

PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF SCHEDULED TRIBES WOMEN IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE – A STUDY

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Abstract: This study attempts to analyze pattern of leadership of Schedule Tribe women in PRIs. It highlights the problems of elected women representatives, factors which influence participation and leadership of women at the grass root level and their political empowerment. It also looks into different aspects of tribal society to determine pattern of leadership of women.

Keywords: Leadership, empowerment, Political Culture, Rural Governance.

Introduction: Leadership plays an important role in shaping the socio-economic and political structure of any society. Effective functioning of PRIs depends mainly on the quality of leadership available at the grass-root levels. Through reservations, leadership of women was given statutory status. This status is a channel to address the issue of women empowerment and to wipe away inequality prevailing in the society. It is evident that women aspire to come out of their traditional roles to create a new environment for the new generation but their assigned roles prevent them from discharging their roles effectively. Experiences so far have shown shades of both valour and weaknesses in women's leadership. Despite their numerical strength women occupy a marginalized position in society because of several socio-economic constraints. This has inhibited effective participation of women in political process and the institutional structure of democracy. Broad-based political participation of women is severely limited due to nexus of traditional factors such as considerations of caste, religion and feudal and family status. Consequently, women are still left on the periphery of political process.

Therefore, the women leader must have qualities such as receptivity to changes, readiness to implement new ideas, risk taking ability, high levels of aspirations, high degree of socio-cultural awareness. These qualities are essential for the women-folk, who have been subjected to the domestic chore, which is one of the major obstacles in the process of modernization and democratization. On the basis of gender discrimination, women leaders have to play a crucial role in educating the women and changing their attitudes towards the changes, national ideologies and politics and also try to influence the women to a change of out look. This may be an uphill task for the women leadership to bring a desired change and bring them into the active politics. Political empowerment creates awareness about day-to-day activities of Politics which are taking place surrounding them. The political empowerment is the only catalyst which will bring about a perceptible change in the lot of women. The Eleventh Plan initiated several measures to accelerate the process of women's Political empowerment and participation in PRIs.

Introduction of Panchayat Raj system in Andhra Pradesh has been a boon to women in the stat to acquire leadership skills and techniques to muster the support and strength from all the quarters. Panchayat Raj bodies are best and effective grounds for the women to acquire the leadership qualities.

Methodology: The present study entitled "*Problems and Prospects of Scheduled Tribes Women in Local Governance – A Study*" is initiated to understand the extent of political participation of Scheduled Tribes women in local governance, the factors affecting their role in local governance and the nexus between their socio-economic and political profile and their political behavior in local governance. Scheduled Tribes participation, so far on this study refers to the extent of participation of elected women representatives in rural governance i.e. Panchayat Raj Institutions. The study covered a total sample of 100 respondents from 56 villages of 17 selected Mandals in two districts of Telugu States of Adilabad and Vishakhapatnam where Scheduled Tribe population is high. The study is heavily depends on primary

source of information. The primary data has been collected by administering a structured questionnaire schedule to the sample respondents.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To account the extent of participation of Scheduled Tribe Women representatives in the governance of local bodies.
2. To identify the factors affecting an active participation in local bodies by scheduled tribe women representatives.
3. To study the impact of political participation at local levels and its implications for their empowerment.

Research Design: The study is exploratory in nature. It would be the micro to the extent of study of levels of participation and influencing factors of women participation in politics. It also explains the women participation towards the politics and good governance. To substantiate the broader perspectives of the participation of tribal women in politics, the present study has been under taken in two districts of Telugu States i.e. Adilabad and Vishakhapatnam. The scope of the study has been restricted to 10 mandals of Adilabad and 7 mandals of Visakhapatnam districts in Telugu States. In choosing the areas and selecting the respondents.

Altogether in two selected districts for the study, a sample of 100 (50 from each district) women representatives have been chosen from 30 villages pertaining to 17 mandals. The sample Scheduled Tribes women representatives consist of Sarpanchs (46%), followed by M.P.T.C. (27%), Ward Members (22%) and M.P.Ps. (5%).

Result and Discussion:

Table 1: Persons helped to entry in to politics (Education-wise)

Education/ Int. Politics	Myself %	Family background %	Party background %	Others %	Total %
Illiterate	(13.04) 6 (54.55)	(58.70) 27 (44.26)	(28.27) 13 (48.15)	0	(100) 46 (46)
Primary	(9.68) 3 (27.27)	(58.07) 18 (29.51)	(29.03) 9 (33.34)	(3.23) 1 (100)	(100) 31 (31)
High School	(9.52) 2 (18.18)	(66.67) 14 (22.95)	(23.81) 5 (18.52)	0	(100) 21 (21)
Degree	0	(100) 2 (3.28)	0	0	(100) 2 (2)
Total	(11) 11	(61) 61	(27) 27	(1) 1	(100) 100

Table-1 reveals that, a majority of respondents (46%) have felt that they have entered into politics with the encouragement of leaders belong to various local political parties (table-01). The respondents have felt that it is the party system that helped them join in politics. The party leaders have no option except find out the suitable candidates from the different caste groups in the wake of 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act. Apart from this, women reservation policy also paved the way to them to enter into politics and become public representatives. Another 42 percent of them felt that, they have entered politics because of their family members who had past experience in the politics. Only 11 respondents have felt that they entered in politics by their own interest.

Nearly 40 percent of the respondents who have no formal education entered into politics because of their family background, due to the encouragement of local political leaders and women reservation

policy. Thus it can be said that there is no positive co-ordination between educational level of respondents and their participation rate in politics.

Table 2: Involvement of Family Members in Official Duties of the Respondents

Education/ Interference	Yes	%	No	%	Total
Illiterate	39 (55.71)	(84.78)	7 (23.34)	(15.22)	46 (100.00)
Primary	22 (31.43)	(70.97)	9 (30)	(29.03)	31 (100.00)
High School	7 (10)	(33.33)	14 (46.67)	(66.67)	21 (100.00)
Degree	2 (2.86)	(100)	0		2 (2)
Total	70	(70)	30	(30)	100 (100.00)

The table-2 explains that, Nearly 70 percent of the respondents felt that their family members are usually interfere in day to day functions of the office (table-02). Among them, 60 percent felt that they are accepting the interference of their husbands in their official duties. Rest of them have expressed that they are taking policy decisions on their own.

From the above analysis, it has become once again very clear that the spirit of the 73rd amendment of the Indian constitution is being violated day in and day out. The major chunks of respondents have felt that interference is there at every step and in many forms. It is the relatives, who very often interfere in the duties of the respondents. But husbands are the category, who does the maximum interference. It can be explained in the light of the ground realities. One is our social system and the other is our political system. Both help suppress the empowerment of women. Ironically in some cases, it is the husband who is the de-facto representative, while the wife is de-jure one. Unless this is changed, the empowerment of women is a distant dream. To put it poetically, one has to go miles and some times an extra mile to translate the spirit of the amendment into reality.

Table 3: Involvement of Officers and Political Leaders

Education/ Interference	Yes	%	No	%	Don't Know	%	Total
Illiterate	24 (55.81)	(52.17)	22 (40)	(47.83)	0		46 (100.00)
Primary	10 (23.26)	(32.26)	19 (34.55)	(61.29)	2 (100)	(6.45)	31 (100.00)
High School	7 (16.28)	(33.34)	14 (25.45)	(66.67)	0		21 (100.00)
Degree	2 (4.65)	(100)	0				2
Total	43	(43)	55	(55)	2	(2)	100 (100.00)

The table-3 indicates that, Out of 100 respondents, 43 have felt that the officials and politicians are interfering in their official work (table-03). Among them, nearly 56 percent did not have any formal education. They expressed that some times they have been misguided by the officials in taking decisions. They opined that due to lake of adequate training about the duties, they are unable to take decisions independently.

Table 4: Awareness of the Respondents about Day to Day Political Events

Caste/ Politics Watching	Yes	%	No	%	Total
Koya	13 (14.94)	(100)	0		13 (13) (100.00)
Kodhi	14 (16.09)	(93.34)	1 (7.7)	(6.66)	15 (15) (100.00)
Lambadi	23 (26.44)	(100)	0		23 (23) (100.00)
Gondur	37 (42.53)	(78.72)	10 (76.92)	(21.28)	47 (47) (100.00)
Others	0		2 (15.38)	(100)	2 (2) (100.00)
Total	87	(87)	13	(13)	100 (100.00)

The researcher elicits the information from the respondents regarding their awareness towards political affairs of the country in general and Telangana State in particular. On the whole 87 percent of the respondents have felt that they have watching the political situation and day to day events keenly (table-04). The researcher found that the political awareness is marginally lower in the case of the respondents belong to Gondur and Kodhi community compare to the respondents of Koya and Lambadi community. In the case of Ward Members it is very less. It may be perhaps that their position in rural governance is marginal. However, it is observed that the sample elected women representatives are very much enthusiastic to know about day to day political affairs in their surroundings. It is happy to know that even respondents who are illiterate or do not have no formal education are also showing interest watch day to day political affairs in the Telugu states.

Table 5: Extent of Involvement in Addressing the Meetings

Education/ Addressing	No	%	some times	%	Every time	%	Don't Know	%	Total
Illiterate	12 (60)	(26.09)	27 (45.76)	(58.70)	5 (26.32)	(10.87)	2 (100)	(4.35)	46 (46)
Primary	5 (25)	(16.13)	25 (42.37)	(80.65)	1 (5.26)	(3.23)	0		31 (31)
High School	3 (15)	(14.29)	6 (10.17)	(28.57)	12 (63.16)	(57.14)	0		21 (21)
Degree	0		1 (1.69)	(50)	1 (5.26)	(50)	0		2 (2)
Total	20	(20)	59	(59)	19	(19)	2	(2)	100

On the whole, two- third of the respondents have themselves participated in the meetings of the village Panchayats and at Mandal level. It is found that the respondents of Visakhapatnam are relatively better in this aspect, compared to the respondents of Adilabad district (table-05). Some take active participation and some are passive. Active participants are capable of understanding the problem and they believe in finding out a solution after discussing the issue thread bare. The researcher found that illiteracy; lack of command over the subject matter, in experience, lack of expose and lack of self confidence and shyness are some of the reasons for their passiveness. While stating, they themselves participate in the meetings, the respondents may be not revealing the facts. It is fondly hoped that in due course they will realize their folly and assert their right to position.

Table 6: Concern of Respondents in Resolving Women Problems

Education/ Active Participation	Yes	%	No	%	Don't Know	%	Total
Illiterate	30 (42.25)	(65.22)	10 (50)	(21.74)	6 (66.67)	(13.04)	46 (46)
Primary	21 (29.58)	(67.74)	8 (40)	(25.81)	2 (22.22)	(6.45)	31 (31)
High School	18 (25.35)	(85.71)	2 (10)	(9.52)	1 (11.11)	(4.76)	21 (21)
Degree	2 (2.82)	(100)	0		0		2 (2)
Total	71	(71)	20	(20)	9	(9)	100

It is assumed that the women can know the problems pertaining to women and they definitely show concern to words them. Keeping this in view the researcher probed into this aspect. 71 percent of the elected women respondents in the study area (table- 06) stated that they are very much concentrating to resolve the social problems in their jurisdiction. Mostly the issues are related to dowry harassment, personal problems, ill treatment by the in-laws, domestic violence etc.

Table 7: Role of Respondents in Concluding Proceedings of the Official Meetings

Education/ Chairperson	Yes	%	No	%	Don't Know	%	Not Telling	%	Total
Illiterate	36 (43.37)	(78.26)	7 (63.64)	(15.22)	2 (50)	(4.35)	1 (50)	(2.17)	46 (46)
Primary	26 (31.32)	(83.87)	3 (27.27)	(9.68)	1 (25)	(3.23)	1 (50)	(3.23)	31 (31)
High School	19 (22.89)	(90.48)	1 (9.09)	(4.76)	1 (25)	(4.76)	0		21 (21)
Degree	2 (2.41)	(100)	0		0		0		2 (2)
Total	83	(83)	11	(11)	4	(4)	2	(2)	100

* Source: Field Survey

Out of 100 sample respondents of different categories, the Surpanches (46) and M.P.Ps. (5) are supposed to preside over the meetings in their official work (Table 07). It is found that in the study area almost all the respondents preside over the meetings as per norms. However the researcher observed that 1/3rd of them are not able to conduct the meetings and take decisions independently. Some times they are unable to co-ordinate the meetings and control the proceeding of the meetings.

Conclusion: The study reveals that, a majority of sample elected Scheduled Tribes women representatives in rural governance in the study area have been watching the political situation and day-to-day events keenly and a few showing interest and zeal to grab the political positions. It is found that the level of political awareness is not uniform among all respondents. It is marginally lower in the case of the respondents belong to Gondu and Kodhi community. The political participation in rural governance is marginal in the case of Ward Members. The respondents are very much enthusiastic about women reservation bill to be passed in the Parliament. The confident levels of the respondents are slowly improving particularly in the case of Lambadi and Gondu communities. Around 20 percent of the respondents are actually taken policy decisions independently. More than 65 percent of the respondents have played active role in decision-making at home. The male domination in decision making is slowly fading out and the affections of women in decision-making is getting more pronounced. The researcher found that the Tribal women have slowly progressing in the right direction of empowerment in the

study area. Nearly 2/3 of the respondents have themselves participated in the meetings of the village Panchayats and at mandal level. The respondents of Visakhapatnam are relatively better in this aspect. It is found that illiteracy or just literacy; lack of command over the subject matter, inexperience, lack of expose and lack of self-confidence and shyness are some of the reasons for their passiveness. It is fondly hoped that in due course, they will understand their folly and assert their right to position. 2/3 of the respondents in the study area are very much concentrating to resolve women problems. The respondents some times are unable to co-ordinate the meetings and control the proceedings of the meetings. Nearly, half of the respondents have shown interest to continue in politics and to get higher position in future. Who do not have past experience in this field are not showing interest to contest next time due to their personal reasons. On the whole it can be concluded that the empowerment particularly political empowerment is slowly improving among the Tribal women.

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