

STATUS AND ROLE OF WOMEN PANCHAYAT IN GANGATH VILLAGE

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Abstract: This study on the Status of the women in Panchayat administration in Gangath village, Indore Tehsil, shows the need that men must learn to respect women capabilities, starting to listen their points of view in public gatherings and realize how effective and transparent the women administration can be. Panchayat Raj Institution is the traditional institutions of local governance in India. All over India, including Himachal Pradesh, not too much relevance is given for women despite of regulations and sensitization campaigns. There is a vast variety of factors that restrain women in the earlier times and all throughout the history of Panchayat system, today the same factors continue to inhibit women participation in politics and social life, especially in rural areas. Gender as phenomena never appears in its pure form, it is always veiled, in fact, the patriarchal system is cover up behind cast, class and religious factors. The government and the public institutions may improve the support by creating strategic support to incentive, empower and defend the women participation in public administration in an equal democratic process in order to develop the home condition and indeed the whole society.

Key Words: Panchayat Raj Institution, Women Empowerment, Status of women Panchayat, Gangath Village in Himachal.

INTRODUCTION:

The status of women in Panchayat Raj in Gangath village (Indore) as a topic of this research show how the women are involved in the local administration. The research emphasizes some relevant points like, women in decision making in the local administrations, the influence of the women quota in the administration, the reality of women empowerment in the Panchayat administration and the effects of women literacy in Panchayat administrations. Finally, the research shows in which stand there is involvement of the women in the Panchayat administration of Gangath village, Indore Tehsil under Kangra District of Himachal Pradesh, or if on the contrary women are just a puppet of the patriarchal society.

Ganagath has 4 194 habitats with a ratio of 2,160 males and 2,034 female in accordance with 2018 statistics. There are 875 houses. Out of 33% no working people, 21% are female. The 27% of the population perform agricultural activities, and 56% perform marginal works. There are 213 scheduled caste families, and the level of literacy is of 87% with 10% of the difference between male over female.

The Panchayat Raj is the oldest system of local government in India. Traditionally Panchayat consisted of wise and respected elder person who was chosen and accepted by the local community and works like local assembly in the village. The leader of the Panchayati also known as Mukhiya and Sarpanch. In ancient India, around 400 B.C. Manu Smriti, Arthashastra of Kautilya and Mahabharata referred Panchayati institution as local self-government at the village level with judicial and administrative functions.

The medieval period, during the Sultanate rule, there was Panchayati Raj System, at the village level, that looked after the education, sanitation and also acted as a judicial body to settle disputes. During the rule of

Delhi Sultanate, There was a centralized power, and there were provinces, divided into districts; there were further divisions into smaller units. The village was the lowest body of administration, which was self-sufficient in the form of Panchayati. With the decline of the Mughal rule and the advent of the British rule in India, the village administrative system started to decline.

During the British rule in India, things changed, specifically in 1687 the Municipal Corporation came to exist so that the model of a Town Council was used to collect taxes for the public purposes, in this way the administration of the East India Company caused the disintegration of these village Panchayat.

During this period Dr. R. K. Mookerji defined Panchayat as “Little republics having nearly everything they want whiting themselves and almost independent of foreign relations.” Mahatma Gandhi pleads Panchayati Raj as the basis of India’s political system given the name Swaraj with means village self-governance, and it was formalized in 1992. According to the Indian Constitution and the Panchayati Raj Act, amendment 1998, Sarpanch administrates Gangath village as head of the village. On 27 August 2009, the union cabinet of India approved 50% of reservation of women in Panchayati Raj Institutions.

The nature of this study is of Qualitative research in that it analyses the role of the women in Panchayat administration in Gangath village; The primary and secondary data are collected from sources from Gangath, Indore Tehsil, through some tools and techniques like structured interviews, questionnaires, formal and informal discussions and participant/non-participant observations, are used for this study.

Panchayat Institutions appear during the Vedic times and some forms of Assembly like Sabha allowed women to take part of the head direction. The local bodies close the gates to women with the increasing of the religious and cultural concepts under patriarchal model in the next centuries. During the Sultanate and Mughal rule over India a shadow covered the Panchayat institution and over the women leadership. The British rule suppress and re-established the Institution in alternation of political vision and convenience, but women leadership still continue in the shadow. It is in the post-Independence times that the need of the Panchayat as small self-sufficient republic gave the final fluorescence to the PRIs. The Balawant Rai Mehta Committee in 1957, draw the guidelines for the Panchayat Institution in putting an important land mark was established: “Women inclusion in Panchayat Raj Institution”. However it is until the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1993 that quota reservation is including in the final document of institution of the Panchayat Raj Institution. In the Himachal territory the Amendment was sanctioned under the “Himachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act”, of 1994 with a one third of quota reserved for women.

The concrete experiences of some women of Panchayat Raj of Gangath have also been varied and at times seem a trick in the clouds, in fact 2 out of three panchayat are under women administration. Nevertheless, women in PRIs still lack the capacity and capability to rise voice against the various issues. The opportunities relating to rising issues and participating in decision making process need to be strengthened by adequate training and capacity building. This may help these women representatives tide over the social and economic dis-advantage and face male domination and bureaucratic apathy, relating in a changing factor in favour of the women emancipation through Panchayat administration

STATUS OF WOMEN IN PANCHAYAT

Despite all the constitutional provisions, there is no satisfactory development in women’s status. Perhaps they are not active citizens, and now they are living in a very narrow traditional culture. For this reason, the political behavior of women, says a lot.

1. The reasons for the low participation of women

Internally what affects the process of women's participation is the lack of awareness, lack of experience, lack of knowledge, lack of skills, lack of leadership, low level of education, lack of exposure and lack of confidence. It is evident that women representatives often are unaware of their own functions, their duties and responsibilities. The lack of education or low level of education is the main obstacle to play an active role in the Panchayati Raj Institutions. The elected members are not enough prepared to understand the work and the

dimensions of Panchayati Raj Institutions. All this result in an ineffective leadership. Some external determinants affect the process of participation and empowerment of women. Like: family and its influence, the caste, the social outlook, the patriarchy etc.

The males in India still continue to perceive that they are the only one capable to hold the power. Whereas, Indian Society does not perceive women as capable or worthy of leadership. Men representatives do not help their colleagues' women to understand their role and so play an active part, in fact, men feel that women do not understand some process of development within panchayat. Perhaps they say, are complicated and so unaffordable for women. Another problem is the pressure of the daily house-hold activities, livestock care and farm work, is a matter of facts that rural women are not able to give enough time to panchayat activities.

2. Problems faced by Women Representatives in the Effective Participation of PRIs

There is generally no smooth functioning of any institution, and every institution faces some problems during its operation. Same is the case of individuals who function in that particular institution. After getting constitutional status, Indian Panchayati Raj System is in its primary stage of establishment, and there seem to be multiple problems within the system. The women representatives after reservation in PRIs are also facing many problems. The views of the respondents regarding the various problems which women representatives generally face while participating in the functioning of PRIs.

The opinion of the respondents shows this main problem which women representatives generally face while participating effectively in the functioning of PRIs include lack of knowledge about the rules and procedures of PRIs, lack of time due to earning livelihood, lack of time due to family responsibilities and caring of children, and lack of funds in order to undertake developmental activities.

The other problem which the women representatives of PRIs face, in the opinion of the respondents, are non-cooperative attitudes of husband/family members as well as that of the village community, government officials/bureaucrats, and male members of PRIs shows that in the opinion of the respondents, the main problems which women representatives generally face while participating effectively in the functioning of PRIs include lack of knowledge about the rules and procedures of PRIs, lack of time due to earning livelihood, lack of time due to family responsibilities and caring of children, and lack of funds in order to undertake developmental activities.

3. Limitations in Participation into Election Campaigning

During election, every contesting candidate uses various methods of campaigning to influence the voters. People can take part in campaigning through various types of campaign activities. Election campaign provides an opportunity for women to take part in the political process and their active participation in various campaign activities shows their political involvement.

It is evident that most of the respondents take part in the election campaigning, However as far as the type of campaigning activities are concerned, the majority of the respondents take part in door to door campaigning, whereas less respondents address public meetings, even more less is the presence of respondents in campaigning outside the village, Some respondents distribute pamphlets during their election campaigning, even some use others forms of publicity. The majority face the main problem of time to dedicate into such activities and combine it with the housing activities and family duties.

4. Influence of the Male Family members on the voting choice

Till today, it is observed that females in a family generally follow their husbands and male members in any kind of activities including casting of the votes. However, our study disapproves this patriarchal notion. They deny the influence of family members on their voting choice. There are respondents who accepted that their voting choice is influenced by the male family members like father, father-in-law, husbands, brothers, etc. However, the study shows that women members of PRIs of Gangath in Himachal Pradesh are conscious and aware about their voting rights and they exercise their franchise independently.

5. Political affiliation of the women's family

in the family structure, an individual take inspiration from his/her family members who have a high position in the society, who so ever in the family achieves the high position in the society; other members admire it and try to follow. Those family members have who are involved in politics may get inspired to take part in politics as compared to those women who do not have family background in Politics. In a family with political background, women may be encouraged to take part in politics, and they may get support from their families to enter in politics. A women's opinion may change according to the nature of the environment provided to her. As we know that individual are the products of an environment in which one lives, therefore those women whose family involved in politics will have positive attitude towards women's participation in politics. She can get suggestions from her relatives in taking decisions. She may get benefit for her family who are in the politics.

6. Party affiliation

People participation is the backbone of democracy. In a modern democratic system, the decision making process virtually begins and ends with the elected representatives. In others words, people representatives are responsible for decision-making and policy formulation, and they do this on the behalf of the people. Wide-spread citizen participation in politics is a basic assumption in any theory of democracy. The existence of political parties is an essential feature of democracy. The party system provides the channel between Government and the masses in a democratic setup realizing the importance of the system of democratic decentralization. In a democratic polity, people tend to have broad image of political parties. They usually see the party as generally espousing the cause of a particular set or group in society.

On the basis of such an image or impression, they tend to develop attachment with a party which according to their perception stands for their group interest. As a term party identification generally refers to a voter's sense of attachment or feeling of loyalty towards given political party. Closeness and involvement with political party is considered as one of the best way of serving the community people because without political power no development could be taken up the area. Political parties act as tools of modernization in the villages and act as great instrument for the politicization.

The person who is associated with any political party always more powerful position than the ordinary person. The political parties have begun to select leaders at the local level because there is a close relationship between local power structure at the State and National level. The Political Parties at National and State level want to get political strength from the grass root Institutions. Narain and others have indicated a positive correlation between Political Party affiliation and leadership in the rural local bodies. But Gandhi Ji and J.P. Narayan having their own concept of Panchayati Raj had no place for political parties. Though in Himachal Pradesh PRIs elections are not contested on party symbols but political parties have much influence in these institutions. All parties knows the importance of rural local institutions because these are the entry points in politics and easy to get power in the state and centre. Therefore, it is essential to know about the party's affiliation as the local leader.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH PANCHAYAT IN GANGHAT

Himachal Pradesh is one of the states providing fifty percent reservation for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions. It is the result that at present more than fifty percent women elected as member and Chairperson of these institutions. Though the socio-economic status of women of Himachal Pradesh is higher than neighboring States, but our State is also not an exception to the disappointing state in regard to women's participation in state and national politics. Participation of women in PRIs higher than men, equal number of voters but their representation in H.P State Legislature, Parliament and decision making bodies has been disappointing. Beside this, a very few women have occupied higher position in political parties. In this regard, the present chapter deals with the participation of women in Panchayati Raj and its impact on Himachal Pradesh legislature electoral politics.

FINDINGS

1. Under the 73rd constitutional amendment Act, 1992, arrangement were made for the reservation of at least 33% of the whole number of seats for women. It is an endeavor to guarantee more prominent interest of women in race process straightforwardly and in a roundabout way.
2. Women are effectively taking an interest in rustic advancement according to their ability ideal from workers to arrangement creators.
3. The cooperation of women are ascending because of booking for women in panchayat raj. It goes about as a force factor for women in Himachal Pradesh to take an interest and go to meeting. They give their proposals for different works and issues looked by them.
4. Women in Himachal Pradesh are growing about as a specialist of progress in the public and raising voice against shameful and outrages.
5. In Himachal Pradesh as a result of ladies delegates (out of 4, 3 are ladies) nexus officers and male chosen agents are breaking, which directly affects lessening debasement.
6. The role of local politicians in Himachal Pradesh has significantly decreased because of dynamic standardization and familiarity with women about their rights and power.
7. Domestic violence has considerably declined because of women Sarpanch. These ladies representatives star effectively take up such viciousness issues as a genuine issue. The exploited people do not hesitate to share their complaints to women agents.

CHALLENGES

1. Women are working as a puppet in hands of the men
2. Women are not independent, there is intervention of politics in the functioning of Panchayat.
3. Husband's dominance in the functioning of women
4. Lack of literacy among women in rural areas.
5. Patriarchal society does not support the idea a women to be leader
6. Illiteracy or low average of education amongst the women in country areas is an uncertain block.
7. There is no training sessions for the members of the panchayat particularly for female's representatives.
8. Supremacy of designated male memberships of the Panchayati

SUGGESTIONS FOR A MORE EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN PRI.

1. Political parties interfere in the election and functioning of Panchayat which creates hostile environment for the women contestants and women representatives. Government have to take serious actions to remove the political parties influence in the functioning of panchayat.
2. Lack of political awareness among the rural women. It is the duty of the state government and local administration to educate the women about the political issues and create awareness among them, so, women can take decisions by her own without interference on any one.
3. Special training and refresher courses for women representatives should be conducted from time-to-time. It gives them confidence and creates political awareness and power. with the special training sessions it can help the women to take responsibility directly in their hand
4. Government should make special provisions for the women representatives and give them more powers as compared to male members and educate them about their powers. It helps them to work efficiently and effectively. Efficiency and effectiveness plays a major role in the administration.
5. There should be a provision to give honor and financial rewards to the women members for their exemplary works. it gives satisfaction and honor to them which gives positive impact in the functioning
6. The rotation term of reserved seats should be made at least for 10 years, it would help women representatives to us familiar with Indian political system.

CONCLUSION

Through the implementation of reservation in panchayat after the 73rd constitutional amendment, women got a golden opportunity to rise their concern and opinion in Gram Sabha, not without a hard journey in the bureaucratic world of the post-independence. The concrete experiences of some women of Panchayat Raj of Gangath have also been varied and at times seem a trick in the clouds, in fact 2 out of three panchayat are under women administration. Nevertheless, women in PRIs still lack the capacity and capability to rise voice against the various issues. The opportunities relating to rising issues and participating in decision making process need to be strengthened by adequate training and capacity building. This may help these women representatives tide over the social and economic disadvantage and face male domination and bureaucratic apathy, relating in a changing factor in favour of the women emancipation through Panchayat administration.

It is a great opportunity for the women involve in PRIs, but from inside of the Panchayat the women can promote the women empowerment to more and more members of her own community and to the whole panorama of Women in Indian Politic Participation.

Being women involved in the panchayat as Sarpanch, the empowerment and the safety of women apparently can improve. The quality of life for other women will also improve through the head of the village administration, in fact she can focus and grab the proper programs to ensure the women rights. However all is related with the control of the power, and women cannot enjoy the full power in this cultural context due to the patriarchal vision of the society. As consequence it is difficult to adopt changes in this kind of communities. On the paper it is possible and the women can get more chances if the Sarpanch is women, but in the reality who has the power has the decisions.

It is needed that men learn to respect women capabilities, starting to listen their points of view and opinion in public gatherings and realize how effective and transparent the women administration is. The government and the public institutions may improve the support by creating strategic support to incentive, empower and defend the women participation in public administration in an equal democratic process in order to develop the home condition and indeed the whole society.

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