

## **Political Empowerment of Dalit Women through Panchayat Raj in India: Situation Analysis**

\*Krishnaveni .D,

*Research scholar, Dept. of political sciences, School of social sciences, Osmania University*  
*Corresponding Author: Krishnaveni .D,*

---

**ABSTRACT:** *The present paper deals with political empowerment of dalit women through panchayat raj institution. The participation of dalit women in panchayat raj in different states and the problems encountered by them are discussed. The article concludes that education of women is road to empowerment and with education comes the awareness, courage and then the dalit women can have true representation of self.*

---

Date of Submission: 19-09-2017

Date of acceptance: 10-10-2017

---

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

In India and other countries in South Asia, people have been systematically discriminated against on the basis of their work and descent for centuries. Over 200 million people are Dalits, also known as untouchables or outcasts. They experience violence, discrimination, and social exclusion on a daily basis. Economic growth in India has been strong over the past decade. However, the caste disparities are increasing. Direct political participation of Dalit women in local governance (Panchayati Raj) is a central human right in itself and enables the realization of a host of other human rights. Political voice and decision-making power concerning basic services, economic development and social justice are critical factors in challenging and transforming structural caste-class-gender discrimination, and enabling Dalit women to realize their fundamental rights. Political participation also demands accountability from state and non-state actors to guarantee and respect these women's equal political voice and development. This requires a transformation of power relationships both within institutions of governance and in the women's social environment.

Recent legal and policy reforms in India to ensure the representation of marginalized social groups in decentralized governance, including Dalits and specifically Dalit women, through constitutionally mandated reservations (affirmative action quotas) in Panchayati Raj institutions bring these issues to the fore. They demand analysis to determine how Dalit women are enabled to claim their right to political participation in local governance, and the extent to which this participation is an effective tool for empowerment and realization of human rights for excluded social groups.

#### **Situation of Dalit women Presidents in Various States:**

The social exclusion is the process through which the individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from the participation in the society with in which they live. It is far more difficult to overcome the social exclusion on the basis of caste. The Dalit communities are restricted (excluded) to participation in local government and exercise of political power Thorat states the social condition of those in disadvantage groups, facing acute deprivations, but there is no suggestion that affirmative action alone will be able to remove entirely or eliminate the discrimination and deprivation that have been part of the Dalit and exclusion of the marginalized communities.

Maharashtra:

The positive and negative nature of the PRIs in Maharashtra is recorded by the B.S. Baviskar. They executed their study by intensive participatory observation in three gram Panchayats.

All these Panchayats are dominated by the Maratha community. Mandurane Gram Panchayats is functioning smoothly, the effective leadership of the Chhagonpatil and the effective gram sevak. Off course, the objective of including the caste and patriarchy continue to rule in the village (B.S. Baviskar, 2008).

Baviskar, B.S. 2008. Including the Excluded, Empowering the Powerless: Case Studies of Panchayati Raj in Maharashtra, in Panchayati Raj Institution and Rural Development, Bishnu C Barik and Umesh C. Sahoo, 3 9-57. Jaipur: Rawat Publication In Alwadi Panchayat Satabai a dalit women president has also succeeded in persuading the Panchayat to construct a cement concrete platform to arrange to get a community hall for her Mahar community. Ashok Bagual is a peon of the Panchayat office; he was over loaded by work because of his lower caste. He fights against the Maratha community with the support of Satabai (cf. B.S. Baviskar 2008, 25). He feels confident because the Panchayat president is a fellow Dalit. In the action of

Satabai and Bagul show the beginning of Dalit empowerment. The M.K. Lele observation on the comparative study between traditional village panchayat and the modern Gram Sabha in Maharashtra from the point of view of empowerment of the weaker sections, Lele opined that of course platform of statutory Gram Sabha is theoretically opened for the marginalized but in real sense it is not (2001). S.N. Chaudhary, (2004), in his work 'Dalit and Tribal Leadership in Panchayats' made an attempt to understand the nature and patterns of leadership among Dalits and Tribals in Madhya Pradesh. The study reveals that both Dalit and Tribal Panchayat leaders in Sehore and Betul Districts are in the age group of 25-44 years and are mostly illiterate engaged in agriculture activities. It is also found that most of them are wage workers and belonged to BPL group. The study concludes that lack of basic amenities is serious problem among these communities. Thus, the Dalit and Tribal leaders lack social capital to manage the Panchayat affairs meaningfully. Chaudhary feels that continuous training with regular interval should be conducted exclusively for Dalits and Tribal Panchayat representatives

Baviskar, B.S. 2008. Including the Excluded, Empowering the Powerless: Case Studies of Panchayati Raj in Maharashtra, in Panchayati Raj Institution and Rural Development, Bishnu C Barik and Umesh C. Sahoo, 39-57. Jaipur: Rawat Publication  
Chaudhary, S.N. 2004. Dalit and Tribal Leadership in Panchayats. New Delhi : Concept Publishing Company

Uttar Pradesh:

The role of panchayats and social capital in the empowerment of Dalits in two districts of Uttar Pradesh was studied by Sudha Pai (2001). The reservation facility increases the Dalit representation in panchayat in this district, but in real sense there is radical change in the village power structure in Meerut district and not in the Azamgarh district. In Azamgarh district, still there is a dominance of upper caste and upper backward people in the panchayat, the formal leadership is only in the hands of Dalits, but in case of Meerut district the Dalits have organized power to dominate the panchayat and even negotiate with the dominant caste people like Jats and Thakur. She states that the process of social capital formation is fast and relatively successful in Meerut district. In Azamgarh district the Dalits are economically weak and the even divisions among the Chamars are not collective to challenge the united domination of the Kurims and Yadavs in panchayats. The Dalits entered into the power and authority not only by the reservation, because some of them emerged from the unreserved seats also. The leadership emerging among SCs is new and development oriented and mobility oriented and large section of them belong to landless working class (cit. Chaudhary S.N, 2004) Schedule caste president in a gram panchayat in Kerala, she never ask any percentage or commission for panchayat works. In Karnataka, a frequently expressed justification for accepting commissions for panchayat works was that no income was derived from panchayats, and hence they had to earn a living through these means.

Pai Sudha, 'Social Capital, Panchayats and Grassroots Democracy: Politics of Dalit Assertion in Two Districts of Uttar Pradesh 24 february 2001

Chaudhary, S.N. 2004. Dalit and Tribal Leadership in Panchayats. New Delhi : Concept Publishing Company

Baviskar, B.S and George Mathew (2009) produced quite interesting insights of success and failure of the empowerment of women. These case studies across the country revealed that the constitutional guarantees in terms of reservation for women in Panchayat Raj Institutions have produced paradoxical results leading to structural implications.

The 73rd Amendment of the Constitution which provides 33 percentages of women in Panchayat Raj Institutions has produced uneven results. Empowerment of SC/ST and women has raised basic structural implications where traditionally dominant castes have resistance to accept new changes.

The presence of these marginalized groups in panchayat system was resisted by traditionally dominant caste groups. Despite these resistances the new leadership is emerging from among SCs, STs and women. The constitutionalization of PRI's will go a long way to create a political space and avenues for SCs, STs and women and it will have definite structural implications on Indian society. The marginalized groups which were excluded from political structure, with inclusive policy of reservation, have gained entry into the political structure, whether the dominant castes like it or not. These case studies have highlighted that mere political reservation will not help for the empowerment of marginalized groups in the absence of economic and social equality

Baviskar, B.S. 2008. Including the Excluded, Empowering the Powerless: Case Studies of Panchayati Raj in Maharashtra, in Panchayati Raj Institution and Rural Development, Bishnu C Barik and Umesh C. Sahoo, 39-57. Jaipur: Rawat Publication

Baviskar, B.S and George Mathew (2009) Inclusion and Exclusion in Local Governance: Field Notes from Rural India, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2009, 453 pp

Singla. Pamela, (2007), 'Women's Participation in Panchayat Raj: Nature and Effectiveness' analysis the process of the political participation of the women in the light of 33 percentage reservation for women due to the 73rd Amendment Act. The land mark 73rd Amendment to the Constitution of India has definitely empowered the women in terms of numbers. From the miniscule figure of 2/4 percentage in most of the Indian States, the Amendment has for the first time brought 33-40 percent rural women into the sphere of the decision making process. But, being in large numbers is not enough as reservation provides only the possibility of a voice for women, it does not guarantee it. This is also because the backdrop in which the reservation has been introduced in the country is marked by such factors as illiteracy, male dominance, casteism, deep rooted cultural beliefs and values, which do not encourage women's assertion but retain them in their traditional roles of dependent spouse, mother and housewife amidst such social and cultural constraints, it becomes important to study the nature and effectiveness with which the women members are able to participate in the PRI's specifically their ability to address the women's issues at the local level.

The study done by S.N.Chaudhary (2004) among the dalit and tribal leadership of Madhya Pradesh, reveals that the socio economic environment in most of the villages in M.P are still not in favour of the marginalized. The significant number of dalit and tribal representatives has for the first time joined the PRI, they are from the lower social and economic status. Their exposure to outside world and level of awareness is very low. Therefore, at the decision and action level many of them are dependent on others including the panchayat secretary as a result they are manipulated by others. Singla. Pamela, (2007), 'Women's Participation in Panchayat Raj: Nature and Effectiveness' Rawat Publications, Jaipur Chaudhary, S.N. 2004. Dalit and Tribal Leadership in Panchayats. New Delhi : Concept Publishing Company

## **EMPOWERMENT THROUGH EDUCATION**

Empowerment through education is the most important step to begin with. With education comes the awareness and strength to stand up and demand one's rights. Education here should not be confused with literacy. It has a deep rooted aim of empowerment of the human being which leads to worldview building and development of self and is the force behind all revolutions and reformations. Creating a supportive environment to ensure greater political participation of women is the prerequisite to make the system of Panchayati Raj more participative and ensure holistic representation. Special provisions to ensure smooth and fair election process of Dalit women to panchayats need to be implemented. This could be done by appointing a special officer to look into the matters relating to the same. Granting more decisive power to the local bodies is a step further in the empowerment of Dalit women sarpanches. The bureaucratic structures should function as an aide to the Gram Panchayats. Civil society organizations can help in empowering the women by educating them directly and being an ally in representing their cause to state authorities.

## **Environment-building through the campaign Approach**

A campaign-based approach to influence peoples' perspectives on panchayats and local governance and to encourage them to participate in gram sabhameetings. In the pre-election period, campaigns were devised to motivate people to participate constructively in the elections, both as voters and/or candidates. In many states 'nomination camps' were set up to offer support to aspiring candidates, especially women. These camps provided information regarding filing of nominations, assisted in filling nomination forms and encouraged women to contest from unreserved seats. Providing women with opportunities and support systems (such as reservations & other affirmative action) has the potential to put into motion a sustainable process for a change in gendered power relations allowing them to slowly but steadily break the shackles of existing boundaries. Education for All: Initiatives, issues and strategies, Report of the Working Group on Education for All held at UNESCO Headquarters, 22-24 November 2000, UNESCO, Paris, 2001.

## **REFERENCES**

- [1]. Baviskar, B.S. 2008. Including the Excluded, Empowering the Powerless: Case Studies of Panchayati Raj in Maharashtra, in Panchayati Raj Institution and Rural Development, Bishnu C Barik and Umesh C. Sahoo, 39-57. Jaipur: Rawat Publication
- [2]. Chaudhary, S.N. 2004. Dalit and Tribal Leadership in Panchayats. New Delhi : Concept Publishing Company
- [3]. Lele, M.K. 2001. Local Government: Conflict of Interest and Issues of Legitimization.
- [4]. Economic and political weekly 51: 22-28. <http://censusindia.gov.in/> 2. [www.mospi.gov.in](http://www.mospi.gov.in). Government of India, Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation. Central Statistics Office, Social Statistics Division, RK Puram, New Delhi. . Government of India Human resource development.
- [5]. Government of India Planning commission 11th five year plan. <http://www.nhrcc.nic.in> 6. Express News Service : New Delhi, Wed May 01 2013, Current scenario of dalit women in India, Manjula Pradeep

Krishnaveni .D. "Political Empowerment of Dalit Women through Panchayat Raj in India: Situation Analysis." International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention(IJHSSI), vol. 6, no. 10, 2017, pp. 01-03.