

TRIBAL WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN PANCHAYAT RAJ INSTITUTIONS: PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES

Dr. Sukanta Kumar Dwibedi

Principal
Mayurbhanj Law College
Takatpur, Baripada, Odisha

Mrs. Lora Aptaprava

Lecturer
Mayurbhanj Law College
Takatpur, Baripada, Odisha

ABSTRACT

There is no denying the fact that tribal women play the vital role in every society of that particular composition of population. It amount to nearly half of the population and therefore for this significant half of its population it is intrinsically important to ensure their equal presence and participation in the bigger process of decision local governance. Different studies indicate that women leaders are low corrupt, are able to provide huge public goods of equal quality at effective price and consider women's preferences to upgrade all round governance. On the other side, studies have also observed that women representatives are illiterate; depend on their husbands and male officials, especially in framing decisions with regard to village development programmes. Political participation of women is wider than their participation in the electoral and administrative process. It includes the whole gamut of voluntary activities with a bearing on the political process including aid of political groups, circulation of political opinions involving in any form of organized activities that effect or seeks to effect mighty and healthy bondings. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act is a principal landmark in the history of Indian women's participation in the genesis of democratic institutions at grassroots level. As assumed by many researchers, in the next decade or so the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and women are bound to make next growth and development in their social status, leadership role, economic position, educational level and, political awareness. In this paper, an effort has been made to place the historical aspect of Panchayat Raj Institutions, various hurdles and problems faced by tribal women in decision making process and throwing light on the levels of their awareness about the functioning of village Panchayats, capability to take own-decision, involvement in community activities and examine kinds of legal measures towards safeguarding of the tribal women in Panchayat Raj Institutions.

Keywords: Tribal Women, Panchayats, Decision Making Process, Participation, Awareness

INTRODUCTION

The historical aspect of the Panchayati raj system in India is not a quick phenomenon but rather evolutionary. Village Panchayats, as the institution of self governance, have their roots in ancient India. In modern India, the institute of Panchayati raj remained central to the thinking, understanding and action of Mahatma Gandhi who harnessed the age-old democratic grassroots culture of India for liberating the country from the British rule, regenerating her from centuries of political subjugation, social and economic deceleration, and unchaining her capability. Women, Dalit and tribal have endured social and economic marginalization since long time and therefore are considered for positive action. The Indian Constitution has been committed to introduce socio-economic and political transformation. The measures of empowering women and the vulnerable sections are the contemplation of its democratic spirit that can be observed from a number of amendments. Especially, the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts provide chances for women's entry and participation in political spheres especially by tribal Women. These Amendment Acts provide for a 33 percent reservation of seats for tribal women in the governance of local bodies both rural and urban with aim of good governance and clean representation at grassroots level.

Recognizing the unsatisfactory growth and development that has been gained in upgrading the socio-economic status of women in the past it has increasingly been felt desirable that involving rural women in the political system and ensuring their participation in the activities of its institutions, including in matters related to decision making process would be instrumental in upgrading the socio-economic status and political empowerment of women. In view of the above statement, the assumptions, the introduction of reservation policy in support of women in the Panchayati Raj Institutions has therefore, been a vital government intervention for maximizing the participation of women in different activities at Gram Panchayat levels and thereby to improve their socioeconomic status.

OBJECTIVES

1. This paper looks into the role of Tribal Women in decision making process through Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs).
2. To recognize the different hazards faced by tribal women representatives in conducting their duties and exercising their power under Panchayati Raj System.
3. To view the legal measures, awareness and Constitutional consciousness of women in Panchayats.
4. To advice types of measures to strengthen participation of tribal women in PRIs.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Hazel D' Lima's (1983) study in Maharashtra State focuses on the role of women in Zilla parishad and Panchayati Samities. She focused on the social background, social awareness and their panorama of women in Panchayati Raj Institutions. She points out that most of them were there because of their husbands and not because of their merit. She points out that many women were illiterate and were not able to read the agenda items. She also indicates that inferior position among women members of Panchayats initially.

Poornima and Vyasulu (1999) states the difficult in political participation of women in PRIs resulting from their lack of mobility, house-hold duties and historical bias. They are hopeful about the future and say that the women in Panchayati Raj should involved more in decision making and bring transformation in decentralized governance.

Nirmala Buch (2009) The author is of the view that, the decision by the union cabinet to increase reservation for women from one-third to 50% of seats at all three levels of Panchayats is a welcome one. However, this decision was taken without addressing the issues caused by compulsory rotation of reserved seats, which women have been drawing attention to and the impasse over the women's Reservation Bill remains.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Looking into necessity of the goals of the research design employed for the work is of descriptive kind. Keeping in mind, the set objectives, this research design is considered to have higher perfection and comprehensively analysis of the research. Available secondary data was broadly used for the study. The methodology is based on different sources of information. The information has been taken from the research outputs, articles, media reports, Journals, books, and periodicals.

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Tribal women have not been able to utilize effectively their constitutional opportunity due to private, social and institutional reasons. They are suppressed and disadvantaged by patriarchal social system, social and cultural prejudices, financial dependence, lack of media support and exposure to political processes, limited training opportunities, insufficiency of funds from government for development work, No work is initiated without bribe, low level of knowledge in respect of PRIs and development programmes and child care duty and by the criminalization of politics. Women are generally asked to contest only because the seats are reserved for them. In actual practice, gender identity and practices limit their abilities to eloquent. Women face numerous obstacles in achieving representation in governance. Unlike in many other communities, tribal women are regarded as crucial especially for the role they play in the socio-economic life. There is a difference of values related to morality regarding sex and sexuality and much lesser degree of stigma attached among the tribal's.

LEGAL MEASURES TO STRENGTHEN PARTICIPATION OF TRIBAL WOMEN IN PANCHAYAT RAJ INSTITUTIONS

ORISSA GRAM PANCHAYAT ACT, 1964

Section 44 and 45 of the Orissa Gram Panchayat Act, 1964 provides for a number of functions for the Gram Panchayats. These functions are divided into two categories, namely the compulsory functions and the optional functions. Obligatory functions include construction, repair and maintenance of roads, drainage system, markets, public institutions, provision for supply of drinking water, soil conservation, spread of primary education, prevention of epidemics etc. Optional functions include planting and maintenance of trees, forests, live stocks, organisation of cooperative societies, libraries, cottage industries etc.

THE 73RD AMDENMENT ACT, 1993

"The 73rd Amendment is considered landmark in the evolution of democratic decentralization in India. This Amendment was implemented in all the States of Indian union, through conformity legislations by 1994. This Amendment not only accorded constitutional status but also sought to make the PRIs as institutions of self-government by empowering them to make and implement the plans for economic development and social justice pertaining to 29 items listed in 11th Schedule of Constitution of India which are to be devolved on PRIs by the State Legislatures.

PESA ACT, 1996

'PESA is a incomparable legislation, often described as a Constitution within the Constitution, which attempt to bring together in a single frame two totally different worlds - the simple system of tribal communities governed by their respective customs and traditions, and the formal system of the State governed exclusively by laws.' It provides a pivotal role to the village recognising a habitation to be a natural unit of the community (defined as a habitation or group of habitation, the natural village as against the administratively defined unit based on population) and its Gram Sabha (as against the elected Gram Panchayat as in the Panchayat Raj Acts of the states) to be pre-eminent. The Gram Sabha was recognized as being capable to act on a range of powers.

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Need of hour to train the women leaders at regular intervals to ensure them to hold the duties accorded to them in the Panchayats at all the levels.
2. The Government must provide finances and infrastructure to deserving women to take up the responsibility of encouraging the women elected representatives.
3. NGOs should create awareness among women to participate in decision making process through mass media, right to information and e-governance.
4. More stringent laws should be made for those who abuse and harass women representative on caste and gender lines.
5. Women must challenge the existing uneven such as rigid restrictions and the rigid role differentiations based on gender, and must be alert of their self rights and responsibilities , powers and duties in the framework of Panchayati Raj.

6. The government need to provide safety to women candidates from criminals and anti parties during and after elections, till they are in office.
7. The gram sabhas must be fully intricate in the plan formulation, implementation, guiding and evaluation of the developing works to be undertaken by the gram Panchayats.
8. There should be increased emphasis on ensuring the participation of women in the leadership qualities and confidence so that they can perform in a better way.
9. Women's collectives like SHGs and sanghas should focus for encouraging, helping and motivating the women's involvement within the Panchayats both as a candidate and as an aware citizen.
10. Reservation for women needs to be continued to ensure their political empowerment through higher participation in political administration and decision making.

CONCLUSIONS

The rising indulgement of women in the mainstream politics and the effect of feminist movements all over the world led to an entirely different approach towards the significance of women in politics. Women in Panchayats consists the basic structures of democracy and a means for the reconstruction of India from below. In this context, political participation of women in India through the Panchayati raj system has provided them floor of freedom, progress, confidence, participation and exposure to the outside world. In spite of the hurdles constraints and criticisms, the socio-economic situation and the patriarchal role existing in our society, the full-grown political power of women in India at the grassroots level is a hard effort but not impossible. This paper concludes that active participation of Tribal women can transform scenario of the rural area and solved the rural problems. If women actively participated in Local Governance they will surely defiantly develop the society. It has to be taken into consideration that the accretion of well qualified women in village Panchayat at the first state of the interlocution of Panchayati Raj Institution in rural areas would be a main instrumental measure in planning for upgrading social status and empowering women. This group of women, if provided representation at village Panchayat level can highly raise in the issues related to the betterment of women, can play dominant role in decision making process and make possible recommendation for upgrading the name and fame of women in the meeting. This comportment generates challenges for women to exercise jurisdiction over design and provisions of services and the administration of resources for higher social well-being.

REFERENCES

1. **Bhaskar, Manu (1997)**, 'Women Panchayat Members in Kerala A profile', Economic and Political Weekly, Vol 32 (26): WS13-20, April 26-May 2, 1997.
2. **Chattopadhyay, Raghendra, and Esther Duflo (2004)**, 'Women as policy makers: Evidence from a randomized policy experiment in India.' 72(5), 1409–1443.
3. **Evelin Hust (2002)**, 'Political Representation and Empowerment: Women in the Institutions of Local Government in Orissa after the 73rd Amendment to the Indian Constitution', Working Paper No. 6, South Asia Institute Department of Political Science, University of Heidelberg.
4. **Hust, Evelin. (2004)**: Women's political representation and empowerment in India: A million Indiras now? New Delhi: Manohar Publications.
5. **Kaushal, K. (2010)**: Decentralized Governance and Empowerment of Women – A Case Study Of India. Paper presented at Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh.
6. **Joshi.R.P and Narwani(2005)**: "Panchayat Raj in India: Emerging trends in India", Rawat Publications, Jaipur
7. **Kaushik Susheela(1993)**: "Women and Panchayat Raj", Har Anand Publications, New Delhi.
8. **Kaushik, Susheela(1995)**: "Panchayat Raj in Action: Challenge to Women's Role", Friedrich Ebert stifleeng publishers, New Delhi.
9. **Khanna.B.S,(1994)**: "Panchayat Raj in India, Rural local self Government", Deep and Deep publication, New Delhi.