



Research Paper

Empowerment of Women Representatives in Panchayati Raj Institution in Gulbarga District in Karnataka

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ABSTRACT:- The study covers women empowerment in Karnataka and its panchayat members of the Gulbarga district in Karnataka in India. The women constitute 50 percent of the world's population but India has shown disproportionate sex ratios whereby female's population has been treated as lower in Indian society. The panchatraj system introduced through Empowerment of women in india particularly in Karnataka. The women will be given equal opportunity in panchayatraj system. The women still they are illiterate depends on husbands and male officials specifically taking any decisions concerning to the village development programmes still they are not empowered. To empower women India they must be given compulsory education, training, and economic status and encouragement in society. If all these orientation Continues to improvement of the women society then the real empowerment of women in Indian society will be model in world context.

I. INTRODUCTION

You might be listening to every day news reading newspaper or magazine you would have gone through incidents with women's in India while any other article on women's empowerment in India will take a look at our rich heritage and enlightened societies of the past where women were treated as equals, the concept of 'India' itself evolved quite recently, relations to the sum of its parts histories, but the truth is that in the modern India the women has always been a second grade citizen, no matter what its esteemed leaders.

Women constitute almost 50 per cent of the world's population but India has shown disproportionate sex ratio whereby female's population has been comparatively lower than males. As far as their social status is concerned. They are not greater as equal to men in all the placed. In the western societies, the women have got equal right and status with men in all walks of life. But gender distributes and discriminations are found in India even today. The paradoxical situation has such that she was sometimes concerned as goddess and at other times merely as slave.

Its specific objectives were:

- To find out the socio-economic and political background of the elected women representative in the Panchyati Raj Institutions;
- To study about the extent of their knowledge regarding the structural and operational dimensions of the Panchayati Raj Institutions;
- To explore their role in the decision-making process; and
- To know about their perceptions regarding their roles to make suggestions for making their role effective.

The study covered one Zilla Panchayat Gulbarga, Three Taluka Panchyat Aland, Afzalpur and Gulbarga and all the Gram Panchayats. The selection of Zilla Panchayat, Taluka Panchyat and Gram Panchyats was made by following stratified and random sampling method for ensuring that the units selected for study becomes, as far as, possible Women representative of Gulbarga district and Aland, Afzalpur and Gulbarga Talukas as a whole.

All the 120 office bearers and members of these including members of the Zilla Panchayat Taluka Panchayat and members of the Gram Panchyats elected in the 2011 Panchyat elections were interviewed. A questionnaire was administered to them during meeting period for this purpose.

Table No.1 Agewise distribution of the respondents

SINo	Age	Percent
1	21-30	58
2	31-40	20
3	41-50	15
4	51 above	7

It has been found that about 58 per cent of the women representatives are from the young 21-30 years and 35 per cent from lower middle age groups 31-40 years and 41-50 years the 7 percent from elder age group, i.e., 51 years and above.

Table No.2 Educational distribution of the respondents

SINo	Education	Percent
1	Illiterate	54
2	Primary	24
3	High school	15
4	Graduate	7

The above table shows that 54 percent illiterate members/office bearers have learnt sign to the papers after getting elected in the Panchyats at various levels. About 24 per cent of them have studied up to primary level and 15 percent those who have got education up to high school level. Only 7 percent of them were graduates.

Table No.3 Caste wise distribution of the respondents

SINo	Education	Percent
1	Upper caste	45
2	Middle caste	22
3	Lower caste	33

Above table deals with the 45 percent still come from the upper castes and 22 percent from middle caste. However, 33 per cent SC women have also been able to get an opportunity to have the feel of democracy

Table No.3 Income wise distribution of the respondents

SINo	Income level Per annul	Percent
1	Below Rs 10,000	58
2	Above Rs 11000	30
3	More than Rs 1lakh	12

The above table deals with the income level of respondents majority of them are in the income below Rupees 10,000 and 30 percent respondents are having Above 11000 .Remaining 12 percent respondents are more than Rs 1lakh.

Table No.4 Family structure of the respondents

SINo	Type of Family	Percent
1	Nuclear	65
2	Joint	35

The above table deals with the family structure of the respondents, it was noted that 65 per cent of them were from nuclear families only 35 percent were joint families.

Table No.5 A Political affiliation of the respondents

SINo	Type of Family	Percent
1	Have Political affiliation	75
2	No Political affiliation	25

The above table deals with 75 per cent of the women representatives have political affiliation with a political party. only 25 percent women representative have no political affiliation

Low level of awareness

Table No.6 Awareness of the duties of the respondents

SINo	Type of duties	Percent
1	Yes Aware	44
2	Not Aware	56

The above table reveals that the awareness of the duties of the representative of the Panchayat, 44 percent said they are aware their duties but 56 percent representative said they are not aware

Table No.7 Awareness of the different government schemes of the respondents

SINo	Awareness of govt schemes	Percent
1	Yes Aware	40
2	Not Aware	60

The above table reveals that the awareness of the government schemes of the representative of the Panchayat, 40 percent said they are aware government schemes but 60 percent representative said they are not aware

Table No.8 How to use of the MGNREGA schemes of the respondents

SINo	Type of work	Percent
1	Repair of roads	44
2	Repair of ponds	56

The above table shows that how to use of MGNREGA scheme most them 44 and 56 percent said only repair of road and ponds.

Table No. A role of the decision making process of the respondents

SINo	Mode of the decision	Percent
1	Husbands advice	65
2	Official advice	25
3	Owen	10

The above table deals with the mode of the decision making process of the respondents. The 65 percent women representatives were expressed their husbands will be advising the important work of the panchayats .25 percent women representatives were taking help of the officials .only 10 percent women representatives were taking own decision.

Table No. Opinion of the making their role effective of the respondents

SINo	Mode of the decision	Percent
1	To give training for rural development programmes	71
2	Exposure visits	19
3	To providing skilled supporting staff	10

The above table deals with the making their role effective the 79 percent women panchayat members opined that training is essential to know the various rural development programmes .The 21percent women panchayat members said exposure visits is very important to understand better .the 10 percent women panchayat members opined that to providing skilled supporting staff to the panchayats to make effective implementation of schemes and developmental activities in the villages.

II. FINDINGS

It has been found that about 58 per cent of the women representatives are from the young 21-30 years and 35per cent from lower middle age groups 31-40 years and 41-50 years. 7 per cent from the elder age group, i.e., 51 years and above. This shows that relatively younger women have begun to replace the elderly ones. It is, undoubtedly, a welcome change. As far the caste structure is concerned above 45 percent still come from the upper castes and 22 percent from middle caste. However, 33 per cent SC women have also been able to get an opportunity to have the feel of democracy. This shows that hegemony of high castes no longer exists but their

dominance continues. However, the weaker sections have ceased to remain marginal and have been able to make a dent into the rural power structure on account of reservations for them. The education profile shows that, a considerable number of women are still illiterate because the level of female literacy remains rather low in rural areas. However, some of the illiterate members/office bearers have learnt sign to the papers after getting elected in the Panchyats at various levels. About 24 per cent of them have studied up to primary level and 15 percent those who have got education up to high school level. Only 7 percent of them were graduates. This state of affairs may be ascribed to the fact that girls are mostly not given a chance to get higher education in rural area in Gulbarga district owing to its conservative culture. It could be observed that low level of education of women representatives became a stumbling block in the way of their taking up the responsibilities in Panchyats. As far as income level of the respondents is concerned, majority of them are in the income below Rupees 10000 per annum. One of the reasons for this situation is the fact that women are not usually given landownership in Karnataka in particular in Gulbarga district. The second reason is the reservation of one third SC seats for women. It may be mentioned that the SCs in Karnataka are mostly landless labourers.

Interestingly, while looking into the family structure of the respondents, it was noted that 65 per cent of them were from nuclear families. This shows that joint family system has broken down due to the impact of modernization. As many as 75 per cent of the women representatives have affiliation with a political party in the Gulbarga district in Karnataka state. The remaining 25 percent are not aligned with any political party. This shows that women representatives in Karnataka have political awareness. This shows that there was something wrong with the panchayat system government give importance of the training needs to the panchayat members in Karnataka in Gulbarga district. It was also observed that most of the women have no affiliation with or membership of even other local organizations. It has also been evident that almost all women representatives in the Panchyats at various levels are totally dependent on their husbands and they lack confidence. This is proving to be a great barrier in the way of their empowerment. Because of the lack of confidence, the women members do not take interest in the activities of the local self-government institutions. It has been felt that low level of awareness among the respondents is the major factor responsible for this dismal situation. More than 80 per cent of the women were not even aware of the one-third reservation for women in the Panchyats at the three levels despite the fact that they got elected because of this very provision. Of course, almost all of them were aware of their five years term.

It was also noticed that 10 per cent of the respondents were not aware of the quorum required for meetings. A large number of them were aware of the electorate at block and Zilla Panchayat level. A large majority of the respondents do not know about the required number of Gram Sabha meetings, the quorum for those and the person responsible for preparing the agendas. Large number of women, however, responded correctly when they were asked regarding the person who keeps Panchyat record. As many as 50 per cent of the women members were also not aware of taxes imposed by the Panchyats and still a higher percentage (56 per cent) did not know about the schemes that are implemented by the Panchyats.

It was sad but not shocking to find that even the functions and duties of Gram Sabha are not known to a large majority of the respondents. About 80 per cent of them were not aware. How to make success of rural development schemes like MGNREGA and the funds received under this scheme, maximum amounts drawn and used for drinking water, watershed development, rural road, sanitation under it. Dependence on their husbands, low level of education, lack of interest, inadequacy of training, etc. appear to be the causes of their low level of awareness.

The reservation has led only to formal and not real empowerment of women in the Panchyats. It has also been found that the participation of women in meetings is not satisfactory. However, they did get cooperation from their family members. Participation of the women in preparing budget and plan was also not to the desired extent. It has also come to light that their participation in the mobilization of funds for developmental activities and how to use of MGNREGA scheme most them said only repair of road and ponds they donot know the overall development of villages. and role in identifying beneficiaries in the Gram Sabha was highly dissatisfactory. Although their participation in the identification of BPL beneficiaries is encouraging, participation in the organization of community programmes is far from satisfactory.

As far as the involvement of elected women leaders in decision-making is concerned, it has been observed that it was insignificant both in the Panchyats and in the households. It may be mentioned that women have little role in deciding even the household activities and have a negligible involvement in the decision-making process in a Panchyats on account of their low socio-economic status. It may be mentioned that women have little role in deciding even the household activities and have a negligible involvement in the decision-making process in Panchyats on account of their low socio-economic status. However, an exception was visible in the case of women from financially sound families. They have a considerable extent of participation in deciding the day-to-day activities. Otherwise, usually women are neither given weight nor consulted to the extent compatible to their being called better-half in the domestic sphere. This state of affairs is the reflection of patriarchal and male dominated rural society of Karnataka. It is on account of this that the attitude of their male

counterparts is at least indifferent and ordinarily inimical to the elected women representatives. It has also been noted that elected women representatives are not able to mobilize funds and raise additional income in the Panchyats through levy of taxes. They, however, do agree that adequate provisions exist for taking effective decisions. But they concede that they are unable to use these effectively due to the nexus among the elected male representatives and the officials, male dominated social system and age-old social taboos against women prevalent among men in general and elders in particular whose ego is badly hurt on being governed by the women representatives.

Suggestions

- It is evident that men's attitude towards women's entry into politics has begun to change from that of total rejection to limited encouragement and in some cases even to active encouragement. This trend needs to be strengthened through orientation courses and training programmes for officials and elected representatives, both males and females. Besides, there is a need to train the women leaders at regular intervals to enable them to manage the responsibilities assigned to them in the Panchyats at all the levels. Since the poor women members at all the levels. Since the poor women members found it difficult to forgo their wages for attending training programmes, these must be organized at their doorstep and some of the articulate Panchayat leaders should also be involved as the trainers.
- Another important effort required for real empowerment of rural women is to bring about an attitudinal change in both men and women. The feeling that women are meant for household activities and rearing children needs to be replaced by a feeling of equal partnership of women and men. To inculcate this, they are imparted education for bringing about social and political awareness among both.
- Studies on women in politics have emphasized that contact with outside world makes women more alert and active in the political process. There could be two ways of doing it. Firstly, interaction between enlightened rural women and illiterate elected women leaders is encouraged. Secondly, these women could be taken out to the urban areas and their interaction with educated urban elected women representatives be arranged.
- The women should also be encouraged to organize themselves. The Mahila Mandals in the villages can be effectively used as instruments to mobilize them for this purpose. Some successful women's organizations can also act as catalytic agents for encouraging women's participation in social and political activities. The government should provide finance and infrastructure to some of the successful women organizations to take up the responsibility of encouraging the women elected representatives. This task could also be taken up by the leaders of women's movement in the country. They too can provide support to sensitize the rural women.
- There should be increased emphasis on ensuring the participation of women in the meetings of Panchyats at all the levels. This is needed to promote and enhance their leadership qualities and self-confidence. It will help them to perform better in the Panchayats. To ensure their participation in the meetings, attendance of all women must be made compulsory right from Gram Sabha to Zilla Panchayat.
- For tackling the problem of the entry of illiterate women into Panchayats, proper identification of village Panchayats and the wards to be reserved for women should be ensured at least for one or two terms. This can help in identifying the educated and enlightened women who could be persuaded to contest elections. It will certainly provide an opportunity to women possessing better educational attainments, leadership qualities and past experiences in carrying out social welfare in their Panchayats by getting elected to these.
- Lack of proper devolution of functions, funds and functionaries has been revealed as one of the major factors by several scholars. This has discouraged the elected women representatives from taking interest in the democratic decentralization. For removing this drawback, the government should ensure devolution of three Fs (functions, funds, and functionaries) through statutory provisions. This will also promote the accountability, transparency and coordination in the working of the Panchayati Raj system.
- Incentives play a vital role in ensuring the participation of elected representatives in decision-making. It has been noticed that there are certain very active and enlightened women leaders at all the levels of Panchayats, who have been successfully implementing the developmental schemes and have ensured overall development of their constituencies. Such leaders need to be encouraged by publicizing their leadership qualities and honouring them in public meetings. It will certainly encourage other women representatives and their cusses stores and good practices will get replicated.
- The genuine NGOs should be identified for entrusting them the tasks of training, encouraging, organizing, mobilizing and guiding the elected women representatives.
- National Literacy Mission and other organizations engaged in the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan should also be assigned the responsibility of educating the rural masses in general and the rural women in particular regarding the significance of Panchayati Raj and empowerment of women.

- The media, both print as well as electronic, can play an important role in creating awareness in the rural society. It can act as an agent of political socialization for inculcating the values of gender quality and gender justice.
- The curriculum for the students at the primary, secondary and higher secondary levels should be so modified as to promote gender sensitivity among the students. There should be chapters on Panchyati Raj and Women Empowerment in all the classes at the school level and compulsory questions be set on these in examinations.
- The unfinished agenda of women empowerment be finished by enacting an Amendment for providing reservation for women in the national parliament and the state legislatures. The reservations at local level are not enough for women empowerment.

From the study and observations it can be interpreted that the provision for the one-third reservations made in 73rd Amendment to the Indian Constitution (1993) and adopted by the Karnataka Panchayati Raj Act, 1994, has ensured adequate representation to women leadership in these institutions of rural level self-government which is relatively younger. It has, however, not resulted in real empowerment of women in these bodies of decentralized rural governance as most of them have not been able to perform their roles on account of lack of literacy and awareness. The womenfolk not only need to have knowledge regarding their powers and responsibilities but also need to be encouraged to perform their role independently. The elected women leaders in the Panchayati Raj Institutions should also be imparted knowledge about various rural development programmes of the central and the state governments. Also vigorous campaign for fundamental changes will also have to be launched for changing the mindset of all the stakeholders in these institutions of grass-root democracy which constitute the base of the Indian Political System. These tasks are so important but so challenging that concerted efforts will have to be made by all those who are committed to it.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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- [2]. Kurukshetra is one of the most developed districts of Haryana on account of the fact that the impact of Green Revolution has been more pronounced here than in other districts owing to, inter alia, larger size of landholdings and availability of underground water for irrigation. Besides, the rural local self-governmental institutions have been in existence in Haryana since the colonial period when Haryana was a part of the Punjab province. Refer to Parmod Chand, 'Haryana Mein Zila Parishadon Kay Netritava Ka Ubhrata Hua Swaroop', Ph.D Thesis, (Unpublished) Department of Political Science, Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra, 2000, pp. 90-96.
- [3]. Jind is one of the most underdeveloped districts of Haryana because the Green Revolution did not make much impact here on account of, inter alia, relatively smaller landholdings and non-availability of underground water for irrigation in large parts of the district. Besides, the local self-government institutions were created here only after Independence, as earlier, it was a part of the princely states of Jind and Patiala. Refer to Ibid., pp. 96-102.
- [4]. One Zilla Panchayat, three Taluka Panchayats all Gram Panchayats, and eight each out of the 16 Gram Panchayats are headed by women from the general category and reserved category.
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