



Participatory Democracy and Tribal Women: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Local governments have no relevance if they are not responsive, transparent, participatory and accountable to the people and in the Indian context, the most deprived sections of society such as the dalits, tribals, and women. It is said that 'politics is about power', but democratic politics is and should be about bringing power down to the people or empowering them. Decentralization therefore may be defined as the empowerment of the local population through the empowerment of local governments, (LGs). The constitution defines Panchayats as "institutions of self-government" and requires the state legislature to create such institutions. Here, this paper examines the Participatory democracy and Tribal Women through Panchayat Raj Institutions with special reference to Chitradurga district of Karnataka state.

Keywords : Participatory democracy, PRIs, Tribal Women

INTRODUCTION:

Local governments have no relevance if they are not responsive, transparent, participatory and accountable to the people and in the Indian context, the most deprived sections of society such as the dalits, tribals, and women. It is said that 'politics is about power', but democratic politics is and should be about bringing power down to the people or empowering them. Decentralization therefore may be defined as the empowerment of the local population through the empowerment of local governments, (LGs). The constitution defines Panchayats as "institutions of self-government" [Article 243 (d)] and requires the state legislature to create such institutions. Tremendous political opportunities emerge from the extension of participatory democracy through the institutions of village Panchayat, Gram sabha, affirmative provisions for dalits, tribals, women and so on. Real improvement in the self-esteem of the vulnerable sections of society can come only through a process of meaningful participation. The nature of the accountability arrangements is also expected to move downward to the people rather than to the bureaucratic superior officers. The efficient use of local resources through decentralized spatial planning mandated in the constitution is an important means to promote economic development. Enhancing the quality of public service delivery, be it primary school, primary health care, drinking water supply, sanitation and so on can be ensured only through citizen's involvement and participation. This is an important means to promote horizontal equity in a country known for its widespread disparities in the level of endowment and development. Within the context of rural governance structures, work was done on three main levels to increase confidence and participation of tribal people in local governance: a) democratic education for children, resulting in the "March for Citizen's Participation in the Electoral Process"; b) political awareness training for youth; and c) the formation of mass level organizations so that they may realize their collective strength and have confidence that collectively they can change the world. A significant move in this regard is the adoption policy to enlarge the base of political participation of women and Tribal women in PRIs. Attention is drawn to the Karnataka Panchayat Raj policy Act of

1983. This Act is unarguably the first of its kind in the history of evolution of PRIs then formulated. This reservation was extended to the posts of presidents participation through increased political representation 25% of reservation to women was raised to 33% in a span of 10 years from 1983 to 1993 witnessed an important amendment to the constitution of India. The amendment namely 73rd Constitutional amendment provided for 33% reservation to women at all levels of PRIs covering the rural India. To see that women representatives perform as leaders of these organizations 33% of the posts of Member, President and Vice-President was earmarked for women representatives.

Here, the main objective of this paper is to study the participatory democracy, political participation of Tribal women and problems faced by the Tribal Women after entering into the politics. This paper is based on primary data and study conducted in Chitradurga District of Karnataka State.

Influencing factors enter into politics by Tribal Women:

The information collected regarding entrance to politics by tribal women respondents with their own interest. They said different opinion regarding their interest in entering politics. The study reveals that majority of the respondents of 95% (286) entered politics with their own interest and only 5% (14) respondents have entered politics without their own interest. The data clearly reveals that PRIs system has given the direct and active participation for Tribal women in local governance in study area.

Problems pertaining to political participation of tribal women compare to other women:

At present women reservation policy provided opportunities to tribal women to enter politics as compare to other women. But sometime of problems of tribal's different from general women; it may be cultural, religious, or social. We have collected information pertaining to problems of tribal women compare to general women.

The study interprets the opinion regarding the problems per-

taining to political participation of tribal women compare to other women. Out of 300 respondents 48% (143) respondents have not faced the problem and 52% (157) respondents have faced this problem. In general women come from the dominant caste they enjoyed the privileges in all respects but whereas in the case of tribal women were neglected, disadvantaged, and they have suffered from many problems compared to the general women. The data reveal that relatively problems faced by the tribal women have been considerably decreased, because of new policies and programmes for upliftment of tribal women.

Problems faced by tribal women in politics:

Tribal women have faced several problems with respect to the economic, social, political and cultural. Here tribal women were asked the questions in this regard and different opinions were collected by the respondents and are analyzed below.

Table No 1: Problems faced by tribal women in politics

Sl.No.	Problems	Frequency	Percentage
1	Political, social, economic and educational	137	46
2	Social disabilities	24	8
3	All type of traditional problems	96	32
4	Illiteracy, ignorance, & other problems	43	14
Total		300	100

Source: Field Survey

Above table No 1 shows that the Problems faced by tribal women in politics. Out of 300 respondents, 46%(137) respondents having political, social, economical and educational problem, 8%(24) respondents having problem of social disabilities, 32%(96) respondents having all type of traditional problem, and 14%(43) respondents having problem of illiteracy, ignorance and other problems. This data reveals that the majority of respondents are having problem of political, social, economic and educational problems in politics in the study area.

Problem in discharging the duties:

The problems which are faced by elected tribal women while discharging the duties as shown in below explanation. The table No 2 shows the difficulties faced by the elected tribal women such as family members, husband, public, political party, other dominate groups and other people.

Table No 2: Problem in discharging the duties

Sl.No.	Problems	Frequency	Percentage
1	Husband	45	15
2	Family members	138	46
3	Publics	56	19
4	Political Party	37	12
5	Other dominate groups	21	07
6	By Others	03	01
Total		300	100

Source: Field Survey

The above table No 2 shows the problems faced by the members in discharging their duties. Out of three hundred respondents, 15%(45) respondents have faced this type of problem by their husband, 46%(138) of respondents have problem in discharging the duties by family members, 19%(56) respondents have problem in discharging the duties by publics, 12%(37) respondents have problem in discharging the duties by political party, 7%(21) respondents have problem in discharging the duties by other dominant groups and 1%(3) respondents have discharging the duties by other factors. The paper reveals that respondents were agreed that the family members and their husband interfere in discharging the duties in day to day functioning of the PRI.

Women's personal and self decision and appreciation:

Here, paper observed that whether male members are appreciated the women respondents personal and self decision. Different opinion has been collected and analyzed here. Data examined the women's personal and self decision is appreciated by male members. Out of 300 respondents, 86%(259) respondents told that their personal and self decision were appreciated by the male members and 14%(41) respondents told that there is no appreciation for personal and self decision by male members. This data reveals that most of the respondents got appreciation by the male members but small portion of the respondents are not getting the appreciation by the male members.

Conclusion:

Local governments have no relevance if they are not responsive, transparent, participatory and accountable to the people and in the Indian context, the most deprived sections of society such as the dalits, tribals, and women. Tribal women must get greater social and political exposure so that they can be dynamic in active politics. If they take active participation, they can contribute a lot to the all-round development of their regions. They must be provided with better education facilities and offered necessary training at all levels. Efforts must be made to bring about a thorough transformation in their attitude and mindset. Only then the process of Tribal women empowerment through political representation becomes meaningful and realistic. This is not impossible but requires committed and dedicated efforts. All these observations should not lead us to a negative conclusion about the very policy of reservation to Tribal women. It has opened many opportunities to them in terms of participation and to fight against negative impact of patriarchy. So, here participatory democracy has great significance in the process of women empowerment.

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