



FACTORS INHIBITING PARTICIPATION OF TRIBAL WOMEN REPRESENTATIVES IN PANCHAYATI RAJ: A STUDY OF MADHYA PRADESH

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ABSTRACT After independence since nineties, continuous efforts have been made by the government for the development of tribal society, but most of the government and non-governmental organizations have focused their attention on the improvement of social, economical, health and educational status of the tribal society. The issue of political empowerment of tribal society's women was neglected. In 1993, through reservation in 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, tribal women got the opportunity to represent one third of the seats in Panchayati Raj system. 231 tribal women representatives from Bhimpur and Multai development blocks of Betul district in Madhya Pradesh have been taken as sample size of the study. Random sampling method is used. In present article, the analysis of participation of tribal women representatives in the panchayat was done on the basis of primary and secondary data. The study describes gender based discrimination that prevents tribal women from actively participating in Panchayat related works.

KEYWORDS : Tribal Women Representatives, Leadership, Participation, Panchayati Raj System, Gender Based Discrimination.

INTRODUCTION

Tribal society remains a part of India as an important manpower of Indian society. Population-wise 8.6 percent of India's total population is tribal. They have their own unique identity in Indian society due to their ability to survive in difficult natural conditions, special culture, customs and simple life. During the British rule, after implementation of the wild conservation act, economy of the tribes was greatly affected because government had taken the tribal people's land under its control (Tripathi 2016). After independence since nineties, efforts have been continued by the government for the development of the tribal society, but for a long time, most government and non-governmental organizations have focused their attention on the improvement of the social, economical, health and educational status of the tribal society. In particular, the issue of political empowerment of women of the tribal society was neglected. The status of women in any society is determined on the basis of their social, educational, economical, political and health levels, along with the participation of women in various fields in the development of the country, society and community, their place in the society is reflected. Tribal women have been playing an important role in family responsibilities and economical activities, but their participation in educational and political fields has been low. The history of Panchayati Raj system in India is old, Panchayat has been an important unit of local self-government. Changes have been made in the Panchayati Raj system over time. In 1993, 73rd Constitutional Amendment brought a major change in the Panchayati Raj system through which the Panchayati Raj system got constitutional status (Behar and Yogesh 2002). Another important feature of the 73rd constitutional amendment was that through this amendment, women of backward classes were given reservation in Panchayati Raj system on one-third of the seats at the village, district and district levels. Prior to reservation, women from rural areas were marginalized in political participation in India, but the situation of the women from rural backward class was worse as they had no opportunity to speak in the decision making process in the rural political system (Verma 2015). As a result of the reservation, the tribal women became part of the rural panchayat system but their political rights were started to be exercised by the male members of their family and traditionally powerful groups and their presence in the gram panchayat became symbolic (Behera 2017). Particularly Dalit women were encouraged to participate in Panchayat by high caste people and their husband, such people indirectly controlled the activities of Dalit women in Panchayat (Mangubhai and Irudayam 2009). Due to lack of confidence in the tribal women representatives, their panchayat decisions were influenced by their male family members, which has hindered their path to political empowerment (Singh 2009). Reservation in Panchayati Raj affected women from different educational, economical and family backgrounds in different ways. Several studies have found that the level of participation in the Panchayat of women representatives of good educational, economical and family status was better than women representatives of lower educational, economical and family background. Such females representative slowly started taking interest in the work of Panchayats. It is a ground truth that for a long time due to gender equality prevalent in society, women are living in glass house. Their activities are

carefully watched, so women have to take every step carefully. It is commonly seen in society that if a man makes a mistake then a single male is blamed but if a woman makes a mistake then the entire female community is blamed (Varma 2005). It is observed from many studies that during almost 27 years of local participation in *gram panchayat*, both positive and negative results of representation of tribal women representatives have come out.

OBJECTIVES

- 1.To study the participation of tribal women representatives in the Panchayat.
- 2.To analyse the gender discrimination that inhibits the participation of tribal women representative in Panchayati Raj.
- 3.To analyses problems faced by female representatives in participation.

Research Methodology

The primary data is compiled by interview schedule, group discussion observation method, interview method as it is suitable for accomplishing research objectives.

Research Design

The study is based on descriptive research design and its basis is both primary and secondary source .

Research Area

Bhimpur and Multai *Jampadas* in Betul district of Madhya Pradesh is the area of study based on the Purposive sampling method .

Universe Of Study

Tribal women President and ward member of of Bhimpur and Multai blocks in Betul district was the universe of study. Total number of 545 tribal women representatives were taken as universe in study .

Unit Of Study

Tribal women President and ward member of Bhimpur and Multai blocks in Betul district was unit of the study.

Sample Method

Random sampling has been adopted for the study. Scheduled Tribe women representatives of Multai and Bhimpur blocks have been selected through stratified sampling method.

Sample Size

The total sample consists of 231 respondents from Multai and Bhimpur blocks.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD

Primary Data

The data was collected through well-structured interview schedules, which comprised of information for tribal women representatives' participation in the Panchayat.

Secondary Data

The secondary data was collected through various books, journals,

articles, periodicals, newspapers, websites and thesis.

Tools Used For Analysis

Various tools were used and graphical representation was made for easy understanding of the analysis, such as simple percentage method.

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

Women Participation In Panchayat

Table No. 1: Position Of The Women Representatives In The Panchayat

Sl.No.	Position in the panchayat	Frequency	Percentage
1	Wordmember(panch)	217	93.94
2	President(sarpanch)	14	6.06
		231	100

Table No. 1 shows the position of women representatives in panchayat. Out of 231 respondents, 217 (93.94%) of women representatives were in the post of Panch and 14 (6.06%) women representatives participated in the post of sarpanch. This data reveals that majority of the respondents were posted as a ward member in the panchayat.

Table No. 2: Number Of Times Respondents Elected In Panchayats

Sl.No.	No.of time selected	Frequency	Percentage
1	First time	215	93.07
2	Second time	14	6.06
3	Third time	2	0.87
		231	100

Table no. 2 shows the number of times respondents elected in Panchayats. Out of total 231 respondents, the highest number of 215 (93.07%) women representatives represented Panchayat for the first time. 14 (6.06%) women representatives represented the panchayat for the second time and 2 (0.87%) women representatives represented the panchayat for the third time. This data reveals that the majority of respondents represented Panchayat for the first time.

Respondents said that due to male dominance and family interference in the panchayat, women had fewer opportunities to play an active role in the panchayat, so women representatives did not want to represent the upcoming elections.

Table No.3 Troubles In Carrying Out Panchayat Functions

Sl.No	Trouble in carrying out panchayat functions	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	55	23.81
2	No	176	76.19
		231	100

Table No. 3 shows data regarding woman having trouble in doing panchayat functions. Out of 231 respondents, the highest number of 176 (76.19%) women representatives did not face any trouble in performing the functions of Gram Panchayat after winning the election. Because the functions of their panchayat were performed by male members of their family. 55 (23.81%) women representatives faced difficulty in performing the functions of Panchayat. This data reveals that the majority of respondents women representatives did not face any trouble in performing the functions of Gram Panchayat after winning the election.

Table No.4: Problems Faced By Women While Participating In Panchayat

Sl. No	Problems faced by women	Frequency	Percentage
1	Opinion of women representatives are not heard seriously in panchayat	13	23.64
2	In the village of women representatives, women do not speak in front of senior men, so they were hesitant to speak in the meeting.	11	20
3	Male members of Gram Panchayat do not cooperate with women representatives in the work of Panchayat	5	9.09
4	Women representatives had to face Difficulty in going to the panchayat.	8	14.55

5	The female representative could not give time to the functions of the panchayat due to the responsibility of the family.	7	12.73
6	When there was work in the panchayat, she could not give time to household chores.	5	9.09
7	Active female representatives are implicated in false accusations of not working according to men.	2	3.64
8	The domineering people of the village do not allow the women representatives of the Panchayat to act on their own	1	1.81
9	The president, secretary and sub-president decide the work of the panchayat according to their own opinion, they did not consult the women representatives about the work.	3	5.45
		55	100

Table No. 4 depicts problems which women respondents faced while participating in Panchayat. Out of 55 respondents, the highest number of 13 (23.64%) respondents felt that opinion of women representatives are not heard seriously in panchayat and 11 (20%) women respondent faced problem that in the village women do not speak in front of senior male persons, so they were hesitant to speak in the meeting. 8 (14.55%) Women representatives faced difficulty in going to the panchayat and 7 (12.73%) female representatives could not give time to the functions of the panchayat due to their family responsibilities. 5 (9.09%) female representatives told that male members of gram panchayat do not cooperate with them in the work of Panchayat and 2 (3.64%) active female representatives were implicated in false accusations of not working according to men. 5 (9.09%) women representatives faced problem when there was work in the panchayat, she could not give time to household chores and 3 (5.45%) women representative faced problem that the president, secretary and sub- president decide the work of the panchayat according to their own opinion, they did not consult the women representatives about the work. 1 (1.81%) Women representative faced problem that the domineering people of the village do not allow the women representatives of the Panchayat to act on their own. This data reveals that the majority of respondents felt that opinion of women representatives are not heard seriously in panchayat.

DISCUSSION

Though the Indian constitution through various Articles guaranties equal rights for women, there still exists gender inequality in society. According to the research carried out by Sadhu and Sharma (2014) there is little gender equality in local level politics. In fact most political processes and institutions are known not to be very women friendly. As per Dash (2015), women representative not get involved in decision making process in PRIs because of lack of freedom to do so. Government are trying to get gender justice for women because women are half the country's manpower and to reach the aim of actual development it is necessary that women should get equal opportunity in society.

CONCLUSION

Tribal women in rural areas have been participating in the economic activities of the family such as agricultural work, wages etc. But the women did not have formal and industrial participation in rural politics. Women reservation brought a big change in rural politics. Reservation provided tribal women an opportunity to be represented at the village level but due to the rural customs & male dominated society, women are playing their role subordinate to men. Numerous studies suggest that in Panchayat, political rights of women were exercised by male members of their family due to which the role of women in rural politics became symbolic. Due to gender disparities prevailing in the society, female representative is facing problem in playing her active role in the panchayat. Democracy is based on equality, but due to gender discrimination in society there appears inequality in political institutions of democracy.

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