

THE ROLE OF THE PANCHAYAT RAJ SYSTEM IN WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT.

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Abstract:

Indian Panchayati Raj Institutions are considered instruments of good governance and have been instrumental in providing good governance due to the 73rd Constitutional Amendment enacted by the Central Government. This amendment was enacted with the intention of empowering the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, backward classes, and women by giving them political status. The present research article attempts to understand the nature of women's empowerment in the Panchayat Raj system. This study examines the empowerment of Panchayat Raj women members and the problems faced by them. The findings of the study revealed that neither the reservation for women nor their actual presence in the panchayat were more sensitive to the issues related to women in the village. The study found that these members are not always treated with respect, our suggestions are not taken seriously, and we are less considered when making decisions, sometimes pressured by the woman's husband or other family members.

Key words: Panchayat Raj, empowerment, reservation, elected representatives, women.

Introduction

Panchayat Raj is an administrative system in which Gram Panchayats are the basic units of administration. The term "Panchayat Raj" was coined by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in 1958. Raj literally means "rule." Mahatma Gandhi advocated Panchayati Raj, a decentralized form of government in which each village was responsible for its own affairs, as the foundation of India's political system. It is implemented in three phases. Gram Panchayat, Taluk Panchayat, and Zilla Panchayat, In the history of Panchayat Raj in India, on April 24, 1993, the Constitutional (73rd Amendment) Act 1992 came into force to provide constitutional status to Panchayat Raj institutions. The Act was extended from December 24, 1996, to the panchayats of eight states, namely Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, and Rajasthan. At present, the Panchayat Raj system exists in all states except Nagaland. The Government of India has increased the reservation for women at all levels of the Panchayat Raj system from 33 to a minimum of 50%. The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, passed a proposal to amend Article 243(d) of the Constitution on August 27.

Objectives :

The objectives of the present study are as follows:.

1. To know the participation of women in Panchayat Raj.
2. Studying the socioeconomic status of women.
3. Practicing women's empowerment.

Study Area:

For the field work, information was collected from women respondents of panchayats around Kundapur through a questionnaire. I have collected information from the taluk office and statistical department. I collected some information from various offices. The necessary information has been collected from these districts.

Kundapur is a town and municipal council city in Udupi district in the state of Karnataka. Kundapur city has 23 wards. With a population of 30,444 out of which males are 14,840 and females are 15,604, the literacy rate of Kundapur city is 90.52% higher than the state average of 75.36 %. . Male literacy in Kundapur is around 94.34%, while female literacy is 86.911%. It has a total of 99 Gram Panchayats.

Research Methodology:

In this study, 50 elected women members of panchayats around Kundapur were selected for the study. A purposeful sampling technique was adopted to select the sample.

Primary Sources:

Information was collected by personally interviewing the women selected from the purposive sample using the interview method with the help of primary sources. Information is collected with the help of observation.

Secondary Sources:

Information is also collected through secondary sources. It mainly collects information from research articles, subject encyclopedias, surveys, books, research summaries, newspapers, censuses, reports, magazines, etc.

Data Analysis:

For all the above research methods, the research information collected from various sources is compiled through lists, and the report is prepared by entering their percentages.

Status and Quality of Women's Participation in the Panchayat Raj System:

According to the mid-term assessment of Panchayat Raj 2006–07 by the Ministry of Panchayat Raj, "Women comprise 37 percent of the electorate in our Panchayat Raj institutions and are rising to 37 percent. In Bihar, which has 50 percent reservation for women, 54 percent. Increased political accountability for women can only come from increasing their number among decision-makers, yet it is necessary and important.

A commonly chosen criterion for evaluating women's participation in politics is their representation in terms of numbers or percentages. This is because the representation itself does not constitute evidence of participation. Thus, several indicators have been identified to determine the status and quality of women's participation in local politics(Sankara2014).

1. Participation in village meetings

Participation is taken as an important index to assess the empowerment of women members in panchayat raj institutions. According to the 73rd Amendment (Part IX), the Gram Sabha can exercise powers and perform functions at the village level as provided by laws enacted by its State Legislature. A large number of women are organizing and participating in village meetings.

A study conducted by the Ministry of Panchayat Raj in 2008–2009 showed that a remarkable 93 percent were men. Men reported performing their primary role of organizing and attending gram sabha meetings. In the male dominated system, the number of women was very small compared to the past; today, their number is significantly larger.

2. Encouraging community participation in village meetings:

Elected representatives are expected to create an environment that enables the local community, especially women, to participate in Gram Sabha meetings, raise questions, interact, and present their views. A study conducted by the Ministry of Panchayat Raj showed attendance at Gram Sabhas as an important indicator of women's quality. Participation of representatives. The study showed low participation of women citizens in Gram Sabha meetings, indicating a low level of mobilization by elected women representatives. The elected representatives themselves indicated that less than 25% of women participate in village meetings, or about 63%. This participation was particularly low in Orissa, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and Goa but high in Kerala, West Bengal, Karnataka, Assam, and Tripura. The latter category of states has a higher degree of political mobilization(Sankar2014).

3. Communication with Government Officials (Ministry of Panchayati Raj) According to statistics, women participate in:

Gram Sabha meetings; however, he hesitates when it comes to interacting with officials about the problems or development works there. Sometimes, gender inequality can be seen. According to the all-India statistics, more than half of the total principals have good relations with the local police. Among elected women representatives, about 32 percent reported having regular interactions with the police.

Findings:

Information regarding the empowerment of women members of Kundpur Gram Panchayat has been collected, and data analysis has been done. Family status is determined by income. A family's income is based on the assets they own. So the wealth a person earns and enjoys is an important factor in determining his financial status and fulfilling his desires. Income details are also important for research purposes here. Looking at the employment details of the elected women members, 28% of them are doing wage work, 56% are doing agriculture, and 16% are doing business.

Women Empowerment		
occupation	Frequency	percentage
Wages	14	28%
Agriculture	28	56%
Business	8	16%
Total	50	100%
Monthly Income	Frequency	Percentage
10,000-15,000	28	56%
15,000-25,000	16	32%
25,0000 +	6	12%
Total	50	100%
Your participation in the Panchayat	Frequency	Percentage
Participation in all meetings	43	86%
When making decisions	28	56%
Priority in allocation of facilities	41	82%
Women Empowerment	Frequency	Percentage
Greater awareness of politics	28	56%
Income earning	37	74%
Good status	32	64%

Regarding their income, 56% of members earn between Rs 10,000 and 15,000 per month, 32% earn between Rs 15,000 and Rs 25,000, and another 12% members earn between Rs 25,000 and Rs 25,000 per month. As informed by the elected members, the monthly income depends on wages, agriculture, and trade. He said that there is a possibility that it will decrease sometimes.

When asked how their participation in the panchayat is, 86% of the members answered that they participate in all meetings; 56% of the members said that they consider us while taking decisions; and

another 82% of the members said that they consider our suggestions while allocating facilities within the panchayat.

Regarding women's empowerment, 56% of respondents said that participation in panchayats led to greater political awareness; 74% of members reported increased income; and 64% of members reported increased status in society.

Gram Panchayats were empowered through decentralization from the Panchayat Raj system. Women today are being politically empowered through the Panchayat Raj system. For women, consulting with the people of society, responding to their problems, and dealing with people's representatives are all ways to complement their empowerment. Women are becoming stronger.

Conclusion:

The 73rd Constitution Amendment Act in India focused on the political structures and processes of rural India and the vulnerable population. First, the participation of women in panchayat-raj institutions was questioned in terms of substance and effectiveness of representation. Local committees did not adequately represent women. Women rarely head panchayats. Women members of panchayats should be educated and politically literate. The nature of Indian democracy has shaped women's and the underprivileged's suffrage, policies, and programs, whereby women's centers and other institutions act as catalysts to mobilize women and resolve political dilemmas. Women still face many challenges in the local governance system. There is a need to empower all women socially, economically, politically, and educationally in order to address these comprehensively.

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