

Name of the Student: Rechilungle Riame

Name of the Supervisor: Dr. Javed Ahmad Khan

Department: Centre for West Asian Studies

Title: Political and Economic Participation of Women in Kuwait Since 1991

Abstract:

This study is basically concerned with Kuwaiti women and their issues in the context that women comprise half of any country's population and it is considered crucial for them to take part in the country's political and economic development process in order to ensure progress and justice in the society. It also tries to understand the significance of women's role in society in the context that now the debate on women's political and economic participation is gaining more important as now many literatures had started to focus on Arab women and their issues.

This work also tries to understand the importance of both political and economic development in the context that both are two major components for human development. As a well known fact that human development is much more than the rise and fall of national incomes. It is about creating an environment in which people can develop their full potential and lead productive, creative lives.

In this work my observations refer to the period of 1990s, and are basically concern with political and economic development after 1990-91 because: the Gulf war of 1990-91 has served as an opportunity for the eventual liberalization of women's political and social rights. Also during this period, both Islamists and liberal women activists came together and demands for women's political rights which ultimately led to their enfranchisement in 2005.

The issues of women's political and economic participation is also important in the context of ongoing political crisis in the region, 'Arab Spring' as we all know that it is related to political, social and economic problems, such as limited freedom, corruption and unemployment problem

etc. In this work efforts had been made to understand and connect like how lack of women's political and economic participation in the region is related to the Arab Spring.

Findings

Today the attitude of Kuwaiti women has changed from being dependent on others to bring changes rather now they want themselves to be the active participants in the country's development process. On this basis some of the questions raised in this work are like why Kuwaiti women continue to face many hindrances and inequality? Several Muslim-majority countries recognize the principles of equality and prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender, and have already reformed their laws in recent years to extend equal rights to women. In some countries like Pakistan, Indonesia, Turkey and Bangladesh had women head in the state. But Kuwaiti women's political representation is still very low, with just 4 women members in the 65 members National Assembly. Kuwaiti women have labor force participation rate only around 43 percent, despite adopting liberal political and economic policies since 1990s. And women's unemployment rate is around 0.3 percent. Which shows that not only women's representation in legislature is low but their economic participation rate is also continues to fall behind, despite rich resources and high literacy rates.

Kuwait had been practicing democratic form of government since its independence in 1961, with the basic features of the constitution as the Sovereignty of the state, public freedom and equality. But the constitution restricted the right to vote and run for office to male citizen only for long and women were granted full political rights only by 2005. Moreover, political participation of women in Kuwait, like other West Asian countries are severely limited due to a nexus of traditional factors and patriarchal forces that work in favors of men against women. Consequently, women are still left on the periphery of the political process.

Conclusion

Some questions and arguments put forward in this work is that Kuwait being the only democratic country in the region is no doubt sounding very liberal and attractive too. But the reality is that are Kuwaitis enjoyed the fruit of democracy like tolerance on political expression? Are Kuwaiti women receiving their due respect and equal shares in the government and society as an equal citizens? Thus the present study attempts to find out as what is the current status of women so as to examine how far women have been empowered politically and economically in Kuwait.