



Socio economic and political backgrounds of women legislators in Uttar Pradesh

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Abstract

In the present society the capacity to understand the issues and problems which community faces and the ability to communicate one's ideas to others is considered as the important qualities for leadership. It draws interest to study women legislator's socio economic and political backgrounds as it reveals their thoughts, aspirations and quality of leadership as well. If we look at the Uttar Pradesh state Legislative Assembly (study area) we find steadily growing representation of women over a few decades. This work is an overview of socio-economic, religious and political backgrounds of women members of Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly from the years 1980 to 2009. It examines the women legislator's socio economic background their performances and role as they had influenced the proceedings of Legislative Assembly. Their castes and religions have also been highlighted, as these factors played important role in the politics of Uttar Pradesh. With the close microscopic look on the performance of women legislators in the State Assembly, an attempt has also been made to find out the legislative style of women legislators as different to their male counterparts. Interaction of women legislators with their constituency people and the people of their constituency and their involvement in the people's welfare programme has also been looked into.

Keywords: leadership, backgrounds, performance etc.

Introduction

Earlier it was believed that people by virtue of their social and economic position in the society, had virtually taken over the political system of the country. Later on, new leadership that particularly appeared in agrarian areas due to the designs of various development schemes by government essentially emerged from new land owning classes taken over political system of the country. Nonetheless, someone was not big landlord but had more than one substantial source of income. Additionally, social progress in India has witnessed the old big men had gone. For instance the large Zamindar and Tallukdars of Uttar Pradesh, the lords of villages in Punjab and Haryana and elsewhere had collapsed. Consequently now the new rich are of another sort (deriving their wealth from government funds for public welfare policies and programmes) dominates the political system of the country^[1]. To study the socio economic and political backgrounds of women, legislatures seem to be better institutions. Legislatures also provide platform to examine how the number of women and their share in institutional power, their explicit gender similarities and differences affect institutional norms. If we look at the Uttar Pradesh state Legislative Assembly (study area) we find steadily growing representation of women over a few decades. It draws interest to study women legislator's socio economic and political backgrounds as it reveals their thoughts, aspirations and quality of leadership as well. The time period for the study has been chosen from 1980 to 2009. The aim of the study is to weigh the present status of women politicians in Uttar Pradesh in comparison to women

politicians of earlier era. All data for this chapter has been collected from the life history records of MLA's^[2], Assembly proceedings and the literature available in the Legislative Assembly's library.

Following table shows that there were only 163 women legislators who were elected in all Assemblies of U.P. from the period 1980 to 2009. In the Assembly election of 1980, total 85 women had contested the election out of which only 20 women were elected, the ratio of women became 4.70 percent of the total strength 425 of Assembly. In 1985 Assembly election; women representation had rose to 31 and had crossed the level of 7 percent. It was a record which no Assembly could break. After that the number of women legislators had considerably gone down in the four consecutive Assembly elections of UP. The number of women legislators was only 19 in the 10th Assembly election of 1989. 10 women were elected in the 11th Assembly elections of 1991, 13 were elected in the 12th Assembly elections of 1993 and 21 women were elected in the 13th Assembly elections of 1996. However, the 14th Assembly elections of 2002 had represented 26 women legislators. That strength was considerably higher than the 4 previous Assemblies elections result. The Assembly elections of 2007 had 23 women legislators in the house of 403 members. The average percentage of elections from 1980 to 2009 comes just 4.90% in the UP Assembly. (see Table 1) The detailed study of number of elected women has been described in the 6th chapter of the thesis.

¹ Walter C. Neale, "Rural development and politics in India", *Pacific Affairs* (British Columbia.), Vol. 53, (4) (winter 1980-1981), p.626, <http://www.jstore.org/stable/2757532>. 626-631.

² Uttar Pradesh legislative Assembly from 8th to 15th Assembly elections, *Sadsya Parichay*, Vidhan Sabha Sachivalay U.P, Lucknow

Table 1: Number of elected women in UP Assembly from 1980 to 2009

Year of elections	No. of assembly	Total strength of assembly	No. of contested women	Number of elected women	% of women
1980-85	VIII	425	85	20	4.70
1985-89	IX	425	168	31	7.30
1989-91	X	425	207	19	4.47
1991-93	XI	419	226	10	2.35
1993-96	XII	422	253	13	3.05
1996-02	XIII	424	190	21	4.90
2002-07	XIV	403	344	26	5.94
2007-12	XV	403	370	23	5.70
Total+ avg.	8 times	-	-	163	4.90

Source: Statistical report on General Elections of 1991 to the legislative Assembly of Uttar Pradesh, Election commission of India New Delhi

Racial status of women legislators

India is the country of multi racial, multi lingual and multi religious society. Caste system has been one of the basic features of Indian society since beginning. According to the Hindu mythology all the people of the world are divided into four castes- Brahmins [priest], Kshatriya [Warriors], Vaishyas [Common People] and Shudras [Servants] (precedence of these caste is according to the order of enumeration). All other castes are produced by intermarriage either with pure or the mixed castes. These differences in the castes are innate and cannot be obliterated or concealed [3].

At present, there are approximately 3000 castes in India some are derived from tribal or racial elements, other are the member of common guilds or crafts while some are religious in origin [4] Uttar Pradesh is the part of Indian union, and has diversity amongst its territory; almost all types of castes are found here. Racism is one of the subjugated feelings among people of particularly castes, which makes concerned castes as paramount rather than society or nation interest for individual or particular groups.

In post modern time the caste has been divided into four major categories.

1. Upper Caste: it's known as general categories Castes includes Brahmin, Rajput, Thakur and amongst Muslims Syed, Shaikh, Pathan etc.
2. Other backward Caste: (OBC) includes Yadav, Kurmi, Lodhi, Jat Gujjar Bhumihar, Tyagi etc.
3. Schedule Caste: it includes Dalit, Pasi, Dhobi, Mallah, Valmiki, Bhangi etc.
4. Schedule Tribe: Bhotia, Buxa, janusari raji, Tharusa, Shoka, kharbar, mahigir etc.

Earlier, (initial period of independent India) political power was rested in the hands of the upper classes as they were socially and economically strong, and had monopoly over political power. The lower and backward castes were not politically mobilized and were badly dominated by the upper castes in all walks of life. There is no history of any anti-Brahmin movement in the north India during colonial period. However, the later period of independent India observed that lower and backward Castes as newly emerged political forces, opposing and giving stiff resistance to higher castes having domination over political power in India. In the year 1979 the

establishment of Mandal commission and its report (the Mandal commission report created the impression of an imminent transfer of power from upper to backward castes) recommending introduction of affirmative action in society. The grip of upper caste got loose from power of politics. It was taken over by the schedule castes and other backward castes.

This change can also be seen in the selection of women political leaders. Looking at the caste background of women members in Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly for a period of 29 years (1980-2009), initially it was observed that, upper caste women were elected in large number. The caste distribution of women legislators is given in table 2.

In the Assembly election of 1980, out of total 20 women legislators, 17 (85%) were from upper castes, whereas 3 (15%) were from scheduled castes. Consecutive Assembly elections of 1985, 1989, 1991 and 1993 results also make it clear that upper caste women representation was high in comparison to schedule caste women. For instance in the 1985 Assembly elections out of total 31 women who were elected, 22 (70.69 percent) women were represented from upper caste whereas only 7 women (22.58) were from Schedule Caste and two women were from OBC caste. In the next Assembly elections of 1991, total 19 women were elected out of which 11 women (57%) were form upper castes and 4 women (21.5%) were from schedule caste and 4 women (21.5%) were from OBCs.

Similarly, the 1991 Assembly was also filled by upper caste women e.g. total 10 women were elected in this Assembly out of which 8 women (80%) were from upper castes and only 2 (20%) women were from Schedule castes. Thus, this trend was maintained till 1993 Assembly elections, in which the total 13 women were elected; out of these 7 women (53%) represented upper caste, whereas 5 women (38.46%) were from Scheduled castes and 1 women (7.69%) represents OBCs.

The number of schedule caste women was considerably increased in the UP Assembly elections of 1996, 2002 and 2007 and reached the level of 47 %, 50% and 39%, while upper castes women strength had gone down substantially to 52%, then 42% and then 43%. The number of OBCs Women could not make a mark like the SC Women and their number remained constant as it was before. Looking at the average representation of women in all 8th Assembly elections, 59.50 percent representation was of upper Caste women. Schedule castes women represented 32. 51 percent whereas OBC women represented just 7.79 percent (see Table-2).

³ S.V. Ketkar, *History of Caste in India* (Jaipur: Rawat Publications 1979), p. 19.

⁴ Betille Andre, *The Backward Classes in Contemporary India* (New Delhi: Oxford University press, 1992), p. 117.

Table 2: Castes composition of women legislator from 1980- 2009 in UP Assembly

Assembly Elections	Total elected women	General category women	%	OBC Women	%	SC Women	%	ST women
1980	20	17	85.00	-	00.00	3	15.00	-
1985	31	22	70.96	2	6.45	7	22.58	-
1989	19	11	57.00	4	21.05	4	21.05	-
1991	10	8	80.00	-	00.00	2	20.00	-
1993	13	7	53.84	1	7.69	5	38.46	-
1996	21	11	52.38	-	00.00	10	47.61	-
2002	26	11	42.30	2	7.69	13	50.00	-
2007	23	10	43.47	4	17.39	9	39.13	-
Total	163	97	59.50	13	7.97	53	32.51	00.00

Source: Sadsya Parichay, Uttar Pradesh legislative Assembly from 8th to 15th Assembly elections, Vidhan Sabha Sachivalay U.P, Lucknow

Religious Background

After castes influence in the politics of UP, it was also coloured by religious feeling. There are number of religion based political parties in India which came into existence after independence. Such Political parties use religion as a tool to meet their political ends. For example Hindu Mahasabha, Ram Rajya Parishad, Jana Sangh (later BJP), Muslim league, Jamaate Islami, the majlis-e- ittihadul muslimeen etc all these parties have sought to mobilise political support by exploiting the religious sentiments of people. While nominating the candidate for elections to the national Parliament and state legislatures all these political parties are forced to reckon the demographic spread of the electorate in terms of religion. In a predominantly Muslim constituency these parties look for the candidate belonging to the Muslim community. In a Sikh or Hindu dominated constituency parties likewise look for a candidate belonging dominant religious community in that constituency. Similarly in their election campaigns parties liberally make use of religious slogans and symbols and make highly emotive appeals in the name of religion in their public speeches and even on the eve of their election in their door to door campaign ^[5].

Majority of the people in Uttar Pradesh belong to Hindu religion, Muslims in UP are 24.50 percent while Sikhs are 0.45 percent, Jains 0.15 percent, Buddhists 0.22 percent Christians 0.18 percent and other not specified religious population is 0.18 percent ^[6] As UP has 74.50 percent Hindu population and therefore it is quite obvious that the Assembly would be widely held with Hindu Legislators. Women also constitute 50 percent of State population, so obviously it will also be applied on the women strength. In the period between 1980- 2009 the total number of women legislators was 163, out of which 152 (93.25%) seats were occupied by Hindu women. Followed by 10 seats by Muslim women legislators while only 1 seat by Sikh woman, whereas Christian and others communities representation was negligible. (See Table 3)

Table 3: Religious background of women legislators

S. No	Religion	Women Legislators
1	Hindu	152 (93.25)
2	Muslim	10 (6.13)
3	Sikh	1 (0.61)
4	Christian	-
5	Others	-
Total		163

Marital Status

Marriage remains a very important indicator of socio-economic opportunities in India. In the context of political leadership marital status helps the leader in identifying social roles and through a set of relations it also enlarges his/ her supporting network ^[7]. There may be various reasons behind it but the traditional social structure usually does not permit unmarried girls to perform in various fields including of political activities. The normal upbringing of a girl in a traditional society is directed towards marriage as soon as she attains maturity, and a married woman has more stable existence particularly in a traditional society. Looking at the marital status of women legislators, it has been cleared in table 4 that majority of women legislators who were successfully elected in the Assemblies were married. From 1980 to 2009, the total 163 women have been elected out of which 123 (75.46) women were married when they got elected. Unmarried women strength was quite low; only 9 unmarried women were elected including Mayawati in the assembly from 1980 to 2009. Number of widow women was higher than unmarried women in Assembly from 1980 to 2009. It seems to be positive and encouraging change in the society where widows are usually discouraged at public meeting. The marital status of women legislators is shown in table 4.

Table 4: Marital Status of Women Legislators

S. No	Marital Status	Women Legislators
1	Married	123 (75.46)
2	Unmarried	9 (5.52)
3	Widow	31 (19.01)
Total		163

⁵ T.R. Sharma, "Religion and Politics in Modern India: A Historical Overview", in Moin Shakir, ed., Religion State and Politics in India (New Delhi: Ajanta publications 1989), P. 53.

⁶ Census of India 2001, see source series number etc.

⁷ Rashmi Shrivastav, "The Role Of Women in Indian Politics", *Political Science Review* (), Vol. 21 (4), (1982), p.157.

Educational qualification of women legislators

The study of women legislator's educational qualification has revealed that in shaping the leadership quality among women their educational qualification was a very important factor. The data of table 5 reflects that majority of women have good educational records except few women who are shown only literate or come just under high school passed. Graphical presentation of table 5 shows the education level of women members in which large numbers of women are post graduates (23.92 %) and graduates (17.79%). Furthermore 7.36 percent women members are graduates with LLB and 7.97 percent women members are graduates with B. Ed. Six women members i.e. 3.68 percent are PhD degree holders. Level of intermediate and high School passed women members almost very closed to each other, for example, 11.65 percent women have intermediate qualifications and 11.04 percent women are belongs to high school. (Table 5)

Table 5: Education qualification of women legislators

S. No	Education level	No. of women Legislators
1	MPhil +PhD	6 (3.68%)
2	Post Graduate	39 (23.92%)
3	Graduate with L.L.B	12 (7.36%)
4	Graduate with B. Ed	13 (7.97%)
5	Simple Graduate	29 (17.79%)
6	Intermediate	19 (11.65%)
7	High school	18 (11.04%)
8	Below High School	9 (5.52%)
9	Literate	19 (11.65%)
Total		163

Economic and Professional background of women legislators

The economic status of any family is a strong determinant of opportunities available to its members in the power structure. This is especially so in the case of leadership in terms of the leader's capacity to secure and retain power in the political system. A number of studies have revealed that emerging leaders were usually from economically better placed family. But this pattern is now changing. A large number of persons belonging to the weaker section of the society with low level of income are now coming into power politics.

After the study of professional backgrounds of women Legislators in UP Assembly, it has been found that a large number of women were belongs to occupationally strong families. Table 6 reflects that agriculture is the main occupation of the families of women members as 83 of them were engaged with this profession. Although after the introduction of Zamindari Abolition Committee in UP, a large number of landlords and small zamindars automatically were converted into farmers. Actually Agriculture is a big source of income in UP, due to fertile regions of the indo-Gangatic plain and huge irrigations measure (such as the Ganga canal and tube wells). New kind of farmers may earn lot of money with the use of modern irrigation facilities, as new kind of cultivator has arisen especially; farm wells provide guaranteed supply of water¹⁸. Thus women legislators who belong to farmer families or who are agriculturalist had a strong

financial position in society. Moreover, 13 women members were connected with business professionally and 5 women had their own factory. Furthermore, 6 women were practising lawyers, 13 women were engaged in Academic or teaching professions. Besides this one woman legislator was a journalist and 2 women were employed on the high posts in the public services.

However, few women who were social worker had occupied 11 seats (6.74 %) in the Assembly. Eight women (4.74 percent) told that they are professionally politicians and 4 women legislators (2.45 percent) do not specified their occupation status. 17 women were also elected as legislators who were house wives but enjoyed good reputation in the society.

Table 6: Professional background of women legislators

S. No	Occupation	No. of women	Percentage
1	Agriculture	83	50.92
2	Business	13	7.97
3	Industrialist	5	3.67
4	Lawyer	6	3.68
5	Teacher	13	7.97
6	Journalist	1	0.61
7	Public Service	2	1.22
8	Politician	8	4.90
9	Social Worker	11	6.74
10	House wife	17	10.42
11	Others	4	2.45
Total		163	

The above portrayal shows that the most of the women legislators had good leadership quality, have had great impact on UP politics. They played their role efficiently. Mostly women who were selected for the case study have been elected twice- thrice, (few also for the fourth times among them) in Assembly elections of UP. Few women were also available among them who have been elected as MP once or twice. They are experienced; their behaviour shown that they are mature politicians (as it was observed by researcher during their interview time). Being a woman these women legislators are very concern about women issues. They raised their voice in Assembly to solve the women problems. Most of them are felt that women are very marginal in political institutions. Women under representation in Assemblies as well as in Parliament, is a matter of great concern according to them. To get the all round development of women they stressed on the women's education. According to them, Women reservation is only mean but not the end to increase the women representation in politics presently. Irrespective of their caste colour and religion all women legislators are come together to take stand on women issues in Assembly. The researcher has taken their valuable thought and opinion regarding women problems as measure to counter women problems from the society.

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