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WOMEN IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE: A STUDY OF PRIS IN GANJAM DISTRICT**DR. URMALA DAS****DIRECTOR****WOMEN'S STUDIES RESEARCH CENTRE****BERHAMPUR UNIVERSITY****BERHAMPUR****SARBANI SANKAR PANIGRAHI****RESEARCH SCHOLAR****WOMEN'S STUDIES RESEARCH CENTRE****BERHAMPUR UNIVERSITY****BERHAMPUR****ABSTRACT**

Women constitute a major part of the population in India. Their role in politics is vital as they have been empowered by the Government of India by the 73rd amendment of the constitution by reserving one third of the seats for women in the Panchayati Raj system. It has brought to the historical change in Indian Politics. Even the Government of Odisha has taken a decision to increase the reservation seats to fifty percent for women at the PRI level. This not only empowered their position and status in the society but also affected the areas of politics in India. But, when reservation has been made for them and they have been selected, the question arises whether they are truly represented by the society or guided by the male members of their family? Whether they are the active participants in the election process or are under the control of their husband and other elderly male members of their family? The study attempts to answer all the questions of such types by collecting information from the PRI members who have been elected and elected in the process of local governance. The data have been collected by personal interview method, it has been seen that women act in accordance with the direction of male members in their family. They do not have self confidence to maintain their position in the field of local governance.

KEYWORDS

Governance, Decision making, PRI, Political Consciousness, social change.

INTRODUCTION

Among the three tiers of the federal government structure, local governance comes at the bottom or grass root level. Its focus is on people living in the areas of Panchayat Zilla Parishad etc. Reservation for women in local government is not just a question of getting a certain number of in; it also develops their capacities to play their rightful roles in the development process and makes an important difference as the local government deals mostly with the quality of life for citizens. Municipal responsibilities relate both to women's practical needs and their strategic needs. The better we meet women strategic need the better they are able to contribute to good city governance. Good local governance in turn, enables a better response to women's practical needs.

WOMEN AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE

Most local governments have initiated orientation / training programmes to encourage women to participate in local governance by organizing city-specific induction or theme- based training programmes, where in intensive training is given in various subject areas such as, municipal acts and its implementation, laws of meetings, municipal budgeting at ward level, municipal taxation, mobilisation resources, urban service delivery system (solid waste management, water supply, sewerage health care services, traffic and transportations), poverty alleviation schemes, community management, environment management , shelter programmes, new reforms in municipal administration, functioning of ward committees, motivation techniques, communication skills, women and development handling the media etc.

Bringing women to position of political power in local government is just the first step in social transformation. Gender sensitization of those in power, be they men or women, is of critical importance, Government departments, other institutions, non-governmental organizations, and women organization have undertaken several programmes to sensitise local governments about the issues and needs of women in their cities.

Women are changing governance in India by reservation policy under Panchayati Raj Institutions for local bodies. They are being elected to local bodies to the extent of one third of the total position at local level. Unprecedented numbers of women representatives have been elected as per provisions of the 73rd amendments of the constitution, the women whom PRI has brought into politics are now governing be it in one village, or a larger area such as 100 villages or a district. This process of restructuring the national, political and administrative system started as recently as January 1994 (Get comments from fellow members on such statements and record their reaction on the statement in the resource file).

It is too early to assess the impact of women entry into formal structures of government. But some evidence of women impact can be drawn from the experiences of PRI in the two states, which have experimented a full 5 year term of this new administrative and political regime (1987-1992). The sheer number of women that PRI has brought into the political system has made a difference. By 1994, 330,000 women had entered politics as a result of PRI and many more have been elected in the last two years. The percentage of women at various levels of political activity have shifted dramatically as a result of this constitutional change, from 4-5 percent before PRI to 25-40 percent after PRI. But the difference is also qualitative, because these women are bringing their experience of the state. In this way, they are making the state sensitive to issues of poverty, inequality and gender injustice.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There is a vast literature on women participation in politics and especially on women's participation in local governance. The studies undertaken enable us to know which have been studied and which area are remain untouched by the researchers.

Let us focus on few studies undertaken in this field.

Patel (1992) throws light in the statistics on women's participation in electoral process, which are not very encouraging. His findings point out that it is important not only to pressurize the political parties but also to make the leaders understand the significance of organizing systematic training of women possessing leadership qualities of carefully selecting women candidates and ensuring financial, technical and human resources for affirmative action.

Kumari and Kidwai (1996) find that the number of women in politics at the local level had been very small and their influence is negligible. Prior to 1990, the women in local politics were generally either politicians who had lost membership of higher institutions, and whose who were given such an opportunity to serve the purpose of publicity. In many cases, the motive was partially also to satisfy the aspirations of these few women, since they could be kept under virtual control and denied higher aspirations. The insignificant presence of women at these levels was an important indicator of two basic facts: one that women who

are planted at the top often lacked the kind of training required for effective participation, second the society was unable to accept women politics, particularly at the grass-root level.

Yadav and Anil Dutta Mishra (1997) in their study describe the status of women as, down the ages women have always been treated as subordinate to men in every aspect of life. Their place of work was confirmed to the domain of the household with household chores and rearing of children. Her identity was attached to that of her father, husband or son, i.e. she was given a status in accordance with that of her male partner. It is not that women in the past have not contributed substantially in politics, but because of their secondary status and low esteem, most of them were denied entry in political decision-making.

Nath (1998) analysed that the women's movement and groups have to recognise the importance of women as a constituency and ensure their participation and representation in policy formulation. This can be achieved through reorienting existing structures for entry into decision-making including the political party system and introduce quotas or reservation as a temporary means of women's representations. The movement should also provide a support system (women's group) for women who enter political processes to win elections. The women's groups working at the grass root level are small and scattered and have diverse ways of empowering women. There are not infrastructural facilities of networking available that could bring them together and strengthening them while allowing autonomy in their functioning. It is important to create unity in diversity between women's group organizations and individuals involved with women's empowerment. They need to adopt a common strategy, informed by a common vision, to be able to bring about changes in the policies and structures that perpetuate their subordinate status. Non-partisan women's groups should provide necessary moral and advisory support to women candidates to increase their chances of being elected to political offices. They should work towards enhancing the capacity of women candidates to win the elections by providing them with a forum whereby they could exchange ideas and experiences and learn from experts on electoral laws and politics and evolve issues and strategies to win elections.

Mishra Sweta (1997) in her paper "Women and 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act A Critical Appraisal", Social Action, Vol.44 16-30 outlines the marginal position occupied by the India women in the society and also in the political process due to socio-economic constraints. It outlines the evolution of the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) against this backdrop. It then gives a brief account of the position of women in the PRIs before the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act. Finally, it examines the probable role of women in the context of the 73rd Amendment Act. It examines whether women will be able to exercise political power through this system, what hurdles are there on their way and finally how they can overcome there?

Narayana Shashi S. (1998) in his paper "Gender equality through reservation in decision-making Bodies", Social Action pg-147 discusses the need for political empowerment of women through reservation in its decision making bodies like parliament and state legislative in the same line as at "Panchayat" (village) level in India. The current economic and socio-political maladies along with increasing violence against women and children are attributed to the failure of male oriented polity. Representation of women in higher bodies of political authority has been considered a pre-requisite for the success of democracy at the grass-root level. However, the need for accountability and sense of commitment on the part of the elected women representatives is stressed. This requires a higher degree of awareness among women regarding health, literacy, gender and other relevant social, economic and political issues.

NEED/IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

For so many years, women lived under the shadow of men. Because of the social rules, culture, customs, limitation of education and lack of knowledge some men still think that women belong to men. Men largely control the public domain while women control the domestic one. In extreme cases, it is said that women who are working pose a kind of harassment to men, or that women are supposed to be supported by men. That is why women are still unprotected, under developed, and lack of knowledge in business and trade.

Actually, the situation of women has limited men too improving economic, social and environmental realities, as well as democratic participation in local, national, regional and international developments. Women have long been a suppressed group and they are dominated by male counterparts of society. The women are dominated by men in most advanced countries also. The practice can change by women's liberation movements, which have started from western countries. Level of development of a country is correlated with the status of women in that country. The nature of women's participation in political parties is greatly affected by the level of development of a country. The Panchayati Raj in India is an experimental in rural self-government. It is an autonomous local rural institution, rejuvenation and energisation of rural India is its chief goal. This study is undertaken how many women actually working in establishing the local self governance in the Panchayati Raj system.

SAMPLE

The present study confines with the PRI members of Ganjam district. It covers one developed block i.e. Chhatrapur and one under developed block i.e. Seragada of the district. The opinion of the PRI members both women and men regarding women in local governance comprise the core of the data which have been further analysed and interpreted for getting the result.

OBJECTIVES

The study has been undertaken to fulfill the following objectives

- To find out how many women are really involved in the PRI.
- To determine if there has been any correlation between their socio-economic lives with political life.
- To ascertain the extent of social change brought out due to women's entry into politics.
- To study how many women depend on their family members for rendering the duties assigned in PRI.
- Aim of our study is to document the voices of women representatives in the local government of Ganjam district in selected blocks.
- one of the objective of our study is to identify the shortcomings and the failure of the women PRI member in delivering the decisions in the public space.
- To strategise action plan for the capacity building of women PRI members.
- Baring on their felt needs.
- To analyse the nexus of class, caste and gender while contextualising their experiences in our study.
- To suggest the policy makers and planners the points of empowerment of women PRI members for a better future.
- To discuss whether entry of women in politics has become an agency of empowerment or not.

HYPOTHESES

The study is undertaken to examine the following hypotheses:

- Women representatives in PRI are positively oriented towards women's participation in politics.
- Women take decision by the help of their male counterparts in the society.
- Women are politically less active than their male counterparts.
- Women of the upper strata of the society are politically more advanced than those of lower strata.
- Women trust their family members for political decision-making.
- Political awareness and political efficacy of women are correlated with political participation.
- Educated women succeed in politics than uneducated women.
- Young women are more aware of politics than comparatively elder women.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study has been undertaken by following personal interview method to collect information with the help of a structured questionnaire including close-ended and open-ended questions on women representatives in PRIs. The method of the study is exploratory. The data have been collected by interview method. However, relevant documents from various secondary sources have been referred to make the study more comprehensive and trustworthy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The number of women participating in the PRI in Odisha has been increased due to the fifty percent reservation of seats for women as decided by the Government. So, it has made the difference in the political system of the state. The difference is not only quantitative but also qualitative, because these women are bringing their experience in governance of civic society into governance of the State.

In this way, they are making the State sensitive to issues of poverty, inequality and gender injustice measuring and assessing these qualitative changes is not easy, however. Furthermore, the immeasurable is sometimes invaluable. Thus, while much in this document is subjective and preliminary in character, it gives a strong indication of positive outcomes for gender-equitable governance and is very suggestive of areas for future research.

FINDINGS

1. Majority of the female representatives say that the decision making to stand in election was done by family members followed by support from the society.
2. 85% of PRI members say that their election campaign was done by female members. Male members also provided a helping hand in it.
3. They also express that the election campaign was dominated by male members Female members only played their role in it.
4. Majority if the PRI members say that the political decision making was done by their family members. Hence, they act in accordance with direction of the male members.
5. Maximum number of women representatives say that they do not discuss about political affairs. Rather, they remain busy with the household work. For this, they shoulder the responsibility to the male persons living in the family, i.e., husband, father-in-law etc.
6. 90% of women favour the 50% reservation policy for women in PRI election in Odisha. 80% of men too praised this idea of the government.
7. 90% of women and 75% men also express their favour on the same kind of reservation in the Parliament and Assembly Election if possible.
8. Cent percent (100%) of the women respondents express that education is a vital factor for good political decision-making. 90% of men too support the above idea.
9. 93% of women PRI members express that there should be equal facilities or opportunities provided to women like men for their social upliftment.
10. 50% of women participate in political meetings. But they are actually guided by the male members. Few of them even expressed that they send the male members in the family to attend in the party meeting and some are also used to remain absent.,
11. 93% of women PRI members say that the change of society can be brought out by the entry of women into politics. 90% of men to support the above idea.
12. 90% of women say that they took decision by the help of male members in their family. They do not take decision of their own.
13. Majority of women PRI representation do not have general knowledge about the political affairs of their region and state.
14. The female PRI members say that their social prestige remain almost the same after being elected but the male members say the social prestige has been risen.
15. Women representatives express that an ordinary woman can succeed in politics but majority of male members opposed to this idea.
16. Majority men and women representatives say that they have taken developmental work for women as per the scheme of the govt. for women in rural areas.
17. Very few women express that they never aspire to go higher level whereas men have the interest to go to higher level if they will get scope.
18. Majority of women do not know about their work/duties in the Panchayat. Hundred percent, i.e. all men know about their works in the Panchayat.

RECOMMENDATIONS / SUGGESTIONS

Women's entry to PRI is a success story. But the measures at this success must be somewhat different from the indicators that are commonly used to identify success stories. Examples of such commonly used indicators include the capability(vision, insight, commitment) organizations of women or NGOs. to establish movements which generates ideas and prototypes for people led development activities. (e.g. Green Belt Movement in Kenya and the Sewa Movement in India), or the success of organised advocacy and pressure groups such as the " Support stockings" in Sweden and the Notational Women's Coalition of South Africa, in transforming political representation by putting direct pressure on the state from outside.

But in this storey, the success of PRI lies in possibility of women transforming the State from within, I argue that this new arrangement provides the first step to converting grassroots leadership into state leadership, which many feel is the key to ushering in equitable, people led development. What appears to be happening is that as women enter the structures of governance in large numbers, they are changing there structures so that they reflect more closely the concerns women?

CONCLUSIONS

The 73rd and 74th Amendment Act of India provided 33 percent reservation of seats for women in the grass-root level i.e. Panchayat/village level. The Govt. of Odisha too has taken initiative to increase the percentage of reservation to fifty by allowing more women to enter into the politics at the local self government. But, as it has been discussed earlier in this chapter, it has been seen that women act in accordance with the direction of male members in their family. They do not take decision of their own. Most of them were still now under the clutches of their husbands. They only maintain their job as a post office bearer. They do not have self confidence to maintain their position in the field of local governance. Majority of them only say that the change in the society can be brought out the entry of more women into the political field. They say education as compulsory for women in making decision by themselves. Majority of women do this job in a mechanical way as they do not have aspiration to go to higher level in future.

LIMITATIONS

The following are some of the limitations of the study

1. The study covers only two blocks of Ganjam District.
2. It collects the data from women representatives selected at random basis.
3. It collects the information also from elected male representatives.
4. It analyses the data by following simple statistics. It has been designed as per the responses given by elected representatives at PRI level.

SCOPE FOR FUTHER RESEARCH

The present study in limited to Chhatrapur and Seragada blocks of Ganjam district of Odisha. However, there is enough scope for future researches to opt other blocks of the same district, so that the conclusion will more generalised and representative of the population. They may also take other district of the state top present the effect of reservation in the political scenario of the state as a whole. This may help the policy makers of not only Odisha but also India to realize the participation of women and social change.

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APPENDIX / ANNEXURE

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Name of the respondent :
2. Village: Block: Panchayat Ps: District Word in which he/she is elected.
3. Age:
4. Gender:
5. Caste: General/ OBC/SC/ST/ Others:
6. Mother toung :
7. Marital status : Married/ Unmarried / widow/ divorcee/ others :
8. Education qualification :
9. Present Status :

10. Occupation: House wife / working lady/ Male/ Student/ Old Lady/ others:
11. If working lady/ male, (i) What do you do? (ii) What is your monthly income?
12. Who is the head of your family? Father/ Mother/ Husband/ Wife/ Self/ others

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

13. Did you decide yourself of someone has said to stand in the election?
14. Who were campaigning in the election?
15. Did women dominate in the election campaign?
16. Are you belonging to any political party?
17. Did you relate to any women organization before election?
18. If so, name the organization.
19. What type of works you have taken after being elected?
20. Do you decide yourself or guided by someone to decide after elected as a member of PRI?
21. What expenditure did you bear in the election?
22. From where did you get the fund?

POLITICAL AWARENESS

23. Do you discuss about politics with any body?
24. Since when you are in the political field?
25. Is the position reserved/ unreserved?
26. Do you agree with the fifty percent reservation for women in PRI on declared by the Government of Odisha?
27. In this manner, do you think this fifty percent reservation for women should be in assembly or parliament election?
28. Do you think education is necessary for political decision making?
29. In your opinion, women should get equal opportunity with man or not.
30. Do you participate in the meetings organized by any political party?
31. Do you participate in the discussion?
32. Do you sacrifice yourself while working in the office?
33. How many blocks are there in your district?
34. Who is the present chairman and Vice-Chairman of your block?
35. Who is the present MLA under Chhatrapur/ Hinjili constituency?
36. Who is the present MP? He /she belong to which party?
37. Who is the present Chief Minister? He /she is the leader of which party?

PARTICIPATION AND SOCIAL CHANGE

38. In your opinion do social changes be possible if women enter into politics?
39. Women should take decision by themselves or should depend on men?
40. Is there any change in your family after election?
41. What steps do you take to change your area society after being elected as a Member of Parliament?
42. Do the people pay more prestige to you after walking in the Panchayat?
43. Do the people respect all of your family members?
44. Do you think, an ordinary woman can get success than that of an educated woman?
45. What type of important do you get than man as a woman leader in the social-cum-cultural and political organization?
46. What type of important activities have you taken as a woman leader?
47. What development has happen in them?
48. Do you want to contest in the MLA/MP election in future?
49. If so what is your main aim?
50. What is your main duty being a Member of Parliament?
51. Have you shown yourself truly in your work?
52. What type of plan have you taken for development of your area in future?

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