

## WOMEN EMPOWERMENT BY LOCAL REPRESENTATION: A CASE STUDY OF LAHORE

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*Abstract: Pakistan is a country where women have rear opportunities to be part of political activities though they are almost half of the population. They remain under male domination and confront various social, cultural, and economic disparities. A limited number of women take part in political affairs, and mostly they belong to families having political influence and background. Generally they take part in politics on behest of their male family members to enhance their power and are labeled 'mask representatives'. This study will see status of women at local bodies' level, and their role in local representation. In order to empower the women, local representation is considered one of the useful mechanisms. In this research, elements of participation and representation and bottom up approach is used, which stresses on participatory democracy and involvement of the locals in decision making about the area. In a country like Pakistan, women representation is there but they are not empowered in real terms. Women at grassroots level are generally suppressed and deprived and they seem least concerned about their rights and role in political affairs. For real women empowerment, local representation should be strengthened by meaningful participation and ratio of women. This platform can be used as a nursery to train them for national level politics and to have their due rights.*

**Key Words:** Women representation, women empowerment, political participation, local bodies, separate electorate, mask representation, bottom-up approach.

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## **Introduction**

In many areas of the world, it is observed that women remain deprived and powerless in most spheres of life. “Empowerment implies the creation of an enabling environment for individuals to fully use their capabilities and to take charge of their lives. Empowerment also implies the building or acquiring of capacity to accomplish certain tasks and attain specific goals.”<sup>1</sup> Since inception of the UN, women empowerment gained a huge coverage. At international level, some steps were taken to strengthen women like the ‘Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which clearly stated in its Article 2, “Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.” The main objective of Belgium Platform was to provide access to full participation of women in the state decision making. The signatory countries are supposed to provide opportunities to women in political parties, electoral institutes, and provide convenience to them. In this regard, state should be responsible to safeguard the rights and freedom of the women groups. Pakistan is also a signatory of ‘Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women’ (CEDAW) which gives recognition to females.

Similarly the Constitution of Pakistan 1973, Article 25 clearly carries, “All citizens are equal before the law and are entitled to equal protection before the law: there shall be no discrimination on the basis of sex alone.” But one could have a better understanding if gauges the indicators of empowerment; how and how much women participate in the decision making. In Pakistan, problems like illiteracy, poverty, instability, and disparities persist. All of these problems generate trust deficit among the people and marginalized segments remain deprived. People generally don’t encourage women to participate in politics; so they remain

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, *5 Years After Beijing: What efforts in favor of African Women? Assessing Political Empowerment of Women* (Addis Ababa: Economic Commission for Africa, 2001), 1.

neglected, face socio-cultural and religious barriers and discriminatory laws.

Political empowerment means due role of women in the policy and decision making of a country. Women in developed world are economically and socially in better position as compared to women in developing countries. The ratio of women political participation in developing countries is not in consonance with their number. Indeed it is imperative for their empowerment that they should have right to vote of their own choice, undertake campaign, and contest elections. So they can also become an agent of change by their participation. Their involvement in political affairs will ensure the protection of their rights. They need to be empowered to minimize their dependency, exploitation, discriminating attitudes, and biased laws. So the best strategy would be that women empowerment should be started at the grassroots level.

Local representation means to involve people in small scale decision making of the area. Local governments are basic and initial forum for the political training and provide close interaction with people of the area. "For both men and women, local government experience is regarded as a very useful preparation for a national political career."<sup>2</sup> Indeed, local government gives political education, awareness, and political participation, which can put pressure on the leaderships to give them due space. Therefore this study will see position of women at local government level and in local representation. To be specific about the area of study, Lahore has been selected as a case study. Objectives of the research are to figure out space for women in local bodies, to see the effectiveness of local governments for women related problems, and to suggest role of women at local representation.

## **Hypothesis**

"Women meaningful and appropriate representation at local bodies will lead towards their empowerment."

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<sup>2</sup> Ruth Hening and Simon Hening, *Women and Political Power Europe since 1945* (London: Routledge, 2001), 72.

## **Conceptual framework**

### **Empowerment**

Women in Pakistan have been confronting social, cultural, and economic dependency, which limits their political participation. For the betterment of women and society, they should be empowered. Explaining empowerment, Anjum has described, “a process of reconstructing group identity, raising consciousness, acquiring new skill, and up grading knowledge base. It progressively imparts to the poor a new power over the economic and social forces that fashion their daily lives.”<sup>3</sup> Empowerment is the way to pull up the marginalized communities from the vulnerabilities. So one can say that local empowerment is “a process where people assert control over the factors which affects their lives.”<sup>4</sup> Pakistan has been functioning under strong central government. After the 18<sup>th</sup> amendment, provinces have got autonomy. Decentralization means that power to be given to federating units and further to administrative units for uniform development and facilitation of people at local level. This mechanism is more close to the people, and representatives listen and understand the feelings and problems of the people.

### **Political Representation**

Representation is the mean by which large number of people can express their demands. People select their representatives and get themselves involve in the political affairs. They can directly or indirectly became part of the decision making. Representation becomes the main objective of the recognition as stated by Iwanaga, “if empowerment is defined as the capacity to choose, women’s political representation is no doubt potentially an empowering

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<sup>3</sup> Zулqarnain Hussain Anjum, “New Local Government System: A step toward Community Empowerment,” *The Pakistan Development Review* 40, no. 4 (Winter 2001): 853.

<sup>4</sup> Rebacca Keele, *Nursing Research and Evidence Based practice: Ten steps to success* (London: Jones and Bartlett Learning, 2011), 178.

process.”<sup>5</sup> Their representation will give them recognition, and through representation they can express their demands. Chowdhury presents five reasons of why increasing women’s representation and participation is necessary:

- (i) It is a question of democracy and equality as well as a question of civil rights making the demand for proportional representation of women in politics unavoidable, (ii) Women’s insignificant presence in politics raises questions about the legitimacy of the democratic process and of decision-making authorities, (iii) Women are well informed and experienced about their basic problems and needs. But they will be deprived of equal shares if they are not properly represented in politics, (iv) Women’s increased participation in politics and decision-making bodies will facilitate more changes and open up more spaces for them, (v) Finally, for the efficient and maximum utilization of human resources, women should be increasingly allowed in politics.<sup>6</sup>

Celis described the phenomenon of political representation and further divided the phenomenon of women representation in to three dimensions: first, full and equal participations; second, descriptive type representation where men reflect the society composition; and third is substantive representation, which ensures women representation, their interests, and issues in policy procedure.<sup>7</sup> In the context of Pakistan, descriptive kind of women representation will be seen or observed. To strengthen the women, it should begin at the grass root level. This is the way which leads them from smaller scale to a large unit in an appropriate direction.

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<sup>5</sup> Kazuki Iwanaga, *Women’s Political Participation and Representation in Asia: Obstacles and Challenges* (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2008), 305.

<sup>6</sup> Najma Chowdhury, “Women in Politics,” *Empowerment 1* (1994): 21.

<sup>7</sup> K. Celis, “Gendering Representation,” in *Gender Politics and Concepts: Theory and Methodology*, eds. G. Goertz and A. G. Mazur (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

The bottom up approach states that local actors can participate in decision-making and in the selection of the priorities for their own local area. In the context of this approach, women participation in decision making can be improved at local level. For this study, Celis' concept of representation and bottom up approach is used to see the level of women participation, space, and system of participatory government in Pakistan.

## **Methodology**

It is an explorative and descriptive study to explain the scenario of women's powerlessness. It would be qualitative research based on different views and opinions derived from primary research methods like interviews and observation. Purposive sampling method will be preferred and sample consists of the female voters, women councilors, women politicians, women rights activists, experts, and media personals. Interviews are semi structured and information is placed in categories and subcategories to gather the common factors to test the hypothesis.

## **Conditions of Women in South Asia**

Status of women in the South Asian region is still very low:

They share certain predominant features: centralized government; socio-economic inequalities based on class, gender, and cast; and nationalistic divisive claims on ground of ethnicity, language, and religion... South Asian women have born the greatest burden of poverty, deprivation, illiteracy, and morbidity. They have also been the major victims of violence.<sup>8</sup>

Due to similarities in cultural and social aspects, conditions of women are more or less same in the region and are still deprived of their basic rights. A small number of women are involved in

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<sup>8</sup> Aditya Pandey, *South Asia: Polity, Literacy, and Conflict Resolution* (New Delhi: Isha Books, 2005), 16.

constructive activities; and even those are discriminated and exploited by the male members of the society. This region has also produced some leading female figures, however, all of them led by males and belonged to political families. The region has even produced women Presidents (Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga [1994–2005] in Sri Lanka and Pratibha Devisingh Patil [2007–12] in India) and Prime Ministers (Sirimavo Bandaranaike [1960–65, 1970–77, and 1994–2000] and Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga [Aug.–Nov. 1994] in Sri Lanka; Indira Priyadarshini Gandhi [1966–77 and 1980–84] in India; Benazir Bhutto [1988–90 and 1993–96] in Pakistan; and Begum Khaleda Zia [1991–96 and 2001–06] in Bangladesh).<sup>9</sup>

The majority of women elected via reserved seats of South Asian Parliaments share some common characteristics: they belong to the elite, middle and upper middle classes, come from educated families, and from the first legislatorial period, tend to become mere figureheads with no real bargaining power.<sup>10</sup>

In South Asia, women are mostly pressurized by the male domination. The women representation remained reserved because of the male dominating culture in this region.

Often using custom and traditions as a tool, women have been sidelined from most decision-making process... This lack of liberty is a tradition that is rooted in the home and the community where male members maintain strict control over decision

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<sup>9</sup> Muhammad Usman Amin Siddiqi, “Hierarchy of Women Political Participation and Incommensurability between Women Representation and Empowerment in South Asia: Pakistan in Perspective” (Paper Presented at International Conference on Local Representation of Power in South Asia, GC University, Lahore, November 12–14, 2014), 5.

<sup>10</sup> Iwanaga, *Women’s Political Participation*, 43.

making and follows through the highest levels of national legislature and parliaments.<sup>11</sup>

*Table No 1: Representation of Women in National Parliaments*

Sr. No.	World Rank	Country	Elections	Seats	Women	% W
1	36	Nepal	Nov 2013	575	172	29.9%
2	41	Afghanistan	Sep 2010	249	69	27.7%
3	73	Pakistan	May 2013	323	67	20.7%
4	77	Bangladesh	Jan 2014	348	69	19.8%
5	117	India	Apr 2014	543	62	11.4%
6	132	Bhutan	Jul 2013	47	4	8.5%
7	139	Maldives	Mar 2014	85	5	5.9%
8	140	Sri Lanka	Apr 2010	225	13	5.8%

Source: Muhammad Usman Amin Siddiqi, "Hierarchy of Women Political Participation and Incommensurability between Women Representation and Empowerment in South Asia: Pakistan in Perspective" (Paper Presented at International Conference on Local Representation of Power in South Asia, GC University, Lahore, November 12–14, 2014), 6.

It is pertinent to mention here that in Pakistan 15% seats are reserved for females, that is why there is high percentage. In "countries like Nepal, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh, where percentage of women is comparatively high is because of quota system, and more importantly does not translate into real empowerment of women."<sup>12</sup>

### **Women Local Representation in Pakistan:**

The effective way to show democratic attitudes are the representation and participation of the community in decision making. In Pakistan, different administrative sectors of governments work in hierarchal manner starting from top – national, provincial, and local level. However the local government is the lowest administrative tier of the government, which works specifically at the grass root level. It is further divided among three levels – district, tehsil, and union level. The local government system has not

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>12</sup> Siddiqi, "Hierarchy of Women," 6.

remained functional throughout the history. Long gaps and dis-functioning in the structures and amendments have made it weak.

The initial steps for the institutionalization of female participation in the political sphere were taken by the colonial state in opposition to the native sentiments and instinct. As a result of the efforts of the Indian Women Association, the Montague Chelmsford reforms of 1919 granted limited franchise to women. The colonial state also lifted the prohibition on women candidates in 1924 and the Government of Indian Act 1935 reserved seats for women for the first time in the Council of States, the Indian legislative assembly, and the provincial legislators. The franchise committee of the Round Table conference, nonetheless, noted the severe hostility of the Muslim men from the North to the reforms. Following independence, the pro-western elite that succeeded the colonial state preserved the formula of reservation of seats for women in the 1956, 1962, and 1973 constitutions, irrespective of the initial reservations of the religious elite... all indirectly elected by the members of the respective assemblies.<sup>13</sup>

Musharaf regime provided 33 percent representation of female at all administrative levels. Legal Framework Order 2002 raised the position of women in political participation. “The National Assembly has 342 seats, of which 60 are reserved for women.” Besides, “apart from 60 reserved seats, there are 16 directly elected women in the national assembly. They hold 22.2 percent seats in the National assembly, 17 percent seats in the senate and 17.6 percent seats in the provisional assemblies.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Amita Singh, Kapil Kapoor, and Rabindranath Bhattacharyya, eds., *Governance and Poverty Reduction Beyond the Cage of Best Practices* (New Delhi: PHI Learning Private Limited, 2009), 67–68.

<sup>14</sup> Ministry of Law, Justice and Human Rights, *Pakistan’s Fourth Periodic Report on CEDAW* (2013), 40 and 133.

*Table No 2: Women Representation in Local Government in Pakistan.*

<b>Time Period</b>	<b>Regime</b>	<b>Representation</b>
1958-1968	Ayub Khan	No special representation under Basic Democracies
1971-1977	Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto	No special representation was provided
1977-1985	Zia-ul-Haq	2 seats at UC and 10 percent for other tiers except NWFP
1988-1990	Benazir Bhutto	Local government elections were not held
1990-1993	Nawaz Sharif	10.4%
1994-1996	Benazir Bhutto	Local government elections were not held
1997-1999	Nawaz Sharif	12.7% in Punjab, 25.8 % in Balochistan, 2.9 % in NWFP, and 23% in Sindh
1999-2008	Pervez Musharraf	33% at all levels
2008 to date	Yousaf Raza Gillani	Status quo maintained

Source: Adapted from Aurat Foundation, *Citizen’s Campaign for Women Representation in Local Governments* (Islamabad: Aurat Publications, 2001).

Pakistan has been facing governance issue. Since independence, governments were not strong and capable enough to manage their affairs. Pakistan saw constitutional struggle, militarily coups, and a short period of democratic form of government.

*Table No 3: Legislative position regarding Women’s Representation*

<b>Provinces</b>	<b>Seats reserved for women in Senate (Total Strength 100)</b>	<b>Seats reserved for women in the National Assembly (Total Strength 342)</b>	<b>Provincial Assemblies</b>	
			<b>Total strength</b>	<b>Seats reserved for women</b>
Punjab	4	35	371	66
Sindh	4	14	168	29
Balochistan	4	3	65	11
NWFP	4	8	124	22
FATA	0	0	NA	0
Federal	1	0	NA	0
Total	17	60	728	128

Source: Legal Framework Order, 2002

Table No 4: Gender-disaggregated voter turnout (2005)

Region	Male	Female	Total
Punjab	61.48	43.96	53.45
Sindh	47.60	24.31	37.58
NWFP	57.42	21.07	41.22
Balochistan	39.27	21.45	31.06
Overall	56.83	35.86	47.38

Source: Election commission of Pakistan, quote in Farrah Pervaiz Saleh, "Locating Women's Engagement in Democratization, Representation and Government Structure of Pakistan", in Bennett, 2007.

According to this data, female turnout averaged 35.9 per cent, as against male turnout of 56.8 per cent. The data also shows a significant difference between female voter's turnout in Punjab and in the other provinces. While cultural norms which dictate the seclusion of women may have been factors in low female voter turnout in NWFP and Balochistan, the low turnout in Sindh was against expectations, given the relatively high female political awareness in the province.<sup>15</sup>

Women are selected as *Nazims* and *Naib Nazims* in local bodies at union, tehsil, and district level. "In the first Local Government elections in 2000, 16 women were elected as *Nazims* or *Naib Nazims*."<sup>16</sup> It is seen that "in 2008 General Election, women in the South Waziristan Agency (in FATA) voted for the first time."<sup>17</sup> There were some areas where all the contesting candidates agreed not to allow women to cast their votes in the election of 2013, which reflects the severe male domination even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in Pakistan.

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<sup>15</sup> Farida Shaheed, *Imagined Citizenship: Women, State, and Politics in Pakistan* (Lahore: Shirkat Gah Women's Resource Centre, 2002), 140.

<sup>16</sup> Ministry of Law, Justice and Human Rights, *Periodic Report*, 76.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

## **Findings**

Women in Pakistan are one of the most marginalized segments of society. This marginalized group always remained neglected and exploited throughout the history. Although women are in slight majority in number, but in reality, they are always at the receiving end. In Pakistan, Khyber Pukhtunkhawa and Balochistan are more backward in their attitudes and approach towards women. Comparatively, Punjab and Sindh are liberal and in transformational phase. Women participation in election is seen more in these provinces.

There are number of reasons behind the slow progress of women. Due to powerlessness, illiteracy, and poverty, women are generally not taking part in economic activities and remain dependent on males. One of the respondent told, "Women want to excel, but there are number of issues, one of them is financial support."<sup>18</sup> It seems that only rich and influential people can be the part of political affairs. Men belonging to modest background remained under stress due to economic constrains. Therefore majority of male are reluctant to take part in election; so how women, who are dependent on males, can take part in elections even at local level.

Pakistan is a country where cultural, social, and religious factors have given a very narrow space to women. They are not allowed to take part in social and economic activities. They have been compelled to undertake household responsibilities, which keep them busy throughout their life cycle. Women are not free to take decision even about their education, going outside of house, marriage, number of children, and about economic matters; so how they can take part in politics. They eventually lose their interest as their male family members do not give them freedom to express themselves.

Lahore is the second largest city of Pakistan and the capital of the Punjab. It is also considered comparatively a modern city of Pakistan. People here are more educated and liberal as compare to

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<sup>18</sup> Interview with Bushra Malik (PPP), General Secretary Punjab (Women), September 16, 2014.

other cities of Pakistan. It is seen that in Lahore even educated women do not take part in political affairs. Only a small number of female participate in political matters. These women are generally asked to take part in politics by their male family members just to enhance their political power. Their male members compel them to do politics for their own advantage. Most of women politicians are not conscious about their rights and reluctant to better the conditions of female community. It is also observed that when the condition of bachelor degree became compulsory to contest election in Pakistan, most under graduate politicians brought forth their graduate female family members in politics at all levels of representations. Although the representation was there but there was no 'say' and free will in real terms. It is found that no free will is provided to women to participate in the elections. Due to our cultural restrictions and male domination, women are not empowered. One of the respondent said, "Males don't want us to be empowered so they don't allow women to be in politics."<sup>19</sup>

Sometimes, male political leaders, as well as parties, are not supportive to them. Political parties are made to train the people in the art of state craft. However political parties in Pakistan have become the centers of family politics. Generally political parties use women just to secure the reserved seats in the assemblies. Political leaders prefer their female family members to fill the reserved women seats in the assemblies. Generally female political workers have been ignored and neglected, even though these party workers are politically aware and come from grass root level. One of the respondents told, "In our political system, only money matters, not the work."<sup>20</sup> Nominated females belong to the family of leaders and don't have awareness or know how of the political matters so they are weak. Such representation can be called 'puppet representation'. Some female members of houses remain absent from the sessions and their male family members operate on their behalf. It is also

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<sup>19</sup> Interview with Faiza Ahmed Malik (PPP) MNA Punjab, September 16, 2014.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Abid Ali from Aurat Foundation (NGO), September 15, 2014.

extracted that some people use their females in politics to make them known and influential.

Though woman have very limited social space but they have prospects of growth. Social acceptance for female in politics is missing, a lady politician said, “We face problems, because male dominating societies don’t accept us.”<sup>21</sup> It is noticed women in politics do not seem empowered as majority of them are being dictated by the male family members. Women empowerment is not achieved instantly, but gradually; when women will strive for their rights and create their own space. At the time of election when economic support is required to contest election, the female party workers are left alone.

In Pakistani politics, it is observed that women take part mostly on reserved seats and avoid general elections. A lady political told, “General election is purely a game of money.”<sup>22</sup> It is observed that seats are sold and preference is given to influential families not ordinary workers. Economic resources are not provided, and party does not support female workers. It’s hard for common woman to survive in politics but “when you have political background, your male family members support you.”<sup>23</sup> In Pakistan, females are used to bargain the power for their male family members. Need of the hour is to encourage women participation and the contest should be between female members. Female political workers are encouraged and supported more as they are trained and belong to grass root level. Majority of the women who contest elections on the reserved seats must work to come up on general seats as well. More attention should be given to the female education as, “Women want to come but they are not educated. Uneducated women got pressurized.”<sup>24</sup> Another said, “Females who are educated and trained can’t be misused.”<sup>25</sup> For the real empowerment, local bodies system should be promoted. “Local

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<sup>21</sup> Interview with Bushra Malik, September 16, 2014.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Faiza Ahmed Malik, September 16, 2014.

<sup>23</sup> Interview with Bushra Malik, September 16, 2014.

<sup>24</sup> Interview of Nasreen Gillani (Lady Councilor), September 16, 2014.

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Abid Ali, September 15, 2014.

bodies develop direct relations with people to people and discuss their problems,”<sup>26</sup> and local representation must be used as a training center.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Pakistan has experienced strong central governments for a long period, whereas decentralization is a rear thing. Decentralization of power can be reflected in local governments that are made to empower the individuals at grassroots level. Decentralization brings empowerment of people and participatory democracy, because it provides opportunities to involve even the weak segments of the society. So, empowerment will lead towards social, economic, and political development.

Women in Pakistan are deprived from psychological to physical freedom and their political representation remained questionable. Factors like poverty, illiteracy, male-domination, and economic and social constrains have been remained prominent. Although representation of women was there, but their real and meaningful political participation remained missing. There is need to empower them at institutional and individual level. Moreover female political workers, who are educated, trained, and coming from grass root level are not provided with opportunities to be part of decision making. So it is observed that female representation is just a ‘mask representation’ and practically these women do not acquire power.

Local government is the best mean to interact with the people of the area and involve them in decision making. Moreover, through the local government, accountability can be ensured and people be made vigilant about their representatives. Women in political spheres are in a small number, more drastic change was witness in the local governments of 2000–2001, where “woman were provided 33 percent representation at all three tiers of local governance through special quota.”<sup>27</sup> According to Mitra,

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<sup>26</sup> Interview with Talat Bangish (Lady Councilor), September 16, 2014.

<sup>27</sup> Nasira Jabeen and Muhammad Zafar Iqbal, “Gender and Local Governance in Pakistan: Promoting Participation through Capacity

Reservation of women in local government is not just a question of getting a certain number in: it also develops their capacity to play their rightful roles in the development process and makes an important difference, as the local government deals mostly with the quality of life for citizens. Municipal responsibilities relate both to women's practical needs and their strategic needs. The better we meet women's strategic needs, the better they are able to contribute to good city governance. Good local governance in turn enables a better response to women's practical needs.<sup>28</sup>

Indeed women meaningful representation at local level will lead towards their real empowerment. These are some of the recommendations to have speedy empowerment of the women:

1. Education of females should be made compulsory, free, and accessible.
2. Women should be given separate electorate according to their population ratio, where they may contest election and cast their votes.
3. Strengthening Local Government System: It is being noticed that most democratic governments remained reluctant and didn't delegate powers; so they never made local bodies functional in real terms. In our political set up, even ordinary males are not empowered, political elite want concentration of power. They don't want to empower the local bodies system as they may lose some of the powers. There is need to change the mindset and culture of political elite. Strengthening the local government must be the top agenda item of the government. For successful local government system, fair elections should be undertaken on regular intervals.

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Building," *Journal of South Asian Studies* 25, no. 2 (July–December 2010): 265.

<sup>28</sup> Dr. Sangh Mitra and Dr. Bachan Kumar, *Encyclopedia of Women in South Asia* (New Delhi: Kalpaz Publications, 2004), 8:392.

4. Encouraging Women: At individual level, there is a dire need to make women aware that they should speak out for their rights and demands. Their confidence can be developed if women are given motivation and awareness. They should come forward and strive for their rights and political space.
5. Pressure Building Strategies: To build pressure on the decision making authorities, the involvement of print, electronic, and social media could be a very effective tool. So the pressure should be built upon government and political parties to go for people empowerment at grass root level. NGOs should start advocacy and campaigning for women political involvement and for their rights by arranging seminars, workshops, and walks.
6. Political parties should take lead and fix a percentage for women according to their population ratio to empower and accommodate them in the political institutions.
7. The religious leaders should also stress in their addresses (*khutabas*) about the political empowerment of women.
8. One bread winner system should be replaced. All adult family members particularly women should be involved in economic activities. Economic empowerment will lead to their political empowerment.
9. *Panchyat* and *jirga* means a group of senior people who are wise enough to take responsibility of the decision making for the people of area who are in problem. This system is quite old but still working only in rural and tribal settings. Generally male member of the society are part of it. It would be a good idea to promote *panchyat* culture but with a condition that women should also be part of it. Separate women *panchyats* can be set up where women should tackle the issues of women. It would give them the feeling of recognition and encouragement to handle their own issues.
10. Political education must be made part of syllabus even at the primary level, and people should take it as their responsibility and duty to get involved in the political affairs.

11. Need of the hour is to develop progressive approach and come out from the old dogmas. One should get transformed according to the demands of the current times of the world; otherwise we would be left behind.
12. Role of the women politicians is also very important as they have the responsibility to work for the betterment of female. They are working as the trustees of the rights of those whom they are representing. In this regard, role of female councilors is extremely important, who are working at the local level and more close to the people. Female voters should vote for those who are in favors of their empowerment.

Pakistan is a federal state, where powers are shared between the center and provinces and then further at the local level. In Pakistan, women remain suppressed in many spheres of life. In order to strengthen them, they need to be in decision-making to defend themselves. It's better to take an initiative from local bodies and make it effective. Moreover democracy can be successful when participatory mechanism is there. These representatives should be scrutinized for good governance and participatory democracy. To make women empowered only their 'mask representation' is not sufficient. They should be educated and given equal opportunities in social, economic, and political spheres. Government should launch a campaign with the help of media and civil society to bring change in the approach and attitude of people towards women folk. They should not be considered inferior and subservient but equal, complete human being with dignity and respect. To give women better position and conditions 'bottom up approach' should be incorporated in our system. So one cannot reject the hypothesis that 'women meaningful and appropriate representation at local bodies will lead towards their empowerment'. Indeed better the political participation of females more would be the tolerance level in society and eventually it will lead toward a peaceful country having sustainable economy.