

Part Two

Partners in Politics, Competing in Crime

Growing Importance of Independents and Rebels in Local Elections

○ Medha Nanivadekar

In issue No.136 of MANUSHI, Medha Nanivadekar's article "Partners in Politics, Competing in Crime" (Part I) examined the impact of the sudden implementation of the Women's Reservation Policy in the municipal institutions in Maharashtra. While on the one hand, this did bring about an increase in the participation of women in the government, on the other, corruption and inbuilt abuses in the system have limited genuine women activists from participation in local electoral politics.

This article highlights the important role of independent candidates in local elections and the many disadvantages and discriminations they have to deal with on account of their vulnerabilities as women and the corruption inbuilt into the electoral process.

Independents constitute the largest group of candidates in local elections. As any political party can nominate only a single candidate per ward, other party contenders are left out of the contest for the seat. Moreover, alliances reduce the opportunities available for every party, thereby increasing the number of dissidents. Some candidates withdraw, while many others assert themselves by filing nominations as independent candidates.

The independents are criticised severely for shifting loyalties as per their convenience. However, it is not only the independent candidates who deserve the blame. After all, elections are a numbers game in which political parties are primarily interested in acquiring control of as many outfits of the government machinery as possible. They do not hesitate in adopting persons with uncertain loyalties or even with a confirmed lack of loyalty in order to win. Consequently, many genuine

party workers get ignored or bypassed when it comes to giving party tickets for contesting elections. Many such disgruntled workers end up contesting as independents. If none of the parties can get a clear majority, independent corporators really control the balance. This encourages ever-changing party and ideological loyalties.



The 1997, municipal elections clearly showed that the phenomenon of rebellion among party activists has gripped all political parties without exception. Earlier, it was believed that women activists would not dare challenge party organisations, but data does not confirm this belief (*Sakal* February 9,1997). All parties expelled a handful of rebels throughout the State (*Pune Sakal* February 22,1997, *Nasik Sakal* February 16,1997). After expulsion, the candidates tried to justify their rebellion. *Nasik Tarun Bharat* (February 20,1997) reported that the President of the Nasik unit of the BJP Mahila Morcha was expelled from the Party. She hurriedly held a press conference to announce her entry into the Congress (I). She claimed that she was leaving the BJP along with 1,200 workers but could not name even a handful. Also, she could not give any explanation as to why she was joining the Congress (I). While claiming that the BJP had been unjust to her, she mentioned

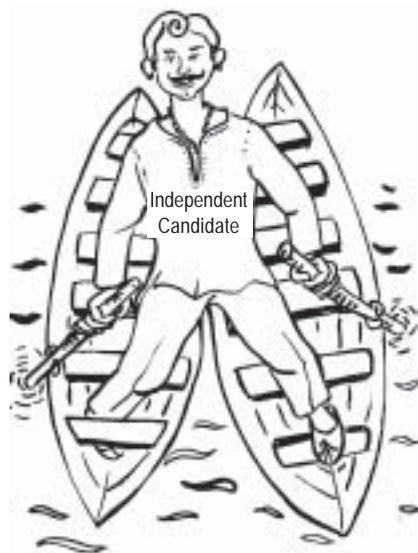
that after her husband's death, her repeated requests for help in securing a gainful job for her son were given a cold shoulder.

The former BJP corporator Rejina Gaikwad from Pune, who was also expelled from the Party, released a press note claiming that she had already resigned from the Party. As a result, the question of expulsion did not arise (*Sakal* February 22,1997). Sangita Sheratate, a Cong (I) activist from Nasik, had warned the Party of her rebellion if some outside candidate was imposed on her ward by sidetracking "a deserving dedicated local candidate" (*Gavakari*, January 31,1997). These three examples offer evidence of the growing assertiveness, ambition and willingness among women to defy the party organisation. The elections also establish that there was no gender difference in the reasons for such incidents of rebellion.

When Factions Dominate

Although all the parties have a Parliamentary Board that is empowered to make decisions about candidacies, some faction within the party organisation usually dominates the decisions of this Board. For example, in Mumbai, most of the Congress (I) aspirants felt that the Murali Deora Faction was not impartial in the decisions about official candidacy for the 1997 elections. As *Maharashtra Times* dated February 2,1997 reported, the dissenting candidates had convened a meeting to decide about collective rebellion.

Throughout the State, dissidents joined forces and many also made frequent trips to Mumbai to appeal to the President of the Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee (I) to look into the matter. Several newspapers made a mention of such delegations, which usually did not



include any women. *Tarun Bharat*, February 2,1997, reported that some of the candidates literally purchased their candidacy, which became a hot topic of discussion in the Congress (I) Committee office. The entire system of nomination of party candidates seems to have lost its credibility.

The lack of a clear majority in the legislature compels the political parties to appease the independents. Those who had witnessed this in the 1992 elections, decided to fight the election on their own without waiting for the Party's decision about candidacy. (*Sakal*, January 31,1997).

Alliances and Adjustments

The formation of alliances led to the adjustment of seats among the partners in the alliance. Nowhere was

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a woman part of the steering committees of such alliances, which took the decision about sharing of seats. The parliamentary boards of various parties refused to officially nominate the few sitting women corporators who sought candidacy in their own open wards. Dr. Sunanda Nalhe, the then sitting BJP corporator, fought as a rebel in 1997 from her own ward, which was de-reserved. She retained her ward even without the backing of her Party. One wonders whether the rebel women deserve to be condemned for the breach of party loyalty in order to satisfy individual ambition, or should they be praised for not succumbing to the decisions of the party that are usually guided by patriarchal considerations?

In Nagpur and Amaravati, several Congress (I) workers, although small in number, switched over to the BJP and managed to be nominated as official BJP candidates. For instance, BJP candidates in Amaravati like Kalpana Bhaise, Chandrakanta Bomre, Maya Dhande and Suman Deshmukh were former Congress (I) activists. In Solapur, the sitting Janata Dal corporator, Ibrahim Vijapure switched over to the Congress (I) and secured his wife's nomination as an official Congress(I) candidate. (*Sanchar*, February 8,1997). In Nasik, the then-sitting corporator Dilip Nigal contested the election as a rebel, whereas his wife Mangala Nigal was the official Congress (I) candidate in his ward, now reserved for women (*Nasik Sakal*, February 10,1997).

Party Fields Independents

In Nagpur, the competition among the rival factions of Congress (I) grew so fierce that fighting elections on behalf of the Party was virtually impossible. Therefore, the Congress (I) allowed its supporters

to fight the election on their own merit without using the Party symbol. As a result, several Congress (I) activists fought as independent candidates. The role of independent candidates in local elections was a major issue in the discourse of this election campaign. Allegedly, the politics of independent candidates is the politics of corruption. This was the perception promoted by opposing political parties targeting independents. Ex-Mayor of Nagpur Corporation, Atal Bahadur Singh attributes the success of the BJP in the Nagpur Corporation to Congress (I)'s decision of freezing the official election symbol, thereby failing to secure even the traditionally committed votes of the Party. Independent candidates do not enjoy the authenticity and legitimacy that is enjoyed by an official party candidate.

BJP's High Success

In Nagpur in 1997, 43 out of 149 wards were reserved for women, out of which 27 were captured by the BJP. Two explanations can be offered for this high success rate:

- a) The BJP's base among the educated urban middle-class people offers the party a sufficiently large pool of eligible women candidates.
- b) The lack of an official election symbol deprived independent women candidates, who originally belonged to the Congress (I), of the legitimacy and also of the committed vote base of the Party. The lack of this legitimacy makes a candidate vulnerable and an average Congress (I) woman activist probably suffered because of it.

As is apparent from the newspaper coverage, the presence of truly independent candidates is negligible. Usually the candidates fighting as independents do belong



to some political party or at least aspire to join one. This fact has two implications:

- In order to acquire political power, one needs to take the crutches of a political party, particularly if one is ambitious enough to want to play a role in state or national politics.
- In one sense, an active role for political parties in selecting candidates is much more desirable even if it restricts the autonomy of an individual. This was so because the parties constitute an accountability system for an elected representative, which may not exist in the case of a truly independent candidate. Non-attachment to a party gives a free hand to candidates to shift their positions and loyalty on any given issue.

Gender Based Differences

In some aspects of electoral process, the gender difference is obvious. There may be some aspects where there may not be any apparent gender differences; but nevertheless, certain subtle processes have different kinds of impact on men and women.

The data generated from interviews with women corporators, male political leaders, and municipal officials reveals that:

→ An average male activist in the electoral process, whether an independent or a party activist, is quite ambitious and wants to acquire the power of a corporator for his own sake. He knows the ways of acquiring this power either with the help of a party or on his own. He is very persistent in the pursuit of power and leaves no stone unturned to ensure his success in electoral politics.

→ On the other hand, an average female actor in this electoral process lacks almost everything that her male counterpart has. To begin with, not many women have gainful employment. A majority of women candidates list "housewife" as their occupation. By contrast, men listed "social work" as their occupation, in addition to their gainful employment or instead of a business, job or profession.

→ An average woman candidate is not always motivated enough to seek candidacy of any political party. On many occasions, she is requested by a male relative to enter into the electoral arena on his behalf.

→ Even when self-motivated, she does not always have sufficient exposure, informal contacts, control over resources, or a decisive role in the party organisation to ensure that her candidacy is successful.

→ If she chooses to fight as an independent, her problems became further aggravated since she cannot even count on the support of committed party activists and committed voters.

→ An average woman who is a housewife does not have sufficient resources at her disposal. This is a crucial obstacle whether she is a

party candidate or an independent. On the other hand, a woman standing on behalf of a male relative is better placed because she can count on his active support, social contacts, financial resources and rapport with the party organisation or at least sufficient manoeuvrability.

→ A male candidate who is in the fray for the first time often lacks the first-hand experience as a corporator but usually has sufficient exposure to the electoral process and to the working of the Municipal Corporation. He is more familiar with the intricacies of politics.

→ It is often overlooked that the 33 per cent reservation for women is the minimum representation assured to them, and men should not consider the general wards as reserved for men. The pressure from male activists for not nominating women in open wards is a manifestation of an anti-reservation backlash.

→ There are hardly any women on parliamentary boards of the parties which select the persons to be nominated as official candidates. It is the same story with the steering committee of an electoral alliance.

→ The male corporators usually have a richer and longer pre-election experience in various social activities. Many of them are office-bearers of cooperative societies, educational institutions, voluntary



organisations, and so on. Women corporators, by contrast, are associated with very few of such bodies. At the most, their participation is confined to *mahila mandals*.

→ Women corporators invariably report that they find it very difficult to combine their dual responsibilities as housewives and corporators. A few women corporators, who do not need to devote all their time to household chores attribute this relief either to their children who share their burden or to the division of labour facilitated by a joint family. Male corporators, by contrast, take pride in stating that they cannot look after domestic affairs since they are too busy with their role as corporators.

→ In the election campaign, women perform ordinary and routine roles. Men often manage the campaigns of women candidates, whereas male candidates manage their own. The visits of outstation women leaders for the election campaign were a rare occurrence. But women's presence at lower levels of political

participation was very high in both the wards reserved for women as well as in the open wards. *The haldi-kumkum* ceremony (women putting auspicious symbols of marriage - turmeric and vermilion - on each other) was found to be a popular event in the campaign of women candidates.

→ Although having family connections is a factor applicable to men and women alike, in the case of the former, it enables an average male candidate to acquire and wield that power on his own. On the other hand, women, in most cases, are found competing not for their own sake but on behalf of their male relatives.

Learning Male Tricks

→ Though the presence of such proxy women is not negligible, the issue of 'proxies' has been

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overemphasised. Sufficient attention has not been paid to candidates who lack family connections or those who may have such connections but are also political activists in their own right. In the initial stages of one's entry into the political process, it is quite natural that there will be some lacunae on the part of women like lack of information, preparedness, exposure and, therefore, a lack of confidence. But we should not overlook the fact that all of these factors are the very reasons for which special provisions are made for these members of society who have not yet had an opportunity to participate in

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the mainstream democratic political process.

→ There were also quite a few similarities between male and female candidates. Aspiring women also made a show of strength at the time of being interviewed by the Parliamentary Board. The issues highlighted in the campaign also display more similarity than differences. Extravagant promises about the eradication of unemployment, which is not an issue within the jurisdiction of the Municipal Corporation, indicate the level of political ignorance on part of men and women alike. As mentioned earlier, instances of rebellion and shifting loyalties were also fairly common among women. Women do not display very different values and norms from that of men. Incidents of violence, threats of withdrawal, misbehaviour, violation of code of conduct, etcetra were witnessed in case of both male and female candidates, though varying in degree. There were incidents where women were involved in organising bogus voting, physical assault, threatening rivals, pressurising for withdrawal, involvement in booth capturing, etcetra. Though these incidents are too few to generalise, they do suggest that there is no essential difference between the attitude of men and women on these issues.

Some Positive Trends

There are a few cases of women corporators displaying tremendous efficacy in the political arena. These positive examples vindicate the true potential of the policy of reservation:

- Smt. Benazir Momin, a Muslim woman corporator in the Aurangabad Municipal Corporation, had to resign from her job of a municipal teacher (as it was an office of profit in the context of that Corporation), before contesting the election. Not only did she succeed



in winning the support of her family for her decision but she also succeeded in transforming the power balance in her family. Now the husband and children share household chores with her. In the private sphere, they are equal partners; in the public sphere, her husband, who also is a teacher in a municipal school, is subordinate to her. This reversal of the traditional patriarchal hierarchy has not created any tensions in the family. Her colleagues and municipal administrators alike praise her performance in the Corporation as well as in her constituency.

However, she admits that she would not have taken the risk of contesting election through an open ward in the absence of reservation for women. Lastly, this example also challenges the widely held prejudices about the lack of progressiveness in the Muslim community.

- Another striking example is that of a housemaid belonging to the Wadar community. Smt. Bheemakka Vitkar (in her late 50's) from Pune worked as a housemaid in the home of a Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA). She was the mediator between her slum and the MLA who had solved many of its problems. When the municipal ward of that slum became reserved for women, the MLA suggested that she should contest the election. Her long-time involvement in solving the problems of that slum, in addition to the caste factor, ensured her victory in the election. She displays a high sense of efficiency and does not have any inferiority complex about her underprivileged background. Additionally, she is quite assertive and at times even aggressive in the House. Yet she too admits that reservation was the only factor responsible for her entry into an elective role.

Women as Mayors

- Two out of three women nominated by the Congress for election to the 11th Lok Sabha had the privilege of being the mayors of cities like Mumbai and Nagpur. This indicates the possibility of upward mobility for women who enter politics as corporators.

- The insights of a person occupying the highest position in an institution can have a far-reaching impact. An analysis of the role of women mayors is useful in this regard. Kunda Vijaykar, the Mayor of Nagpur in 1996, tried to promote

the cause of women according to her best judgement. She took up causes such as organising health camps, mobile health centres, and providing public toilets for women in marketplaces. She gave an additional development fund of Rs. 1,00,000 to all women corporators in order to compensate for their disadvantaged position in mobilising resources out of the fund of MPs and MLAs. She discovered though that only one woman corporator had given consideration to the women's needs while spending the additional funds.

This is evidence that the women corporators did not have any "women's agenda", nor did they recognise their role as special representatives on behalf of women elected from reserved seats. But the women corporators at Nagpur, regardless of their party affiliation, acknowledged that the leadership of Kunda Vijaykar as their Mayor had boosted their morale. The Nagpur case, though exceptional, has the potential of evolving a role model for women corporators elsewhere in the country.

● Kamal Vyavahare, the woman Mayor of Pune, convened a state-level conference of women corporators in August 1996, that resolved to demand 50 per cent reservation for women. The merit of this proposal can be debated, but the action of asking for further reservation was taken as a manifestation of the heightened aspirations of women following the reservation policy.

Victims of Backlash

Since the implementation of the reservation policy for women was not preceded by sufficient public debate, the public was not prepared to accept this policy wholeheartedly. Many male politicians perceive reservation as a policy whose goal is to strip them of their power. The

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backlash was out in the open during the parliamentary debate over the proposed Women's Reservation Bill, whereby the supposedly progressive leaders exposed themselves by taking an anti-reservation position. At the local level, manifestations of the backlash are even more glaring. Men devised a clever strategy for dealing with women's reservation. Individually, they resort to fielding their wives or female relatives as their proxies. Collectively they are working to create serious hurdles in the way of women politicians.

→ The male members of the Mumbai Municipal Corporation passed a resolution virtually opposing the reservation of seats for women and advocated for nomination of 33 per cent women as candidates.

→ While the woman Mayor of Pune hosted a state level, all-women conference in Pune in August 1996, the then Deputy Mayor of Pune said that he intended to hold a similar all-male state conference to oppose women's reservation. Curiously, the whole matter was subsequently hushed up. There are sufficient grounds to infer that the Congress leadership silenced the Deputy Mayor for his politically incorrect move.

→ At Nagpur, the Deputy Mayor categorically expressed his opposition to the reservation in general and to the special

development fund of Rs. 1,00,000 given by the woman Mayor to women corporators.

→ In the Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation, the Mayor's post in 1996 was reserved for women. The post of the Deputy Mayor, although open, was also given to a woman as no male corporator was willing to work as the Deputy under a woman mayor.

→ Similar male prejudice was reflected regarding the membership of women and child development committees of municipal corporations. Though 75 per cent of the seats are reserved for women, one finds 100 per cent women members on these committees simply because male corporators hate to be associated with them.

The Role of the Press

After going through thousands of news clippings, the author discovered the biased attitude of several reporters. A news item in *Loksatta* about the 1992 elections to *panchayats* reads: "The candidates have been allotted very funny election symbols. Some men have got symbols like frock, comb and bucket whereas some women have got symbols like ink bottle, pen and spectacles."

The very fact that the reporter finds allotment of the election symbols like pen and ink bottle and spectacles to women "rather funny" is revealing.

→ *Tarun Bharat* (January 29, 1997) carries a report about an exhibition which was organised as a part of an election campaign supposedly aimed at reducing the fear of snakes which widely prevails "among women and children."

→ *Sanchar* (February 19, 1997) a local newspaper in Solapur, while describing a ward reserved for women mentions that, "Men in this

ward will have to accept the leadership of women," as though there was something derogatory about accepting women's leadership.

→ *Pune Sakal* (February 21, 1997) gives a comprehensive report of the election campaign in Pune city, which mentions that wherever the candidates have taken out processions "along with the party activists, women and children were also present," as though party activists by definition exclude women and children!

All these news items either display the bias of reporters or carry the same bias held by the candidates. Such a bias becomes very harmful when it gets amplified through the newspapers reaching out to millions of readers.

Women's organisations can contribute to removing such bias by raising gender sensitivity awareness among journalists. Increased awareness could have a far-reaching impact on the portrayal of women in the media.

The Missing Links

The manner in which the policy of reservation was suddenly implemented in the local bodies has resulted in several negative fall-outs. Had the decision of reservation been an outcome of a sustained women's struggle, it would have helped the movement. But now it appears as though in a tug of war, one side has suddenly let go of the rope, thereby making the women's side lose balance and fall backwards.

The relationship between the women's movement and elected women is a crucial factor in evolving a new politics. Elected representatives hold formal political power. Their attitude towards dominant power relations will play a decisive role in either reinforcing or

altering these relations. So far there is not enough evidence of success of the women's movement in inducting their activists into positions of formal power at the local level. The women's movement is also not in a position to influence the choice of candidates of political parties or field its own candidates. It neither influenced the actual electoral outcome in Maharashtra nor did it intervene in the electoral process. It also did not generate any electoral discourse to reach out to the masses so as to influence their voting preferences.

Some stray attempts were made by women's organisations like Purogami Mahila Sanghatana in Mumbai and Bharatiya Stree Shakti Jagaran in Pune, in the form of preparing a common minimum agenda for women candidates and organising a symposium for an open debate on what each party had to offer women if it came to power. However, these were localised attempts without mass mobilisation at grass-roots level that did not get enough media publicity. There was also an attempt to form a women's alliance on the basis of a common agenda in Kolhapur. But the attempt was a failure because some parties insisted on using their banner, which was not acceptable to others, who insisted on a non-party banner. Moreover, such attempts were limited to the women from the Left parties. Women belonging to the Congress, BJP and Shiv Sena, who constitute nearly 93 per cent of women corporators in Maharashtra, were left out. This restricted the chances of electoral success of any such alliance even before it was formed. Further within the Left, specific party loyalties of the activists proved to be an obstacle in the formation and sustenance of such alliances.

It was expected that if activists from the women's movement join politics, it would lead to a substantial change in the quality of women's participation. This has proved to be a naïve expectation. Not even handfuls have joined. Moreover, in the absence of any accountability system within the women's movement, some activists in the movement have used the cause of women as a short cut to acquiring positions of purely personal political power.

Return to the Private Sphere

The policy of reservation ensured political recruitment of women but actual political dynamics put serious obstacles in the way of continuing involvement of women in the political process resulting in the withdrawal of women from electoral politics. This gender gap is qualitative as well as quantitative.

→ In the case of male corporators, the loss of office after the expiration of a five-year term does not lead to withdrawal from the political process in general. They continue to nurture their political mass base through other power structures like cooperative credit societies, youth clubs and cooperative dairies.

→ Even though a male member fails to get re-elected when his constituency becomes reserved, he finds a way out by nominating his wife or sister-in-law in that constituency and continues to exercise *de facto* power, even though she is the *de jure* corporator. In this way, he becomes the agency for the recruitment of his woman relative to a political office.

→ After the expiry of their term, these women, who perceive themselves primarily as dutiful housewives, hand over these constituencies to their husbands and

retreat to the private sphere. Their withdrawal is almost total, not simply from the political office, but from the political process as a whole.

→ Activists aligned to the women's movement who are elected to the Municipal Corporation from a women-reserved constituency, continue with their political activity after the end of their term. But there is not a single woman activist who was elected from an open constituency. All five women activists among the 1990 batch failed to get elected from an open constituency or even from a

neighbouring woman-reserved constituency.

→ Though genuine activists have failed to get re-elected, in the last three elections to the Kolhapur Municipal Corporation, we find four examples of proxy women getting re-elected in the subsequent election. None of them had any involvement in politics before their first election. The husband of each of them was a corporator.

On the Plus Side

It must be noted that in spite of a few negative trends, reservation has achieved some positive results.

→ Reservation has created a space for at least a few women committed to women's causes who, even after working for the party for over 30 years, would not have dreamt of contesting an election. In the case of many such activists, their incapacity to bear the election expenditure was not a detriment in securing their candidature or ensuring their success in an election. The fact that people contributed generously to their campaign fund alone justifies the reservation, despite some negative outcomes.

→ Reservation has widened the base of our democracy by facilitating the representation of hitherto under-represented sections of our society.

→ It clearly legitimises and asserts the role of women as partners in the public sphere, particularly in operating formal governmental structures. This will encourage more women to take up politics as their career and mission and shape their priorities accordingly.

→ Reservation has increased the self-esteem, confidence, and motivation of women activists as well as of women at large.

→ It has led to the evolution of new power centres that has the potential for challenging the traditional patriarchal hierarchies in the long run.

→ It has initiated the process of empowerment in the political sphere that is liable to get reflected in other spheres as well.

Improvements Needed

→ Gross under-representation of women at every level of party hierarchy, in all its wings and in important committees of the parties, continues even after the implementation of reservation at the local level. Parties have not initiated any special drives for the recruitment and training of women

The Electoral Trends in Kolhapur Municipal Corporation

Table 1 : Increase in Number of Women Getting Elected

	Election year 1990	Re-elected in 1995
Elected male members	44	19
Elected female members	18	1
	Election year 1995	Re-elected in 2000
Elected male members (himself or his wife)	48	15
Elected female members	22	2

Table 2 : Caste Wise Proportion of Women Candidates in Election Year 1995

	General	Women	OBC	OBC women	SC	SC women
No. of wards	29	16	13	5	6	3
Candidates women/all	10/425	190	5/147	28	4/82	33
Women candidates (% of that category)	2.35%		3.4%		4.87%	

The above data on de-recruitment and OBC women from Kolhapur Municipal Corporation is suggestive of significant trends and also has potential for future direction of research. Data collection pertaining to other Municipal Corporations in progress.



with enough vigour. Political parties must be made to amend their constitutions to provide 33 per cent reservation for women at every level of the party hierarchy, and in every wing and every decision-making body of the party organisation. This will widen the pool of eligible women candidates, reduce the percentage of proxies, and improve the efficacy of women's participation. Where the major national parties do not have even ten per cent women members, it is unrealistic to expect them to field 33 per cent women activists as candidates. This in large part explains the presence of proxy women.

→ One-third of committee seats on women and child development should be reserved for men. This will convey the message that women's cause need not be confined to women alone.

→ Political education of the electors will help reduce the number of proxies. Responsible electors will reduce the role of money, muscle power and other parochial loyalties, which largely determine electoral outcomes.

→ At present, political parties are not effectively performing their duties

toward political education, political socialisation and political recruitment. Parties need to revitalise supplementary programmes for political education of the cadre and voters.

→ Massive efforts for comprehensive political education and gender sensitisation are necessary. Professional training institutes or even universities should organise training camps for political workers. This will establish hitherto missing linkages between educational institutions teaching political science and the political education of citizens.

→ Gender sensitisation needs to be an integral component of such education. Such programmes will be instrumental in neutralising the male backlash. Joint gender sensitisation programmes for women representatives along with their spouses should be conducted on a trial basis. Despite the change in the role of women in the public sphere, their overburdened roles in the private sphere have not changed. The contribution of women to the public sphere must be compensated by an equal contribution of men to the private sphere. This would give a more humane face to both spheres and family will not become an obstruction for women in their pursuits in the public sphere.

→ Elected representatives must be provided with adequate honorarium, training and other support services to enable them to function well as full-time politicians.

→ Reservation need not be an eternal phenomenon. A time limit should be specified for reservation and a periodic review of reservation policy should be carried out to see whether women are being represented in proportion to their population. There are indications of a gradual increase from the bottom line of 33 per cent. Today, we do find some women elected through open constituencies as well.

→ Radical electoral reforms for decriminalisation of politics, public financing of elections, etcetra, must be initiated. This will remove the greatest obstacle that inhibits women, as well as many other citizens, from active political participation.

On the whole, the positive achievements of reservation outweigh the newly emergent negative trends. If we succeed in evolving a mechanism for checking the negative fall-outs, the policy of reservation is sure to meet its goals. □

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Apology for Lapse

In the article by Medha Nanivadekar - "Partners in Politics, Competing in Crime" (Part -I) published in issue No. 136, the data and information gathered was based on a study of all Municipal Corporations in Maharashtra, rather than a select few Zilla Parishads as wrongly mentioned in Manushi's introduction to the article. All pictures accompanying Medha Nanivadekar's article were by Shri. Nandkishore Waghmare of *Daily Lokmat*. We regret that we forgot to give due credit for the visuals in Issue 136. We apologise for these errors.