



AWARENESS OF DALIT WOMENS ABOUT PANCHAYAT RAJ: A STUDY OF KALABURAGI DISTRICT OF KARNATAKA”

**Mr. Saibanna
Muneppa**

Research Scholar Dept. of Political Science Sahydra Arts College, Shimoga

**Dr.m. H.
Prahaldappa**

Associate Professor and Research Guide of Political Science.P G Studies and Research. Sahydra Arts College, Shimoga

ABSTRACT Panchayat as a grassroot political institution has been in existence in India since time immemorial in one form or the other. However, women never occupied any important position in the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and their participation was almost non-existent due to the predominance of certain social evils like the rigid patriarchal system, purdah system, illiteracy, superstition and traditional beliefs. Women had an important role in household work, and economy of the family was mainly in the hands of men. Politics as well as the decision making process was considered an exclusively male domain. During the Freedom Movement Mahatma Gandhi provided the concept of swaraj wherein he declared – 'as long as women of India do not take part in public life there can be no salvation for the country. I would have no use for that kind of swaraj to which such women have not made their full contribution.' He also said that the governance of a village should be conducted by the Panchayat of five persons, annually elected by the adult villagers, male and female, possessing minimum prescribed qualifications. But, Gandhiji's idea of 'Gram Swaraj' was not accepted by the constitution makers. Empowerment of Dalit women in Panchayati Raj Institutions very much depends upon their awareness about Panchayati Raj Institutions. Therefore, in this article an attempt has been made to analyze the awareness of Dalit women respondents about the organization, personal administration, financial administration and State control over the Panchayati Raj Institutions in Kalaburagi District of Karnataka.

KEYWORDS : Panchayat Awareness, Empowerment, Development, Women,

INTRODUCTION

It is believed that Dalit women empowerment through induction of more number of Dalit women in the Panchayati Raj Institutions could help them to effectively participate in discussions relating to various aspects of Panchayati Raj Institutions and developmental programs and they are likely to bring about qualitative change in the political goals. But the findings of study make it clear that a vast majority of the Dalit woman respondents are not aware of the details relating to organization of New Panchayati Raj System in Karnataka, personnel administration in New Panchayati Raj Bodies, financial administration of Panchayati Raj Bodies and State control over Panchayati Raj Bodies on the basis of the awareness and participation of Dalit women respondents. Empowerment of Dalit woman in the implementation of developmental programs reveals that majority of the Dalit women respondents of District Panchayat, Taluka Panchayat and Grama Panchayat are not aware of the allocation of funds under the central Government Sponsored programs such as Indira Awaaz Yojana, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme and National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development and State Government sponsored schemes. Empowerment of Dalit women respondents after the implementation of 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act analyzed on the basis of certain indicators reveal that majority of Dalit women respondents of District Panchayats; Taluka Panchayats; and Grama Panchayat disagree or strongly disagree that self confidence, participation in political activities, participation in social activities, participation in cultural activities, improved social status, improved political status, improved economic status, leadership qualities, social habits, liberation from social exclusion, economic liberation of Dalit women, freedom in decision making, opportunities to control over resources, respect in the family, respect in the society.

Panchayat Raj System in Karnataka

In the organization of New Panchayati Raj System in Karnataka, the responsibilities of Rural Development and Local Administration Minister, organization and functions of Secretariat Department of Rural Development and Local Administration, organization and functions of the Directorate of Rural Development and Local Administration, constitution of Panchayats at different levels, functions of Panchayats at different levels, organization and functions of Gram Sabha and awareness and participation of Dalit woman respondents in the organization of the Panchayati Raj Institutions are analyzed in the following pages.

Rural Development and Local Administration Minister

The Political Head of the Rural Development and Local Administration

Department in Karnataka is in the rank of Cabinet Minister. He is entrusted with three important responsibilities. They are to make policies in respect of Rural Development and Local Administration; to supervise and control the implementation of policies and laws in respect of Rural Development and Local Administration; and to be answerable to the Members of the State Legislature for the omissions and commissions in respect of Rural Development and Local Administration.

Dalit woman respondents of Kalaburagi District were asked whether they were aware of the responsibilities of Rural Development and Local Administration Minister. The responses of the respondents are provided in table .1

Table .01 Rural Development and local administration Minister

Sl. No.	Dalit Woman respondents	Yes	No	Total
1	Zilla Panchayats	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	2 (100%)
2	Taluka Panchayats	3 (19%)	15 (81%)	18 (100%)
3	Grama Panchayats	25 (28%)	65 (72%)	90 (100%)
	Total	29 (32%)	81 (90%)	110 (100%)

Source : Primary Data

The responses of the respondents indicate that about 50% of the Dalit woman respondents of District Panchayat, about 81% of the Dalit woman respondents of Taluka Panchayat and about 72% of the Dalit woman respondents of Grama Panchayat are not aware of the responsibilities of Rural Development and Local Administration Minister; and about 50% of the Dalit woman respondents of District Panchayat, about 19% of the Dalit woman respondents of Taluka Panchayat and about 28% of the Dalit woman respondents of Grama Panchayat are aware of the responsibilities of Rural Development and Local Administration Minister to some extent.

Dalit woman respondents of Kalaburagi District were asked whether they were aware of the organization functions of the Secretariat Rural Development and Local Administration Department. The responses of the respondents are provided in table.02

Table .02 Secretariat rural development and local Administration department

Sl. No.	Dalit Woman respondents	Yes	No	Total
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1	Zilla Panchayats	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	2 (100%)
2	Taluka Panchayats	14 (76%)	4 (24%)	18 (100%)
3	Grama Panchayats	70 (28%)	20 (22%)	90 (100%)
	Total	85 (94%)	25 (28%)	110 (100%)

Source : Primary Data

The responses of the respondents indicated that about 50% of the Dalit woman respondents of District Panchayat, about 24% of the Dalit woman respondents of Taluka Panchayat and about 22% of the Dalit woman respondents of Grama Panchayat are aware of the organization functions of the Secretariat Rural Development and Local Administration Department; and about 50% of the Dalit woman respondents of District Panchayat, about 76% of the Dalit woman respondents of Taluka Panchayat and about 78% of the Dalit woman respondents of Grama Panchayat are not aware of the organization functions of the Secretariat Rural Development and Local Administration Department.

Dalit woman respondents of Kalaburagi District Panchayat Raj institutions were asked whether they were aware of the constitution of the Panchayats at different levels. The responses of the Dalit woman respondents are provided in table.03

Table.03 Constitution of Panchayat at Different Level

Sl. No.	Dalit Woman respondents	Yes	No	Total
1	Zilla Panchayats	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	2 (100%)
2	Taluka Panchayats	5 (29%)	13 (71%)	18 (100%)
3	Grama Panchayats	20 (22%)	70 (78%)	90 (100%)
	Total	26 (29%)	84 (93%)	110 (100%)

Source : Primary Data

The responses of the respondents indicated that about 50% of the Dalit woman respondents of District Panchayat, about 71% of the Dalit woman respondents of Taluka Panchayat and about 78% of the Dalit woman respondents of Grama Panchayat are aware of the constitution of the Panchayats at different levels; and about 50% of the Dalit woman respondents of District Panchayat, about 29% of the Dalit woman respondents of Taluka Panchayat and about 22% of the Dalit woman respondents of Grama Panchayat are aware of the constitution of the Panchayats at different levels to some extent.

Gram Sabha

The Karnataka Panchayat Act, 1993 has explained the composition and powers of the Gram Sabha. According to this Act there shall be a Gram Sabha for every Grama Panchayat consisting of persons registered in the electoral roll relating to the Panchayat Village, comprised within the area of said Grama Panchayat. Subject to the general orders of the Government, the Gram Sabha shall meet at least, thrice in a year but six months shall not intervene between any two meetings. If the Grama Panchayat fails to convene the Gram Sabha, the Inspector shall convene the Gram Sabha. The Gram Sabha shall approve the Village plan; approve the Village budget for the year; and review the progress of the implementation of all schemes entrusted to the Grama Panchayat.

The Government may, by notification, entrust to the Gram Sabha such other functions as may be specified. The Grama Panchayat shall give due consideration to the recommendations and suggestions of the Gram Sabha. The quorum for a meeting of the Gram Sabha shall be one-third of the total number of the members of the Gram Sabha and procedure for convening and conducting such meetings of the Gram Sabha shall be such as may be prescribed. Every meeting of the Gram Sabha shall be presided over by the President and in his absence, by the Vice-President and in the absence of both the President and Vice-President, by a Member chosen by the Members present at the meeting.

Dalit woman respondents of Kalaburagi District were asked whether they were aware about the Organization and functions of Gram Sabha in Karnataka. The responses of the Dalit woman respondents are provided in table .04

Table .04 Organization and the functions of Gram Sabha in Kalaburagi District

Sl. No.	Dalit Woman respondents	Yes	No	Total
1	Zilla Panchayats	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	2 (100%)
2	Taluka Panchayats	15 (81%)	3 (19%)	18 (100%)
3	Grama Panchayats	77 (86%)	13 (14%)	90 (100%)
	Total	93 (104%)	17 (19%)	110 (100%)

Source : Primary Data

The responses of the respondents indicated that about 50% of the Dalit woman respondents of District Panchayat, about 19% of the Dalit woman respondents of Taluka Panchayat and about 14% of the Dalit woman respondents of Grama Panchayat are aware of the organization and functions of Gram Sabha in Karnataka; and about 50% of the Dalit woman respondents of District Panchayat, about 81% of the Dalit woman respondents of Taluka Panchayat and about 86% of the Dalit woman respondents of Grama Panchayat are aware of the organization and functions of Gram Sabha in Karnataka to some extent.

State Control over Panchayati Raj Bodies

It is said that Local Bodies have to be regularly controlled, supervised, guided and occasionally punished for their acts of omission and commission. The Karnataka Panchayat Act has provided certain provisions to exercise control over the Panchayati Raj Bodies. The different controls exercised over the Panchayati Raj Bodies are in the form of appointment of officers to supervise Panchayats, power to suspend or cancel resolution, etc. under the Act, emergency powers of Collector and Inspector, power to take action in default of a Grama Panchayat President, etc., removal of President, removal of Vice President, removal of Chairman of Taluka Panchayat, removal of Vice-Chairman of Taluka Panchayat, removal of Chairman of Zilla Panchayat, removal of Vice-Chairman of Zilla Panchayat, motion of no confidence in Vice-President of Panchayat, motion of no confidence in Vice-Chairman of Taluka Panchayat, motion of no confidence in Vice-Chairman of Zilla Panchayat, dissolution of Grama Panchayat, dissolution of Taluka Panchayat, dissolution of District Panchayat, liability for payment of compensation, reports and enquiries, appellate powers, financial control, regulation of Local Government income, regulation of expenditure, local Government budget, accounting, auditing and judicial control. Let us briefly discuss the different controls exercised over the Panchayati Raj Bodies.

These controls are primarily meant to enable the Panchayati Raj Bodies to carry out their different functions according to Karnataka Panchayat Act. When the Panchayati Raj Bodies don't function according to the Act, the State Government take actions on the basis of the provisions of the Act. The Woman Representatives should know the various controls exercised over the Panchayati Raj Bodies so that they can move the appropriate authority to take action on them.

The Dalit woman respondents of Kalaburagi Zilla Panchayats were asked whether they knew about the various controls exercised over the Panchayati Raj Bodies. The responses of the Dalit woman respondents are provided in table.05

Table.05 Various controls exercised over the Panchayati Raj Bodies

Sl. No.	Dalit Woman respondents	Yes	No	Total
1	Zilla Panchayats	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	2 (100%)
2	Taluka Panchayats	12 (68%)	6 (32%)	18 (100%)
3	Grama Panchayats	68 (75%)	22 (25%)	90 (100%)
	Total	81 (90%)	29 (32%)	110 (100%)

Source : Primary Data

The responses of the respondents indicate that about 50% of the Dalit woman respondents of Zilla Panchayat, about 32% of the Dalit woman respondents of Taluka Panchayat and about 25% of the Dalit woman respondents of Grama Panchayat are not aware about the various control exercised over the Panchayati Raj Bodies; and about 50% of the Dalit woman respondents of Zilla Panchayat, about 68% of the Dalit woman respondents of Taluka Panchayat and about 75% of the Dalit woman respondents of Grama Panchayat are aware about the various control exercised over the Panchayati Raj Bodies.

CONCLUSION:

The Government should take steps to create awareness about the various aspects of Panchayat Raj Institutions and to enable them to participate effectively in the discussions relating to the various aspects of Panchayat Raj Institutions and in the implementation of development programs to create self confidence, improved social, political, economic status, leadership qualities, social habits, liberation from social exclusion, respect in the family, society and relatives, encourage participation in political, social and cultural activities, inter caste marriage and female literacy so that Dalit woman empowerment could become a reality.

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