

# RELEVANCE OF WOMEN RESERVATION IN NEPAL

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## Abstract

*The major feature of democratic system is the inclusive and equitable representation of every individual from every stratum. True democracy can't be imagined in absence of equal representation either politically, socially or economically. Female access must be ensured in every mechanism of the state for the justifiable and proportionate participation of women. Their position, as a privilege, must be saved to bring them into the mainstream of the state since they have been suppressed and oppressed from the time immemorial. Women, who hold more than 50% of the total population, must be ensured with their equal representations from local level to central. This paper aims to apprise the situation of women participation in politics and policy making and to highlight the significance of reservation for them.*

## Keywords

Women, politics, participation, policy making, reservation

## Introduction

A woman has to play an important role either in a house or a family or a society. Until a woman develops from every aspect, it will be almost impossible to lead the country on the way to progress. There can be no two opinions that if a man is educated, he is only educated. If a woman is educated, the whole family is educated. But it is very sad to say that society

has not accepted entirely the contributive role of a woman yet. According to Marx, "Anybody who knows anything of history knows that great social change is impossible without the feminine ferment." (Cited in Yami, 2003, p. 165). But our society seems to have neglected about the inevitability of a women's access in education, health, diversified training, and economic access for women's empowerment. Napoleon Bonaparte maintained 'Give me

a good mother and I shall give you a good nation'. This emphasizes the importance of women in the development of a nation.

Nepalese Women are very backward due to various causes such as male dominated society, feudalistic attitude and culture, and dogmatic social structure. If there is a competition held between trained and untrained, obviously, trained will be selected. Similarly, if a backward woman and a man are involved in a competition under the name of equality, obviously the woman cannot compete and it will be unjust on the part of the backward woman. To make them stand on the equal footing, there must be given special priority, privileges and special training to uplift the backward women. (Subedi, 2059 B.S.)

Although I do not blindly favor women reservation, yet the representation of handful of elite women's participation can not hold the desire and aspiration of the rest of backward and marginalized women. There have been allegations that women are not allowed for nominations in election as men. Even if they are allowed, they are permitted from the areas where they don't have holds at all due to which they have to lose the election/get defeated in the election.

It is obvious that a woman can't concentrate on election campaign as much as a man since she has to look after or solve the domestic hassles as well. She fails to make nonsensical election propaganda. She can't save her position due to criminalization in politics and politicalization in crimes. Thus, the women, who have covered half of the population of the country, Mao-Tse-Tung-" Women hold half sky'" (Yami, 2007, p. 19) and therefore, must be given the privilege of "reservation" in each and every field of the state. Their negligible participation can't ensure their rights.

Until and unless men and women are in the same status from every aspect, reservation realizes to be inevitable. Lenin states "we cannot pull people into politics without

bringing the women on political activities" to highlight the importance of women participation in politics (Yami, 2007, p.19).

### **Women politics across the globe**

We can find women in politics from the dawn of 19<sup>th</sup> century. Earlier whether we talk about Magna Charta (1215 A. D.) or French Revolution 1789, or American Independent War 1776 or Industrial Revolution of England in 1917, women had no franchise and political rights.

The advocacy of "Feminism" started in France by Olampe the Gous and in America in 1953 by Schzoner Chhunch being influenced with the former revolutions of U.K. France and U.S.A. In 1865, Emil Denis and Liz Gyarep gave a memorandum in the parliament of England to John Stuart demanding for women franchise and equal rights as men. And women commission was formed in 1903. Voices were raised by hunger strike and picketing. As a result, women aged 30 were provided franchise in 1918. Later, rectifying the same bill, franchise was provided to female aged 21. And later in 1946, Female Right Advisory Commission was formed (Subedi, 2059 B.S.).

In the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century, women in different countries across the world, started raising their voices, shouting slogans and started demanding franchise as men. In 1951, International Labor Organization convention passed a bill which said -women should also be given equal wages as men. In 1960, the ILO convention declared another bill to remove professional disparity between a man a woman, it stated the average age of marriage and the legal foundation for the marriage registration. Similarly, Women Day was declared in 1975 to boost up the personality of women and their role. In 1997, a historical declaration was made by UN convention to remove all kind of exploitation, tyranny and discrimination against women and Nepal also signed in the agreement in 1991 and made

a commitment to abide by the declaration passed by U.N. convention in 1992, April 22.

### **Conferences to promote the role of women**

The first world women conference was conducted in Mexico City in 1975, the second in Copenhagen in 1980, and the third in Kenya in 1985 which made a plan of action known as “Narrobi Forward Looking Strategy” by 2000. The fourth conference was held in China in 1995 and there were 30,000 women participation in the conference and the movement forwarded by women for their rights was reviewed (CNGD, 2061 B.S.). Following the different movements raised by women, majority of countries of the world have started giving more priority and importance on women participation.

### **Status of women reservation across the globe**

Certain reservation has been guaranteed to increase the women participation in the state in different countries, such as SAARC, South African Countries, Uganda, and Rwanda and Afghanistan and so on. The provision of 33% women participation in the local level village development committee has been guaranteed in the Indian Constitution.

In Afghanistan, out of 250 members of parliament, 2 women representatives are available from each provision and in upper house 50% elected women from parliament can be included by the Veto Power of the president. In Uganda, Rwanda and other South African countries, 30 to 33% of women participation is a must in the parliament or village development committee. There is a proportionate election system in South Africa due to which considerable women representatives are found in the parliament. There is 26% women in the constituent assembly of East Timor. Women participation in the parliament of the world in 2001 has been stated as follows:

Sweden ( Social Democracy) 42.7%, Denmark ( social Democracy) 37.4%, Finland ( Social Democracy) 36.5% , Norway ( Social Democracy) 36.4% , Iceland ( social democracy) 34.9%, U.S.A. 12.5%, Australia ( 25.1%), Belgium 24.9%, Japan 9.00%, U.K. 17.1%, France 9.1%, Switzerland 22.4% , Austria 25.1% , Italy 10.00% , Spain 18.00%, Cuba ( Social Democracy) 27.6%, Russia 5.7%, Vietnam ( Social Democracy) 26.00%, China ( Social Democracy) 26.00%, India 8.9%, Nepal 6.4%, Bangladesh 9.1%, Sri Lanka 4.9%, Egypt 2.00%, Jordan 2.5%, Bulgaria 10.8%, Rumania 5.6%, Poland 12.7%, Hungary 8.4%, Albania 5.2% , Bolivia 10.2%(Beijing Manifesto Instruction book,2059:72)

### **Glimpse of women political history in Nepal**

No remarkable commencement has ever been conducted about women political history in Nepal. However, following data will explain as what kinds of initiations were done either from the state level or by people level. Though we can't find any separate institutional structure that has worked for women-development, symbolically, various kinds of initiations have been conducted from state-level and people-level. The following lines have reflected various stages for the institutional structure for women-development. Organizationally, women organization started in 1974 under the co-ordination of Yogmaya Koirala who established ‘Women committee’ , in 2004 Nepal women association was established under the leadership of Mangala Devi Singh, in 2006 all Nepal women association under the leadership of Punya Prabha Devi, after 2007 political polarization started in the country and in 2008, under the leadership of Kamaksha Devi another Nepal women association was declared, in 2029(Subedi,p ratibha,2059:112),female education project began by education ministry, in 2034 Women service co-ordination committee was formed, in 2034, under the leadership of Parijaat, all Nepal women association was revived, another all Nepal women association,

under the leadership of Shanta Manawi was established in 2037, women –development cell was established under the local-development during Panchayati system in 2038 which was later transformed into women-development division in 2039, women-development division was formed in 2044 under labor ministry, women farmer development division was formed under agriculture ministry in 2049, child and women development branch was formed in the secretariat of National Planning Commission in 2050, women development branch was established in 2050 under education ministry, hydropower branch was formed in 2050 and women-development unit was formed under water ministry, National women and child development council was formed under the chairmanship of the Prime-minister which was later inactive. Women and welfare ministry was formed in 2052, women police cell was formed, National women commission was formed in sixth five years plan.

### Status of Nepalese women

Population of women 50.5%, women literate population 42.8%, women voters 49.7%, the occupied land by women 10.8%, women house ownership 5.5%, women in constituent assembly 33.77%, women in judicial body 2.24%, women in economic activities 37.5%, women in federation of Industries and commerce and industrial area 2.68%, women lawyers 6.61%, women in judicial service 1.37%, women in communication 14.00%, women as a board of directors in communication sector 4.00% (Shrestha, 2067, p.4)

Women participation in political activities and other activities is very negligible due to patriarchy society, narrow thinking, and social and cultural barriers despite having the ability to compete with men folk in every field.

**Table 1: Women representatives in local level**

Local level	No. Woman Representatives	Percentage of Women	Total Representatives
District Council	150	1.5	1000
District Development Committee	75	6.7	1117
Municipality	806	19.3	4146
Village Development Committee	3913	7.7	50857
Ward Committee	333	20.0	176031

(Source: Shrestha, 2067 B.S. p. 4)

According to the local election ordinance of 1997, from VDC to Municipality, there is a clear provision that elected women should be official, however, Table 1 shows that small percent of women (i.e. 6.7% in DDC and 7.7% in VDC) representation in local level.

### Women in Nepalese parliament

As per the constitution of 2047 B.S., 5% women must be included in the general election but nothing of that sort happened. When there was the existence of Member of Parliament under the constitution of 2047 till 2058, out of 205 members of parliament, there were not more than 7 women in the parliament.

**Table 2: Female representatives from district in Constituent Assembly**

Number of female members	Number of districts
1-10	2
5-7	11
1-5	30
1	16
0	16
Total 197	75

(Source; Election commission Nepal, 2065 B.S.)

Table 2 shows that out of 601 members of constituent assembly from 75 districts, there are only 197 female members in constituent assembly. There is only one member each from 16 districts. However, there is no female representative from another 16 districts.

**Table 3: Women members in Central Committee of major political parties**

S.N.	Political Parties	Wom-en	Percent-age of women	Men
1	U NCP(Maoist)	12	8.69	126
2	Nepali Congress	7	11.47	54
3	NCP (UML)	21	18.10	95
4.	Madheshi Jan Adhikari Forum	13	24.52	40
5	Terai Madhes Loktantrik Party	6	10.52	49

(Source; Shrestha, 2067, p. 5)

Table 3 shows the representation of women in Central Committee of three major political parties. NCP (UML) has about 18 %, Napali Congress has 11% nearly and UNCP(Maoists) has nearly 9% women representation.

**Conclusion**

The relevance of women reservation in Nepal can hardly be ignored. Unfortunately, it has been found that women appointment is conducted on the basis of nepotism and favoritism. Appointment is done randomly not on the basis of capability rather on the basis of approach. The leaders have not met their commitments. No activities and exercises are conducted to improve or increase women’s self-confidence and their morale. There is lack of training, and interactions to make women skill-oriented. Women are generally alleged against their characters. Women are suppressed, oppressed, and quelled. They don’t get helping hand from family, society, administration and political parties. They are only used to collect crowd, carry flags and carrying out different kinds of rallies and demonstrations. Women are lacking self-confidence. There is lack of unity among women to women. Policies are not

enforced whatever made for women. Lack of strong law, Women can’t flatter, and they can’t be sycophants and can’t go for drink and dine like men-folk.

Women have been spending their lives as a second class citizen due to man-oriented society, feudalistic thoughts, dogmatic deep-rooted culture and mentality from the time immemorial. Even great philosophers and thinkers of the then society (till 18<sup>th</sup> century) had tagged women a second class citizen. Due to which the condition of women went from bad to worse. They were never given opportunity to improve their personality and leadership either in social, political and economic area because of patriarchic society. They always remained backward and they were made to be dependent on men. They were taught that their husbands were the incarnation of Lord Bishnu. Therefore the reservation of women in politics and policy building should be given.

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**Website**

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