



## An analysis of participation of women in politics: A case study of the State of Jammu and Kashmir

**Mohmad Muzaffar Khan**

Research Scholar Media Education Research Centre: University of Kashmir

**Malik Zahra Khalid**

Sr. Asst. Prof.: Media Education Research Centre: University of Kashmir

**Aaliya Ahmed**

Sr. Asst. Prof.: Media Education Research Centre: University of Kashmir

### ABSTRACT

*The idea of a democratic nation-state is impossible without an active participation of women, which form the half of world's population. The highest law making bodies in parliamentary democracies are the legislatures, delegated by people to form laws for modern nation states. An ideal legislature should comprise of men and women in equal numbers. However, the reality on ground is different. The global average of women in parliaments as of November 2013 stood at 21.3%. As far as India is concerned, the situation is also not pleasing in this regard. Women in India have a poor 11% representation in Lok Sabha and 10.6% in Rajya Sabha making India 108th among 188 countries covered in the annual analysis on the statistics of women members of parliament, conducted by inter-parliamentary union (IPU). Although the sixteenth Lok Sabha, elected in 2014, has record 61 women members in Lok Sabha as compared to 59 women MPs of the earlier elected lower house. The number of women in present-day parliament is better than previous Lok Sabha, but the numbers are not substantial and proportionate to women population of India. The makeup of incumbent J&K legislative assembly, as far as representation of women is concerned is also unsatisfactory. The elected members of J&K legislative assembly stand at 87, out of which only two are women. Observing the inadequate representation of women in the Jammu and Kashmir legislative assembly honorable governor nominated two women representatives to the legislative assembly of Jammu and Kashmir. This paper analyzes the representation of women in the legislative assembly of Jammu and Kashmir over various decades by the survey method. The paper also throws light on the role of women in the history of Kashmir politics by historical research method. This paper also highlights the sense that true development of a modern day nation state is impossible and charred without the active participation of women in politics.*

**KEYWORDS :** women, representation, politics, participation.

### Introduction:

The state of Jammu and Kashmir has a unique history that is replete with such examples where women have come on the forefront to steer the administration. The local historians are all praise for such women who made a mark on the administrative set of local polity in ancient Kashmir. Politically the adjoining areas of proper Kashmir valley had been under the sway of Kashmir's ruling dynasties in ancient as well as medieval period. Nevertheless women in ancient 'Kashmir kingdom' played a very pivotal role when their providence pushed them to do so. One of the most striking features of ancient Kashmiri society was the freedom that women enjoyed. The picture, one gets of their life from various sources is not that of servitude or deprivation but of happy participation in different spheres of human activity. There was no attempt to degrade them or demean them, as was being done in other contemporary societies elsewhere in the world.

Several women have played a significant role in shaping the political history of Kashmir. Yashovanti became the first queen in Kashmir to be enthroned as a ruler. Queens like Sugandha and Didda gave very impressive account of their administrative acumen. Many others like Khadana, Amritprabha, Chakramardika, Kalyanadevi, Ratnadevi and Kamla Devi built shrines and towns. Charapida's queen Kalyana Devi was exalted as 'Mahapratiharapala'. Some like the chief chamberlain, Suryamati the queen of king Ananta helped her husband to overcome the initial difficulties in administration. Queen Kalhanika was sent on a delicate diplomatic mission to bring about a rapprochement between Jayasimha and Boja. Thus one can presupposes that queens must have been well read. The celebrated queen of Kashmir, Kotarani, history reveals, fought bravely all the odds. She stood ground and made the Mongol invader to retreat back at a time when she was left bewildered by density.

The medieval history of Kashmir is no less lucky to have such illustrated women who had a considerable influence on polity. According to S N Wakhlu, Habakhatoon was an educated rustic class girl, who after her marriage with the sultan Yusuf Shah Chak played a pivotal role in administration of Kashmir. Besides it she invented a musical instrument and had a great acumen for art, literature and administration.

The mother of illustrious and compassionate Sultan Zain-ul-Abideen had unwavering influence on her son. Her intricately built tomb at Aali Kadal reflects the relation that this mother and son shared. However, the radiant role of women of ancient and medieval Kashmir is not reflected in the status of today's women. Apart from the fact that Jammu and Kashmir, quite recently made it to the much notorious list of north Indian states where the girls share in sex ratio is declining, the role of women in politics is negligible. The women representative in the legislative assembly of Jammu and Kashmir is of no comparison to their population. Political parties from time to time have made loud pledges to increase the number of tickets to women folk to content election but these loud assertions are not reflected in the ticket distribution process. The reason cited by political parties is the win ability factor that hedges them to give more tickets to women. However few women of the state of Jammu and Kashmir have fought all the odds with zeal. But in recent history we find that when ever given a chance women have proved their metal and have proved no less efficient than their male counter parts.

Some illustrious women politicians of the state of Jammu and Kashmir:

**Krishna Misri:**

Krishna Misri, women of substance took arms for the safety and

security of her country men. Misri was born in 1933.she was just 14 years old when tribesmen invaded Kashmir in 1947. misri had her arms training at women's college Srinagar, where she later worked as principal. After maharaja shifted to Jammu at the dead of night on 25<sup>th</sup> October, 1947-an acute panicky gripped the capital city of Srinagar. The leadership of that time decided to set up the Jammu and Kashmir Militia .the militia men then became a core of resistance. Simultaneously women's self defense corps (WSDC) was raised against tribal invasion. Misri too joined in the activities of women's defense group, which had women stalwarts like Freda Bedi, Zainab begum (sister of GM Sadiq); with the basic training in arms Krishna was employed to provide logistical support to Indian forces. The WSDC was a forum with wide ranging volunteer work from military training to social Work and cultural activity. Their day started at Gol Bagh with exercise, parade and weapons training. They were taught target shooting with 303 rifles, stenguns, Bren guns and pistols; and also throwing grenades, at Chandmari, an open area on the outskirts of the city. What every volunteer looked forward to with bated breath was firing from long and short ranges. The real test of marksmanship was to hit the bull's eye. They participated in several firing competitions to hone their skills at the army cantonment, at Badami Bagh. A perfect shot entitled a volunteer to three packets of salt; a rare commodity in Srinagar in 1947.

**Begum Akbar Jehan Abdullah:**

Akbar Jehan was an illustrious and well known Kashmir women politician. Far ahead of many of her contemporary men, she proved her metal. she was known for her industrious nature and nationalism. Akbar Jehan, wife of Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah was the daughters of Michael harry Nedou. She married to sheikh Abdullah in 1933. she served as member of 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha from 1977 to 1979 and 1984 to 1989 from Kashmir's Srinagar and Anantnag constituencies. She had the distinction of being the first president of Jammu and Kashmir Red Cross society. In 1975 she became the president of Indian family welfare association. She died on 11<sup>th</sup> of July 2000 in Srinagar at the age of 93.In her book 'life of a Kashmiri women: dialectic of resistance and accommodation' Nyla Ali khan summarizes the political carrier of Akbar jehan. She reveals that Akbar jehan was an integral part of her husband's political career.

**Khemlata Wakhlu:**

In their book titled 'creative teachers' N Wakhlu, Arun Wakhlu and Niloufer Aga mention the illustrious role that has been played by this daughter of the soil. Mrs Khemlata Wakhlu is an author, political leader and a social worker, and also served as state social welfare board. She has been in public life for nearly three decades. She has been the tourism minister in the J&k state, as well as a member of legislative assembly. She is associated with all India women's conference. She has authored many novels in Hindi, that lucidly describes the lives of a ordinary Kashmir Muslim and a Hindu. She has also co-authored a book 'Kashmir-behind the white curtain' with her husband ON Wakhlu.

**Mehbooba Mufti:**

Born on 22 may 1959, she is the current chief minister of Jammu And Kashmir State. Serving since 4<sup>th</sup> April 2016, she also represented Anantnag parliamentary constituency in the lower house of parliament after she successfully won 2014 general election. She earned a law degree from the University of Kashmir. She is also the India's first Muslim chief minister of any state and the first women chief minister of Jammu And Kashmir State. Since 1999, the year when her part people's Democratic Party came into being, she has stood all odds and has showed her political acumen. She is a grass root level leader and has risen to highest position after battling the odds.

Representation of women in the legislative assembly (elected representative) of the state of Jammu And Kashmir State in the recent past:

1996 state elections	2002 state elections	2008 state elections
02	01	03

The table give above speaks for itself. out of 87 elected members to the state legislative assembly the dismal number of 2-3 is of female members. Given the fact women has been playing a pivotal role in Kashmir polity from time immemorial, the contemporary trends of women participation is abysmal. In the recently held elections of 2014 the bleak trend of abysmal women entry into legislative assembly repeated itself. In 2014 only two women made it to the legislative assembly. Although in the summer of 2016 Mehbooba Mufti successfully contested the Anantnag seat successfully after it was left vacant due to the demise of Mufti Muhammad Syed. The dismal number of women in the state's highest policy making body will surely tell upon the administrative health of our state. The state is already a backward state and is faced with a multitude of problems including political ones. The need of the hour is that political parties should consider giving more tickets to women so that large number of them enters assembly. This does not mean that women should get preference at the cost of men .although a good chunk of women folk can stand for their issues which otherwise have no takers in an assembly bereft of them. The women reservation bill is a controversial issue for most of the mainstream parties at central level. So the best way out is to give more tickets to women candidates so that they also voice their concerns for issues affecting them.

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