

The Role and condition of women in Panchyati Raj in Rajasthan

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Abstract

The present study investigated the social back ground of women in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), awareness about the structure and functions of PRIs, and the social – cultural constraints faced by women. For the study, six districts of Jodhpur division of Rajasthan were covered namely Barmer, Jalore, Jaisalmer, Jodhpur, Pali and Sirohi. Rural Population in the area ranged between 65% to 92.70% and the study included 1575 sarpanchs 40 pradhans and 5 zila Pramukhs. In all 234 women sarpanchs, 14 women Pradhans, 2 zila Pramukhs were selected as woman respondents. The average age of women respondents was between 43-47 yrs. 30% respondents were literate and 46% were literate and 32% woman respondents were from upper castes. The social – economic background of woman respondents has significant bearing on their functioning as village sarpanchs. The awareness level of structure and composition of Panchayat samiti was satisfactory among both men and women respondents. But only 50% know about the provision of reservation of seats for special categories. The study revealed that activities of male respondents extended to almost all areas like village development, budget, education etc. But women respondent were still confined to the roles assigned to them through RIs 85% women respondents felt local leaders should chalk out their development programmes as per local needs. In terms of freedom expression 33% women respondents considered themselves equal to men But 55% male respondents considered women to be inferior to them. Still 53% male respondents favoured reservation for women in PRIs. They were confident that their Participation would contribute to women's development, panchayati raj represents Political Power at grass roots level. In the light of findings it was suggested that PRIs should be empowered. Gram sabhas strengthen by women's participation. Men and women should be educated for better understanding of problems and their resolution free and frank participation of women should be encouraged, and PRI workshops, awareness camps should be organized.

Keywords : PRIs, discrimination, equality, patriarchal society, paraya dhan

Introduction

The Present Paper is a study to investigate the social back ground of women in Panchayati raj institutions, awareness about the structure and function of PRIs and the social-cultural constraints faced by women. As we know Panchayati raj is a system of governance in which gram - Panchayats are the basic units of administration. It has three levels:- village, block and district, it was adopted by state governments during the 1950s and 60s laws were passed to establish Panchyats in various states.

Women In Independent India

Women in India now participate in all activities such as education, sports, politics, media, art and culture, service sectors, science and technology etc. The constitution of India guarantees to all India women equality (Article 14) no discrimination by the state (Article 16 (1)), equality of opportunity (Article 16), equal pay to equal work (Article 39 (d)). In 2010 March 9, One day after international women's day, Rajyasabha passed women's reservation bill ensuring 33% reservation to women in parliament and legislative bodies.

The real position of women in society is reflected by their low Participation rate in the wide range of political space from the legislative Assembly of the state to the Panchayats. The Provision of 33 percent reservation for women in Panchayati raj institutions and urban bodies has given an important chance to the women to play a decisive role in the development. This step of the government has played a remarkable role in making a radical departure from the prevailing thinking.

Women's Condition in Panchyati raj in Rajasthan

For the study we have choosed six districts of jodhpur, division of rajasthan were covered like Barmer, Jalore, Jaisalmer , Jodhpur, Pali and Sirohi, rural population in the area ranged between 65% - 92.70% and the study included 1575 sarpanchs 40 pradhans and 5 Zila pramukh. In all 234 women sarpanchs, 14 women Pardhans, 2 Zila Pramuks were selected as women respondents. The average age of women respondents was between 43-47 yrs. 30% women respondents were literates and 46% men respondents were literate and 32% women respondents were from upper castes, the social – economic background of women respondents has significant bearing on their functioning as village sarpanchs. The awareness level of structure and compositions of panchayat samiti was satisfactory among both men and women respondents. But only 50% know about the Provision of reservation of seats for special categories.

Though the constitution of India guarantees equality of all citizens before the law still women carry the burden of centuries of subordination thereby making it difficult for them to realize the constitutional rights recognizing the real status of women the constitution also provides for positive discrimination in favor of women. The government of Rajasthan reaffirms its commitment to work for the realization of constitutional guarantee of equality, social justice and non-discrimination on the basis of sex, caste, community, language and religion.

In the global development scenario, Rajasthan has almost become synonymous with low status of women, patriarchal society, feudal customs and values social polarization along caste lines, high illiteracy and extreme poverty. To some extent this picture of Rajasthan may be the contribution of mass media and films. Yet the bitter truth is that girls and women are considered an unwanted burden in Rajasthan society. This is evident from the adverse sex ratio (910) in the state. A wide range of social factor contribute to the this situation and this sex ratio is an outcome of the prevailing social – economic condition of women and their position in society. Women and girls of Rajasthan are known to carry a greater burden of illiteracy, poor health, oppression, social discrimination, poverty and powerlessness as compared to their sisters in many other parts of the country, Persistence of the tradition of child marriage and looking at a girl child as “Paraya dhan” have robbed many girl children of their childhood and plunged them into domestic responsibilities at a tender age. In the absence of new social norms, laws and enforcement systems, women of Rajasthan are passing through a critical transitional period.

Despite poor status and hard living conditions, women of this state are known for their courage, strength and firm determinations. Surviving in such a harsh environment where simple necessities of life like water and firewood involve many hours of hard work is a major achievement in itself. Women of Rajasthan are known the world over for their artistic sense, song dance and traditional crafts. They are also well known for their capacity to work hard in difficult work environments on constructions sites and roads.

Rajasthan is the first state to have launched in 1984 in 6 districts, the women development programme for the development of women. Many department have different plans aiming at ameliorating the condition of women directly and indirectly due to limited Resources women development programme has its limits, Yet it cannot be denied that this programmes played an important role in making them aware of their respective fields, modifying their approach to social justice imparting them the benefits of development work and giving them a sense of leadership. In this respect the state government has taken two more important decisions under which the Rajasthan state women commission has been constituted and 30% reservation for women has been provided in government services.

Many experts are of the opinion that the existence of progressive policies and legal provision are helpful in safeguarding citizen's rights. The constitution of India also makes positive discrimination in favour of women. The state government recognizes that every step towards promoting gender justice contributes in some way to women's struggle for equality.

State Government's Policy for Women

It helped that policy will also signal a major departure from conventional policy documents, the aim of this policy is to bring improvement in the status and position of women to make the process in order to realize the objectives the following steps are outlined

Promote and support effective participation of women in political processes and gain their access to decision making government.

Create a conducive environment and appropriate mechanism for gender sensitization of Government functionaries at all level and in all departments and initiate systems for sensitization of political leaders, opinion makers. Recognize the productive role of women in economy society and the state. The government will strive towards ensuring equal access to and control over resources and the fruits of development.

Initiate policies and programmes that promote gender equality and social justice and enable women to realize their constitutional rights.

Conclusion

The greatest challenge before the government is to bridge the gap between policy programmed and ground reality. We have one of the most progressive constitution in the world. We have laws and legislation's based on gender justice, an important challenge is to women influential role in polices, panchayati raj institution and local bodies, in this regard there is growing evidence that strong and articulate women are often made victims of no confidence motion despite the odds, it is indeed gratifying to not that women are coming out of patriarchal structure and claiming a place in politics. It is suggested that panchayati raj institution should be empowered men and women should be educated for better under – standing of problems and their resolution, free and frank participation of women should be encouraged and PRis workshops, awareness camps should be organized by the government.

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