

TRIBAL WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS: A STUDY IN HUNSUR TALUK KARNATAKA

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Abstract: India has one of the largest tribal concentrations in the world. Prior to the adoption of Indian constitution the tribes were variously termed as aboriginals, adivasis, forest tribes, hill tribes, primitive tribes etc. Up to 1919, the tribes were included under the head of depressed classes, the Indian Franchise Committee in 1919 accorded a separate nomenclature for the census reports in 1931 primitive tribes; 1941 tribes and 1951 scheduled tribes. As per the 2001 census, the tribal inhabit in almost all the states and union territories. The government has identified more than 650 tribal communities in the country.

Keywords: Participatory politics, Women empowerment, tribal women.

Introduction: Scheduled tribes have been divided into three major groups based on their distribution in three well-defined zones viz., the southern, the central and the northeastern zones. Southern zone consists of the part of peninsular India, south of the River Krishna. The tribes in this zone appear to be the most ancient inhabitants of India. Now, they are called as the Todas, Paniyans, Kurumbas / Kurubas, Kotas, Hakkipikkies, Soligas, Malayalees, Kadars, Kanichars, Mutheevans, Mannans, Irulas, Uralis, Malapantarams, Koyas, Yendis, Yeravas, Chenchees etc. A Negrito characters found among some of the more primitive and isolated tribes like the Kadars, the Irulas, the Paniyans, and the Uralis. Their livelihood based on hunting, food collection and gathering. The village headman adjudicates the disputes of the tribal communities. The structure of society is based on the matriarchal character and there is, or was till recently evidence of polyandry among the Nilgiri tribes. The central zone has provided refuge for the aboriginal population from time immemorial and it consists of the plateaus and mountainous belts between Indo-Gangetic basin in north and the Krishna River in the south. The Juangs, Kharias, Hos, Santhals, Gonds, Bhils, Mundas, Oraons, Birhors, Bhuiyas, Saoras, Khandas, Baigas and Kols are the major tribes found in this region. They conform to the pattern of Austroloid characters. Shifting cultivation is the prevalent of food production. Community life is organized with village councils under headman. Contact with low country people and other persons of the surrounding areas have led to a considerable degree of assimilation of Indian ideas and religious rites among these tribes. The Northeastern zone consists of the sub-Himalayan region and the hills and mountain ranges of northeastern India of the Tista valley and the Jamuna-Padma portion of the Brahmaputra valley. The main tribes found in this zone are the Nagas, Khouasis, Gares, Mistruis, Limbus, Lepehas, Daflas, Abors, Mitims, Bodo and the Kuki-Lushais. The Mongoloid characters found among them.

Definition of the Scheduled Tribes the word "tribe" has been defined clearly in the Constitution of India. Article 342 of the Constitution of India empowers the President to draw up a list of scheduled tribes in consultation with the Governor of each State subject to the revision by the Parliament. Accordingly the President has made orders, specifying the scheduled tribes in the different states of India. In post-independence period, the decision as to which community is a tribe and which one is not taken by the administration and not by the social scientists. Thus any community, which is listed in the schedule of the Constitution as a tribe is known as the scheduled tribes in India. Most of the definitions of tribes are confusing and vague. There is haziness and the definitions are never precise. Some of the definitions of the word tribe are given below. An East Asian Conference defined "A tribal community as forming a group of people generally constituting a homogenous unit, speaking a common language, claiming a common ancestry, living in a particular geographical area, generally they are lacking in scientific knowledge and modern technology and having a social structure based on kinship". According to Oxford Dictionary "A tribe is a group of people in primitive in barbarous stage of development, acknowledging the authority of a chief and usually regarding themselves as having a common ancestor". Apart from the Scheduled Tribes, there are 75 indigenous groups in India known as "Primitive Tribal Groups". The Tenth Plan of the Central Government observes that these vulnerable communities have experienced a decline in their sustenance base and the resultant food insecurity, malnutrition and ill-health has forced them to live in the most fragile living conditions and some of them are even under the threat of getting extinct. In Karnataka, the Koragas of Dakshina Kannada district and the Jenu Kurubas who are concentrated in the districts of Mysore, Chamarajnagar and Kodagu are classified as "primitive tribes". As a result of the restructuring the political administrative

system provided by the constitutional amendment women had been elected to the local councils in unprecedented numbers. By 1994, 3,30,000 women had entered politics as a result of Panchayat Raj Institutions and the percentage of women at various levels of political activity has shifted dramatically as a result of this constitutional change from 4-5 per cent before Panchayat Raj Institutions to 25-40 per cent after Panchayat Raj Institutions. This brought about a qualitative difference as they are making the state sensitive towards issues of poverty, inequality, and gender injustice by bringing their experience of governance of civic society in to governance of state

Objectives of the study:

1. To identify the problems faced by women members of the Panchayath Raj Institutions.
2. To identify the decision making in tribal areas.
3. To identify the NGOs in creating awareness the tribal women to participate in their Panchayath Raj Institutions issues.

Village wise Distribution of Tribal population in Ummathru and Gurupura Gramapanchayat 2015-16

Villages	No. of Hadies	Jenu Kuruba	Kadu Kuruba	Hakki Pikki	Dongri Gerasia	Total
^{1st} Pakshirajapura	2	-	-	1682	473	2155
^{2nd} Pakshirajapura	2	192	-	1056	-	1248
Naagapura ^{1st} to ^{6th} block	6	1739	763	-	-	2502
Total	10	1931	763	2738	473	5905

Source: Annual report 2015-16 DSO Mysuru

Table shows that Hadies wise distribution of tribal population in Ummathuru and Gurupura Gramapanchayath in Hunsur Taluk. ^{1st} Pakshirajapura had the highest number of 2155 tribes in Ummathuru and Nagapura ^{1st} to ^{6th} block with 2502 tribes in Gurupura gramapanchayat and lowest tribes are 473 Dongri gorassia tribes in Ummathuru gramapanchayat.

The table also shows that distribution of village wise tribes. As per annual report 2015-16 Mysore District has the highest of 39,568 Jenu Kuruba tribes, followed by Kadu Kuruba tribe 3430, Hakki Pikki tribe 4625 and lowest number of 842 Dongri Gerasia tribes.

Findings of the study: Ummathuru Grama Panchayat situated in Hunsur Taluk of Mysore District, constitutes of 18 villages. This village panchayat is located 7 kms from Hunsur head quarter dominated by Hakkipikki tribes. The language of the people is Kannada and Gujarati. LAMPS- (Large Scale Adivasi Multipurpose Co-operative Society) an NGO has been working in this Grama Panchayat since 10 years. The motive of this NGO is that to motivate tribal about their own affairs. The NGO brought drastic change among the tribal. The NGO have been giving training to tribal in all aspects. Right now Ummathru gramapanchayat president is tribal woman, her name is Shantha. Gurupura Grama

Methodology: Rationale selection of the sample Hadies namely, Ummathuru Grama Panchayat and Gurupura Grama Panchayat. The office of the members in the two village's panchayat is reserved for women candidates belonging to Schedule Tribes. In the two villages, Ummathuru Grama panchayat has an NGO trained member while Gurupura Grama panchayat has no NGO participation. Individual case studies of the Panchayat members were recorded by conducting personal interview and probing into various aspects of their achievements and constraints. The filed investigation was conducted by administering a detailed questionnaire and through personal interviews. The main tool of data collection was carefully prepared questionnaire for the various categories of sample respondents who included, women panchayat members of the sample village and Male representatives of the sample village.

Panchayat situated in Hunsur taluk of Mysore District, constitutes of 11 villages. This village is located 13 km from Hunsur head quarter dominated by Jenukuruba Tribes.

Awareness of Tribal Women in Panchayat Activities: The most positive thing noticed in Ummathuru village is an improvement in overall awareness of women in panchayat work and its activities. As many as 62 per cent women are aware of the development programs undertaken by the panchayat in this village where the NGO is working. Nearly 70 per cent were aware about the timings and agenda of the panchayat meetings and equal number knew about the powers of panchayat. Implementation of the government policies and undertaking of the development programs were regarded as the two main powers of panchayat. 70 per cent of the respondents replied the question regarding their awareness about the issues undertaken in their panchayat. Most of these were stated to be related to the housing under Indira Awas Yojana, Ambedkar housing scheme, Basava Kutira or construction work, pension schemes, maternity benefits etc. 69 per cent of women identified the source of income of their panchayats, which came mainly from government funds, panchayat property and collection of taxes and through politicians like

MLA, MP grants. The participation and performance of women in panchayat has brought about a positive change in tribal women's image and the respect they receive from other as expressed by more than half the respondents. 56 per cent respondents expressed that people have started believing that women can perform well as panchayat representatives. Gurupura Grama panchayat where there is no NGOs working, it has been identified that there was lack of regular women attendance in meetings, less rising of the issues and the dominance of the male members of the family in the panchayat work. 73 per cent of women in Gurupura Grama Panchayat said that they do not raise any issue and those few who did were mainly confined to personnel and drinking water. About 48 per cent of them attend meetings regularly whereas 52 per cent either do not attend meetings at all or attend at times. 61 per cent of those who were not attending meetings regularly said that their husbands manage the affair. Earlier women were not interested in politics but now after two terms, their participation in the political process had enhanced their political consciousness, awareness and empowerment. As a result they are ready to contest again. All this goes to reveal that the elected women members of the panchayats value their knowledge and their new sense of freedom and their new political status, as representatives of the people, which has relatively improved their social status both at home and outside. The grama sabha meetings were more popular and better attended in the Ummathuru (72 per cent) than Gurupura (51 per cent) indicates that role played by civil society in organizing women's participation. In other words, people in the village panchayat, feel that, through participation in the social, economic and political processes they may be able to bring about speedy development of their village panchayat. The 50 per cent reservation provision, a large number of tribal women candidates from the weaker sections have come into the panchayats now. The elections and the 50 per cent of seats for women have ensured their numerical strength in the rural power structure, and women have been physically there, occupying formal positions of power.

The study is that the Panchayath Raj system functioned efficiently in the Ummathuru when compared to Gurupura. The field study revealed that political participation of women panchayat members

in Gurupura gramapanchayat was more intensive in voting, attending meetings, where as it is more vibrant extending to participation in decision making, formulation of plans and monitoring in NGO aided Ummathuru village.

Conclusion: The rural tribal societies have been provided a place in the Panchayath Raj Institutions under the Act. The most valuable area of contribution of NGOs to engendering the Panchayath Raj Institutions has been in the organizing of women like, the NGO works with health, Self Help Groups, housing, water and sanitation, education and watershed etc., it has also been reported that women in Panchayath Raj Institutions who have been supported and nurtured by NGOs and those who have been involved in larger people's movements have gained a more confidently. Today when the seats are reserved for tribal women, men of such families still dominate the panchayat through them. It is shown the study that the important positions in the traditional panchayats were always held by males that were passed on more or less in a hereditary manner. Tribal women must also be seen as women and not just "tribal". Tribal women must be looked as a part of the tribal community, which has suffered at the hands of the non-tribal and marginalized in the process of development. It was noticed at many places that the non-tribal dominated the panchayats. Tribal women suffered as much, in fact more by virtue of their belonging to the tribal community. The scheduled tribes are given special provisions constitutionally and how with extension of panchayat raj in the scheduled areas, they have been given power of self-governance. The study has revealed that women leaders in Gurupura have exhibited their determination to occupy the public place; though there are hurdles in the process of empowering women. It is necessary that women come out of this domination and subordination for which they need to be educated and trained. These are not sufficient conditions in themselves, their scarcity of women from taking important decisions. Besides lack of awareness, education and training, the respondents also expressed their opinions regarding other problems. Lack of financial resources was considered as the most important one. The seeds of empowerment have been sown and now it is the responsibility of the NGO, political leadership and the bureaucratic structure to educate it to flower bud.

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