

POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN THROUGH PANCHAYATS (A STUDY ON COASTAL DISTRICTS OF ANDHRA PRADESH)

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ABSTRACT

About 24% of India's population lives in the coastal states (Andhra Pradesh (AP), West Bengal (WB), Tamil Nadu (TN) and Orissa). West Bengal is densely populated followed by Andhra Pradesh. And For the last few decades, the concept of empowerment has come to occupy a key place in almost all the countries, both developed and developing. Several issues relating to this concept have been engaging the serious attention of researchers of Social Science disciplines. Empowerment in any sphere plays an important role in molding the social, economic, and political life of people in all communities. As such, empowerment is a universal phenomenon. Unfortunately, women, who constitute about half of the total population, did not enjoy any political rights in the past in any society. In the Indian context, the political participation of women and ultimately their political empowerment have gained a lot of prominence after the enactment of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992. This landmark act made a historical beginning in the direction of political empowerment of women by providing them with 33.33 percent of reservations in the political offices in the grassroots level. This research paper will discuss political empowerment of women, in the Panchayat Raj Body's coastal district of Andhra Pradesh.

KEYWORDS: Amendments, Developing, Historical, Political Knowledge, Reservation

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Gender disparities also play a major role in the development of diseases. Women are still socially, politically, culturally and economically lagging. The study examines the influence of socio-economic activities on the coastal environment and local contributions and another angle Empowerment means to give power or authority to someone. So empowering someone means giving power or authority to fulfill some authority. Political empowerment of women in this perspective needs further analysis. i.e if we empower someone with a power; it indirectly indicates the person does not have it previously. This concept needs further attention in Indian context.

As per the 2011 census, the population of India is 121.02 crores, In which 58.15(48.5%) crores are females and the remaining 62.37crores (51.5%) are males. Females have a share of 48.1% in the urban population 48.6% in the rural population. As per the 2011 census Andhra Pradesh has a population of 8.46 crores of which 4.25 crores (50.24%) are male and 4.22 crores (49.76%) are female. As per the 2011 census literacy rate of India is 74.04% of which male literacy comprises of 82.14% and female literacy comprises of 65.46%, .As per the 2011 census literacy rate of Andhra Pradesh

is 67.66% of which male literacy comprises of 75.56% and female literacy comprises of 59.74%. These statistics clearly indicates that gender disparities exist in India and also Andhra Pradesh. Women lag in the ratio of population and also in the rate of literacy for which causes can be traced from history itself. The 16th Loksabha has 62 women Parliamentarians which is just 14.45 of the total 545 members. The Rajya Sabha (a permanent institution) has 26 women members which comprises 10.6% of the total members. The legislative Assembly of Andhra Pradesh 20 women members (11.43%) of total 175 members and legislative council have 5 women members (0.86%) of total 58 members. These details bring out those there gender disparities in political participation, heavily skewed towards men . At this outret , There is a need to increase women ‘s participation in politics In India in general and also in Andhra Pradesh in particular.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The political empowerment is to be beginning with bottom sections of the society. Hence, the aim of the present study is to assess the process of political empowerment of women among the coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh. East and West Godavari Districts were identifying the researcher for field study as the area represents more number of women in the three-tier system of panchayatraj. The objective of the study covers the following aspects.

- To explain the nature and process of empowerment of women among Coastal Districts of Andhra Pradesh.
- To examine the factors that contributes to the participants in the selective study area.
- To suggest measures to be taken to empowerment women’s participation in politics.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

O.P.Bohraⁱ states that, 73rd Amendment Act, mainly aimed at decentralizing the power and also removing the gender imbalances and bias in the institutions of local self government .He justifies the rationale to provide reservations for women in panchatraj institutions.

Devaki Jainⁱⁱ in her analysis of the 73rd constitutional amendment writes that the main intention of the policy makers behind this reservation is two-fold one is the democratic justice and second is resource utilization (human). She further states that as the half of the population are women. The country development cannot achieve without the proper participation of woman.

Biduyt Mohantyⁱⁱⁱ; in her article states that empowerment has been defined here as the change of self-perception through knowledge. She clarifies that by providing reservation, our policy makers intention was not only to improve only the number of elected leaders but also to improve their economic independence, access to resources as well as to education so by examining their socio-economic situation we can derive the conclusion whether woman are really ‘empowered’.

P. Manikymba^{iv} states that the makers of Panchayati Raj system desired rural woman should not only become a beneficiary of development, but more importantly contributors to it. Analyzing the Balawantrai Mehta Committee she states that Mehta Committee considered the condition of the rural woman at length and felt that they should be assisted to find ways to increase their incomes and improve the condition of their children.

Usha Naryan^v confirms that the main position of 73rd constitutional amendment involves the participation of women as voter, women as members of political parties, women as candidates, women elected members of PRI’s taking

part in decision making, planning implementation and evaluation. She stressed that reservation provisions are providing be a guarantee for their empowerment.

^{vi}After Independence of India Panchayat Raj was first introduced in Assam in 1948 through a legislative Act entitled 'The Assam Rural Panchayat Act 1948'. But until the 73rd amendment to the constitution of India in 1992 Panchayati Raj did not function regularly in Assam and also in the other states of North east India .The 73rd Constitution amendment act has made an effort to give some special power to women in all the three tiers of Panchayati Raj .Women are empowered through women emancipation movement ,education ,communication ,media , political parties and general awakening .The Panchayati Raj effort of empowerment is one of the several efforts made simultaneously in the society. But, prevalence of patriarchal value, illiteracy, ignorance, non availability of women, corrupt leadership and bureaucracy, bias towards elite and middle class are some of the factors that create an obstacle in the way towards the empowerment of women through the Panchayati Raj system.

^{vii}In modern era of the participation and administrative state many writers have voiced their concern over the problem of responsiveness of the administrative state to the norms of democratic procedures. To safeguard individual rights and liberties against bureaucratic or arbitrary abuse an increase in women's vigilance and participation in politics is necessary. Modern state should show "concern for individual people in the criteria used in making decisions; as an effort to assign each women's need equal weight in policy deliberations and as an effort to make as broad as feasible the opportunities for women to participate in the decisions that affect them." The term 'political participation' refers to those voluntary activities by which members share in the selection of rulers and, directly or indirectly, in the formation of public policy. These activities are like casting vote, seeking information, holding discussions, attending meetings, making financial contributions to political parties, staging strikes and demonstrations, communicating with the legislators and other leading figures and the like. It follows that political participation "is the involvement of the individual at various level in the political system. Political activity may range from non-involvement to office-holding. It is also important to stress that participation "may result in the motivation for increased participation, including the highest level – that of holding various types of offices - which involves the process of political recruitment. The idea of political justice and equality is explained in article 1 of the Universal Declaration of 1948 in these words, "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in spirit of brotherhood".

DATA COLLECTION AND METHODS

The present study is based on historical, analytical, empirical and sample survey methods. The data will be collected from the available literature on Panchayat Raj institution, women's political participation, in the form of books and professional journals. Some of the data has also been collected from the relevant acts of the State Legislature and records of the institutions of the study area. As the study is an empirical study. The women members of the sample will be requested to give panchayatraj institutions information on.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- Majority 84.54% (268) of the women leaders says that the women have 33 percent reservation of seats in the political bodies, 13.88% of women leaders said that the women should be 50 percent and the rest of the women leaders said that the women should have no need of reservation of seats in the political bodies.

- Nearly half of the women leaders (46.37%) are cultivation, 42.59 percent of the women leaders are labourers, 7.89 percent of the women leaders are housewives and the rest of the few women leaders are business..
- Majority of the women leaders (50.79%) are serve the public, 42.59 percent of the women leaders rational behind entering into politics of their political interest and the rest of the 6.62 percent of the women leaders rational behind entering into politics of their heredity.
- Majority 58.99% of the women leaders elected from Congress party and the rest of the 41.01 percent of the women leaders elected from the Telugu Desam Party.
- Majority 59.94% of the women leaders expended below Rs. 25 000, 30.91 percent of the women leaders expended Rs. 25001 to 50000 and very few women leaders expended above Rs. 50000 in their elected from Congress party and the rest of the 41.01 percent of the women leaders elected from the Telugu Desam Party.
- Majority 74.76% of the women leaders are favourable opinion towards their participation in mandal / district politics and the rest of the women leaders have no favourable opinion towards their participation in mandal / district politics.
- Majority (89.59%) of the women leaders are positive response towards their leadership and the rest of the 10.41 percent of the women leaders are negative response towards their leadership in the politics.
- Majority 84.86% of the women leaders are said need of hour towards direct and indirects in Panchayat Raj Elections and the rest of the 15.14 percent of the women leaders said not necessary direct and indirect elections in Panchayat Raj elections.

CONCLUSIONS

- Personal information regarding caste, age, education, marital status. Awareness of women, process of empowerment, participation at the local administrative institutions, awareness of Panchayat Raj Institutions
- Special attention is given to study the background of the women representatives in various aspects and the factors that influence their journey towards political empowerment. The study revealed that there developed a general trend among the women to improve their economic conditions, leading a life of more meaningful and useful to the community and society of exercising their rights that are guaranteed by the constitution of our country. Several schemes like DWCRA, TRYSM, DRDA and others that are implemented by the Government helped the women for a collective action towards better standards of living.
- As a first step in the process of political empowerment, women were able to exercise their duties as heads of local political bodies. Some of the successful women representatives brought tremendous changes in their villages. In other words, the villages Panchayats under the leadership of women were reconstructed through various developmental activities. Good roads were laid, bores were dug, schools have been started and temples have been renovated. As a result of the preventive measures adopted by the heads of the Panchayats the villages were able to minimize some of the communicable diseases. The honest nature of women Sarpanches minimized corruption and litigation. Aiming at the all round development of the Villages Community Development Programmes and National Extension Service Schemes have been widely propagated and implemented.

- The Panchayat set is based on democratic procedure and therefore the decision making process is also based on democratic process at the Panchayat level also. Yet due to lack of education, lack of insight into the local problems, shyness being women result in the low degree of women's participation at the local political bodies. Therefore, the hypothesis that higher the level of education and awareness of the problems the greater the level of participation comes true in the case of women representatives of the area under study.

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