

## **Political Status of Women in India with special reference to erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Women make-up half of the world's population, no country can afford to ignore the skills, talents, and experiences of half its people. The status of women in erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir has been a checked one as it has been ups and downs, which affected the status of women. Women participation in mainstream politics has important implications for the broader arena of governance in any country. But women's participation in politics of erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir is still not very impressive. The number of women Politian's is very small as compared to men. In this context the present study analysis the participation and representation of women in the politics of erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir.*

**Keywords: Politics, Participation, Representation, Voting, women.**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Every country in the world had half a population of women folks, but this share of population has been kept aside in the sphere of politics. In society of erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir, the women always witnessed varying fortunes as there are many ups and downs, which affected the women of the state. To make their presence felt the women of Jammu and Kashmir had always struggled, so that their voice has been heard in the society. After the participation of women masses in 1930's sociopolitical moments there has been an increase in number of women participation of Jammu and Kashmir state politics. Till 13<sup>th</sup> century only noble women enjoyed political freedom and exercised power and responsibility. The king discusses the problems of vital importance with his queen and also took the queen's advice. With the beginning of Muslim rule during the 14<sup>th</sup> century in Jammu and Kashmir, the position and status of women started to degrade. They started to live a miserable life as their political rights had snatched. During the early phase of 20<sup>th</sup> century freedom struggle against the Dogra dynasty has started in Jammu and Kashmir. Women from the valley had participated in those movements. The uprising in 1931 led towards the creation of legislative assembly (Praja Sabha) in 1934 by the commission under B.J.Galancy which was appointed by the Maharaja in 1932. The commission gave some political rights to the people, but in the matter of women right to vote was given only to the middle pass out. In 1944, it was national conference under the leadership of S.M. Abdullah that gave women an energetic platform.

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The 'Naya Kashmir' manifesto which was adopted by National Conference has charter regarding to women as 'women Charter'. This was the Manifesto which gave the women of state every political right that is the right to vote, right to elect, and the right to be elected in all institutions on the equality with men. A provision of reservation of seats for women had given with this manifesto.

After the independence the economic conditions of erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir women started to improve but the political zeal in the women of Jammu and Kashmir was hardly visible. The Begum Akbar Jahan Abdullah wife of S.M. Abdullah, the first Prime Minister of erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir had played a prominent role in politics and she was also first female to reach parties. But after 1953 the women governance declined. Despite many initiatives taken by the government for women political empowerment, the women participation in politics of Jammu and Kashmir remained very low till today.

## II. POLITICAL REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN ERSTWHILE STATE OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR

Like many other states of India, in Jammu and Kashmir also women's participation in politics is not very satisfactory. In Jammu and Kashmir, women constitute about half of the total population and voting strength as well, but their participation in state legislative assembly, parliament and other prominent decision making is very low. Undoubtedly, over the years their participation in politics has shown somewhat upward trend. Their participation in voting is almost equal to their male counterparts. However, their overall participation and representation in the politics of the state is not still up to the mark in the state legislative assembly, parliament and decision making bodies. . Although, from early decades of 20<sup>th</sup> century, women in the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir government conscious about their suppression due to emergence of political consciousness, development of modern education, spread of cultural awareness and corrosion of economic condition.

Even though the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir is hurtling towards elections, officially, the presence of women in Jammu and Kashmir political process is almost most a rarity. Historically, women in the valley have played a frontline role, but 13 years of insurgency have ensured that women bear the burden of rebuilding a traumatized society, and their presence in politics, today is almost negligible.

## III. WOMEN VOTERS' TURNOUT IN ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS IN ERSTWHILE STATE OF J&K (1962-2014)

S.No	Year	Total no of women voters	Women voters who cast their vote	Total percentage
01	1962	--	--	--
02	1967	635181	337052	53.06
03	1972	1062399	572886	53.92

04	1977	1253302	756898	60.39
05	1983	1413017	995824	70.48
06	1987	1618445	1138744	70.36
07	1996	2185882	1007249	46.08
08	2002	2770407	1060143	38.27
09	2008	3097492	1823212	58.86
10	2014	3462092	2294469	66.27

Source: Election Commission of India

Following table presents women voters turnout in different Assembly elections in erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir over the years. In elections of erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir, women obviously contribute less in the politics as a voter in elections; women obviously contribute less in the politics as a voter in general and as candidate in particular. An interesting fact: the first assembly election in Jammu and Kashmir, in 1962, there had no women registered as voters. The voting percentage of women rose in subsequent elections i.e., in 1967 (53.06), 1972 (53.92) and 1977 (60.39). Women voters has speedy increased in 1983 (70.48), and 1987 (70.36). But in 1996 and 2002, it has declined from 46.08 percent to 38.27 percent. Again in 2008 and 2014, there were again a greater number of women voters which is increased from 58.86 percent to 66.27 percent.

#### IV. WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN LOK SABHA ELECTIONS FROM ERSTWHILE STATE OF J&K (1967-2019)

The first Lok Sabha elections in erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir were started from 1967. The participation of women in the Lok Sabha elections from Jammu and Kashmir remains very low from the beginning.

Year	No of seats	Women contestants	Name of the elected women	constituency	Party	Votes	Percentage
1967	06	00	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
1971	06	00	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
1977	06	02	Akbar Jahan begum	Srinagar	NC	210072	67.73
			Parvati Devi	Ladakh	NC	231310	53.32
1980	06	00	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
1984	06	01	Akbar Jahan begum	Anantnag	NC	240973	58.51
1989	06	00	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
1991							

1992	-----No Elections-----						
1996	06	08	---	----	---	----	---
1998	06	02	----	----	---	----	----
1999	06	06	----	----	----	----	----
2004	06	04	Mehbooba Mufti	Anantnag	PDP	74436	49.58
2009	06	00	-----	-----	----	----	-----
2014	06	03	Mehbooba Mufti	Anantnag	PDP	200429	54.27
2019	06	03	----	-----	----	----	---

Source: Election Commission of India

The following table shows the participation of women in Lok Sabha elections from Jammu and Kashmir. From the first Lok Sabha election held in Jammu and Kashmir in 1967, only three women were elected as the member parliament from the erstwhile state. The elections of 1967, 1971 and 1980 not a single woman contested in the Lok Sabha elections. In the elections of 1977, two women contested in the Lok Sabha elections and both were elected from their respective constituencies; Akbar Jehan Begum of National Conference was elected from Srinagar Parliament seat and Parvati Devi of INC was elected from Ladakh Parliament seat. Akbar Jehan Begum was the single contested woman candidate in 1984 elections and was elected from Anantnag Parliament seat. In the elections of 1989, 1996, 1998, 1999 and 2009 there was some participation of women contested candidates, but not a single woman was elected for Lok Sabha in those elections. Due to the unfavorable conditions there were no Lok Sabha elections in erstwhile state in 1991 and 1992. Mehbooba Mufti of Peoples Democratic Party was elected from Anantnag in 2004 and 2014 elections. In 2019, out of six seats, only three women were contested and lost their deposit, despite females constituting 48 percent of the electorate in the violence-hit Himalayan state.

## V. PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS OF ERSTWHILE STATE OF J&K (1962-2014)

The participation of women in the Legislative Assembly in erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir is generally low. It has always been low and sometimes zero. The lower representation of women in the State Legislature is a matter of serious concern. The state passed through critical times due to the rise of militancy and conflict, which affected the normal functioning of democratic political institutions since the early nineties.

S No	Year	Contested	Name of elected women	Party	Constituency	Votes	%
1	1962	01	----	-----	-----	----	----
2	1967	01	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
			Zainab Begum	INC	Amira Kadal	7446	38.12

3	1972	06	Hajra Begum	INC	Banihal	----	----
			Nirmala Devi	INC	Tikri	11929	63.37
			Shanta Bharti	INC	JandrahGarota	10172	62.90
4	1977	04	Gurbachan Kumari	JNP	Bari Brahmana	8124	39.27
5	1983	07	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
6	1987	13	Swaran Lata	INC	Bari Brahmana	14539	45.51
7	1996	15	Sakina Akhter	NC	Noor Abad	12553	53.12
			Mehbooba Mufti	INC	Bijbehara	10051	45.28
8	2002	13	Mehbooba Mufti	PDP	Pahalgam	8544	45.11
			Suman Lata Baghat	INC	RS Pura	19669	41.40
9	2008	67	Shameema Firdous	NC	Habba Kadal	2374	41.14
			Mehbooba Mufti	PDP	Wachi	12810	37.96
			Sakina Ittoo	NC	Noor Abad	16240	35.23
10	2014	28	Asiea	PDP	Hazratbal	9834	45.52
			Shameema Firdous	NC	Habba Kadal	2596	42.83
			Mehbooba Mufti	PDP	Anantnag	5616	NA

Source: Election Commission of India

Following table depicts that the first Assembly election in erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir was held in 1962, in which there was only one woman who contested but lost her deposit. In 1972 Assembly elections, for the first time women entered the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly. And that year, ten women filed their nominations, in which six contested and three won. It was first time of elections of Jammu and Kashmir assembly in which majority of women contestants won. They also gave the state assembly its highest percentage (5.33 percent) of women. From 1977 to 1966, women went missing from the state politics. In the 1996 elections, 15 women contested, in which 14 lost their deposits and one woman were elected. In the 2002 election, 13 women were contested in which 2 women were elected. In the 2008 election, first time 67 women were in the fray, in which two were elected. And most recently, in 2014, out of 28 women contested, three women were elected.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Women empowerment in the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir possibly would remain a slogan for at least one more century because there appears no immediate ray of hope to give them an opportunity. This is unfortunately that even after 70 years of democracy only five women leaders could become even members of parliament. Yes, in the recent history of the state only three women from Jammu and Kashmir could enter parliament of India. Parvati Devi, Begum Jahan and Mehbooba Mufti are the only names that come into thought

when one explores political empowerment for women in Jammu and Kashmir. The discrimination is done by each political party of the state with women; all of them are reluctant in giving them political opportunity to show their abilities and competence.

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