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Women Representation in National Assembly of Pakistan (1947-1999)

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ABSTRACT

The study provides an in-depth examination of Pakistan's parliamentary system from 1947 to 1999 in regard to women representation, tracing its evolution amidst pivotal milestones, challenges, and transformative shifts. The nation's founding principles emphasized women's rights and participation, yet their representation fluctuated due to various factors. Despite these challenges, women made significant strides, with notable figures paving the way. This study explores intersection of international influences and domestic evolution, benchmarking Pakistan's progress on women's political representation against global standards, to identify areas of strength and weakness and inform strategies for promoting greater gender equality and inclusive governance. The study was done by using the qualitative content analysis technique and concluded that only two females, Benazir and Nusrat Bhutto, were elected repeatedly on the general seats in all four elections of this time period. No any other female parliamentarian joined them continuously in the parliament and study highlighted the need of especially measures for female representation in the parliament.

Keywords: Women participation, benchmarking, parliamentarian, representation, fluctuated, gender equality

Introduction of the Study

The representation of women in Pakistan's National Assembly has been a dynamic and evolving aspect of the country's political landscape since its inception in 1947. This study examines the trajectory of women's participation and representation in the National Assembly of Pakistan from 1947 to 1999, a period marked by significant political changes, legislative developments, and socio-cultural shifts. Pakistan's journey as a nation has been characterized by varying degrees of democratic governance, military interventions, and efforts towards promoting gender equality. The presence of women in legislative bodies is a crucial indicator of political empowerment and inclusivity. This research explores the numbers, roles, and challenges of female members in Pakistan's National Assembly during this period, contextualizing their participation within the broader framework of Pakistan's political history and societal norms. Key leaders like Fatima Jinnah, Begum Shaista Ikramullah, and Benazir Bhutto exemplify notable milestones in women's political engagement. By analyzing women's representation in the National Assembly from 1947 to 1999, this study aims to provide insights into the progress made, obstacles faced, and the evolving nature of women's political participation in Pakistan. The study was initiated to explore the state of female representation in Pakistan during 20th century by using the qualitative content analysis technique.

Women in Pakistan's Legislature

The participation of women in Pakistan's legislature has undergone significant transformation over time, marked by distinct phases. Initially, women's involvement in political affairs was severely limited, with fewer than 5 percent of legislative seats held by women. However, through sustained efforts and advocacy, the gender quota has expanded substantially. From the initial reservation of 10 seats in 1956 to 20 seats in 1973 and 60 seats in 2002, women's representation has grown. Today, women hold approximately 20 percent of legislative seats, contributing to policy debates and championing social causes. Key figures; like Benazir Bhutto, Nusrat Bhutto, Tehmnina Doltana, Begum Ashraf Abbasi, Fehmida Mirza; have paved the way for future generations, and while challenges persist, Pakistan's gender quota has paved the way for

increased representation and empowerment, signaling a gradual shift towards greater inclusivity and gender equality in the country's political landscape.

Historical Overview of Gender Quota in Pakistan

At current, Pakistan's gender quota for women parliamentarians allocates 60 reserved seats (17 percent) in the National Assembly and 128 seats (17 percent) in Provincial Assemblies, elected through proportional representation. Women Quota was introduced in 1956 with initial reservation of 10 seats, the quota has evolved over time, increasing to 20 seats in 1973 and 60 seats in 2002. This system has significantly boosted women's representation, rising from 3 percent in 1947 to 20 percent currently. Despite challenges, such as limited influence within parties and societal barriers, the quota has enabled women to participate in legislative processes and focus on women's rights and social issues. However, further reforms are advocated to enhance meaningful participation, including increasing reserved seats, introducing direct elections, and strengthening party quotas to ensure more substantial empowerment.

Pre-Independence Scenario

The issue of political rights for females in subcontinent was raised in 1920s, activists demanded separate parliamentary reservations and women raised voice for this around the country, but their demand was not acknowledged at first hand, but the voice had reached till the power corridors and international forums as demand of Indian women. In 1931 Indian National Congress adopted this demand of women activists. Congress did not demand vote for Women but demanded vote for every adult without any discrimination upon the base if gender, sex, cast and religion.

The scenario of the independence movement was also enlightened with the names of brilliant and vibrant women. Amjadi Bano, Begum Raana Liaqat, Begum Mohammad Ali, Fatima Jinnah, Begum Salma Tasadduq, Begum Shahnawaz, Fatima Begum, Begum Karimdad Khan and Zubaida Shah participated in political activities and played a moral role to educate and aware females to their basic rights and society's issues. Thus the commitment was dissolved in 1935 by the Government of India Act 1935. This act

acknowledged the right of females for reserved seats for women but it was declared that Muslim females could vote for only Muslim female candidates. About 10 percent quota was determined for females but only 3 percent quota was awarded.

It was hard fact that, Muslim League was demanding especial reserved seats for women from British rulers but unfortunately League could not arrange for women seats after independence in early two Assemblies. There was a single woman, Shaista Suhrawardy, in the first Constituent Assembly of Pakistan. The newly established Pakistani government had not allocated and never tried to allocate the reserved seats for women in Assembly which they had already demanded many times from British. Pakistan adopted the Constitution of 1935 to run the state affairs the constitution also acknowledges the reserved women seats but there was nothing for women after independence of the state.

The only female legislator in first constituent assembly, Begum Shaista Suhrawardy, was known name of international political and diplomatic corners. She was the first Muslim lady earned PhD degree from the University of London, served as diplomat of Pakistan in Morocco in late 60s. She was the first lady chaired meeting of All-India Muslim League women committee and also the only women who chaired Muslim Students Federation before independence. She participated in active politics and elected member of Constituent Assembly (Smith, 2008). Begum Shaista actively participated in independence movement and assembled the women and young girls from all over the Indian areas and gathered them for independence movement. There was great enthusiasm in girls to serve for the nation and with the efforts of Shaista they gathered on the platform of Muslim League (Bari, 2010).

Gender Quota at Independence

British Government introduced a policy of gender quotas in the subcontinent and this colonial legacy continued to exist after the creation of Pakistan in 1947. Muslim leaders had been demanding from the British Government to introduce a quota for Muslim women in the legislative assemblies. This demand was accepted in 1930 but virtually it was fulfilled in the Government of India Act, of 1935. In this Act, nine seats

were reserved for women in the Federal Assembly and six seats for women in the Council of States (Zia & Bari, 1999). However, under its statutes, Muslim women could only vote for Muslim women's seats (Afzal N. , 1999). This act first time provided women an opportunity to be part of the legislative assemblies (Krook, 2009).

It is worth mentioning that women already had gained the right to vote in the provincial elections with strong property qualifications (Bari, 2010). After Pakistan gained independence in 1947, the Government of India Act 1935 was adopted as the provisional constitution of the newly formed state of Pakistan. The first Constituent Assembly of Pakistan adopted the principle of Adult Franchise in 1951. Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, had emphasized that the equal participation of women in all walks of life was an essential condition for women's empowerment (Ikramullah, 2002). Later on, the third amendment was made that also reserved seats for women in the provincial assemblies whereby women would be elected by female voters through separate constituencies (Afzal N. , 1999).

During this early period, there had been a consistent to demand from women's rights groups to introduce women reserved seats. It is convincingly argued that during the early phase of independence, there were certain important governance issues that need urgent attention from the government. These challenges put the question of women's reserved seats under the carpet (Afzal N. , 1999), but women activists were not ready to let the government put this demand in abeyance. In 1948, thousands of women gathered in Lahore to push the government to grant women their due rights. These Women also claimed to have the right to inherit property and, also women reserved seats should be increased. As a result of the agitation in 1949, another woman organization namely the All-Pakistan Women's Association (APWA) was created for promotion and protection of the interests of Pakistani women (Zafar, 1991).

In March 1949, the Basic Principles Committee (BPC) was established with the responsibility of drafting the basic principles for the future constitution of Pakistan. This committee considered a variety of options after having a consultation with individuals and women's rights organizations on the question of women's political representation.

Religious groups sent their own recommendations and suggested that they were not in favor of women's political activity, but these suggestions were overruled by the Basic Principles Committee (BPC). The committee instead presented its own ambiguous suggestions in 1952 that every adult citizen has the right to vote and right to participate and contest elections for political office but did not give a clear stance on women reserved seats (Afzal N. , 1999).

In the first Constituent Assembly, two women Legislators presented a Women's Right Bill in which a five percent quota for women was proposed, however, only a three percent quota was approved by the Constitutional Assembly in 1954 (Zafar, 1991). Predominantly, two main arguments were presented on women reserved seats during that period. It was contended that even in the Western countries, women were underprivileged of certain rights while supporters pointed out that it would be an injustice to dispossess a substantial proportion of the population from exercising their right to vote (A. Haroon, 1995). After some delay, the Constituent Assembly officially adopted the recommendations of the report of the BPC but at the end of the day, in the 52-member House of the People, only two seats were reserved for women. Women candidates on reserved seats would only be elected by female voters based on territorial constituencies (Afzal N. , 1999).

There were two females, one from each part of the country, in the First Constituent Assembly of Pakistan. Begum Shaista Ikamullah Suharwardy from East Pakistan and Begum Jahan Ara Shah Nawaz from Western part of the country. There was no female in second Constituent Assembly of Pakistan.

Women Reserved Seats in the 1956 Constitution

The first Constitution of Pakistan was adopted in 1956 and article (44-2-1) of the constitution, provided ten reserved seats for women among 156 members unicameral parliament for a period of ten years. These reserved seats were equally divided between West Pakistan and East Pakistan (five from each province). The constitution of 1956 gave women the right to double vote. They were not only entitled to cast a vote for a general seat, but also for the female candidates on reserved seats. However, as it turned out,

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women were unable to exercise this right because no elections were held during this period (Mumtaz, 2005).

Women Reserved Seats in the 1962 Constitution

Ayub Khan, a military general imposed martial law in Pakistan on October 8, 1958. General Ayub Khan was skeptical of parliamentary democracy and he openly articulated that this type of governance was not suitable for Pakistan, because the people of Pakistan had low literacy rates and were not sufficiently knowledgeable to cast a meaningful vote. He devised the presidential form of government and introduced a five-tiered system in which, an electoral college consisting of 80,000 locally elected Basic Democrats who would elect the members of the provincial and National Assembly and also president of the state. Women's rights organizations severely criticized this system of governance because women reserved seats were not introduced. Ayub Khan constituted an eleven-member Constitution Commission to present recommendations for women reserved seats and also allowing women to contest elections on the general seats.

The second Constitution of Pakistan was adopted in 1962 that provided six seats for women, three each from East and West Pakistan, in the single-chamber National Assembly consisting of 156 members (later increased to 218). The Constitution of 1962 brought changes in the electoral procedure for women's reserved seats, which were now to be filled through the indirect method of election (Zia & Bari, 1999). This constitution also abolished the arrangement of female suffrage on the basis of territorial constituencies. Now male members of the national and provincial assemblies have delegated this responsibility to elect female members (Zafar, 1991). It is argued that this indirect system of elections curtailed women's direct contact with constituencies and made them accountable to the male members of the assemblies (Zia & Bari, 1999).

In 1964, during the deliberations over the Electoral College Bill, the question of women's reserved seats resurfaced. A female member from East Pakistan proposed that half of all seats of the 80,000 Basic Democrats be reserved for women, stating that it would be a reflection of their proportion of the population. But later she proposed two more amendments. She suggested that there should be at least 10,000 seats for women as

Basic Democrats. National Assembly approved the proposal to establish separate polling stations for women voters but the proposal for women reserved seats was rejected. She then introduced another constitutional amendment in the parliament and proposed that at least 25 percent of all seats should be reserved for women.

Yet again in 1966, a female legislator proposed to increase the proportion of women reserved seats in the parliament. The government did not visibly react, but the Minister for Law announced in 1967 that the government has planned to increase women reserved seats in the National Assembly as well as in each provincial assembly. These reforms triggered a completely new debate. The women groups argued for greater women's representation in the National and the Provincial Assemblies, but some prominent male politicians pointed out that women already had two women members in the Parliament so the demand for an increase in women's seats had no justification. It indicated that male politicians were trying to keep women's representation in the existing position.

Women in 1962 and 1965 Assemblies

There were eight females in the National Assembly from 1962 to 1965. There were six females; three from East Pakistan, Begum Shamsun Nahar Mahmood, Begum Roquyya Anwar, Begum Sarajunnessa Chaudhary, and three from West Pakistan Begum Khadija GA Khan, Begum Zari Sarfraz, Begum Mujeebun Nisa, were elected on especial women seats while two females, one from each province, Begum Hameeda Muhammad Ali, Miss Zahra Aziz, were elected on general seats. The election of female candidate at that time had significant importance in the parliamentary history of the country and same time significantly imperative for the women's political empowerment.

The Punjab Assembly had been merged with West Pakistan Assembly and elections were held in for East and West Pakistan provincial Assemblies. There were three females in provincial assembly of West Pakistan, Begum Aisha Aziz, Begum Jehan Ara Shah Nawaz and Sahibzadi Mehmooda Begum.

Miss Zaahra Aziz, among the eight females in National Assembly, was elected from Lyallpur, and significantly from the area based on clock tower and other central areas of the city. Begum Khadija GA Khan was also belonged to Lyallpur and elected member of West Pakistan Assembly in 1954 from Lyallpur. She also served as Deputy Minister in that tenure. Miss Zaahra Aziz was the first ever member National Assembly from West Pakistan territory who elected on general seat. She elected member of the National Assembly of Pakistan in 1962 from the constituency NW-33 Lyallpur-II. She was daughter of seasoned politician of that time Aziz Din Chaidhary. Aziz Din was elected member provincial assembly in 1951 and 1962.

In 1965, Begum Mariam Hashimudddin Ahmed, Begum Razia Faiz, and Begum Doly Azad, from East Pakistan while Begum Jujeebun Nisa, Begum Khadija GA Khan, and Begum Zari Sarfraz, from West Pakistan, were elected member of National Assembly. They served with this position till the Assembly was dissolved in 1969. Sahibzadi Mehmooda Begum. Begum Mumtaz Jamal, and Begum Mumtaz Safdar, on especial seats for women while Begum Ashraf Burney elected on general seats and reached provincial assembly of West Pakistan. Begum Zahida Khaliq-uz-Zaman served as the provincial minister for health during that period.

LFO 1970 and Women Seats in Parliament

General Yahya Khan, another army commander, assumed power after a countrywide movement to get rid of Ayub Khan. In March 1970, after consultation with various political forces, he replaced the constitution with his own version of constitutional arrangements called Legal Framework Order (LFO). In this new law, there had been a provision of thirteen reserved seats for women in the National Assembly (Afzal N. , 1999). The LFO also specified that women on these reserved seats would be elected by members of the national and provincial assemblies (the majority were male). It is the credit of Yahya Khan that he successfully conducted the first general elections on December 7, 1970. However, due to political crises, the assembly was not able to have a session. This political chaos forced the Election Commission to fill women reserved seats without elections. The returning officer has delegated the power to fill the women

reserved seats from the women candidates who had filed nomination papers (Afzal N. , 1999).

East Pakistan came into being as the new state of Bangladesh in 1971 and later on those legislators, who were elected from West Pakistan, instituted the Parliament of Pakistan. Among the 144 members National Assembly, six women members came on the reserve seats. The government constituted a 25-member Constitution Committee to give its recommendations on institutional reforms. In its report, the committee also proposed ten reserved seats for women for the period of ten years, but women organizations had been lobbying to increase the number of women reserved seats and also demanded that electoral procedure for these seats be changed from indirect to direct elections. The Committee in its final report suggested the creation of a bicameral legislature but surprisingly did not recommend any reserved seats for women in the Senate. In the National Assembly, only ten women reserved seats were recommended. There had been contradictory views by male and female legislators. Male legislators supported the proposed reforms, but several female members criticized the nonexistence of women reserved seats in the Senate. They were of the opinion that every bill required the approval of the Senate and women need to be present in the Senate to play their effective role in policymaking and legislation. It was claimed that this would lead to the exclusion of women's views from the broader legislative process. Female members presented their own proposal and suggested that as all provinces had equal representation in the Senate so there should be at least one or two seats be reserved for women in the Senate. The proposal of these female legislators was rejected by the National Assembly and endorsed the committee's recommendations on women reserved seats (Mumtaz, 2005).

Female legislators made another attempt to increase women's representation in mainstream politics of the country. A female legislator subsequently presented an amendment for changing the electoral procedure for women reserved seats. It was proposed that women on reserved seats should be directly elected by female voters because it will foster accountability of the female legislator and also strengthen liaison between women legislators and ordinary voters. Begum Nasim Jehan argued that the prevailing method of election had restricted the capacity of female legislators to work for

women's issues. She further pointed out that in many instances when a female legislator took a strong standpoint on women issues, their male colleagues reminded her that she is here due to the courtesy of male members (Mumtaz, 2005).

It indicated that indirect election procedures strongly curtail women members' legislative choices. It is also argued that this procedure of indirect elections had enabled political parties to increase their numbers in the Parliament, without feeling any commitment to safeguarding women issues in the legislature (NCSW, 2010). Male legislators showed strong hostility towards these arguments. They claimed that if these seats were filled through direct elections by the female voters than it would create a further gender gap. This procedure of elections would support only urban, women and would keep rural women out of the corridor of power because urban women are highly educated and politically more active (Mumtaz K. , 2005).

Women in 1973 Assembly

There were six females in the National Assembly in 1973; none of them was elected on general seats. Mrs. Nargis Naeem from Faisalabad, Begum Nasim Jehan from Lahore Begum Zahida Sultan from Rahimyar Khan were representing the Punjab, Begum Ashraf Abbasi from Larkana was representing the Sindh, Shirin Wahab from Peshawar Cant was representing the NWFP and Jennifer Qazi from Pashin was representing the Baluchistan. Begum Ashraf Abbasi (PPP) was Deputy Speaker of the Assembly.

Gender Equality Provisions in 1973 Constitution

The constitution of 1973 has a few significant provisions to uphold gender equality and had forbidden gender discrimination. Even it was suggested to include at least one woman as a member of the Council of Islamic Ideology (Afzal N. , 1999). The 1973 constitution retained the indirect procedure of election for women reserved seats. Gender quota is considered a short-term policy measure, and this was the purpose of inserting a provision of the time frame for women reserve seats until two more general elections or ten years, whichever came later. After this time, this provision of women reserved seats would expire until Parliament increases the time period (Zia & Bari, 1999).

It seemed that people at the helm of affairs at that time believed that after ten years women would be in a position to contest elections on general seats. These developments stemmed from a robust women's rights movement that played a significant role during the anti-Ayub agitation and it also pressed major political parties to form women's wings inside the party cadre.

Women in 1977 Assembly

There were 10 seats reserved for women in the National Assembly but the process of their representation could not be completed due to uncertainty in the country and imposition of Martial Law. Begum Naseem Wali Khan was elected from two constituencies of NWFP.

Women Quota in Zia's Majlis e Shura

A political scuffle over the formation of the government after the 1977 elections, culminated in yet another episode of martial law in the country by the Army Chief, General Zia-ul-Haq. He depicted himself as bringing back "Islamic democracy". Despite the anti-woman image of his government, he included twenty women legislators among 284 members of Majlis e Shoora formed in 1983. This helped to slightly increase women's representation in assemblies.

In 1983, Zia established the Ansari Commission to present proposals on the subject of a possible system of government. The commission presented a few controversial recommendations like excluding women from becoming the head of state and the only females over the age of fifty could contest the National Assembly elections. It was also made mandatory for women candidates to obtain written permission of their husbands in order to be considered an eligible candidate for elections. The commission claimed that these regulations were, according to Islam, but many speculated that certain provisions were deliberately inserted to block the entry of Benazir Bhutto, a prominent political figure in the opposition. She was thirty years old and unmarried.

On the other hand, the commission also advocated another policy measure of having separate electorates for women and men. At least 5 percent of seats were reserved

for women in the National Assembly. Several months later there had been an intense deliberation in the Majlis e Shura to discuss these issues. Female legislators demanded to increase the number of women reserved seats. On the other hand, male legislators presented a motion in which it was proposed that women should not be head of the state.

Women Quota in 1985 Assembly

In 1985, the Zia ul Haq government increased women reserved seats in the National Assembly from ten to twenty but not a single seat was reserved for women in the Senate (Zafar, 1991). The Eighth Constitutional Amendment Bill proposes to extend the time period of the provisions of reserved seats for one more general election (NCSW, 2010). Female legislators had conflicting opinions during the deliberations on the bill. Women elected to general seats pointed out that reserved seats were an oblique and sneaky way to be elected. It indicated that women could not win elections on general seats and these women were always labeled quota women. On the other hand, women on reserve seats showed apprehensions that without reserved seats; the number of elected women would dramatically decline. The Women's Action Forum lobbied to allow women a double vote. A woman could give her one vote for a general seat and one vote for reserved seats. These various suggestions were not accepted, and the National Assembly retained the current provision of reserve seats for one electoral phase (A. Haroon, 1995).

The constitutional provision of reserved seats, with the amendment made in 1985, stayed in force until the 1988 elections. The provision expired after that election on the pretext that three general elections had been held so lawfully this provision no longer had any legal power. In the next National Assembly, 20 women were elected on reserve seats. The provision of reserve seats lapsed in 1988 and its cloud no is restored in the next three general elections held in 1990, 1993 and 1997. Although, Benazir Bhutto was strong voice for women rights in 1990s and she took various steps in this regard but her countless efforts could not be successful due to continuous intervention of pressure groups in power corridors.

Women in 1985 Assembly

There were 22 females in the National Assembly of Pakistan in 1985, 20 were nominated on reserved seats for females, one (Lila Wati) on reserved seat for female minority and one (Begum Abida Hussain) was elected on general seat from Jhang. Two female members, Dr. Noor Jehan Panezai and Begum Bilqees Shahbaz were from Baluchistan; two females Kalsum Saifullah and Bilquis Nasr were from NWFP; and four female members Mrs. Afroze Nazir, Rashida Pasha, Begum Salma Ahmed and Qamar un Nisa were from Sindh. Twelve seats were reserved for females from Punjab. Begum Sarwari Sadiq, Mehmooda Begum, Nisar Fatima, Begum Afsar Riza, Silvat Sher Ali, Ishrat Ashraf, Khurshid Begum, Rehana Aleem, Atiya Inayatullah Dureshawar Mazari, Rafia Tariq and Farrukh Mukhtar were nominated on these twelve seats.

Era of Controlled Democracy

Benazir Bhutto expressed on different occasions during the election campaigns that her government will implement a comprehensive plan to empower women. After becoming the Prime Minister, she established a new Ministry of Women's Development and subsequently directed this ministry to develop a comprehensive plan of action to ensure that women had at least five to ten percent representation in all decision-making positions within each ministry (Weiss, 1990). Women's organizations also pushed the Benazir government to not only reinstate women reserved seats but also increase the number of seats reserved for women. These organizations presented a proposal of having twenty percent of women reserved seats in the national and provincial assemblies and 10 percent of the seats are reserved for women in the Senate.

This proposal also further required that all women reserved should be constituencies based (Zafar, 1991). According to the Constitution of Pakistan, for any constitutional amendment, two-thirds votes of the Parliament are required and Benazir Government tried to get the support of various political parties to reinstate the provisions for women reserved seats. In November 1989, the Government introduced a bill into the Senate, but before the voting could take place, President Ghulam Ishaq Khan dismissed the government of Benazir Bhutto (Zia & Bari, 1999).

Nawaz Sharif became the next Prime Minister of Pakistan and his government dissolved the Marriage Act and Family Protection Bill. This had severe consequences for the protection of women's rights. His government also passed the Sharia Law Bill, which established religious courts with the supremacy to overrule the existing laws. Women groups felt that such type of legal system will shrink any protections previously granted to women (Weiss, 1990). The Sharif Government did not show any enthusiasm for women's inclusion in politics. The continuous efforts and hard work of the women's groups pushed the government to submit a new bill on women reserved seats in the Parliament (Zia & Bari, 1999). Three years later, Nawaz Sharif was forced to resign after a scuffle with the president, resulting in new elections being held in October 1993. Women's groups launched a campaign and met the leaders of the political parties and motivated them to give an extraordinary consideration to women's issues in their election manifestos, including reserved seats. This campaign was successful in the way that the major parties pledged to work for the restoration of the constitutional provision about women reserved seats.

During the second tenure of Benazir Bhutto as prime minister (1993-96), the Women's Action Forum and the Commission on the Status of Women initiated deliberations with the government as well as opposition parties to formulate a more detailed plan for women reserved seats (NCSW, 2010). The campaign of women groups remained successful in the sense that the PPP government drafted a constitutional amendment bill to increase the number of women reserved seats in the parliament and provincial assemblies. In the National Assembly 25 reserved seats for women was proposed and subsequently nine seats in the Senate, and 5 percent seats for women in the provincial assemblies. This proposal asked for no time restrictions. Opposition party Pakistan Muslim League (N) responded with two alternative proposals. Firstly, it was suggested to have 40 reserved seats for women in the National Assembly. Secondly, women on these seats are elected either directly by female voters or through a process of proportional representation. Pakistan Muslim League (N) also proposed that all political parties should award 10 percent tickets to female candidates.

However, during the parliamentary session, the PML-N did not support the constitutional amendment bill and proposed that the government should submit a broader package of constitutional reforms. The government indicated some apprehension regarding the new stance of PML-N, and it was argued that this shift was a strategy to demoralize the government. These conflicting stances and misunderstandings eventually led failure of both bills, but Women's groups continued their efforts to advocate the issue of women reserved seats. In response to this hard work, the Bhutto Government set up a National Consultative Committee to discuss the question of women reserved seats with the legislators. The committee obtained 148 signatures in favor of the proposed reforms. Three major political parties also signed a joint statement and supported the reinstatement of women reserved seats. The government was optimistic to gain the required support of the legislators to introduce a bill to reinstate reserved seats. Despite the apparent consensus and support across all parties, the effort was badly defeated, said, due to the concerns of PML-N. It was also the obligation of the government of Pakistan after the ratification CEDAW, to incorporate a bigger proportion of women at all tiers of political institutions so all political bodies should have women representation. The government of Benazir Bhutto was again dismissed in 1996. It is a discouraging scenario that even a woman prime minister could not reintroduce the women reserved seats in the Parliament of Pakistan.

The PML-N got a clear majority in the subsequent elections held in 1997 and Nawaz Sharif was sworn as the prime minister of Pakistan for a second time. Women's groups organized demonstrations and called on the government and members of the parliament to reinstate women reserved seats. In this term of government, Nawaz Sharif enjoyed a massive majority in the parliament enabling him to pursue a course of action to nullify the legislation enacted during the regime of his "spiritual father". Zia-ul-Haq, who inserted the controversial Eighth Amendment in the constitution of Pakistan that had shifted the balance of power between the president and Prime Minister. This law allowed the president to dismiss the government and the parliament.

Pakistan People's Party introduced another bill in the Senate and proposed nine seats for women in the Senate and forty seats for women in the National Assembly. It was

also proposed in the bill that women's seats were distributed among the political parties according to the number of votes secured by each political party in the elections. This bill was sent to the relevant parliamentary committee, but PML-N did not support the bill and it lapsed without further development. The ruling party announced that it would bring a new bill, having a broader constitutional reform package that would also have a proposal for reserved seats. The opposition parties considered the government intentions simply an act of vengeance. The Federal Minister for Law and Justice maintained later that this was not a controversial issue and the government would soon present a constitutional amendment package in which all the proposals of the opposition's parties would be accommodated. That promise proved to be empty and women continued to occupy less than a 3 percent representation in political institutions.

Women in Assemblies 1988-1997

There were 24 females the National Assembly in 1988, among them 20 were nominated on reserved seats while four were elected on general seats. From all three constituencies of the district Larkana, females candidates won the contest. Benazir Bhutto, Begum Nusrat Bhutto and Mrs. Ashraf Abbasi contested against the male candidates and won the contest with huge majority. Begum Abida Hussain elected from Jhang.

Bibi Amna and Samina Razak from Baluchistan; Kulsum Saifullah and Mrs. Mehr-un Nisa from NWFP; Shamim ND Khan, Mehmooda Shah, Zareen Majeed and Rukaya Soomro from Sindh and Begum Sarwari Sadiq, Rehana Sarwar, Begum Nadir Khakwani, Amna Piracha, Razia Sultana, Rehana Aleem, Shahnaz Begum, Abida Malik, Amira Ehsan, Attiya Inayatullah, Shahnaz Wazir and Begum Nasreen Rao were nominated from Punjab.

There were only two females parliamentarians in the National Assembly. Both, Benazir Bhutto and Begum Nusrat Bhutto were elected on general seats from Larkana. Both were elected again in 1993 and Tehmina Daultana and Shahnaz Javed joined them in the Assembly. In 1997, there were six females in the National Assembly. Begum Abida Hussain, Tehmina Daultana, Mrs. Khurshid Mehmood and Fehmida Mirza joined Benazir and Nusrat Bhutto in the legislature.

Conclusion

The debate over the women reserved seats continued through the history of Pakistan. The country's unstable democratic history, low social and economic development, and strong identity as an Islamic republic like factors are responsible for low levels of women's political representation. The study "Women Representation in National Assembly of Pakistan (1947-1999)" reveals a complex and evolving narrative of women's participation in Pakistan's political landscape. Despite facing socio-cultural barriers and patriarchal norms, women like Fatima Jinnah, Begum Shaista Ikramullah, and notably Benazir Bhutto, played pivotal roles in shaping Pakistan's political trajectory. The implementation of reserved seats for women in legislative bodies was a significant mechanism enhancing female representation. However, challenges persisted, including limited access to general seats and broader societal obstacles to women's empowerment. The period from 1947 to 1999 laid foundational aspects of women's political engagement in Pakistan. Understanding this history can inform strategies for enhancing women's representation and empowerment in Pakistan's political sphere. The journey underscores the interplay of political will, societal attitudes, and institutional frameworks in shaping women's roles in politics. Even though in 2002, on the one hand, 60 seats were reserved for women, but on the other hand, a number of controversial constitutional amendments were introduced to stop the entry of few politicians in the parliament. The new requirements of graduation barred many strong former male politicians. Several months later, 13 women were elected on general seats and later on at least sixty more women became the member of the National Assembly on reserved seats. However, due to the ineligibility of many prominent male political leaders, female relatives were nominated because they could not afford to lose that constituency.

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