



Political Inclusion and Schedule Tribe Women: A Case Study in Karnataka

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ABSTRACT

The 'Inclusion of the marginalized groups in local governance' has been a serious problem in our society. 'Inclusion' in this framework means the inclusion of the marginalized sections - Women, Dalit and tribal's in local governance. However, 'inclusion' cannot be understood, without having any reference to 'exclusion'. The Indian Constitution has been committed to introduce socio-economic and political transformation. The initiatives of empowering women and the marginalized sections are the reflection of its democratic spirit that can be noticed from a number of amendments in these fields. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act is an important landmark in the history of Indian women's participation in the formation of democratic institutions at grassroots level. The most significant aspect is that the gender representation in the decision-making has been taken into account. Hence, this paper examines the Schedule Tribe Women and their Political Inclusion through Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs), a case study in Karnataka.

Political participation of women is broader than their participation in the electoral and administrative process. It includes the whole gamut of voluntary activities with a bearing on the political process including support of political groups, dissemination of political views, involving in any form of organized activities that effect or seeks to effect power relationships. It refers to activities not only formally empowered to make decisions, but also intends to influence the attitudes and behavior or those who have powers for decision-making. The 'Inclusion of the marginalized groups in local governance' has been a serious problem in our society. 'Inclusion' in this framework means the inclusion of the marginalized sections - Women, Dalit and tribal's in local governance. However, 'inclusion' cannot be understood, without having any reference to 'exclusion'. Exclusion needs to be countered to promote inclusion. Since exclusion and inclusion are inter-related, new insights on inclusion through sincerely analysis requires on both: causes, consequences and means of exclusion as also the ways in which marginalized groups work towards their inclusion. Women, Dalit and tribal have suffered social and economic marginalization for a long time and therefore are considered for positive action. Particularly in the rural setting, the socio-economic hierarchies are inter-related. The Indian Constitution has been committed to introduce socio-economic and political transformation. The initiatives of empowering women and the marginalized sections are the reflection of its democratic spirit that can be noticed from a number of amendments in these fields. Especially, the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts provide for an opportunity for women's entry into political spheres especially Tribal Women. These Amendment Acts provide for a 33 percent reservation of seats for Tribal women in the governance of local bodies both rural and urban with target of good governance and fair representation in the development process at grassroots level. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act is an important landmark in the history of Indian

women's participation in the formation of democratic institutions at grassroots level. The most significant aspect is that the gender representation in the decision-making has been taken into account.

Despite the political inclusion of Scheduled Tribe women in Panchayats and the claims to equality in political participation, the political marginalization of Scheduled Tribe women continues. Political inclusion is a consequence of their exclusion at the macro & micro levels of social and economic domains. To make their presence in governance more effective institutional strategies should be complemented by political commitment to improve their access to development resources, training & extension, & a facilitating role by civil society associations (V.Vijayalakshi, 2001:88). In modern democratic system political participation has been regarded as relevant and determining factor. Democracy is an accepted form of government in most countries of the world today. Accordingly the constitutions of these countries have ensured political, economic and social equality. However, it is an important phenomenon to note that there is an element of difference in the level of equality conferred by different governments across the globe. It becomes evident that the prevailing socio-economic and political factors in these countries have a definite bearing on the privileges granted to the people. Political Participation in India seems to be considerably smaller in proportions in relation to political representation of women in western countries. In support of this observation, it can be noticed that the number of women representatives in Indian parliament since the first general election has never been in excess of 10% of total members at any point of time. This kind of political inequality between men and women is a global phenomenon. However, inequality in the Indian scenario is much larger than in most of the countries of the world. It was only after 1950s that attempts are being made to reduce the gap between men and women representation in Indian politics in general and local self-government in particular.

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 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.

Factors of Interest to enter into politics: 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.

Influence of Reservation Policy: Reservation of women in the panchayat raj is not only increasing the number of women members but also allow the women in rural and tribal areas to develop themselves and contribute to

the society. Participation in the development process brings about a variety of new opportunities and challenges for the elected representatives need to enhance their ability and confidence to handle the responsibilities. Here, studied whether respondents were elected under reservation policy or not.

The collected data illustrate the impact of reservation on women participation in politics. The common perception is that due to reservation, women representatives are able to participate in the affairs of panchayats with much more confidence and they also feel much more secured. Majority of (94%) (283) of respondents entered politics with reservation policy and only 6% (17) of respondents say that they have not taken any reservation. This data give clear scenario of fruitfulness of reservation policy. Here majority of women members' i.e 95% of them are in politics because of women reservation. Perhaps this is positive impact of reservation in favour of women in panchayat raj institutions.

Problems faced in Political participation: It would be appropriate to sum up that there are number of obstacles in the way of effective participation of women respondents of panchayat raj institutions. They may face all kind of obstacles in the field. For this purpose researcher has collected the information about the problems in active participation by the tribal women respondents in study area.

Table No 1: Problem faced by Tribal women in political participation

Sl. No.	Problems	Frequency	Percentage
1	All type, Economic, Social, Political, cultural	128	43
2	Troubles from upper caste people	45	15
3	Economical and other problems	94	31
4	Social problems	14	08
5	Problems from influenced groups	07	02
6	Non co-operation from male members	02	01
Total		300	100

Above table No 1 shows that, out of 300 interviewed respondents 43%(128) of the respondents have faced all type of problems like economic, social, political, cultural, 15%(45) of the respondents have faced the problems in participation because troubles from upper caste people, 31%(94) of the respondents have faced problem of economic and other problem, 08%(24) of the respondents have faced problem in participating in panchayats due to social problem, 02%(07) of the respondents have faced problem by the influenced groups, 01%(02) of the respondents have faced problem of non-cooperation from male members. The table reveals that they have faced all kind of problems like economic, social, political and cultural. Basically study area is most backward and tribal's area in the state; hence respondents in the study area face many problems regarding the participation. In this context, it requires more concentration by the state to develop this region and provide the new economic opportunities for their development is concern.

Dual role of Tribal Women: Mainly Tribal Women facing lot of problems due to performing dual role. Here collected information about dual role in discharging household work and panchayat work. While discharging duties as panchayat member have problem in both the side of work they have to maintain at household work and panchayats work. Different opinions collected by the respondents and discussed here. Out of 300 respondents, 49%(146) respondents were think that there is a problem in handling household work and panchayat work but in other side 51%(154) respondents were felt that there is no problem in maintaining the

household and panchayat work. The data reveals that the women respondents have equal response to this question.

Conclusion: In conclusion it may be remarked that 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. The study has shown that the process needs to be carried forward and not halted.

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