

# GENDER, POLITICAL PARTIES AND REPRESENTATION: A STUDY OF LUCKNOW MUNICIPAL CORPORATION

—*Shailja Singh*\*

*Abstract* — The present article is based on the data collected for the Minor Research Project 'Study of the Status of Elected Women Representatives: A Survey of the Lucknow Municipal Corporation' sponsored by University Grants Commission, New Delhi. The present work tries to explore the role of political parties in ensuring representation and promoting gender equality. The issue of representation in formal political structure and decision making is vital for women. The study suggests that changes brought by the ascendancy of women into power structure are not sustainable. The patriarchal mindset of the society is still preventing the women from participating in political domain unconditionally.

**Keywords:** Gender, Representation, Political Parties,  
*Women Representatives*

## I.

Urbanization has a dynamics of its own, which is often difficult to comprehend in all its ramifications at a given point of time. The urban lifestyle is undergoing rapid changes; consequently, municipal governance institutions and mechanisms have to cope with the speedy requirement of

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\* Ph.D. (Sociology), Associate Professor (Sociology), Department of Sociology, Social Science & Social Work, Dr Shakuntala Mishra National Rehabilitation University, Lucknow. <shailjadsmru@gmail.com>

fast-changing urban life through constantly evolving responses and processes. Infrastructure facilities, services, legal framework, administrative arrangements and machinery considered adequate and effective today would require a fresh look tomorrow and will have to be continuously modified, expanded and updated accordingly. This change demands better governance and better management; it is only possible when the people involved in the governance process are sensitive to the local challenges. The local self-government institutions get strengthened by including the marginalized section, mainly women into the governance process, and this is very true regarding local urban governance.

The Constitution 74th Amendment Act, 1992 can be said to be a landmark initiative which placed urban local governments on a constitutional pedestal built on the premise that all power in a democracy gets derived from people. Therefore, locally elected representatives and local communities should have a decisive role in urban planning and implementation of programmes and the administering of civil services.

The creation of urban space depends upon the flow of capital over a particular area and time. This urban space also depends upon the dynamics of power and politics, whereby the state dictates to initiate a new urban space. The urban space created by the flow of capital and power dynamics of the state has a cultural tone also. This cultural tone is already there in the system and after the creation of urban space by the capital and power gains new cultural meanings and understanding. The present work takes into consideration the metropolitan area of Lucknow, the capital of province Uttar Pradesh, one of the biggest provinces in India. The present paper tries to explore the relationship between representation, gender and the orientation of the political parties in promoting the women's participation. It also explores the contemporary development in the political and social sphere of the city and how this affects the dynamics of the urban area.

Political parties are consistently identified as responsible for women's underrepresentation, given their role as the main 'gatekeepers' of elected decision-making positions in most countries. It is widely acknowledged that the failure to include women and gender perspectives in political decision-making weakens the legitimacy of democratic institutions and processes (International IDEA 2016). Achieving gender equality in political parties and other institutions of political participation and representation is central to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDG5 aims to achieve 'gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls' by 2030; one of its indicators is that women should have full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political,

economic and public life in all countries. SDG16 aims to achieve ‘effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels’ (United Nations 2015)<sup>1</sup>.

Caul Kittilson (2007) argues that increases in women’s representation came about through women taking advantage of favorable conditions within parties to devise and require implementation of “context-contingent strategies for inclusion” such as quotas. However, she does not take this as the final word on the matter. She unpacks the circumstances that create an environment within a party supportive of the adoption of quotas and finds that three conditions are more significant than others: a high level of women among the party elites, a contagion or diffusion effect across parties, and the fact that leftist parties adopt quotas sooner than parties from other ideological perspectives. However, she concludes that quotas are a necessary precondition for women to receive a boost to their representation on a party’s national executive<sup>2</sup>.

The quota for the women in the Municipal Corporation is ensured by the Constitution of India, but the question is how different political parties treat this quota of women reservation and representation. In the Indian context the representation of women is not only a contention of gender frame but it is also contingent upon caste also. The issue of representing dalit women, both at the level of theory and politics, has erupted time and again in the discourse on dalit women. Dalit women justify the case for talking differently on the basis of external factors (non-dalit forces homogenizing the issue of dalit women) and internal factors (the patriarchal domination within the dalits). The claim for women’s solidarity at both national and global levels subsumes contradictions that exist between high caste and dalit women<sup>3</sup>. Therefore the quota alone is not the only variable but other factors are also important for the manifestation of women empowerment and one is the orientation of political parties.

Congress party has always emphasized on the representation of women in political forums. Wendy Singer (2007) in his book, ‘the constituencies suitable for ladies’ explains the historical discourse of women representation in India. He explains how after independence Congress party is searching the ways to represent women. The other political parties, mainly Bhartiya Janta Party also stands for the proper representation of women in different political forum.

<sup>1</sup> Gender in Political Parties’ Strategic Plans, Fact Sheet May 2019, The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA). <<https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/gender-in-political-parties-strategic-plans-14-05-19.pdf>>.

<sup>2</sup> Caul Kittilson, Miki (2006), *Challenging Parties, Changing Parliaments: Women and Elected Office in Contemporary Western Europe*, Columbus: Ohio State University Press. Reviewed by Yvonne Galligan (2007) *Gender and Political Representation: Current Empirical Perspectives*, *International Political Science Review/Revue internationale de science politique*, Nov. 2007, Vol. 28, No. 5 (Nov. 2007), pp. 557-570. Sage Publications Ltd. <<http://www.jstor.com/stable/20445117>>.

<sup>3</sup> Guru, Gopal (1995): “Dalit Women Talk Differently”, *Economic & Political Weekly*, Vol. 30, Nos. 41-42, Oct. 14-21 (1995).

The deadlock on women reservation bill signifies that certain issues are still not addressed and that is why the women are not getting their due in Parliament and State Legislative Bodies. But the reservation of 33% compulsory reservation in urban and rural local bodies compel the political parties to provide way for the women representation.

## II.

Lucknow became the de facto capital in 1921 as a result of the straight-out coercion of the members of Legislative Council by representatives of the government of Sir Harcourt Butler<sup>4</sup>. The choice of Butler was not guided by public opinion or welfare but by personal preference. In his autobiography, he admitted that he did his 'best to establish Lucknow as the de facto capital and to dethrone Allahabad- which he characterized as being tainted with Bengali and Maratha infusions'<sup>5</sup>. In an editorial entitled 'The Lucknow-Allahabad Controversy', the *Leader* (1921) pointed out that: 'the real reason for its decision was not that Lucknow was more centrally situated than Allahabad but it wanted to prevent the Council being located at a place where it would be subjected to the liberalizing influences of a democratic atmosphere. ....It felt that the aristocratic and autocratic aroma of Lucknow was essential for protecting the legislative council from the pestilential influence of agitators and demagogues for whom despots have a holy horror'<sup>6</sup>. Thus the establishment of new capital status to Lucknow contributed in the expansion of city boundaries manifold. The cultural city Lucknow converts into a new political city. This transformation had a bearing on the institutions of governance as well as on the citizenry. The change of cultural capital into a political city affects the dynamics of urban space. The notion of good governance in the 1990s emphasized upon the decentralization of administrative and management structure and therefore, two crucial legal enactments in the form of Constitution 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Amendments were incorporated. The 73<sup>rd</sup> amendment dealt with the rural local body, whereas the 74<sup>th</sup> amendment integrated urban area.

The term 'good governance' became prominent in the early 1990s when it became accessible concerning economic and social development. The World Bank introduced the concept in 1992 as part of its lending requirements. Good governance refers to the changes in the public sector; these changes are broadly associated with neoliberalism (the new public management, marketization and privatization). Other international organizations, notably the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the United Nations followed suit; they required good governance of developing countries that wanted to receive financial assistance. However, they defined 'good' in different ways according to

<sup>4</sup> Violette, Graff (2011) ed., *Memories of a City*, Oxford India Press, India, p. 214.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*, 215.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*, 216.

their own beliefs and purposes<sup>7</sup>. This good governance is only possible when the people involved in the governance process are sensitive to the local challenges. This good governance is only possible when local self-government institutions incorporate the womenfolk as an integral part of the governance process. The Constitution 74th Amendment Act, 1992 can be said to be a landmark in the history of municipal governance. This initiative which placed urban local governments on a constitutional pedestal built on the premise that all power in a democracy is derived from people and to ensure a compulsory representation to the disadvantaged sections of the society.

### III.

**Women in Urban Local Body in Uttar Pradesh:** The aim of the Constitution of India is to create a society based on equality and to attain this a proper environment is required. This is possible, when the urban development is taken care of and the women are given due representation and participation in the affairs of urban management. This has led to the concept of smart cities. The objective of the Smart Cities Mission (SCM) as explained in The Municipal Performance Index Assessment Framework (2019)<sup>8</sup> is to promote cities that provide core infrastructure and give a decent quality of life to its citizens, a clean and sustainable environment and application of ‘Smart’ Solutions. Under the Smart City Mission a three level strategy has been taken up by the Government:

1. Smart Cities: (Level 3): 100 Smart Cities address the issue of Ease of Living through increased use of digital technology and optimum utilization of resources and are developed as lighthouses.
2. AMRUT Cities (Level 2): Water Supply and Sewerage which need economies of scale are implemented in 500 AMRUT cities with more than 1 lakh population.
3. All Cities (Level 1): Poverty Alleviation, Affordable Housing and Cleanliness are addressed through DAY-NULM, PMAY (U) and SBM (U) for all the urban local bodies.

In all the three-tier structure of urban local body, there is a provision of 33.3% reservation of women, so women are visible in all the democratic forums of the urban governance. The three tiers of local urban body consist of Nagar Nigam, Nagar Palika Parishad, Nagar Panchayat.

<sup>7</sup> Bevir, Mark (2009), *Key Concepts in Governance*, Sage Publications, India, pp. 93-94.

<sup>8</sup> The Municipal Performance Index Assessment Framework 2019, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India. <[https://smartnet.niua.org/eol19/pdf/MPI\\_Methodology.pdf](https://smartnet.niua.org/eol19/pdf/MPI_Methodology.pdf)>.

**URBAN LOCAL BODY (UTTAR PRADESH)****TABLE-(1)**

<i>Nagar Nigam</i>	<i>Nagar Palika Parishad</i>	<i>Nagar Panchayat</i>
17	198	437

**WOMEN WINNING IN THE URBAN LOCAL BODY (UTTAR PRADESH, 2017)****TABLE-(2)**

	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
Mayor (Nagar Nigam)	10 (62.5%)	06 (37.5%)	16 (100%)
Chairperson (Nagar Palika Parishad)	133 (67.2%)	65 (32.8%)	198 (100%)
Chairperson (Nagar Panchayat)	292 (66.7%)	146 (33.3%)	438 (100%)

Source: <http://sec.up.nic.in/site/>

The representation of women as Mayor, Nagar Nigam of Uttar Pradesh is impressive. Out of total sixteen position of Mayor, six were dominated by women. It signifies that women are not only contesting the election, they are converting that into wins. Same way, the story is repeated for the Chairperson, Nagar Palika Parishad and Nagar Panchayat where 32.8% and 33.3% women registered their win.

**WOMEN WINNING IN THE URBAN LOCAL BODY (UTTAR PRADESH, 2017)****TABLE-(3)**

	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
Member (Nagar Nigam)	862 (66.3%)	438 (33.7%)	1300 (100%)
Member (Nagar Palika Parishad)	3386 (64.4%)	1875 (35.6%)	5261 (100%)
Member (Nagar Panchayat)	3464 (63.7%)	1970 (36.3%)	5434 (100%)

Source: <http://sec.up.nic.in/site/>

Women are representing as Member, Nagar Nigam, Nagar Palika Parishad and Nagar Panchayat. Their representation is 33.7%, 35.65% and 36.3% respectively in all three bodies of the local urban bodies. It signifies the presence of women in the different domains of governance of urban space.

#### IV.

**Lucknow Municipal Corporation:** The representation of women through 33% reservation by the 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act helps to change the democratic space at the urban local bodies, and that is equally true for Lucknow Municipal Corporation. Since the Mayor or the head of the Municipal Corporation is a woman, this has added more gender-friendly ambience at the grassroots democratic forum of urban Lucknow. Discussion Paper Series On Women's Political Leadership in collaboration with UN WOMEN and International Center for Research on Women (2012) explored that, great diversity in performance-related indicators is visible in different states of India. It depends upon the state policies, devolution of functions, functionaries and funds, implementation mechanisms utilized, and the presence of fundamental indicators such as education and socio-economic levels. All these inform the type of scenario that may prevail in future. It is crucial to carry out a comprehensive analysis of whether a clear pattern of involvement and participation could be visible or despite more than a decade of the introduction of the reservation policy, women are yet to make a significant change in the governance system. All of these, in turn, will give a nuanced understanding of not permitting women to contribute to local governance matters. The analysis of the variables of gender, education and political affiliation indicates a comprehensive picture of the dynamics of women representation and assertion.

The average age of the representatives of Nagar Nigam Lucknow is 42.47 years; whereas, the average male age is 41.76 years, and the average female age is 43.47 years. It suggests that the male members are young in comparison to female members at an average in Lucknow Nagar Nigam. The most aged person representing Nagar Nigam is of the age of 68 year, and is a female, whereas the maximum age of the male member is 64 years. The minimum age of the male corporator is 24 years, whereas the minimum age of the female corporator is 23 years. The chairperson (Mayor) of the Nagar Nigam is senior in age to all the representatives of the Nagar Nigam, Lucknow. The composition regarding age suggests that the Lucknow Municipal Corporation is quite young.

#### **EDUCATION QUALIFICATION**

**TABLE-(4)**

<b>Graduate and Above</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>	<b>High School</b>	<b>Primary</b>	<b>No Formal Education</b>	<b>Total</b>
56	18	10	18	08	110
(50.90%)	(16.36%)	(9.09%)	(16.36%)	(7.27%)	(100%)

The segregation based on education suggests that the elected representatives are well educated as 50.90% are graduate or post-graduate. 16.36% of the

representatives of Nagar Nigam, Lucknow attained education till Intermediate, whereas 16.36% and 7.27% of the representatives attained education until High school and Primary level. Only 7.27% of respondents do not have any formal education.

**COMPARISON OF EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION**

**TABLE-(5)**

-	<i>Graduate</i>	<i>Intermediate</i>	<i>High School</i>	<i>Primary Education</i>	<i>No Formal Education</i>	<i>Total</i>
Female	19 (17.27%)	08 (7.27%)	04 (3.63%)	05(4.54%)	05 (4.54%)	41 (37.275)
Male	37 (33.63%)	10 (9.09%)	06 (5.45%)	13 (11.81%)	03 (2.72%)	69 (62.72%)
Total Percentage	56 (50.90%)	18 (16.36%)	10 (9.09%)	18 (16.36%)	08 (7.27%)	110 (100%)

The data suggests that male corporators are better educated in comparison to female corporators. 33.63% male corporators are graduate whereas 17.27% of female corporators are graduate. 4.54% female corporators do not have any formal education, while 2.72% of male corporators do not have any formal education.

**Gender and Political Parties:** The political parties are not unanimous regarding the women's reservation in politics, and that is why the reservation of women in Indian Parliament is a distant dream. Some political parties support the reservation of women, and others support this reservation with certain conditions; this deadlock continued, and at present, there is no debate and discussion and neither any political party is worried about this. But the scene regarding urban local bodies is different as there is a mandatory thirty-three per cent reservation, all the political parties have to nominate their candidates for the election of different positions for the urban local bodies. The present analysis takes in its fold the relationship of women's participation and their representation and how the various political parties adopt this shift concerning gender perspective.

**AFFILIATION TO POLITICAL PARTY (WOMEN CORPORATORS)**

**TABLE-(6)**

BJP	22	53.65%
Congress	03	7.31%
SP	11	26.82%
Others	05	12.19%
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	100%

Out of the total 110 wards, women represent 41 wards suggesting thereby that women represent 37.27% of the wards in Lucknow Nagar Nigam. These



women representatives have their political affiliation to various political parties also. 53.65% of the corporators belong to Bhartiya Janta Party, in comparison, 26.82% of the female corporators belong to Samajwadi Party, 7.31% belongs to Congress Party, and 12.19% belong to either Bahujan Samaj Party or not affiliated to any political party. Therefore, this suggests that the ideology of BJP is the dominant ideology on the part of women corporators.

**EDUCATION QUALIFICATION AND POLITICAL PARTIES (WOMEN CORPORATORS)**

**TABLE (7)**

	<b>Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP)</b>	<b>Congress</b>	<b>Samajwadi Party (SP)</b>	<b>No Party affiliation</b>	<b>Total</b>
Graduate	14 (73.68%)	02 (10.52%)	02 (10.52%)	01 (5.26%)	19 (100%)
Intermediate	02 (25%)	01 (12.5%)	03 (37.5%)	02 (25%)	08 (100%)
High School	03 (75%)	-	01 (25%)	-	04 (100%)
Primary	02 (40%)	-	02 (40%)	01 (20%)	05 (100%)
No Formal Education	01 (20%)	-	03 (60%)	01 (20%)	05 (100%)

The women representatives affiliated to the Bhartiya Janta Party in comparison to the women representatives affiliated to other political parties are more educated. Out of 41 women representatives, 19 are graduate or post-graduate and out of these 19, fourteen that is 73.68% belong to Bhartiya Janta Party.

**Analysis of Four Wards Dominated By Women:** The four wards which were unreserved or open for all but a woman contesting the election won the election. Out of these four seats, two are unique as the same women repeat the winning performance in spite of the fact that the seat was unreserved.

**TABLE-(8)**

<b>Wards</b>	<b>Women contestants</b>	<b>Men contestants</b>	<b>Total contestants</b>	<b>Total votes polled/Votes for winning candidate (%)</b>
Daulatganj Ward (BJP)	01	15	16	6742/1444 (21.42%)
Mallahitola Dwitiya (No Party Affiliation)	02	11	13	6148/1736 (28.24%)
Rammohan Roy (BJP)	01	07	08	5013/ 1660 (33.11%)
Bijlipasi Ward –I (BJP)	01	09	10	5022/1080 (21.51%)

Due to the rotation policy of reservation, the above mentioned four seats that remained reserved for women in the election of 2012 initially, converted to open category seats in the election of 2017. Three out of four seats remained

open as unreserved seats and one reserved for scheduled caste, meaning thereby none of them continued reserved for women in the election of 2017, but women captured all four seats. On two of the places, the same woman repeated their performance and won the election.

In all the wards except Mallahitola Dwitiya, only one female contestant is there whereas the number of male contestants on all these seats were 15, 11, 07 and 09 respectively. Therefore, this suggests that on all the four seats, the main challenge posed by the male contestants. The one thing to note is that Bhartiya Janta Party supports all the winning candidates except Mallahitola ward, therefore one may safely conclude that the assertion of women on non-reserved seats is not secure unless the political parties support them. Not only this the total votes received by the winning candidate in all the four constituencies are less than forty per cent. And in three of the constituencies, it is less than thirty per cent. Therefore, this suggests that the moment the seat gets de-reserved, there is no consideration on the part of a patriarchal society to promote women, as indicated in all the four constituencies that the number of male candidates contested the election. In the election of 2012, the seats remained reserved for women; all the contestants were female, the moment the seats got unreserved in the election of 2017 all the women candidates who contested the election vanished from the scene. Therefore, this suggests that reservation is a reliable tool, and is helpful for the women assertion and participation.

## V.

A total of 70 women candidates contested the Mayor election, only six that is 8.57% could win the election. In contrast, Member, Nagar Nigam, 3772 women candidates contesting the election, only 438 that is 11.61% could register to gain. Therefore, this suggests enthusiasm on the part of women, but that passion is not converting into a winning frame. The female corporators have their political affiliation to various political parties also. 53.65% of the corporators belong to Bhartiya Janta Party, in comparison, 26.82% of the female corporators belong to Samajwadi Party, 7.31% belongs to Congress Party, and 12.19% belong to either Bahujan Samaj Party or not affiliated to any political party. Therefore, this suggests that the ideology of BJP is the dominant ideology on the part of women corporators.

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The dynamics of participation of women in the local body politics mainly urban local body is determined by the male counterpart. They choose their female counterpart as a safeguard in the condition the seat get reserved for the woman category. In the majority of the cases where woman represents the ward in Lucknow Municipal Corporation, they have mainly contested the election in the place of their husbands. Women who served various wards due to reservation in 2012, were no more visible in the election of 2017 because of the rotation of the reservation. No consideration was there on the part of the husbands to file the nominations of their wives on the unreserved seats, they contested the election, and some of them even lost the election. One important observation to note is that mostly the female family member who gets a chance to contest the election is wife. Very few exceptions are there where either sister or mother or any other female relative receives the opportunity to contest the election. It suggests that the affinal kinship alliance is more dominating in comparison to consanguineal kinship when it comes to promoting women in the political arena.

The four seats where the women repeated their performance, the major challenge was posed by the male contestants. There was no sympathy for the woman candidate, and in all the four constituencies, the opposition was from the male contestants. Only one woman candidate was there in the election against the current representative; others were male candidates. Therefore, this suggests the parameter of women empowerment determined not by the informal psychological variables of the male counterpart but by the legal imposition of reservation from the side of the government.

The issue of representation in formal political structure and decision making is vital for women. The study suggests that changes brought by the ascendancy of women into power structure are not sustainable. The reason can be ascertained to the fact that only political empowerment is not useful if the broader system is not empowering them economically, legally and socio-culturally. The patriarchal mindset of the society is still preventing the women from participating in political domain unconditionally. The reservation pattern should continue for at least two elections so that the woman who gets trained in the business of managing the ward may get another term. Otherwise, a new set of women come to the political forum, and the moment they get trained the change of reservation seals their prospects. The socio-political capital generated through this process of reservation does not sustain further. The compulsory representation of women in local urban politics is not the effort of women. They never initiated any movement for this right. It is imposed upon them. Therefore, any interaction and understanding must be very cautiously observed as to how the policymakers are determining the choices and alternatives of the women's development and empowerment. Before political empowerment, there remain many variables concerning the economy and socio-cultural system where women are deprived and discriminated.

Parliament has recognized the role of political parties in local bodies pursuant to the amendment introduced through 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act. These Amendments have given rural and urban local body institutions, a constitutional status as a result of which they have become permanent in the Indian Political System as a third Government. These political parties are usually creatures of their cultural environment and the machinery with which they performed their functions is shaped by history, tradition and the electoral process stipulated by the constitutional government. Socialization and education of the citizenry and translation of their demands into public policy is the direct outcome of such organization. They are political guides of the population at large and it is their responsibility to promote the representation of women and empower them.