



RESEARCH ARTICLE

PARTICIPATION OF TRIBAL WOMEN IN THE GOVERNANCE OF PANCHAYAT RAJ INSTITUTIONS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO TODA TRIBALS, TAMIL NADU, INDIA

^{1,*}Gowri Lakshmi. G.M. and ²Dr. Esther Buvana. C.

¹Research Scholar Post Graduate and Research Department of Public Administration, Government Arts College, (Autonomous) Coimbatore-641018

²Assistant Professor and Head, Post Graduate and Research Department of Public Administration, Government Arts College, (Autonomous) Coimbatore-641018

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 29th September, 2017
Received in revised form
17th October, 2017
Accepted 26th November, 2017
Published online 30th December, 2017

Keywords:

Empowerment,
Leadership, Panchayat Raj
Institutions (PRIs),
Reservation policy,
Tribal Women.

ABSTRACT

The term 'political participation' has a very broad meaning. It is not only related to 'Right to Vote', but simultaneously it is related to participation in leadership, decision making process, political activism, political consciousness, etc. Women in India participate in voting, run the public offices and political parties at lower levels more than men. 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 consideration. But most of the tribal women participate in the electoral process as voter. There are less aware about the Panchayati Raj Act of 73rd Amendment in the Constitution of India. They know that every village have a Panchayat which works for the development for the village but they do not know the various power, works etc. of the Panchayats. They have a very little knowledge about the reservation of seats for women in Gram Panchayats. Hence, through this paper the researcher would like to bring out the awareness level of the Toda tribal women regarding their political rights and bring out some suggestions which will increase their level of awareness.

INTRODUCTION

Tribal women have suffered social and economic marginalization for a long time. 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 character 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. 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 (Rashmi Arun, 1996).

**Corresponding author: Gowri Lakshmi, G.M.,*
Research Scholar Post Graduate and Research Department of Public Administration, Government Arts College, (Autonomous) Coimbatore-641018.

According to the 2011 census the total population of the Nilgiri District was 735,394 lakhs. Out of which the total primitive tribal group population is 20,373 constituting 4.32% of the general population. (Census of India 2011). The Toda of the Nilgiris is one of the best known and most studied community in India. They are the scheduled tribe living in the Nilgiri district of Tamil Nadu. In addition to Todas other tribal communities are found in the district. They are Kots, Kurumba, Irulas, Paniyas and Kattunayakans. Hence, through this paper the researcher would like to bring out the awareness level of the Toda tribal women regarding their political rights and bring out some suggestions which will increase their level of awareness.

Constitutional Safe Guards for the Scheduled Tribes in India

The important features of the constitution are the provision for scheduling of tribes or tribal communities, parts of groups within tribes or tribal communities. The scheduling of tribes has the following advantages

Political

- Administration and control of the scheduled Areas and scheduled Tribes an any state (Article 244 & 339)

- Reservation of seats for SC’s and ST’s in the house of the people and the legislative assemblies in the states (Article 330 &332)
- Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat (Article 243 D(3)),
- Not less than one- third of the total number of offices of Chairpersons in the Panchayats at each level to be reserved for women (Article 243 D (4)),
- Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Municipality to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Municipality (Article 243 T (3)),
- Reservation of offices of Chairpersons in Municipalities for the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and women in such manner as the legislature of a State may by law provide (Article 243 T (4)).

Protective

Special legislation for protecting economic interests

- To promote justice, on a basis of equal opportunity and to provide free legal aid by suitable legislation or scheme or in any other way to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities (Article 39 A),
- The State to promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and to protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation (Article 46),

Development

Implementation of special programmes for educational and socio- economic development.

- The State to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people (Article 47),

Social

- Equality before law for women (Article 14)
- The State not to discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them (Article 15 (i))
- The State to make any special provision in favor of women and children (Article 15 (3))
- Equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State (Article 16)
- The State to direct its policy towards securing for men and women equally the right to an adequate means of livelihood (Article 39(a)); and equal pay for equal work for both men and women (Article 39(d))
- The State to make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief (Article 42),

- To promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India and to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women (Article 51(A) (e))

The Constitution of India not only grants equality to women but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favors of women for neutralizing the cumulative socio economic, education and political disadvantages faced by them. Fundamental Rights, among others, ensure equality before the law and equal protection of law; prohibits discrimination against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth, and guarantee equality of opportunity to all citizens in matters.

Objectives of the Study

This paper examines the Participation of Tribal Women in the governance of Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs). In the present study emphasis to understand these phenomena, the researcher has formulated the following objectives:

- To study the socio-economic background of the respondents,
- To know the awareness and constitutional knowledge of women in PRI’s.
- To Bring out the awareness level of the Tribal Women regarding their Political Rights.
- To bring out some suggestions to increase their level of awareness.

Research Methodology

For the present study, both primary and secondary data was used. An interview schedule was framed to collect the primary data. 10 Toda villages are chosen as an study area in four thaluks in The Nilgiri District. Out of 13 Villages, 100 respondents were selected. Here, random sampling method has been adopted for the selection of sample respondents. To understand the socio-economic background of respondents the researcher should analyse the age, education, caste, family type, family size and family income, of the respondents.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1. Age wise classification of Respondent

S.NO	AGE	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Young Age(18-31)	20	20%
2	Middle Age(32-50)	73	73%
3	Aged(Above50)	7	7%
TOTAL		100	100%

(Sources: Computed from primary data)

The Table 1 presents the age wise classification of the respondents. A perusal of the table reveals that out of total sample of 100 female respondents (20 per cent) belonged to 18- 31 years of age group, (73 per cent) belonged to 32-50 years of age group and (7 per cent) respondents were from the age group of above 50 years. The table 2 depicts that majority of our respondents 68 per cent were SSLC passed. 27 per cent were studied up to Higher secondary level. Followed by graduate level 1per cent respondents were graduate and only 04 per cent women were illiterate. Education level was very

low in this area. Education is essential to bring awareness in the respondents in context to PRI's.

Table 2. Educational Qualification of the Respondents

S.NO	Educational Qualification	Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Illiterate	4	4%
2	SSLC	68	68%
3	HSC	27	27%
4	Graduate	1	1%
5	Post Graduate	0	0%
	TOTAL	100	100%

(Sources: Computed from primary data)

Table-3 Awareness level of the Respondents about the Panchayati Raj

S.NO	Awareness	Respondents saying 'yes'	Percentage (%)
1	Knowledge of Panchayati Raj Act 73rd Amendment	29	29%
2	Sources of Income of Panchayats	25	25%
3	Power & Works of Panchayats	25	25%
4	Seats reserved for women in PRI's, Assemblies & Parliament	21	21%
5	TOTAL	100	100%

(Sources: Computed from primary data)

Table 3 shows that respondents have very less awareness about the Panchayati Raj Institution. They have very little knowledge about the Panchayati Raj Act 73rd Amendment, power and works of the Gram Panchayats, sources of income of Gram Panchayats and reservation of seats PRI's, assemblies and parliament. So we found less awareness of the respondents about various issues of PRI's and constitutional bodies.

Table 4. Mode of Electoral Participation of Women in Panchayat Election

S.NO	Participation	Respondents saying 'yes'	Percentage (%)
1	As a Voter	85	60%
2	Supporter of Political Parties	10	30%
3	As a campaigner	05	10%
4	As a candidate	00	00%
5	TOTAL	100	100%

(Sources: Computed from primary data)

Table 4 shows that majority of respondents participate in the election as voter 10 per cent respondents participated to support any political party. Only 5 per cent respondents participated as a campaigner in the Panchayats election. When the questions were asked from the respondents about their own choice, interestingly, most of their response show that they casted their vote which was decided by their husband. Rather they only know the symbol of the political party which was tell by their husband.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

The present study entitled "Participation of Women in the Governance of Panchayati Raj Institutions with special reference to Toda Tribals in Tamil Nadu" is a study conducted to know the awareness and constitutional knowledge of women in PRI's.

The study has been conducted on 100 women respondents. When the researcher analyze all the data collected from the respondents and found that majority of respondents participate as voter in the elections.

- From this study researcher found that respondents have very less awareness about the Panchayati Raj Act 73rd Amendment. They know that every village have a Panchayat which works for the development for the village but they do not know the various powers and the functions of the Panchayat.
- They have a very little knowledge about the reservation of seats for women. The study shows that participation of women in the affairs of Panchayat Elections is not up to mark. They have less awareness about the Panchayati Raj Act 73rd Amendment and the working of gram Panchayat. Even the respondents have very less knowledge about the reservation of seats for women in Panchayats, Assemblies and Parliament. Our respondents also don't know about the various sources of the gram Panchayats. From the above analysis, it is clear that the illiteracy, poverty, traditional family values and pattern of society, male dominance societies etc. are responsible for their less participation in Panchayati Raj Institutions. This survey we found that most of the respondents cast their vote to that candidate whom their husband chooses. Even they do not have that right to cast their vote for their own choice.

Suggestions

- Education is necessary to bring awareness in the respondents in context to PRI's. .
- Encouragement by the families in the form of appreciation of their official work, their decisions and ensuring their presence in the meetings would help encourage active participation in decision making.
- Similarly government officials need to be more patient towards them and help them in their work and enabling them to understand their work.
- Encouraging tribal women to attend Grama Shaba meetings.
- Adult Education must be started in Toda Villages.

REFERENCES

- Shukla, 2000. Forestry for Tribal Development, Wheeler Publishing, New Delhi
- Subha K. and Bhargava B.S. 2007. Feminism and Political Empowerment of Women: The Karnataka Experience, as in M.R. Birju (Ed.), Decentralisation: An Indian Experience, National Publishing House, Jaipur.
- Thakur Minni, 2010. Women Empowerment through Panchayati Raj, New Delhi: Concept Publishing House, 78-79
- Gochhayat Artarrana, 2013. Political Participation of Women in Gram Panchayat Elections in Odisha, International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention, 2(2), 38-46
- Census of India 2011