

A Study on socio-economic status and problems faced by rural women of Panchayati Raj Institutions: Ghaziabad district

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ABSTRACT

The makers of Panchayati Raj system desire that rural women should not only become beneficiaries of development but more importantly contributors to it. An analysis of the socio-economic characteristics and problems faced by rural women about their political participation would help the planners to reorient the rural development programmes in a meaningful way. Most of the rural women faced problems regarding male dominance, house hold responsibilities, criminalization, illiteracy, castism, economic dependence, sex-stereotype role in the participation in Panchayatiraj Institutions. The presence of appreciable women in a visible at effective and meaningful levels will help in heralding a humane and equitable social order.

KEY WORDS : Rural women, Panchayati Raj Institutions, Participation

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INTRODUCTION

India could attain Ramarajya only by going back to certain golden traditions of ancient India as well as by revising the indigenous Institutions that will suit the Indian culture. – **Mahatma Gandhi.**

Panchayat Raj Institution is one of the most important political innovations of independent India. Panchayat Raj is identified as democratic decentralisation; it means democracy at grass root levels. The 73rd constitution Amendment Act 1992, which came into force from 24th April 1993, had the objectives of placing the power in the hands of SC-ST and women. Women have come to position in the local bodies as provision has been made in the constitution. The out look towards the rural women has started changing. But there are hurdles in the process of empowering women. Steps are being taken their own to overcome the hurdles. It is a long drawn process. A structure which had been created over centuries to work against interest of rural women can not be altered overnight.

Reservation of seats helps to create a political space for women in the male dominated political system and lead to social justice, equality of status and political empowerment. The present study is the need of hour.

The findings of the study will provide the attributes required among politically active women which will influence the decision making process, raise their grievances and other social economic problems in a formal way. Their knowledge about their political rights will seek outside support terms of NGO's women's organisations mass media so that women will relatively more vocal and will actually by participating in PRIs. The present study will be helpful for the policy makers, women's organisation educationalists researchers, sociologists, curriculum planners, NGOs for formulation of micro-level planning to develop leadership qualities among rural women.

Kaushik (1999) revealed that the politics is essentially an art of acquiring and exercising power-the power effectively influences the decision-making processes and policies, to reverse the exercise of power is very much a necessity, particular for the disadvantaged group, in this instance, the women.

Further, she depicted that the participation of women in the formal political institutions, such a participation is very much a condition and indication of women's own present power and status, it is also requirement for influencing the decisions in the future for promoting women's rights and development. The lack of sufficient

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participation of women in politics and at the decision making levels, are themselves the results of their poor social and domestic status and their exclusion from certain position and levels of power. Ghosh and Pramanik (1999) remarked that India is the only country in the world today that has not only paved the way for the creation of institution of local self-government but has reserved a third of the seats for women of them. But there are two major obstacles for making this reservation a reality-a reservation enables women to play their rightful role in the national development at every level including the decentralised Panchayat level, are : (i) The mass illiteracy of women; and (ii) The discrimination, exploitation and oppression that they face in society.

Batliawala (2001) Similar arguments were advanced in regard to the reservation of political offices to the scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes. In a male dominated society, the idea of political empowerment of women and weaker sections was bound to face opposition. Even the women and the marginalised communities in the rural area were not initially very confident of their abilities to assume leadership in the Panchayats. Studies on women participation in PRIs indicate that women elected, apart from access to information and education, require more of supportive attitudes both at home and Panchayats.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted during the years 2009 in Bhojpur Block of Ghaziabad district. The study was based both on primary and secondary data. Interview schedule and informal observations were used to collect primary data from rural women of Panchayati Raj institutions. Multistage stratified purposive sampling technique was used for data collection. Ghaziabad district was selected purposively in the first stage as it was convenient to the researchers. Ghaziabad district was divided into rural and urban areas. Again rural area was selected purposively in the second stage as it was the need of the study. Ghaziabad rural consists of four Tehsils. Modinagar Tehsil was selected. The selected Tehsil consists of two blocks (Bhojpur and Muradnagar). Bhojpur was selected randomly. The selected block consisted of 130 villages. One woman (25 to 50 years) was selected purposively as sample. Thus, 350 rural women participating in Panchayati Raj Institution (25 to 50 years) was unit of information for the present study. Number, frequency, percentage were calculated. Item wise intensity indices were calculated to study the importance of problems faced by rural women.

OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

The result obtained from the present investigation are presented in Table 1 and 2

Table 1 reveals that high majority of respondents were Hindu. 52% belonged to general caste followed by

Table 1 : Socio-economic characteristics of respondents

Variables	Numbers	Percentage
Religion		
Hindus	343	98
Muslim	07	02
Caste		
General	178	52
O.B.C	138	39
S.C.	134	09
Age group		
25 to 30 years	49	15
31 to 35 years	124	35
36 to 40 years	86	24
41 to 45 years	91	26
Education		
Primary	31	09
High School	198	57
Intermediate	75	21
Graduate	26	07
Post- Graduate	07	02
Diploma	13	04
Stream		
Acts	297	85
Science	53	15
Specialization		
History	16	05
Political Science	77	22
Hindi	139	40
English	01	-
Home Science	30	09
Economics	34	09
Drawing	-	-
Music	-	-
Science	53	15
Family type		
Joint	226	65
Nuclear	124	35
Marital status		
Unmarried	42	12
Married	308	88
Widowed	00	-
Divorced	00	-

Contd... Table 1

Table 1 contd...

Occupational stoaats		
Non-working	269	77
Working	81	23
Monthly income		
3000/- to 5000/-	73	21
5000/- to 7000/-	59	17
7000/- to 10,000/-	60	17
10,000/- to 15,000/-	153	45
Involvement of family members in politics		
Yes	160	46
No	190	54
Family member		
Mother	03	02
Father	17	11
Son	-	-
Daughter	-	-
Husband	74	46
Father-in-law	24	15
Mother-in-law	27	17
Brother	15	09
Sister	-	-
Duration		
Less than 5 years	163	46
6 to 10 years	134	38
11 to 15 years	153	16
16 to 20 years	-	02
Above 21 years	103	-

39% to O.B.C and 9% S.C. category, 35% respondents were 31 to 35 years old followed by 26% in the age group of 41 to 45 years, 57% respondents were educated up to High School, high majority were from Art stream, 40% had studied Hindi followed by political science (22%). The results pertaining to marital status revealed that high majority (88%) of respondents were married with respect to occupation, 77% were non-working women.

It can be observed that 45% of the respondents family income was between 10,000 to 15,000/ per month, regarding political background, 54% respondents, family members were not involved in politics. Out of which, majority were having their husband involved in politics. 46% of the respondents were less experienced *i.e.* less than 5 years.

Table 2 shows that all the personal problems were found to be some what important for the lack of women's political participation except the problem women are more concerned with moral, values and principles as compared

Table 2 : Intensity indices showing problems for the lack of political participation

Sr. No.	Problems	Mean	S.D.
Personal problems			
1.	Women are more concerned with moral, values and principles as compared to men.	2.65	0.54
2.	Women consider politics as a dirty game.	2.45	0.75
3.	Women think politics is very time consuming.	2.45	0.75
4.	Women consider politics as a tough job for themselves.	2.41	0.66
5.	Women's reproductive role restricts them of participate in politics.	2.29	0.76
6.	Women are hesitant in taking up Public positions.	2.23	0.68
7.	Basically women are not interested in politics.	2.22	0.65
8.	Most of the women do not visualise politics as a career for themselves.	2.21	0.66
9.	Lack of knowledge of financial management.	2.19	0.76
10.	Women's lack of knowledge about various on going projects and programmes.	2.07	0.77
11.	Women are unable to relate themselves with the implications of work which they do.	2.07	0.89
12.	Women are unable to understand the relevance of the political process and policies to solve their problems.	2.07	0.87
13.	Women are not physically strong to handle the situations demanding self problems.	1.99	0.77
14.	Women's lack of knowledge about budget funds and its stipulation for utilization.	1.96	0.77
15.	No knowledge of micro planning and project formulation.	1.96	0.80
16.	Women are unable of relate themselves with the broader socio-political contexts.	1.96	0.83
17.	Women are ignorant about their rights and responsibilities.	1.79	0.88
Social problems			
1.	Men are unable to accept the political participation of women.	2.67	0.56
2.	Home and family responsibilities prevent them form accepting public responsibilities.	2.67	0.59

Contd... Table 2

Table 2 contd..

3.	Women are uncoiling to enter the politics due to goondaism corruption and communalism prevalent in politics	2.65	0.63
4.	There are inadequate training opportunities for better participation of women in politics.	2.62	0.75
5.	Girls education and career are given less importance in Indian society.	2.61	0.63
6.	Parents do not allow their daughters to work in public fields.	2.60	0.67
7.	Women are not permitted to use their family wealth for political purpose.	2.49	0.67
8.	Traditional image of women do not allow them to participate in politics.	2.49	0.67
9.	High percentage of illiterate women in India.	2.45	0.59
10.	Girls are deprived at home and school of training to play active role in public life.	2.31	0.56
11.	Women have favourable attitude towards ascribed status than achieved status.	2.30	0.64
12.	Women are inexperienced in playing role in public life due to sex stereotype based training.	2.12	0.63
13.	Women have lack of exposure to the outside world.	1.90	0.81
Political problems			
1.	Reservation for rural women should be increased.	2.84	0.42
2.	There is dearth of leaders who can motivate women leaders.	2.76	0.52
3.	There is lack of Government schemes to improve rural women's economic position.	2.61	0.70
4.	It is difficult for women to establish contact with party workers in a male dominating party structure.	2.39	0.61
5.	Fund collection for election is a great problem for women.	2.39	0.61
6.	Political parties have apathetic and hostile attitude towards the political participation of women.	2.35	0.60
7.	Women are not aware of the ways to get party tickets.	1.96	0.85
8.	There is no contact among women's organisations, government and non-government bodies.	1.88	0.74

to men (2.65) as most important reason. The range of Intensity Indices for problems ranged from 2.65 to 1.79. None of the problems was considered as least important.

It reveals that the range of the Intensity Indices for social problems ranged from 2.67 to 1.90. The following problems were considered as most important:

– Men are unable to accept the political participation of women.

– Home and family responsibilities prevent them from accepting public responsibilities

– Women are uncoiling to enter into politics due to goondaism and communalism prevalent in politics.

– There are inadequate training opportunities for better participation of women in politics.

– Girls education and career are given less importance in Indian society.

– Parents do not allow their daughters to work in public fields.

It reveals that the range of the Intensity Indices for political problems ranged from 2.842 to 1.88. The following problems were considered as most important:

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– There is dearth of leaders who can motivate women leaders.

– There is lack of Government schemes to improve rural women's economic position.

Conclusion:

Women leadership at grass root level gets turned down due to many social traditional and personal factors. To cope-up with the inhibiting factors and standup in panchayat, women need to be more articulate in coordinating the social and economic roles thus making space for new political role in her life. Reservation is just a means towards equality and not an end in itself to make it successful, men and women must strive to ensure that the end is achieved.

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