

Political Participation of Women Corporators: A Case Study on Cuttack Municipal Corporation

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Abstract

Despite the rise of various women in the political arena, women's political participation is still exist. This study aimed to assess women's political participation, status and build an alternative model of women's political empowerment. The purpose of the present study is to analyse and examine the role of the women corporators in Cuttack Municipal Corporation (CMC). Women political participation is very much focused upon and debated. Important to mention here is about the women reservation Bill in legislative, which has been tabled in parliament but is much debated and discussed due to its various provision relating to reservation of women. Women reservation has been provided in the rural and urban local bodies in the 73rd and 74th constitution Amendment Act, 1993. This provision has certainly encouraged women to directly participate in the local bodies. Even women who do not have any political background have come forward for political participation in the local bodies and have contested election. There is the common criticism, in this context, that women are acting as rubber-stamp and their male counter- parts in the family are really acting on behalf of them. In other words, the woman representatives are the dejureauthority and their male family members (father, husband, brother etc.) are the defacto authority. The present study examines some of such controversial allegations. The results show two essential stages of being an empowered woman in the Cuttack Municipal Corporation political arena. The first stage is women's political participation with two significant elements, namely, (1) leaders capabilities composed of political values, personality, direction and knowledge, and (2) sources of powers entail the women's personality characteristics, financial conditions, and organizational connections.

Key Words: Cuttack Municipal Corporation, Dejure, De-Facto authority

Introduction:

Women and men are two sides of a same coin. Women constitute a crucial part of human resources. But all over the world they are neglected and harassed. In reality, they constitute half of the population and their role is very important to create, maintain and smash society. There are many professions around the world is in progress, but politics is one of them. Women are not involved relatively in any political activities like policymaking.

However, the majority understood that there is a woman's political empowerment because they saw the rise of various women in the political arena and even in other fields. Tundi (2013) emphasized that politics is practically everywhere a male-oriented, male-dominated enterprise but in some countries, the political participation of women is more. The 74th Amendment Act 1992 to the Constitution provides for one-third reservation to women to the urban local bodies. Prior to this in Orissa the then Chief Minister Biju Patnaik had

implemented this policy in Orissa's urban and rural local bodies. Since then a large number of women are actively participating in the political process of the local bodies, then a large number of women are actively participating in the political process of the local bodies. Pertinent to mention here that in many rural local bodies elections, the political participation of women has been a controversial issue in comparison to the urban local bodies election. In urban local bodies and that too in Corporation area, the voters are quite conscious and they judiciously cast their votes in favor of the candidates. Hence the women candidates have to prove their credentials to the voters and they cannot be mere dummy candidates of their male counterparts as is prevalent in many rural local bodies.

The purpose of the present study is to analyze and examine the role of the women corporators in Cuttack Municipal Corporation (CMC). Women's political participation is very much focused upon and debated. Important to mention here is the women reservation Bill in legislative, which has been tabled in parliament but is much debated and discussed due to its various provision relating to the reservation of women. Women reservation has been provided in the rural and urban local bodies in the 73rd and 74th constitution Amendment Act, 1993. This provision has certainly encouraged women to directly participate in the local bodies. Even women who do not have any political background have come forward for political participation in the local bodies and have contested elections. There is the common criticism, in this context, that women are acting as rubber-stamp and their male counter-parts in the family are

acting on behalf of them. In other words, the woman representatives are the de jure authority and their male family members (father, husband, brother, etc.) are the de facto authority. The present study examines some of such controversial allegations.

To shed some light on women's right to political participation, let us review the roots. The root of the involvement of women traced back to the 19th-century reform movement. Still, it is only during the British era in the early 20th-century, the crusade for the political participation of women became a significant part of the evolution of Indian women. The women did not share an equal position with men and their job was subordinate to men. From the Indian perspective, there are three types of women empowerment: political, social, and financial (Das, 2012). While in Bangladesh, women who attempt to engage in community decision-making face considerable discrimination that tended to wane over time as they demonstrated their 'ability to speak' and to contribute to community life. Their ability to pursue this kind of work despite this opposition is commonly related to their political connections, family status, level of education, and involvement in NGO networks (O'Neil and Domingo, 2016).

Background of Cuttack:

The District of Cuttack is named after the Principal town as well as the headquarter of the district of the same name. The word Cuttack is an anglicized form of the Sanskrit word KATAKA that assumes two different meanings namely "military camp" and secondly, the fort of capital on the seat of the Government

protected by the army. Cuttack which is one of the oldest cities of India and the capital city of Orissa for almost nine centuries was built as a military cantonment in 989 A.D. by the king of NrupaKeshari. . It was occupied by the British in 1803 and became the capital of the then Orissa Division in 1816. From then onward till 1948 when the capital was shifted to Bhubaneswar, the city remained the administrative headquarters of Orissa.

Location:

Cuttack is the administrative headquarters of the district and is situated in a tongue; of land formed by the Mahanadi and Kathojodi rivers at their points of bifurcation in 20 degrees 29 inch North latitude and 85 degrees 52-inch East longitudes. Like Rome, Cuttack also was not built in a day, History has recorded the past of this ancient city, the stories of the rise and fall of several empires and dynasties.

The Cuttack Municipal was constituted in 1876 with 30 members, 24 elected, 4 ex-officio, and 2 nominated by the Govt. The Municipal Board took charge of lighting the town, providing drinking water facilities, medical relief, and public instruction at the primary stage. The Municipality also took charge of a few mileage of road and it worked, although under great restriction to develop Cuttack into a modern town.

The city is reputed all over the country for its exquisite and delicate filigree works, its artistic horn works, and the foam and colorful textiles manufactured here. The Barabati stadium erected in the famous killamaidan near the Barabati fort is considered to be next in size and

magnificence only to those in Bombay and Delhi over the whole of India. The High Court Building on the Kathojodi is another impressive structure in the city

Cuttack was established as a municipality on 04.06.1876. It was named as a corporation on 15.08.1994. This corporation covers an area of 1925 sq. km. with a population above 5, 35,139. It includes road coverage of 783 km. with numerous drains of about 1729 km. It has set up 1682 tube wells, 9902 street lights, 12 medical dispensaries and 10 schools, etc.

The objective of the study:

The following are the objectives of the research study –

- i. To study the factors responsible for the political interest of the women corporators.
- ii. To study the role of women corporators in the decision-making process of CMC.
- iii. To study the constraints/ difficulties experienced by the women corporators and
- iv. To analyze the role of women corporators in the development process of the CMC area

Theoretical Framework:

The participation of women in politics requires decision-making that is essential in the advancement of the real and influential democratic political culture that contributes achievement of sustainable development and most importantly to good governance conditions (United Nations Women, 2014). There are various definitions of women's participation, According to David Easton Political

participation means “allocation of values in society”. The study was aimed to find out the political participation of the women corporators. It specifically dealt with the political interests of the women, their attitude, and family support towards their political participation. In this study, the researcher opted to focus on the political aspect. Women's political empowerment refers to the state domain, in which a person is a civic actor (World bank, 2007); creating the conditions for women to be able to make choices; participation and decision making at formal institutions; the process of increasing capacity for women, leading to greater choice, agency, and participation in societal decision-making (Wang & Ligberg, 2017).

The researcher formulated the following assumptions:

- i. Women’s political participation is not based on an equal number of men and women;
- ii. Women political leaders from popular, rich, and educated families have the potential to promote women’s political participation;
- iii. Women political leaders have less access to resources than men political leaders; and
- iv. Sources of power promote women's political participation.

Methodology:

This chapter provides a brief overview of the research methods that were used in this study. This section of the research design and approach explains how the study's research outcome corresponded to the study's purpose. As a consequence, it encompasses the study's research

technique from the research strategy through the presentation of the results

Research Design:

This study employed a descriptive phenomenological research design. Giorgi (2009) and Moustakas (1994) defined phenomenological research as a method of inquiry coming from philosophy and psychology in which the researcher describes the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as expressed by participants. This description culminates in the essence of the experiences for several individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon. This design has strong philosophical underpinnings and typically involves conducting interviews. This kind of study focuses on the meaning of everyday life, like the women's political experiences in fighting for women’s political participation in Municipal areas. The tools of this method are interviews both Face-to-Face Interviews (F2F). In conducting a qualitative study, it is also necessary to perform or incorporate a particular exit procedure into the research design. Typically, validity is ascertained by taking the write-up of the results back to the research participants for review.

Role of the Researcher:

The goal and function of the researcher are to get into the experience of the participants and see it as they see it. In this sense, the researcher and the research participants are co-researchers. It is useful to think of the researcher as a sort of medium or facilitator in the process (Vanderstoep and Johnston, 2009).

qualified participants to obtain information about women's political participation. Network sampling is considered an alternative to the previous ways of estimating rare populations on which the sampling frame is almost impossible to gather.

The participants of this study were determined using the following criteria:

- i. Political women leaders in the municipality, city, or provincial level (present or past)
- ii. Women leaders in the executive or legislative posts;
- iii. Age 18 and above (Based on the age qualifications to run for Mayor, Vice-Mayor, Councilors, Board Members, Vice-governor, and Governor)

Data Analysis Procedures:

The data analysis and interpretation of this study are patterned from the proposed design of John Creswell (2014).

Step 1 - Organize and prepare the data for analysis.

Step 2 - Read or look at all the data.

Step 3 - Start coding all of the data.

Step 4 - Use the coding process to generate a description of the setting or people as well as categories or themes for analysis.

Step 5 - Advance how the description and themes will be represented in the qualitative narrative.

Step 6 - A final step in data analysis involves interpreting qualitative research of the findings or results.

Ethical Considerations of the Study:

During any field activity, participants identified themselves by their

names. The participants' self-identification was largely perceived as a component of the local culture, in which it is common to present oneself to strangers by name as well as institutional designation, as in the case of locals. However, no participant was coerced or pressured in any manner to reveal her or his name if she or he preferred to remain anonymous. The original names of the participants were safeguarded by a measure of anonymity as a general rule. During the field study phase, the participants' identities were solely used to clarify or validate data. However, by employing the idea of anonymity and the usage of pseudonyms, we have taken extra precautions to safeguard individuals who may be vulnerable.

The study team is directly in control of all data and names of research participants, which are kept in a safe place. All records including the participants' identities will be blacked out or shredded after the research is over. The same precaution will be followed in the case of digital records, with the identities of participants being removed when the study is over. Because the participants who participated in this study speak and understand the local language at the study location, no translators or transcribing services were required. It contributed to the study process's secrecy.

Results and Discussions:

Stage 1: Women's Political Participation. Every human being in this world has the right to participate in decisions that define his or her life. It is considered the foundation of the ideal of equal participation in decision-making among women and men. However, male

dominance and gender stereotypes are identified as significant barriers that hinder women from accessing political leadership (Maloiy, Jonck, & Goujon, 2016). As cited in Chafetz and Dwork (1986), leadership is predominantly a male prerogative in corporate, political, military, and other sectors of society. Despite these political situations, women's political participation believes to be an act of empowering women.

Role 1: Women's political involvement

This study helps the women to involve themselves in politics. Political participation is a process by which women will get the liberty to do something for society. This particular 74th Amendment of the Indian Constitution ushered in a new era in the democratic process in India as it not only provided constitutional status to the municipal bodies but also provided an enabling environment for women to take direct part in the process of local self-government and brought women to the forefront of city development. The 74th Amendment mandated the reservation of one-third seats in municipal bodies for women. There is also one-third reservations for women in a position of chairpersons of these local bodies in India.

A very active role for women in local governance is envisaged as compared to governance at the state and national levels in India. These provisions have provided great opportunities and challenges to women in India.

Women's role in decision-making is one of the most important questions for consideration in the movement for their empowerment. Reservation of seats for women in local bodies has shown that it has tremendous implications, not merely in

terms of the number of women entering the public arena and holding public office, but also in terms of the social, economic, and political impact that these reservations have had for the total system.

Today, women have limited access to positions in the government. According to National Democratic Institute (n.d), in the past 20 years, women doubled their numbers in parliaments around the world, from 11 to 22 percent that in 2015 there were 18 women as heads of government. Their participation is called socially transformative, which research shows that women in politics raise issues that others overlook as women can participate in peace processes. Women faced many struggles in their political participation. At current rates of progress, the political party will not be reached until 2080, making equality in politics the highest hurdle women face. It is indeed a massive challenge to the world's women leaders. Therefore, to achieve an equal number of men and women in any political position is undoubtedly considered to be a prolonged agony of any woman advocate.

Role 2: Women's Political Leadership

Political leadership is vital in achieving women's political participation as the participants emphasized that women political leaders should know how to raise their voice, how to deliver their ideas, be strong on their stand, and be able to defend their proposed legislations, programs, projects, or activities. Women's political empowerment is about the ability to talk and influence others. Leadership is about having decision-making power. This power is the ability to influence decisions that affect one's life – both private and public. Given the circumstances that not

all women leaders have good political leadership skills, it is also necessary to re-orient their thinking about women empowerment — re-orientation on their role as a woman leader. Re-orientation on women's political participation does not mean an equal number of men and women in politics; it is only a representation of women for them to raise their voice, prove their leadership, and be part of the decision-making aspects. Women political leaders should know their rights, roles, and obligations. Thus, the researcher defines Women's Political Leadership as the ability of a woman to influence the ideas and behavior of others and is useful when it is translated into outcomes, whatever the content of those may be.

The researcher formulated the Four Points of Women's Political participation in Cuttack Municipal Corporation to wit:

- i. Leadership, voice, and decision-making are the core elements of women's political empowerment;
- ii. Women's voice, access to, or participation in decision making will give them actual influence over decisions and outcomes;
- iii. The women with a strong influence will champion issues of concern to women, including gender equality; and
- iv. Effective voice and leadership of women are associated with an ability to reason out.

Role 3: Participation as the development - The concept of women development is a process of empowering women to realize their potential

- i. Recognizing their potential in society.

- ii. Recognizing their ability to make decisions.
- iii. Utilizing the resources and produce of their labour.
- iv. To integrate women issues into all sectoral development plans as well as to involve them in administrative responsibilities and decision-making.
- v. To indicate statistically the contribution of both men and women in the development process.
- vi. To eradicate all obstacles hindering women from having access to education and training opportunities to the level which they desire.
- vii. To eradicate from the society ideas, conduct, norms, values, customs, and traditions which hinder women from participating fully in economic, social, cultural, and political development to become free.
- viii. To eradicate all actions which harass and discriminate against women on sexual grounds and which portray them as subordinate members of society.
- ix. To promote a culture that encourages social justice and equality for each person.
- x. To provide women with services that ensure safe motherhood, better ways of rearing children and the family.

Conclusion and recommendation of the study:

Every aspect has certain merits and demerits. So political participation of women has so many positiveness and negativeness

- i. Like two sides of a coin, man and woman are equal with each other. In every sphere they are equal. so if women empowerment will be more then society will be more developed and modernized
- ii. Mother is the first teacher of a child. If a mother will be educated and well informed about the political, social, and economic activities of the society. Then she will make her child a perfect citizen of our country. so women participate not only in political activities but also in every types of activities ,She has to participate and should be aware of everything .
- iii. Comparing to the other states the state of Odisha is quite backward. So Odisha will develop when the participation of women will be more. Women reservation should be properly utilized. The Govt. should give more and more privileges to the women.
- iv. Though there are many merits, but certain circumstances are occurred in society which diminishes the empowerment of women such as criminalization of politics and corruption .It is another deterrent for woman to enter into politics is the very nature of politicking .Money and Muscle power are used to threaten opponents and the voters and impose their decisions on the electorate and to raise the kinds of funds violating women’s dignity is an integral part of politics instilling fear in woman.
- v. Literacy is also a barrier for woman development and decision making process. Every woman should be literate first, then they’ll take the proper decisions for a ward, for their district, for their state and for their country. So Government should give prior to literacy.
- vi. Proper Training is also necessary for the women corporators about their duties, rights and about the day to day happenings.
- vii. The Officials and other senior members of the governance, particularly the party members should coordinate and interact properly with the women candidates, by the way it’ll be easier for women development and growth of the society.

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