and Shufa and to promote Islamic teachings through media.

level and two seats at the District Council and Municipal Committees and Corporations levels (ibid: 1996).

The NWFP government had a different policy. It gave two seats to women only at the District Council level. Although there were variations within different provinces, women had some representation in the district and urban councils, but because they were elected indirectly, they could never enjoy the same authority, financial power and voice within the councils as the male representatives (ibid: 1996). Moreover, under the previous system, there was hardly any possibility of females to become chairpersons in the local government institutions. This was because women were nominated and elected by male councillors. Since NWFP's government did not allocate any reserved seats for women in the Union Council (the lowest level of local government), it failed on the province level in terms of more representation of women (ibid: 1996).

The 1988 general elections brought Benazir Bhutto to power. Given the low number of women who contested for general seats in 1988, it was clear that women's presence in the assemblies would require special affirmative action (Shaheed: 2002). In 1989, a few Senators belonging to the PPP moved a bill to enable this in the Upper House; but before the bill could be acted upon, Bhutto's government was dismissed in August 1990, and the Constitution could not be amended in favour of more reserved seats for women (Farida Shaheed 1998). The Islami Jamhuri Ittihad's government, led by Mian Nawaz Sharif that followed did not take any affirmative action to increase women's reserved seats and provided 10.4% representation to women in local governments. In 1993, Benazir Bhutto's government again came to power but was again dismissed by the President of Pakistan under the provision of the Eighth Constitutional Amendment that provides the President with the power to dismiss an elected government (ibid: 2002). The dismissal of Bhutto's government once again brought Nawaz Sharif to power. During the period 1988–1998, women, therefore, continued to be grossly under-represented in Pakistan's legislative bodies.

Unlike the military regime of Zia-ul-Haq who had pledged for the Islamization of the Pakistani state and society during the Cold War period, General Musharraf's stance was ostensibly liberal in a post-Cold War period characterized by a transition from military dictatorship to democracy. For the first time in 2002, Musharraf reserved 60 of the 342 seats for women in the

national assembly (17.5% percent of seats, three times more than the previous 20 seats) (GoP, 2000). These seats were allocated to the political parties proportionally, according to their electoral results. The names were picked from the top of a list of 60 women that each party presented to the electoral authorities before the election (IDEA 2007). For the Provincial Assemblies, 128 out of the 728 were reserved for women, i.e. 17.6% (ibid: 2007). On the whole, 21 percent of seats in the national legislature belong to women. Furthermore, four out of 100 seats in the Senate were reserved for women (ibid: 2007).

In General Musharraf's period, it was generally assumed that women achieved a breakthrough in the form of a new local government system, where for the first time in the political history of Pakistan they were granted a direct mode of an election at the union council level⁵ (e.g. see Naz: 2001). The government had allocated one-third of seats to women at the local level claiming that this would bring them into the mainstream of socio-economic activity. The exciting feature of the new system was not only that women were given 33 percent representation at three different levels (the district, *tehsil* and the union levels), but they could also be directly elected at the union council level.

In the elections 2000-2001 36,105 women got seats as representatives at different levels of local governments, out of which 23,222 were elected through constituency-based direct elections at the union level, 3741 were selected at district and *tehsil* level, 16 of them were elected as *nazims* and *naib nazims* at various levels of local government. Two of them were elected as *nazim* from district Khairpur, and Nawabshah in the Sindh province and 126 women were on reserved seats of minorities (Pattan Development, 2001).

The participation of such a large number of women in local governments was considered a bold expression of new realities in national politics (Naz: 2001). The unprecedented success of women in this election was considered a milestone achievement in the struggle for political rights. It was also considered a healthy sign that would give birth to a balanced and prosperous society based on good governance

⁵ According to the Devolution Plan 2000, direct election could only take place at the union level. The union *nazims* and *naib nazims* in turn become the members of the district and *tehsil* councils respectively and elect the district and *tehsil nazims* through indirect elections.

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and strong democracy (ibid: 2001). The quality of service in health and education departments showed some improvement, particularly by women. Women councillors had worked a lot in facilitating the poor to access safety nets such as Zakat and Bait-ul-mal. They had served their community by arranging funds for dowry, marriage; enhance literacy and getting identity cards (Shaban et al. 2014).

The women councillors, however, did not have enough skills to accomplish their role. Moreover, cultural constraints and stereotypical gender roles assigned to them as mothers and wives posed barriers to participate in public affairs effectively. Some other barriers they faced were the discouraging attitude of the community, lack of information, lack of power, domestic work, children, and family pressures (Shaban et al. 2014).

Overall, Women's political participation was strictly dominated by male politics. Their participation at the decision-making level was not

considered important. Political parties did not encourage women for election campaigns. Some other related issues were discouraging attitude of male councillors and hostile behaviour of Nazims and Naib Nazims. Moreover, no specific resources were allocated to women's development. They were not encouraged to supervise the civil work of their schemes (Shaban et al. 2014).

Furthermore, as indicated in Table 2, women's abilities in solving community problems were largely circumscribed by an overall male-dominated milieu. They were not even able to solve general community problems, let alone problems facing women specifically. They were not informed about council meetings, not treated as equal by male council members and *nazims* and not encouraged to take part in the decision-making process. Consequently, they were seldom able to raise issues in council meetings. The broader community's attitude towards female councillors has not changed.

Table2. Women Councillors Demand Meaningful Representation in Local Government (study findings).

Y	Women Councilors Response	Percentage
What kinds of issues are brought to councillors?	Domestic disputes	56 %
	Unemployment	12 %
	Financial assistance	32 %
Were they successful in solving issues?	Unsuccessful	82 %
	Successful	18 %
Did the behaviour of the community change towards them after the elections?	Changed negatively	87 %
	Getting the same respect and honour	13 %
What is the difference in the behaviour?	Communities expectations could not be met due to lack of empowerment of women's councilors	100 %
Are councillors informed about the monthly councils' meetings?	Not informed	63 %
	Informed	37 %
Do councillors regularly participate in these meetings?	Don't participate	66 %
	Participate	34 %
Do women councillors get equal treatment as against male colleagues?	Not treated as equal	67 %
	Treated as equal	33 %
Do councillors participate in the decision-making process at the union council level?	Do not participate	70 %
	Participate	30 %
Are councillors consulted on important issues tackled by the union council?	Have never been consulted	79 %
	Have been consulted	21 %
How many times did a councillor get a chance to speak on any issue in the union council meetings within the last two years?	Did not get a single chance	30 %
	1 to 5 times only	32 %
	6 to 10 times only	26 %
	More 10ten times	12 %
Did a councillor raise any issue at the union council level?	Did not raise any issue	34 %
	Raised issues	66 %
Did male councillors support issues raised by female councillors?	Never supported	88 %
	Supported	12 %
Who created more problems for you at the union council level?	Union Nazim	63 %
	Union Secretary	21%
	Male councillors	16 %

Source: Naz 2001

On the whole, there were three major factors associated with women's participation in the special interest seats reserved for women in the local government in the past. First, the women elected on reserved seats were accountable to the male councillors through whom they were elected. Two, the women candidates were merely names on papers having no actual powers. Three, most of them belonged to the dominant political party in the area and followed the party mandate rather than focusing on women's issues (Khattak 1996). However, the Devolution Plan if continued, could have brought significant improvement in women's participation and empowerment in the long run. This was the only political scheme that brought a huge number of women in politics at the local level and was a significant achievement in quantitative terms that could gradually turn into quality.

However, the later governments abandoned General Musharraf's Devolution plan that had constitutional protection until 2013. The subsequent LG elections held across Pakistan in 2014 & 2015. While, unlike Musharraf, the later governments held local government elections on party basis, the legal remit of each law was limited in scope, excessively deferential to provincial governments, and devoid of any meaningful devolution of financial, political and administrative powers (as required by Article 140- A and Article 37). Each provincial law vests provincial governments with overriding authority over all tiers of elected local governments through control over funds, allocation of functions and powers, both municipal and fiscal, and stringent supervision and oversight, including the right of suspension, of elected local governments and office-bearers. Each provincial, local government legislation appeared to insulate the provincial government against the exercise of any power or authority by elected local governments. Another limiting feature of the new local government system was reduced seats for women.

Following elections in 2013 and 2015, approximately 19.6% of councillors were women. There are reserved seats for women councillors: 33% in Balochistan, 22% in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh, 15% in Punjab. In the 2013 Balochistan local council elections, 2,335 out of 7,169 councillors were women: 2,332 via reserved seats and three via non-reserved seats. In the 2015 cantonment elections, 2 out of 199 seats were won by women, and the 33% reservation was not implemented (SCRIBD, 2018).

CONCLUSIONS

The preceding analysis shows that although Constitutional provisions relating to women have done substantial good for their exposure and empowerment in local governments in Karnataka, women continue to encounter several challenges and constraints in their participation at the national level politics. The secret behind Karnataka's success is strong governance based on a competitive party system, free press, professional civil service and a sustained mechanism of public scrutiny of those in power. In short, Karnataka has a public culture of accountability.

Nevertheless, the above prerequisites for successful decentralisation were present in Karnataka before decentralisation reforms and were not an outcome of the latter, which proves that societies with a more developed public culture of accountability and strong civil society have a better chance of successful decentralisation including women's empowerment

In contrast, the history of decentralisation in Pakistan reveals that the central tendency underlying major experiments with local governments primarily conducted by non-representative military regimes was to accumulate power further. Military dominance never allowed a public culture of accountability to flourish. The civilian governments, on the other hand, were reluctant to establish strong local governments because provincial ministers and members of provincial parliaments wanted to keep development funds in their hands to build their networks of personalised patronage. Such a situation existed because of continuous and long periods of military rule that systematically weakened political parties and democratic political culture that could bring any meaningful change. Women in local governments, therefore, could also not gain empowerment. Musharraf's Devolution Plan and reservation of 33 percent reserved seats for women did promise better prospects to women for more participation and empowerment in the long run, but the later governments abandoned the Plan.

The upshot is that societies with a more developed public culture of accountability and strong civil society have a better chance of successful decentralisation, including enhancing women's participation and empowerment.

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