

SRI LANKAN WOMAN PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS

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One of the main features of a democratic system is people's participation in politics irrespective of the gender differences. Women's participation in politics was absent in traditional Sri Lankan society since they were confined to play traditional gender roles such as engaging in household work and looking after children. As such, they did not have equal democratic rights to enter the political arena. Sri Lanka can be considered as a country ruled under democratic fundamentals. However, before 1931, there was only a limited franchise until all the citizens of the country received universal franchise irrespective of their gender, ethnicity and class difference by the Donoughmore constitution in 1931. All obstacles to women entering political arena were removed by these new reforms. Consequently, both men and women received equal political rights. However, even after 82 years of enjoying universal franchise one can still see that women's participation in politics is relatively low compared to that in other fields. Sri Lankan women's active participation in politics is visibly slow despite the congenial atmosphere prevailing in the country for active politics. Despite the availability of the opportunities to Sri Lankan women to enter the field of politics, why do they hesitate to participate in politics compared to their engagement in other fields? This research was done based on this question and the objectives of this research were to examine how the women's participation in politics is restrained, growth in women's participation in politics and social progress, factors obstructing women's participation in politics and how those constraints can be removed. Information was obtained in diverse means referring to books, journals, magazines, election reports, newspapers and internet based secondary data. One limitation of this research is seen as the dependence on printed media as it was limited only to secondary data. Conclusions entailing this research can be cited as women's limited contribution to active politics are caused by the factors such as the family, the society, education, accepted norms, values and beliefs, myths and social status.