

Political Role of Baloch Women in Mainstreaming Politics in Balochistan:

By

¹Abdul Sattar, ²Shahida Habib Alizai

Abstract:

Politics is the lifeline of every nation on this planet. But in this era of chaos there is a widen discrimination in political landscape for women. The narrative for making women segregates from local, national and international politics initiated during 20th century. In fact, pre 20 century era of human civilization women were not allowed to participate in any aspects of people lives but to look after house and kids. Many movements have been launched during the course of 19th and 20th centuries and at the end of 19th century women had got many social, economic and religious rights and protections. But 20 century marked as political isolation of women in many of the world. Women in British Balochistan were limited to their houses and to just cook foods. Both the colonial and Khan Rulers in Balochistan deprived women from their due rights. Soon after the independence of Pakistan, Balochistan becomes the part of one unit from 1948 to 1970s. In this era women of Balochistan were not allowed to take part in political activities. The constitution of 1973, had paved the way for women to participate in political maneuver of regional and national politics. But the extreme tribal norms and gated community of Balochistan could not let women to chip in political adventure. But from 2000 and onward women of Balochistan step in political discourse of Pakistan and become an active contributor of politics. During Zardari regime women representatives passed various laws for women domestic protection, social and economic rights. Indeed, today women are working in every platform with men equally and accordingly. The Baloch women can play a vital role for mainstreaming Balochistan politics into national level. Women can counter extreme tribal norms, feudal hegemony of men and male dominated society on more participation of politics in every level.

¹M.Phil. Scholar (Sociology) in Department of Balochistan Study Center University of Balochistan Quetta Pakistan

²Dr. Shahida Habib Alizai Assistant Professor: Gender Development Study University of Balochistan Quetta Pakistan

Keywords: Gate community, Political landscape, Mainstreaming, Narrative, Tribalism, Social hegemony

Introduction:

Background of the Study:

Since the trace history of Baloch culture and tradition women is given a high pride on matters related to family and society. Beside they have deprived from their political rights and could not let them to participate in political landscape. During Khan Rules in Balochistan women were not allowed in key or other positions in legislature, judiciary and executive. Their role in political arena was zero and was not permitted to join any political party or activities. Thus in era of intolerance of women in Balochistan Khan and Sardars limited their natural attributes and aptitude. With the passage of time women struggled to acquire limited political role in affairs of state.

The limited struggle of women for obtaining more rights in British Balochistan was threatened and ambushed by rulers in different times. But the movement to empower women in all sphere of life more especially on political concern continued in various modes to acknowledge and preach all women for gender equality, justice and even opportunities. The Baloch women became a very popular figure in tribal society up to the second decade of 20th century. Thus the various modes of struggle brought the women in the mainstream politics in British Balochistan and the ratio of women participation reached to 3-5 percent in political decision making of the society.(Naseer, 2012)

The slow pace of women struggle for attaining more political rights led them to become an equal member of the society. From 1947 to 1948 women of Khan Leaderships enjoyed various political rights to contribute on national, domestic, social, economic and foreign affairs. But they were not allowed in major decision making likewise defense affairs, war decision making and security concerns. In fact, they got various political rights and women in first time of thousands years of Baloch history male dominated rulers recognized their vested political rights. (Hanif, 2010)

After the accession of Balochistan with Pakistan special measures have taken to mainstream Baloch women in politics. But various hurdles likewise tribalism, extreme social norms, family mores had hindered them from political activities. The fifty years of Pakistan history (1950s to 2000) had witnessed three different constitutions and there was no single provision for women political rights in Balochistan. The 1956, 1962 and 1973 constitution of Pakistan did not determine a single

provision for deprived women in Balochistan. Their contribution to the social and economic development of societies is also more than half as compared to that of men by virtue of their dual roles in the productive and reproductive spheres. Additionally, in this period there was no single law to protect women rights in Balochistan.

But 2000 and onward women in Balochistan started to participate in different political activities and contributed to develop regional and national politics. In fact, mainstreaming of any politics both genders equal participation is duly necessary. The Baloch women after 2002 and onward played a vital role in mainstreaming regional and national politics. Regionally, the Baloch women negated the extreme level of tribal norms, created space for women in election and initiated various moves for equal representation in local and regional governments. In national politics Baloch women negated fanatic approaches of Baloch tribal lords and women inequality. Now and presently women are working with male equally and on line of mutual respects to mainstream politics in Balochistan. (Editorial, 2017)

Theoretical Underpinning:

Feminism and gender equality is the core approach of the study. Women in present world are facing enormous problems in political, social and economic lines. Feminism works to empower women in politics to acquire more vested and absolute rights. On the other hand, gender equality aims to bring both genders in equal putting in political, economic and social aspects of the life. Mainstreaming of women in politics related to feminism and gender equality and their vital role can be defined under the umbrella of local, regional and national politics.

Research Methodology:

The study is purely based upon secondary sources where various books, research articles, journals and magazines have been consulted. Additionally, it contains various sources of internet to prove the data for authenticity of the study.

Variables:

Independent Variable:

Political role of Baloch women

Dependent Variable:

Mainstreaming of politics in Balochistan

Women Political Role Historically:

Historically women had not given political rights to explore their natural capacities and capabilities. But they have taken various moves to develop Balochistan backward political culture to a modern political society. They have faced enormous problems while highlighting women related issues in the society. Many women have been killed for the only reason of demanding political rights and many have been tortured. The suppression of women was a part of routine life and they were not allowed to step out beyond the four corners of houses. They have treated very cruelly and vested rights were refused by patriarchal setup of the society. Thus patriarchy was the very immediate hindrance of women political empowerment in Balochistan. (Majeed, 2010)

Political empowerment of Baloch women began from Z.A Bhutto era where various part of Balochistan women demanded more political rights for women to mainstream Balochistan politics. Bhutto regime accepted some demand of Baloch women to empower them from atrocity of tribal norms. Unfortunately, Z.A Bhutto could not mention women specifically in the constitution. During his tenure women in Balochistan got limited powers but political status remained very poor. Anyhow the Bhutto regime had paved the way for women empowerment in Balochistan. (Shumaila, 2016)

During third military tenure of Zia, Islamic laws made by him left women in the darkest age of history. General Zia's approach Islamic line was so rigid and uncompromising on issue of women. The women in Balochistan especially Baloch women suffered the most and the laws of Zia era added fuel to fire on tribal principles of Balochistan. Additionally, women were not given their natural and vested rights. But Baloch women in this period of history stand against Zia's draconian laws to provide them enough political powers. Comparatively the Musharraf's era was too liberal and provided ample opportunities to women in political, economic and social aspects of life. (Peterson, 2008)

The most noticeable journey of Baloch women political development began during the period of Musharraf. He fixed and improved Baloch women special educational and political quota in federal and provincial levels. The strength of female educational ratio improved tremendously and women in Balochistan got numerous opportunities to obtain more political rights. After 2005 Baloch women actively participated in political landscape of Balochistan. In fact, Baloch women in a very short period got various rights in provincial level. Consequently, Baloch women got enormous rights in various aspects of life to mainstream Baloch regional politics to national level.

Baloch Women Struggle in Acquiring Gender Equality in Regional and National Politics:

Baloch women live in extremely patriarchal environment where they have no right to decide their fate. The majority of decision of Baloch women are taken by male and they have no right to refuse the order of male. In veracity of fact, around 75 percent of Baloch women live in rural part of Balochistan and among them 60 percent even never hear about the word politics. In another estimate observed that the ratio of women education is very poor in rural Balochistan where 80 percent of children are out of school. Apart from low education and political awareness women in various means contributing to mainstream Balochistan politics. (Pernab, 2015)

The aggressive division among both genders in Baloch society serves to highlight the level of discrimination. This has widened the conflict between both the sexes have created numerous problems on the way of women development. Additionally, women in daily lives are trying to create better understanding between the both genders for long and durable stability. This is ongoing crisis and left the society in dark. Comparatively women are more tolerant and dealing men with respect and dignity. But Baloch men are more biased and bigot on concerns of women to not let them beyond the four corner of the house. (Lagachu, 2016)

Balochistan regional politics is divided between on line of language, tribe, caste, nation and particularly the genders. Such violent division stagnate political development and could not allow the region to create democratic climate. Women active participation in politics negated male supremacy in the Baloch society. While women are working to educate all rural females and introduced many laws related to women health, honor social and economic development. This is indeed the mainstreaming of regional politics to thrive democratically. Without women the regional politics cannot take strong and permanent roots in Balochistan. (Akbar Khalil, Mashood Ahmed Sheikh, 2010)

The local and regional political participation of Baloch women has developed women nationally. Baloch women are struggling to gain more representation in federal assembly and demanding more reforms in local, regional and national level for women. The process of mainstreaming of politics as like Punjab, Sind and KP is developing in Balochistan and women are demanding more constitutional, political, economic and social rights. In fact, Baloch women wanted to take steps on constitutional reforms for women protection on tribal hegemony. Additionally, they are working to gain more freedom and liberties in regional political arena. Furthermore, women are demanding equal and

just economic opportunities to bring both genders on the fold of equality. (Siddiqi, 2012)

Political Parties and Baloch Women Contribution:

The all political parties in Balochistan are dominated by men and poor participation of female is on its full swing. But the trend is changing speedily and women are becoming members of various political parties. The Baloch women active participation in political culture is bringing them in mainstream of regional politics. Presently, Baloch women political participation is up to 30 to 35 percent and the leadership's level is up to 5 percent in different local areas. Anyhow, it is the best achievement of Baloch women that they have women wings in various political parties of Balochistan. (Hamid, 2011)

The separate wings in various political parties like BNP Mengal and NP provide women wings to discuss women related issues and provide them opportunities to tackle such issues. This thing is leading women for more political empowerment to address women related issues in Balochistan. When there was a time women have no access to any economic, social and political rights but presently women are as equal as the men in Baloch society. This thing is formulating a society where both genders can live with equality and equity. The Baloch women struggle for mainstreaming regional politics is unending struggle and a continuous process. (Safdar Sail, Abdul Basit, 2010)

Baloch women contribution in political arena of Balochistan is quite obvious and exploring political culture throughout the region. They are bringing women in center of Balochistan politics and working to flourish women educational capabilities. From 2000 to 2005 women political participation ratio as standing up to 7 to 9 percent and the trend increased up 15 to 20 percent by 2010. The pace of women political participation increases day by day and reached at 35 percent by 2013. Such participation of women is mainstreaming Balochistan politics and creating a tolerant social fabric. But by 2015 women political power show becomes a change for tribal and feudal society. (Umbreen Javaid, Javeria Jahangir, 2015)

Mainstreaming Regional Politics of Balochistan and Women Vital Role:

Baloch women are essential figure to mainstream Balochistan politics due to its tribal and feudal status. Without women participation in politics, it seems improbable to mainstream Baluchistan's gated society. The recognizable role of women in politics of region is pivotal and cannot be refused by ordinarily. It is women political results that today women are working with man on equal putting in different educational,

social and economic institutions. Both male and female are acquiring education in co-education in various urban and rural part of Balochistan. The mainstreaming of Balochistan politics means to create equality in social, political, economic and tribal aspects of life in the region. (Umbreen, 2010)

Balochistan politics is circulating around voting banks and women shares 48 percent of population. Without women participation in election it is impossible to promote voting culture. The volatile land of Balochistan is providing opportunity to women national and international level of exposure. Women in present time are struggling to mainstream each and every female in regional level of politics to create balanced society. The notable role of women for mainstreaming regional politics is demanding laws for equality of both genders in each aspects of life. (Pakistan, 2011)

Furthermore, women are working to maintain the society on political and economic lines. Their political role is very vital for restructuring and mainstreaming Balochistan politics. Apart from the sad fact that Baloch woman is facing enormous threats from tribal lords, insurgent groups and militant groups and religious groups are threatening them to not join politics. But they refuse to the threats and joining more political activities. In contest of Baloch women joining in politics means to explore their natural, constitutional, political, social and economic rights. (Mehwish Malghani Durdana Khosa Maria Khosa Farhat Sajjad, 2018)

Hence women role in mainstreaming is vital and without women contribution it is not possible in Balochistan to thrive political activities smoothly and properly. It is women contributing political maturity and educating the rest of society. The Baloch women are playing a vital role for building this society a modern and a prosperous society. The political parties are also taking various steps to bring women in party politics for fair play between both the sexes. Vision of any political party plays a vital role in protecting their self-image and cognitively developing a relationship between the party and general public. Hence women are vital for regional political mainstreaming. (Mroczek, 2014)

Some Notable Hindrance on the Way of Women in Politics:

The first and foremost hindrance on the way of women politics is Baloch nationalism has a dual basis. On one hand, it developed as a tribal identity repressed by a force perceived as foreign hands are involved. Baloch nationalism openly opposed women political participation and took many steps to stop women to not join Pakistan mainstream politics. Baloch thriving insurgency in various part of Balochistan is negated by

the Baloch women on more participation of regional and national politics. (Bukhari, 2011)

The tribal norms and mores are other problems which the Baloch women are facing on participation of regional and national politics. Additionally, the extreme tribal principles could not allow women to take step in outside of the house. The tribal restrain Baloch women that's why leaning towards backwardness politically and socially. Hence Baloch women avoided these harsh cultures and joining various political parties for more formidable role in regional and national politics. (Bari, 2005)

The fertile land of Balochistan is comparatively volatile for women protection than that of other province of Pakistan. Social insecurity of women in Balochistan is always in question where women face different blames from male dominated society. This thing is leading women toward backwardness and they felt extreme social insecurity.

There is constitutional guarantee of women and there is no specific provision for women on political concerns. The lack of constitutional empowerment of women in Balochistan is creating various drawbacks on the way of Balochistan political culture.

The lack of women oriented political parties is another traced issue for women political empowerment. There is no single political party which could develop women politically, socially, and to protect their rights, freedom and social liberties.

Balochistan all political parties have never considered single women to become party leader. The leadership's drought among Baloch women in multi-party politics in the region is hindering political development. Hence presently there is hardly few women who are member of party central committee members but there are no single women who could led the party affairs.

Last but not the least Baloch women are facing numerous other problems in the gated society.

The problem like honor question, limited space for women in social circle, employment opportunities, low educational institutions and early marriages are the most notable conundrum being faced by Baloch women. (Javaid, 2014)

Recommendations:

- Women contribute approximately half of the population of Balochistan and Baloch women in the region facing insurgency related threats to not join political culture. The issue of insurgency should be addressed by provincial and federal government accordingly for women better participation in politics.
- Tribalism should be permitted with limited and accepted roles and norms. The tribal norms should not attack women vested and

natural rights. Tribalism should be used as culture not a threat for women.

- The both provincial and federal government takes measures to assure women constitutional political protection. All Baloch women should be protected under the umbrella of supreme law the land.
- Educational plans should be drawn up to 2025 to enroll all females in educational institutions. The plan should meet both rural and urban women and to educate them freely.
- Social security should be provided to women on political and social concerns. Women should be protected in social life and at the violation of women social life should be awarded.
- The domestic violence should be eradicated in all forms and means. There should be an eye bird view on Balochistan domestic concerns of family lives.
- There should be specific quota for women in provincial and federal jobs. The equal and formidable treatment of women on concern of employment should be guarantee by legislature.
- Various laws to be made on concerns of women political, social, economic and family concerns of Baloch women. Hence such thing can mainstream regional politics of Balochistan.

Conclusion:

Baloch women are the nucleus of Balochistan politics and they are contributing for political development of the region and beyond. Their obvious role in political culture highlight Baloch liberal and moderate thinking in this century. This thing paves the way for more rights for Baloch women for their future development and growth. When there was a time Baloch women were bound to live in the four corners of the wall. But their continuous struggle paid them more political, social and economic rights. Without women participation in politics it was impossible for women to gain much popularity in the field of politics, education, human rights, social development and economic growth.

In conclusion, Baloch women have played a vital role for mainstreaming of Balochistan politics. Additionally, women contribution in Balochistan politics has formulated a tolerant society and today the politics is more liberal and moderate for both genders. The various laws have been made for protecting all Baloch women in remote part of Balochistan and they initiated many campaigns for women political and social security. Henceforth, Baloch women are performing their part to take Balochistan backward politics into a modern and democratic and even more tolerant for both genders.

References:

- Akbar Khalil, Mashood Ahmed Sheikh. (2010). Political manipulation in human rights violation: A case study of honor killing in Balochistan Pakistan . *A Journal of Pakistan studies* , 22.
- Bari, F. (2005). Women's Political Participation: Issues and Challenges. *EGM/WPD-EE/2005/EP.12*, 12.
- Bukhari, S. (2011). MICRO– CREDIT” A Strategy for poverty alleviation among rural woemn in Balochistan . *BI-ANNUAL RESEARCH JOURNAL “BALOCHISTAN REVIEW” ISSN 1810-2174*”, 09.
- Editorial. (2017). National conference on women's political emanicipation. The future of Pakistan. *The Balochistan PoINT*, 12-14.
- Hamid, W. (2011). The Balochistan Dynamics,. *The nation*, 06.
- Hanif, S. F. (2010). *Security dynamics in Pakistani Balochistan: Religious activism amd ethnic conflict in the war on terror*. Islamabad: Quid e Azam unversity.
- Javaid, U. (2014). Concerns of Balochistan:Effects and Implications on Federation of Pakistan. *Journal of Political Studies, Vol. 1, Issue 2, 113-125*, 07.
- Lagachu, J. (2016). Education and Women Rights of Mising Tribe: A Case Study on Jengrai Panchayat. *International Journal of Humanities & Social Science Studies*, 14.
- Majeed. (2010). Ethnicity and ethnic conflict in Pakistan. *Journal of political studies* , 53.
- Mehwish Malghani Durdana Khosa Maria Khosa Farhat Sajjad. (2018). Role of Context in the (Re)construction of Political Ideologies and Identities. *WALIA journal*, 11.
- Mroczek, Z. (2014). A new society in Pakistani Balochistan. *ISPI*, 9.
- Naseer, B. (2012). *The plight of Baloch youth*. Tehran: Iran human rights review.

- Pakistan, G. o. (2011). Provincial Census Report of Balochistan. *Statistic division Islamabad*, 23.
- Pernab, P. (2015). Does institutional change ensure gender mainstreaming in politics? The experiment of Bangladesh. *University of Ragshahi*, 07.
- Peterson, R. (2008). Women's empowerment in challenging environments: a case study from Balochistan. *Development in practice*, 12.
- Safdar Sail, Abdul Basit. (2010). Conflict and Insecurity in Balochistan: Assessing Strategic Policy Options for Peace and Security. *Conflict and Peace Studies*, 4.
- Shumaila, U. (2016). Education and Empowerment of the Women in Rural Areas of Balochistan: The views of tribal men. *International journal of humanities and social sciences*, 19.
- Siddiqi, F. H. (2012). The politics of ethnicity in Pakistan: The Baloch, Sindhi and Mohajir ethnic movements. *Researchgate*, 06.
- Umbreen Javaid, Javeria Jahangir. (2015). Balochistan: A Key Factor in Global Politics. *South Asian Studies*, 15.
- Umbreen, D. (2010). Concerns of Balochistan: Effects and Implications on DE Federation of Pakistan. *Journal of Political Studies*, 12.